

# **The Cabinet of Curiosities Study Guide**

## **The Cabinet of Curiosities by Douglas Preston**

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# Contents

<a href="#">The Cabinet of Curiosities Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Part 1, Boneyard: Chapters 1-8.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 1-7.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 8-13.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 1-8.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 9-15.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Part 4, Many Worm: Chapters 1-9.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Part 5, Horse's Tail: Chapters 1-8.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Part 6, The Old, Dark House: Chapters 1-7.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Part 7, All Those Dreadful Little Cuts: Chapters 1-7.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Part 8, The Search: Chapters 1-9.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 1-7.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 8-14 and Epilogue, Arcanum.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>



# Plot Summary

The Cabinet of Curiosities is another novel by the bestselling team of Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. In this novel, Nora Kelly and Bill Smithback make another appearance, along with Special Agent Pendergast, the curious FBI agent from New Orleans. Pendergast enlists Nora's help in investigating the discovery of a collection of murder victims in the coal cellar of what was once Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. These murder victims, thirty-six in all, could possibly be the victims of the most prolific serial killer in American history. However, greed and political corruption keep Nora and Pendergast from investigating the site to the extent they would like. Fortunately, archives and a paper trail lead them to a name and a location, placing Pendergast, Nora, and Bill in a horrific situation that will take a great deal of skill and luck to escape. The Cabinet of Curiosities is a historical mystery that keeps the reader guessing to the final word.

Nora argues with her immediate supervisor at the Museum of Natural History, Mr. Brisbane, for an increase in her department's funding. Unfortunately, Brisbane not only refuses, but insists Nora cut her budget further. Nora returns to her office to find a curious man waiting for her. His name is Special Agent Pendergast, and he wants her to inspect a newly discovered archeological site. Unfortunately, when they arrive Nora realizes that not only do they not have the authority to be there, but the site is quickly being destroyed by a medical examiner from the city. Pendergast gives Nora less than half an hour to inspect the site. Nora finds many bones, all of which have had their spinal columns excised in what looks like a surgical procedure. Nora also finds a dress that appears to have a piece of paper sewed into it. Before Nora can extract the paper, she is thrown out of the site.

Nora cannot get the dress out of her mind. Later that night, Nora returns to the construction site where she directs her boyfriend, Bill Smithback, to remove the dress while she distracts the security guard. The following day, Nora inspects the dress within which she withdraws a piece of paper with the name, age, and address of a young victim. This discovery gives Nora motive to continue working on the case with Pendergast, despite her boss's reluctance to allow her the time. They begin searching the Museum's archives where they find a letter from J.C. Shottum to a Museum curator, naming Enoch Leng as the murderer. It seems Leng had been attempting to find a way to prolong human life.

Nora gives a copy of the letter to Smithback for safe keeping, never imagining he would write an article about it for the New York Times. This article causes Nora a great deal of grief at her job, inspiring her to stop speaking to Smithback. This article, it appears, causes a copycat killer to begin attacking innocent people in New York City. At the same time, Nora is forbidden to continue work on the Leng case. However, Nora finds the body of the Museum's archivist and is nearly killed herself by the copycat killer, dubbed the Surgeon by the press. This motivates Nora to continue helping Pendergast despite her boss's clear instructions to stay away from the man.



Nora and Pendergast rent a room in a building that was built over Leng's second laboratory. Nora excavates the ground in the basement apartment and finds the bodies of three of Leng's enemies from the early part of the twentieth century. This discovery takes the focus from the copycat killer and places an inept cop in charge of the investigation. The discovery also inspires Bill Smithback to investigate Leng in an attempt to win back Nora's favor. Smithback finds an address for Leng, which he immediately goes to check out. While inspecting the house, Smithback is taken hostage by the copycat killer.

Upon learning of Smithback's disappearance, Nora and Pendergast locate Leng's home and go in search of him. They fall into a booby trap and are taken hostage. However, Pendergast has intimate knowledge of the house's design and the chains that hold him captive, giving him an edge over the killer. Pendergast frees himself and lures the killer into a subbasement, while Nora fights to save Smithback's life. In the end, the killer exposes himself to the poisons Leng was using to find a way to annihilate the entire human race, his ultimate project, and Pendergast manages to rescue himself, Nora, and Smithback. In the end, Pendergast discovers all of Leng's research and destroys it before it can do any more harm.



# Part 1, Boneyard: Chapters 1-8

## Part 1, Boneyard: Chapters 1-8 Summary

Nora Kelly is an archeologist who appeared in a previous Preston-Child novel. Kelly once lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico and led an expedition into Utah, where she met journalist William Smithback Jr. Smithback has also appeared in multiple novels by Preston-Child. Special Agent Pendergast, a curious FBI agent from New Orleans, also makes a return appearance in this novel, proving to be the catalyst that will draw Nora and Smithback into the investigation that propels the plot of this novel.

In chapter one, a disgruntled construction worker is instructed to enter a structure uncovered in an attempt to dig a deep pit for the foundation of a new apartment building. Inside, the worker is startled to find multiple skeletons.

In chapter two, Nora Kelly confronts her immediate supervisor at the Museum of Natural History, first vice-president Roger Brisbane III, in an attempt to receive the eighteen thousand dollars she needs for carbon-14 testing on artifacts from a site in Utah. However, not only does Brisbane refuse to give Nora the money, he also instructs her to cut her department's budget by eighteen thousand dollars, despite how deeply the budget has already been cut. Frustrated, Nora returns to her office to find a strange man waiting for her.

In chapter three, the strange man introduces himself as Special Agent Pendergast of the FBI. The man is vague in what he wants from Nora, only telling her that he wants her to supervise a new archeological site.

In chapter four, Pendergast takes Nora to a construction site on Catherine Street, where she watches Pendergast bluff his way onto the site past the police captain supervising the security. Once inside, Pendergast takes Nora to a structure recently uncovered by the construction and informs her that she has less than an hour to investigate the site. Nora quickly begins pulling bones and clothing from a dozen niches set all along a long tunnel-like structure. Nora does not have specimen bags, so she stuffs bones and the contents of several pockets into her own pockets. In the next-to-last niche, Nora finds a dress that appears to have some sort of paper sewn into it. Before Nora can explore further, the medical examiner comes into the tunnel and informs her that she has no authority here and must leave. Nora shoves the dress back into the niche and leaves with Pendergast.

In chapter five, Nora has dinner with her boyfriend, William Smithback Jr., who she met during an expedition in Utah. Nora tells Bill about Pendergast, who Bill knows from a story he did on some murders in the Museum of Natural History more than five years before, and about the dress with the note sewn inside. Nora convinces Bill to help her steal the dress.



In chapter six, Nora pretends to be a prostitute in order to distract the guard at the construction site while Bill steals the dress. Bill succeeds, but not before nearly getting caught.

In chapter seven, Nora takes the dress to her office for examination. Nora is careful not to disturb any possible evidence. Pendergast arrives just as Nora is about to remove the hidden note. Nora carefully removes the stitches and reveals a torn piece of what looks like a book page. Written on it are a name, age, and address. Pendergast does a quick test and reveals the note was written in human blood.

In chapter eight, Pendergast takes Nora to Brisbane's office and bullies the vice president into allowing Nora to assist in his investigation.

## **Part 1, Boneyard: Chapters 1-8 Analysis**

This first part of the novel introduces the catalyst that will propel the plot through its end. The catalyst is the discovery of bones in what was once a coal chamber that belonged to a building long since gone. Nora is dragged to the scene by an interesting FBI agent who refuses to reveal how he knew of this discovery or what his interest in it might be. In fact, the FBI agent is from New Orleans; therefore, he does not even have jurisdiction over a crime scene in New York, even a crime scene that is more than a hundred years old. The reader does learn, however, that Pendergast appeared in another Preston-Child book in which he helped investigate the murders that took place in the Museum of Natural History more than five years ago.

Pendergast is highly secretive, suggesting to the reader that he knows more about these murders than he says. However, at this point, the site appears to simply be a crime scene that is too old to investigate. This line of thinking is what allows the city of New York to shut down all investigation into this site and allow construction to continue. It also helps that the owner of the land is Anthony Fairhaven, a very rich, very connected real estate developer who has the power to force the mayor's hand. This action, based on Fairhaven's concern over money loss, illustrates the theme of greed in this section of the novel.

Nora Kelly is also a character that fans of Preston-Child will remember from a previous book. Nora is an archeologist who, on an expedition in Utah, found what her father believed was Quivira. Nora continues to work on the artifacts taken from that site, needing more than ten thousand dollars to do testing on artifacts to prove her theory that the Aztecs helped to build the Anasazi site. This is a motivator for Nora, motivating her first to work at the Museum of Natural History, to attempt to appease her bosses, and to work with Pendergast in the hopes of getting the money she needs for her research.



## Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 1-7

### Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 1-7 Summary

In chapter one, Nora goes to the Museum's archives in order to research the building that once stood over the coal chamber where the bones were found, Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. Nora learns more about cabinets of curiosities than she ever wanted to know, as well as a connection between J.C. Shottum and one of the Museum's own curators, Tinbury McFadden. Nora arranges to view all material belonging to McFadden and Shottum the following morning.

In chapter two, Patrick O'Shaughnessy, a sergeant with the NYPD, is assigned to be Pendergast's liaison during his investigation. O'Shaughnessy is instructed to watch Pendergast and to not be very helpful to his investigation. O'Shaughnessy believes he is being placed on this assignment because of a mistake he made five years previously.

In chapter three, O'Shaughnessy accompanies Pendergast to the Metropolitan Museum. On the way, Pendergast informs O'Shaughnessy that he knows about his trouble five years before, taking a bribe from a prostitute he felt sorry for and letting her go. Pendergast believes this means O'Shaughnessy has heart. At the museum, Pendergast barges his way into the office of a curator who specializes in period clothing in order to ask about the dress Nora recovered from the Catherine Street site. The curator, after some charm from Pendergast, tells them the dress was most likely made by the owner from cloth given her in a workhouse.

In chapter four, Nora, Pendergast, and O'Shaughnessy return to the Museum archives to inspect the papers and artifacts belonging to Shottum and McFadden. They find little of use until Pendergast finds a letter hidden in a drawer of a box made from an elephant's foot.

In chapter five, the letter appears to be from J.C. Shottum to McFadden. In the letter, Shottum explains how he became suspicious of his tenant, Enoch Leng, when blood dripped through his floor onto Shottum's desk below. Shottum was not satisfied with Leng's explanation, so he began to investigate. Shottum found nothing but well cleaned rooms in Leng's rented lab. However, in the basement coal chamber, Shottum found journals chronicling Leng's attempts to find the secret formula to prolonged life and a living person on whom Leng had removed the cauda equina for use in his experiments.

In chapter six, Brisbane reviews inter-office memos, looking for reasons to fire some of the staff. Brisbane focuses on Reinhart Puck, the archivist, because of his help with Nora and Pendergast's investigation.

In chapter seven, Smithback meets with Nora to look at an apartment. Smithback hopes they will move in together. However, Nora is distracted by what she and Pendergast found in the archives, and the fact that Brisbane or the Museum director, Collopy,



ordered all materials relating to Shottum and McFadden removed from the archives. Nora allows another couple to take the apartment. Smithback, believing he is helping, decides to write an article about Leng and the murders.

## **Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 1-7 Analysis**

As Pendergast continues his investigation, the police department assigns a man to follow him around. This suggests to the reader that not only is the police department annoyed at Pendergast's investigation, they do not trust him to follow procedures and to share anything he might find with them. Therefore, they assign a man who is already tainted by improper behavior to be his shadow. The reader wonders what this man will be for Pendergast, a hindrance or a help.

Nora has become so deeply involved in the case that she is excited to find a hidden letter that accuses a man named Enoch Leng of the murders discovered on Catherine Street. Not only this, but the letter claims Leng has done this for research to help him find a way to prolong life. This is an interesting suggestion, should it be true; therefore, the reader must wonder if it is possible that Leng could have been successful and still be alive.

Nora shares her concerns about the case with her boyfriend, giving him a copy of the letter, hoping he will offer emotional support. Instead, Bill, a reporter who has been known to go to great lengths to write that one piece that will give him the Pulitzer, decides to write an article on the letter. This is a breach of trust, a theme of the novel, that could have long reaching consequences.





## Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 8-13

### Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 8-13 Summary

In chapter eight, Fairhaven is having breakfast when he comes across Smithback's article about Leng, an article that clearly accuses Fairhaven's company, The Moegen-Fairhaven Group, of breaking a New York law that forces the shutdown of construction when an archeological site is discovered. Fairhaven begins making phone calls, starting with the mayor.

In chapter nine, Doreen Hollander, a tourist from Oklahoma, becomes lost in Central Park on her way to the Metropolitan Museum and is abducted by an unseen assailant.

In chapter ten, Collopy sits behind his desk contemplating his legacy with the Museum. Collopy has also seen the article in the New York Times and he calls Brisbane to tell him how the Museum would be handling it.

In chapter eleven, Nora is called to Brisbane's office, where she fears she will lose her job. Instead, Brisbane tells her that she is now a hero for her connection to the Catherine Street site and she must represent the Museum as such. Brisbane insists she not have contact with Smithback or Pendergast any further. In exchange, Collopy has agreed to reinstate her budget to its previous level and to allow her the money for her carbon-14 testing.

In chapter twelve, Pendergast and O'Shaughnessy attend the opening of a new exhibit at the Museum of Natural History. Smithback is there as well, clearly surprised to meet Pendergast again. When Nora arrives, she accuses Smithback of ruining her career and then refuses to speak to him. When the new exhibit is opened, someone has placed Brisbane's nameplate on one of the chimpanzee displays.

In chapter thirteen, a man opens a box he has clearly gotten from some old, neglected source. Inside are old surgical tools, most for use in surgeries dealing with bone. The man fondles them with affection and settles in to sharpen them with an old fashioned leather strap.

### Part 2, Men of Science: Chapters 8-13 Analysis

Again, the theme of greed is touched upon as Smithback accuses Moegen-Fairhaven of refusing archeologists access to the Catherine Street site in order to save some money on the construction. Fairhaven is not happy and begins making calls to the mayor. This suggests the investigation will find more closed doors in the future. At the same time, the Museum deals with the fallout from the article, an article that also accuses them of keeping archived documents from those investigating the case. Nora is threatened by Brisbane and instructed to stay away from the investigation if she wants the funding she so desperately needs for her own research. Now Nora has what she wants, but the



consequences instruct her to stop investigating the bones from Catherine Street and to stay away from Bill.

While all this political maneuvering is going on, a woman is abducted from Central Park. At the same time, an unidentified man fondles surgical tools from a bygone era that he has clearly found in some neglected place. This makes the reader wonder if perhaps these are not the same tools that Leng used to torture and murder his victims. The reader also wonders what the tools might be used for.



## Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 1-8

### Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 1-8 Summary

In chapter one, a young couple hoping to have sex in Central Park instead stumble upon a dead body.

In chapter two, the medical examiner is about to begin the autopsy of a young murder victim when Pendergast and O'Shaughnessy arrive. Pendergast talks the doctor into allowing him to watch. Pendergast instructs the doctor to examine the young woman's back first. There he discovers that the young woman has undergone some sort of surgical procedure in which the cauda equina, a bundle of nerves at the bottom of the spine, have been removed.

In chapter three, Smithback goes to the office of The Moegen-Fairhaven Group in hope of talking his way into an interview with Anthony Fairhaven. To Smithback's surprise, Fairhaven invites him to his office himself. Smithback and Fairhaven talk, with Fairhaven clearly controlling the conversation and giving only the answers he chooses. Smithback becomes confused and angry, learning nothing he has wanted to know, except that the remains of those found on Catherine Street have been interred in a nearby cemetery.

In chapter four, a young up-and-coming model is abducted on the street in the middle of the night as she walks to her Tompkins Square apartment.

In chapter five, Smithback is frustrated with his investigation into Fairhaven because he has learned nothing dirty. Fairhaven comes off as an angel, donating time and money to several organizations, including one he founded for the treatment of rare childhood diseases. Smithback comes across a yearbook from the year Fairhaven graduated high school and decides to visit the school. A teacher tells Smithback that Fairhaven was a good student, a good person, and that the only dark thing that ever happened to him was the death of his older brother, Arthur, at a young age from some rare disease. Smithback also learns that Fairhaven had the nickname Slasher because he refused to dissect a frog. On the way back to the office, Smithback discovers his nemesis, Bryce Harriman, has scooped him on two recent murders that have been linked to a copycat of Leng.

In chapter six, Nora meets Pendergast at a Chinatown tea shop where he buys her an expensive bag of tea even as she tells him she can no longer help him. Pendergast talks Nora into seeing the home of Mary Greene. Once there, Pendergast tells Nora how Mary Greene was forced to prostitute herself to provide for two younger siblings after the death of their parents. It was after an arrest for prostitution that Mary was placed in a workhouse that should have been her salvation, but was not.



In chapter seven, Nora attempts to work in her lab, but she cannot stop thinking of Pendergast and his investigation. As Nora thinks about the investigation, Smithback arrives. Nora not only will not allow him into her lab, she also calls security to escort him out of the library. As he is being taken away, Smithback tells Nora that Pendergast has been stabbed.

In chapter eight, Nora goes to the hospital and learns that Pendergast, who is a very difficult patient, has survived surgery and will most likely recover. Pendergast tells Nora that he was attacked outside his apartment building by a man in a dark coat and derby who attempted to chloroform him. Pendergast managed to fight him off and direct the stab wound to a non-vital area. Pendergast sees this attack as a good sign, suggesting they are getting close to the copycat killer.

### **Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 1-8 Analysis**

The copycat killer seems to be jumping in where Leng stopped. The first victim clearly has the same sort of wounds Nora saw in the bones of the skeletons found at the site on Catherine Street. This suggests to the reader that someone is continuing Leng's work. However, the astute reader might wonder if maybe Leng himself has already found the answer to long life and is committing the crimes himself.

Pendergast is attacked on the street by a man fitting the same description of the person the reader is aware kidnapped a second victim not long before. Pendergast sees this as a good omen, suggesting they are getting close to the killer. However, Nora sees it as another reason to stop working the investigation. Unfortunately, Nora cannot get the story of Mary Greene out of her head. Nora is used to working with skeletons that have been dead thousands of years; therefore, she cannot emotionally relate to them. However, this time Nora can relate to Mary Greene and it could prove to be the motivation she needs to see the investigation through.



## Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 9-15

### Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 9-15 Summary

In chapter nine, an unidentified man sits in a basement room and prepares to inject some kind of serum into his arm, something he hopes will prove his experiments are working.

In chapter ten, Nora goes to visit Clara McFadden, the elderly daughter of the late Tinbury McFadden. Clara tells Nora that she once met Enoch Leng and that he resembled a walking cadaver. Clara also says that she believes Leng is responsible for her father's disappearance over seventy years ago. Clara says her father believed Leng caused the fire that destroyed Shottum's Cabinet and killed Shottum.

In chapter eleven, Pendergast uses a relaxation technique to mentally walk through New York in the year 1881 in order to mentally walk through Shottum's Cabinet and find the reason why Leng had his lab there. Pendergast finally realizes that Leng used the cabinet to capture his victims when they would walk through a display that included a tiny cul-de-sac, where only one person could go through at a time.

In chapter twelve, O'Shaughnessy goes to the Dakota, the building outside which Pendergast was attacked, to look for clues. While there, O'Shaughnessy runs into Smithback, who is doing the same thing. Smithback suggests they have a drink and compare notes. O'Shaughnessy agrees after some hesitation.

In chapter thirteen, Pendergast once again uses his relaxation technique to walk through New York in 1881, this time on the night of the fire that destroyed Shottum's Cabinet in order to discover the location of Leng's second laboratory. Pendergast walks the streets between a mission and a workhouse where Leng donated his medical expertise beginning the year before the fire. Pendergast realizes Leng would have put his lab in the recently abandoned waterworks.

In chapter fourteen, Nora visits Pendergast to tell him she will no longer help him on the case. Pendergast tells her about an apartment building that has been built on top of Leng's second lab and that he plans to rent the basement apartment in order to excavate the site. Pendergast makes a point not to ask Nora to help, causing Nora to become annoyed.

In chapter fifteen, Nora goes to the archives in response to a note from Puck telling her he found more material on Shottum. When Nora arrives, Puck is nowhere to be found, but there is a note on his desk telling her he is in the archives near the triceratops. Nora goes looking for Puck, but quickly becomes lost. Nora becomes aware of someone following her movements through the stacks. When Nora finds Puck's body impaled on



the triceratops' horns, she panics. There is clearly someone chasing her. Nora climbs a set of shelves to escape, but her pursuer follows. Nora manages to get down and run away before her pursuer catches her. Nora climbs inside a woolly mammoth Puck showed her the first time she was in the archives and hides until Puck's assistant finds her a short time later.

### **Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chapters 9-15 Analysis**

While Nora visits with the daughter of Tinbury McFadden and gets a physical description of Leng, as well as an accusation of murder, Pendergast uses a unique mental relaxation technique to figure out first why Leng would want to rent rooms in Shottum's Cabinet and second where he might have moved his lab before the fire that destroyed Shottum's. Pendergast figures out that Leng was using the cabinet to kidnap his victims since the cabinet offered the only entertainment children in the area could afford and because it had a perfect secluded location to grab his victims. Later, Pendergast identifies the area where Leng must have moved his lab, giving him a modern day location to search. All Pendergast's investigation at this point takes place in a setting unfamiliar to the reader that is both historically fascinating and visually unique.

Nora is attacked in the archives at the Museum by an unseen assailant who might also be responsible for the death of the archivist, Puck. Nora is mildly injured and frightened, but okay. However, now Nora has been identified as a target by this copycat killer, once again drawing her back into the investigation even as she has promised herself she would put distance between herself and Pendergast because of her job.



## Part 4, Many Worm: Chapters 1-9

### Part 4, Many Worm: Chapters 1-9 Summary

In chapter one, Smithback attends a press conference in which the mayor and the police commissioner plan to discuss the three murders connected to a killer apparently copying Leng's modus operandi and the attack on Nora Kelly. When the mayor makes his statement, he appears to be blaming this copycat killer on the article Smithback wrote on the Shottum letter. This causes Smithback some embarrassment, especially when other reporters begin asking questions to further incriminate Smithback. Finally, Smithback is able to ask some questions of the Museum president, Collopy, suggesting the Museum has obstructed justice by not allowing Nora Kelly to investigate the Catherine Street bones.

In chapter two, Nora and O'Shaughnessy go to the Doyers Street apartment building in Chinatown believed to have been built over Leng's second lab. Nora rents the room with cash, despite the reluctant landlord who would prefer to rent to a person of Chinese decent.

In chapter three, Nora and O'Shaughnessy inspect the apartment. Nora immediately sends O'Shaughnessy to her office at the Museum to collect the necessary tools for the excavation.

In chapter four, as a storm rages outside, Nora and O'Shaughnessy work, moving the dirt from a deep hole under the apartment's living room floor. Nora has found a few inconsequential items and dug down to another brick floor that she believes may be the floor of Leng's lab. Nora tells O'Shaughnessy they will have to expand and deepen the hole. Outside, a man in a derby hat watches the apartment building.

In chapter five, Captain Custer receives a call from the police commissioner complaining that O'Shaughnessy requested a copy of the ME's report on the bones taken from the site at Catherine Street. The commissioner wants all copies of this report returned to him immediately.

In chapter six, Pendergast has had himself released from the hospital and he sits in the living room watching the excavation. Just as Nora uncovers a human skull, the landlord's wife knocks. O'Shaughnessy tells her that has been a murder in the apartment and she should stay in her apartment until he tells her otherwise.

In chapter seven, Captain Custer arrives at the apartment building on Doyer Street, weeding through a throng of reporters on his way to the door. When Custer enters the apartment where the excavation has been done, the police commissioner pulls him aside and tells him that he has been given credit for this find because of O'Shaughnessy's involvement and that the mayor wants him assigned to the copycat, or



Surgeon, case. Custer is also instructed to give Bryce Harriman an exclusive on this discovery.

In chapter eight, O'Shaughnessy goes to Captain Custer's office where he is told that he has been placed on administrative leave pending an investigation into allegations of disobeying direct orders and freelancing with the FBI. When O'Shaughnessy tells Pendergast, he informs O'Shaughnessy that he has arranged for him to become a consulting specialist.

In chapter nine, Nora arrives at Pendergast's apartment to discuss the next step in the investigation. Pendergast has narrowed down the possible location of Leng's home to Riverside Drive between 110th Street and 139th Street. Pendergast also believes he has located the chemist where Leng bought his chemicals, a business that is still open. Pendergast asks O'Shaughnessy to visit the chemist. Finally, Pendergast states that he believes Leng may still be alive.

## **Part 4, Many Worm: Chapters 1-9 Analysis**

Nora begins working with Pendergast again because of her attack at the museum. This leads to Nora finding several skeletons under the floor of what was Leng's second lab. These bodies appear to belong to McFadden and two of his colleagues who were suspicious of Leng. This discovery takes focus away from the copycat killer, or the Surgeon as the press has dubbed him. It also creates a situation in which Captain Custer is given jurisdiction over the case even though he is not a homicide detective.

Smithback continues to fight to find a way to get back in Nora's good graces, even as the public, including the mayor, is blaming him for the copycat murders. At the same time, Pendergast is pushing the investigation harder, suggesting that Leng found a way to prolong his life and he is still killing. This is hard to believe, but was foreshadowed in earlier chapters and suggests a foe that might be very difficult for Nora, Pendergast, and O'Shaughnessy to face.





## Part 5, Horse's Tail: Chapters 1-8

### Part 5, Horse's Tail: Chapters 1-8 Summary

In chapter one, Smithback meets with O'Shaughnessy over drinks and learns that Pendergast believes Leng is still alive. Smithback agrees to investigate this possibility for O'Shaughnessy. Afterward, Smithback realizes that he could write an article on Leng to both help O'Shaughnessy and to help his flagging career.

In chapter two, O'Shaughnessy goes to New Amsterdam Chemists to talk to the current owner. This is the chemist Pendergast believes Leng frequented and he hopes their might be something in their records that will lead them to Leng's address.

O'Shaughnessy talks to the current owner, who is the grandson of the original owner, and learns there was a fire that destroyed most of the records before 1942. However, a search of a fireproof safe shows that some of the records survived and were rebound in plastic journals. O'Shaughnessy takes these in the hopes they can be useful.

In chapter three, Smithback spends a day looking through the archives at the New York Times, hoping to find an obituary for Leng. Instead, Smithback finds a dozen murders similar to Leng's previous victims that stop in 1935. Smithback theorizes that this means Leng died in 1935.

In chapter four, O'Shaughnessy has attempted to find Pendergast, but has no luck. O'Shaughnessy decides to walk past Mary Greene's house on his way home. As he walks, O'Shaughnessy becomes aware of someone following him. O'Shaughnessy believes he has given this person the slip several times, but the pursuer surprises him, wrapping a hood over his head and knocking him out with chloroform.

In chapter five, O'Shaughnessy wakes in a basement, chained to the wall. A slit in the door opens and someone tells him his ordeal will be over soon. O'Shaughnessy knows he has been kidnapped by the Surgeon. O'Shaughnessy hits his head, causing it to bleed, in order to fake a head injury. O'Shaughnessy then pretends to be unconscious so that he might take his kidnapper by surprise when he comes for him.

In chapter six, Pendergast visits a man named Wren, who works in the bowels of the New York Public Library. Pendergast asks this man to review a bequest made to the library by a wealthy patron for some deeds to homes on Riverside Drive. In exchange, Pendergast allows Wren to review a rare manuscript Pendergast owns.

In chapter seven, the Surgeon returns to his lab on Riverside Drive, entering a basement through a hidden door in a closet. In the lab, the Surgeon reviews a list of names and draws a line through O'Shaughnessy's, leaving only Nora, Pendergast, and Smithback's names.

In chapter eight, Smithback cons his way into the Old Records department at the Museum of Natural History and convinces the guard to allow him access to the files. At



first Smithback cannot find what he is looking for, but in a set of backup files he finds a file from 1870 on Leng.

## **Part 5, Horse's Tail: Chapters 1-8 Analysis**

Smithback learns that Pendergast believes Leng is still alive. This gives Smithback an idea for an article, so he begins researching Leng. Smithback's career is on the line because he has been scooped twice by his rival and because the article on Fairhaven he wanted to do proved to be a dud. Smithback also wants to get back in Nora's good graces. Smithback uses all his skills to find information on Leng, but finds it nearly impossible. Of interest to the reader, Smithback never finds an obituary for Leng, but he does find multiple murders that fit Leng's modus operandi, suggesting Leng continued to kill until 1935.

At the same time, Pendergast continues looking for Leng's home, believing this is the last clue they need to solve the riddle of Leng. O'Shaughnessy finds ledgers that might be helpful in this regard, but he is kidnapped by the Surgeon before he can get them to Pendergast. O'Shaughnessy gives the reader hope by concocting a plan to overwhelm his kidnapper. However, the Surgeon appears to be a highly educated, highly prepared killer.



# Part 6, The Old, Dark House: Chapters 1-7

## Part 6, The Old, Dark House: Chapters 1-7 Summary

In chapter one, Smithback reads through the papers he has stolen and realizes the only information worth researching is the address. Smithback decides to rent a car and check out the address to see if the house still exists. Smithback drives by the house, which looks solid but abandoned, and decides to check it out up close. Smithback parks nine blocks away, the closest he could find a parking spot, and walks back. All the windows on the first floor are covered with tin and the doors are locked tight. Smithback decides to climb up to a second floor window.

In chapter two, Custer is in his office thinking about lunch when it occurs to him he should be focusing on the archives at the Museum of Natural History since that appeared to be a target of the killer.

In chapter three, Smithback climbs to a second floor window, but cannot see anything of interest in the empty room. Smithback decides he has to get inside to learn anything. When he spots a police car coming his way, Smithback quickly breaks the window and goes inside. Smithback removes his shoes and makes his way into the hallway. The place is dusty and everything is covered in rotting sheets. However, the place does not have a neglected feel and Smithback begins to wonder if there might be a caretaker even as he begins uncovering paintings and displays. Downstairs, Smithback finds multiple collections of natural artifacts, gems, and animals. Smithback begins to feel uneasy and makes his way back upstairs to leave. However, all the doors are locked, including the one Smithback came through.

In chapter four, Custer arrives at the Museum of Natural History with a search warrant. Custer discusses this with the head of security before demanding to be taken to Collopy's office. In Collopy's office, they learn the director has left early and is unreachable. Custer insists he be taken to the archives and that a room is set aside for interrogations of all pertinent personnel.

In chapter five, Smithback decides to go downstairs to find another way out. The rooms downstairs are pitch dark; therefore, Smithback must use matches to see where he is going. Smithback finds many rooms filled with collections, all badly neglected. Smithback accidentally knocks over one specimen and spills formaldehyde, soaking his socks. Smithback retreats and enters a room on the other side of the receiving hall and finds a door leading to the outside. As Smithback attempts to open the door, a voice asks why he is leaving so soon.

In chapter six, Custer orders a search of the archives. Custer interrogates the archivist's assistant in regard to Shottum's letter and the removal of Shottum's papers from the



archive. Custer also learns that Brisbane had a confrontation with Puck the day he died and that he wanted Puck fired. Custer also is told that Brisbane did not like Nora Kelly researching Shottum on museum time. As they talk, Brisbane comes in, insisting the police stop their search.

In chapter seven, Smithback calls out to the disembodied voice before he sees a form stand with a scalpel in its hand. Smithback tries to run, but he is caught. Smithback wakes some time later in a basement room, handcuffed to the wall, much like O'Shaughnessy before him.

## **Part 6, The Old, Dark House: Chapters 1-7 Analysis**

Smithback finds Leng's address and goes directly to the house, imagining the article he will write with a picture of the house as an accompanying photograph. Smithback enters the house, hoping to see some of Leng's belongings so that he can write them up in the article as well. Smithback never takes into consideration that Leng may still be alive and living in the house, or that his copycat killer might have taken up residence there. The reader realizes this, however, when Smithback describes the outside of the house and it sounds very much like the house the unnamed man described in an earlier chapter. When Smithback is captured, the reader has no doubt. Now the question remains, is it Leng who has Smithback, or a copycat killer?

At the same time, Custer believes that the killer is associated with the museum. While this is sound thinking, Custer takes it a step too far and receives a warrant that allows him to search the museum archives without thought to care or history. This angers Brisbane, a disliked authority in the museum, but someone who cares for history all the same. This suggests to the reader that Custer might focus on the wrong man while the real killer is about to perform amateur surgery on Smithback.



## Part 7, All Those Dreadful Little Cuts: Chapters 1-7

### Part 7, All Those Dreadful Little Cuts: Chapters 1-7 Summary

In chapter one, Pendergast visits the Mount Mercy Hospital for the Criminal Insane. Pendergast's aunt, Cornelia, is imprisoned there and Pendergast wants to ask her a few questions. Most of Pendergast's questions revolve around his great-grand uncle Antoine Leng Pendergast, a relative who was fascinated with science and black magic. Antoine left New Orleans and moved to New York sometime before 1870 and was never heard from within the family again. Pendergast then asked his Aunt Cornelia what he should do with a formula that could prolong life. Aunt Cornelia warns him to destroy it or else it would destroy humanity.

In chapter two, Custer has another epiphany as he watches his men search the archives and listens to Brisbane's objections. Custer asks to speak to Brisbane in his office.

In chapter three, Smithback is still chained in the basement room when the Surgeon returns. The Surgeon injects Smithback with succinyl choline, a paralyzing agent that will allow Smithback to remain conscious but unable to move during his operation.

In chapter four, Nora is interrogated by two officers who would rather be elsewhere. The two men, who find her attractive, fight for her attention.

In chapter five, the Surgeon injects Smithback, leaving him unable to even breathe. The Surgeon then intubates Smithback and takes him into the lab where he places him on a metal table for the operation.

In chapter six, Nora is annoyed and barely listens to the questions until one of the officers begins asking about Bill Smithback. When Nora learns that Smithback stole papers from the museum and that his rental car was found parked on Riverside Drive, she becomes concerned. Nora tells the men she has to go to the restroom and then she runs from them, hiding in the dinosaur storage room until she is able to lock the men inside.

In chapter seven, Pendergast arrives home to find a letter waiting from him, written on paper that resembles Pendergast family stationary. In the letter is a piece of paper holding a piece of human nerve. At the same time, Pendergast gets a call from Nora telling him Smithback found Leng's house.



## Part 7, All Those Dreadful Little Cuts: Chapters 1-7 Analysis

Pendergast visits his aunt and suddenly his fascination with this case becomes apparent. Pendergast is related to Leng and believes that he is still alive and responsible for the recent murders. Pendergast must find Leng and stop him, not only to protect the innocent, but to protect his family name as well.

In the chaos at the museum, Custer believes that Brisbane is the killer and arranges to interview him alone to prove his case. At the same time, Nora learns during her own interrogation that Smithback is missing and his car is near Riverside Drive. Nora knows that Leng's house is thought to be on Riverside Drive, so this convinces her that Smithback has found the house and has fallen into the Surgeon's hands. Unaware of how right she is, the tension increases as the reader learns that Smithback is about to be the Surgeon's next victim if Nora and Pendergast do not come to his rescue fast enough.



## Part 8, The Search: Chapters 1-9

### Part 8, The Search: Chapters 1-9 Summary

In chapter one, Pendergast picks up Nora and rushes to Riverside Drive.

In chapter two, Custer interrogates Brisbane over his argument with Puck the day he died. Custer searches Brisbane's office as he talks. When Custer opens the closet, a derby hat falls out. Brisbane immediately insists it is not what they think.

In chapter three, Pendergast and Nora pause beside Smithback's rented car, hoping to find something with the address written on it, but cannot find anything. Pendergast has the driver drop them off and they begin searching for the house on foot.

In chapter four, Brisbane explains that the derby is part of a costume he wears to costume parties at the Museum. However, Custer does not believe him and decides to place him under arrest.

In chapter five, Pendergast recognizes an escutcheon over the door of the final house in their search area. Pendergast picks the lock on a door at the back of the house and they enter. They begin their search, using Pendergast's flashlight to find their way. When Pendergast comes across a human display, he is deeply shocked. Nora is as well, especially since the corpse closely resembles Pendergast.

In chapter six, Custer calls a press conference and asks the mayor to make the announcement.

In chapter seven, Pendergast tells Nora the corpse is Leng, who apparently had been alive until two months before. Pendergast then leads the way further into the house until they find themselves in a library. Pendergast locates a hidden elevator, in which is O'Shaughnessy trapped with a rope around his neck. Pendergast and Nora go to his rescue, only to find themselves plunging to the basement.

In chapter eight, Custer makes a production of placing Brisbane in the patrol car in front of the press.

In chapter nine, Nora wakes to find herself chained up in a small basement room. Pendergast is beside her. In a moment, Nora hears terrible screaming that she is convinced is Smithback.

### Part 8, The Search: Chapters 1-9 Analysis

As Nora and Pendergast search for Leng's house, the tension is increasing by the moment since the reader knows that Smithback is about to be murdered, and Custer pins the murders on Brisbane. Although Brisbane is an unlikeable person, the reader clearly



knows he is not the killer because the killer is at that moment in a house on Riverside Drive. It seems Custer has just made a fatal mistake, perhaps offering a little revenge for the treatment O'Shaughnessy suffered at his hands.

The reader knows that Pendergast believes Enoch Leng is his great-grand uncle, Antoine Leng Pendergast. Now that Pendergast has found Leng's corpse, the resemblance convinces the reader that he has to be a relative of Pendergast. However, the question remains how he was alive for so long, who killed him, and why.





## Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 1-7

### Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 1-7 Summary

In chapter one, Pendergast uses his mental relaxation technique to walk through the house where he grew up. Pendergast goes to the subbasement where there were tombs holding his relatives. Pendergast remembers someone telling him his great-grand uncle spent a great deal of time here after the death of his mother. This causes Pendergast to realize Leng has one last collection somewhere in a subbasement similar to that one.

In chapter two, Pendergast releases himself from his chains and goes to Nora. Before Pendergast releases Nora, he forces her to promise that she will wait ten minutes and then go to check on Smithback. If Smithback is dead, she is to get out of the house any way she can, no matter what she hears or sees. Nora agrees.

In chapter three, the Surgeon surveys the work he has done thus far on Smithback and prepares for the excision of the caudal equina. Pendergast comes into the room and begins telling him that Leng created his life-prolonging formula in order to work on another project, a more important project that he knew would take several lifetimes. Pendergast offers to take the Surgeon to see this project, but the Surgeon shoots Pendergast instead.

In chapter four, Nora counts the seconds until ten minutes have past, briefly allowing herself to become distracted by the gunshot.

In chapter five, the Surgeon realizes that Pendergast escaped through a hidden doorway as he was firing the gun. The Surgeon follows Pendergast into a subbasement filled with rooms that contain many collections, including chemicals, bugs, birds, and clothing. As the Surgeon follows Pendergast through these rooms, he finds pools of blood that tell him Pendergast was badly wounded by the gunshot.

In chapter six, Nora walks into the lab and finds Smithback on an autopsy table. Nora recognizes that Smithback is suffering from blood loss. Nora does not know what to do but to open his IV and administer fluids.

In chapter seven, Pendergast moves painfully through the subbasement. Pendergast has been shot through the side and believes the bullet hit his spleen. Pendergast is afraid he is about to lose his first case before he can figure out what Leng's ultimate project was. Pendergast tries to discover the answer through the collections, but they make little sense to him. Then Pendergast discovers Leng's secret lab. Once there, Pendergast is so distracted he does not hear the Surgeon come up behind him. Pendergast is shot through the elbow before he is able to escape once again.



## Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 1-7 Analysis

The situation for Nora and Pendergast looks bleak. Pendergast tries to figure out what Leng's ultimate collection, his ultimate project, was and has an epiphany he hopes will help get them out of this situation. Pendergast is able to free himself and Nora and confront the Surgeon. However, Pendergast is shot in the process. This increases the tension of the novel, just as Nora's discovery of a slowly dying Smithback does the same. The reader begins to wonder if either will survive this night even as both fight for life.



# Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 8-14 and Epilogue, Arcanum

## Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 8-14 and Epilogue, Arcanum Summary

In chapter eight, Nora watches as Smithback continues to die despite her best efforts.

In chapter nine, Pendergast looks around the lab and realizes it has not been touched in more than fifty years, creating another mystery.

In chapter ten, the Surgeon is close on Pendergast's heels. The Surgeon pauses to ponder the strange collections before once again focusing on Pendergast.

In chapter eleven, the Surgeon enters the lab and sees Pendergast collapsed on the floor of the next room. The Surgeon enters carefully. Pendergast asks that he kill him quick. Instead, the Surgeon sees that the room is filled with weapons. The Surgeon begins handling the weapons, finally choosing an executioner's axe to kill Pendergast with.

In chapter twelve, Nora sits with Smithback and realizes he is beginning to recover. Nora then begins to focus on escape. Nora searches the basement for a way out, but cannot find one. Nora decides to follow Pendergast and the Surgeon down into the subbasement, hoping to find Pendergast alive and able to help search out an escape route. As Nora enters the lab, a creature comes out of the dark room next door. Nora focuses her light on it and screams.

In chapter thirteen, Custer attends the press conference where the mayor announces Brisbane is the Surgeon and Collopy apologizes to the public for the museum's connection to the killer.

In chapter fourteen, Nora stares at the creature and realizes he was once human. Nora goes into the room where Pendergast is lying and helps him up. Pendergast tells her that the creature is Anthony Fairhaven, the Surgeon. Fairhaven touched weapons that were laced with a variety of poisons. Pendergast has figured out that Leng wanted to destroy the human race through poison and the weapons were an experiment in the distribution of the poison. Pendergast repairs his wound and checks Smithback before directing Nora to a secret passage to the river. Pendergast instructs Nora to get help from his chauffeur. Pendergast then tells Nora that no one can learn of this house, of Leng's experiments, or the identity of the Surgeon.

In the epilogue, Nora and Smithback return to Leng's house to meet Pendergast six weeks after their ordeal. Pendergast tells them how Fairhaven learned of Leng through his research at the archives in the museum. Fairhaven tracked Leng to this house and



tortured him for his formula for a long life. Leng never told it to Fairhaven. Fairhaven then bought the land where Shottum's once stood in order to find materials related to the formula. With these, he began killing in order to recreate Leng's experiments. Pendergast also tells them that Leng wanted to prolong his life in order to find a way to exterminate the human race. However, Leng stopped his work in 1954 when the first thermonuclear bomb was tested. Leng thought with bombs like that, it would only be a matter of time before the human race exterminated itself. Leng did perfect his formula to prolong life and Pendergast has found it. Pendergast takes Nora and Smithback to the grave of Mary Greene, where he burns and buries the formula.

## **Part 9, In the Dark: Chapters 8-14 and Epilogue, Arcanum Analysis**

Nora knows that Smithback needs a doctor, adding to the tension of the novel, so she goes in search of Pendergast. Nora runs into a monster, a creature she cannot recognize as human, and is told it is the Surgeon, poisoned by various poisons created by Leng. This begins to answer the questions as to what Leng was up to in his secret lab.

Leng wanted to save humanity by destroying humans. It is ironic that this drove Leng through his prolonged life. However, the deeper irony is that Leng could have destroyed humanity by releasing his prolonged life formula and allowed people to fight over it. Fairhaven, the Surgeon, only wanted to prolong his life so that he would never have to die the way his brother did. However, in his insanity, Fairhaven took pleasure in killing people to meet his goal, even though it turns out the formula was in the house and no longer required human donors to create. This too is a touch of irony. Finally, Pendergast tells this story to Smithback but makes it so that Smithback can never write about it, the one article that most like would have resulted in his much sought after Pulitzer.



# Characters

## Special Agent Pendergast

Special Agent Pendergast is an FBI agent out of New Orleans. No one knows much about Pendergast, except that he seems to be allowed a great deal of leeway when it comes to investigating crimes. Pendergast appears to have a great deal of money that is illustrated by his lush apartment in the famous Dakota building and a Rolls Royce in which he has driven all over New York City. Pendergast has been featured in a previous Preston-Child book in which he worked with Bill Smithback in tracking a killer at work in the Museum of Natural History in New York City.

In this novel, Pendergast has become interested in the remains of thirty-six bodies found in an ancient coal passage under what was once an old tenement building in New York City. These people were all murdered in the same way, and with the removal of the lower portion of their spinal columns. Pendergast enlists the help of Nora Kelly to investigate these bones, but is quickly chased away from the sight by the police because it is not considered an archeological site. Pendergast continues to investigate these crimes, however, using research through the library and artifacts in the museum to propel the investigation. In the process, Pendergast is attacked by a copy-cat killer who has begun murdering people in the same manner as the original killer in the 1870s. In fact, Pendergast comes to believe that the killer, who was killing to find a way to prolong life, was successful and that he still lives.

The reader soon learns the motivation Pendergast has in pursuing this case. It turns out that Leng, the killer who left his victims in the basement of Shottum's Cabinet, is Pendergast's great-grand uncle, Antoine Leng Pendergast. Pendergast feels a personal need to clear his family name and stop Leng's terrible reign of terror. In the end, Pendergast discovers the secret to Leng's work and destroys it, stopping Leng in his last endeavor to end humanity.

## Nora Kelly

Nora Kelly is an archeologist whose specializes in the Anazazi Indian people. In a previous Preston-Child book, Nora discovered a sight that her father believed was the mythical city of gold known as Quivira. Since this discovery, Nora has had to deal with the fallout from various law enforcement agencies and some professional fall out. Nora has quit her job in Santa Fe, New Mexico, taking a job at the Museum of Natural History in order to be close to her boyfriend and to further her research into Quivira. However, Nora's tenure at this museum is fragile and she is struggling with multiple budget cuts.

Pendergast comes to Nora with a tiny skull and asks her to help him with a site. Nora investigates the charnel in the short time she is allowed and becomes convinced that a piece of paper attached to a young woman's dress is of significance. Nora steals the



dress and become engrossed in the case, allowing Pendergast to encourage her further investigation. However, when Bill Smithback writes a story about the case for the paper, Nora is penalized by her boss and told to stay away from the investigation.

When Nora goes to the archives to review some materials the caretaker has found for her, Nora finds the caretaker dead and the killer after her. When Nora escapes this ordeal, she becomes determined to help Pendergast to solve the case. Nora excavates the basement of a building believed to have belonged to the murderer and uncovers the skeletons of three rivals of the killer. This eventually leads Nora and Pendergast to the home of the killer, Leng, where she survives an ordeal that should have ended in her death.

## **William Smithback Jr.**

William Smithback Jr. is a writer with the New York Times who has several non-fiction books to his credit. Bill is always looking for the next story that will get him the Pulitzer, at times putting his personal relationships at risk in his ambition. Bill willingly helps Nora steal the dress belonging to one of the murder victims from Catherine Street, interested in the story that is unfolding in the investigation. Later, when Nora seems to be in a difficult position regarding the investigation, Bill writes an article about it for his newspaper in the hopes that it will convince Nora's boss what an important story this is and free her to continue working on it. The story backfires, however, causing Nora to nearly lose her job and stop talking to Bill. Bill is also accused of inspiring the copycat killer with his story.

Bill continues to work on the story, trying to find out information of the owner of the construction company that owns the land where the bodies were found and to research the man accused of the killings. This leads Bill to the killer's house that he owned in the 1870s, and leads him to danger. The house is the site of the killer's laboratory, abandoned in 1954. However, the house has been taken over by the copycat killer where he attempts to continue Leng's experiments in order to prolong his own life. Bill survives the killer's surgery meant to extract from him the necessary ingredients for the arcanum and is rescued by Nora and Pendergast.

## **Sergeant Patrick Murphy O'Shaughnessy**

Sergeant Patrick Murphy O'Shaughnessy is a police officer with the NYPD. Five years prior to the beginning of the novel, O'Shaughnessy took pity on a prostitute and released her from custody to protect her from her pimp. O'Shaughnessy also took two hundred dollars from the girl in order to make it appear that it was a bribe. This was all caught on tape, however, causing O'Shaughnessy to be investigated for taking a bribe. Although the charges were eventually dropped, O'Shaughnessy's career has dead ended and no one will allow him to forget his mistake.

O'Shaughnessy is assigned to be Pendergast's NYPD liaison officer. At first O'Shaughnessy dislikes Pendergast and believes the assignment to be another



punishment for his past actions. However, O'Shaughnessy is quickly drawn to the case and its victims. O'Shaughnessy willingly helps Pendergast and Kelly investigate Leng and is present when Nora unearths the skeletons of Leng's enemies. Later, O'Shaughnessy gets evidence of false names Leng used to purchase chemicals, but he is kidnapped and killed by the copycat killer before he can get them to Pendergast.

## **Enoch Leng or Antoine Leng Pendergast**

Enoch Leng was a scientist in the 1870s who had a laboratory above the Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. During the time that Leng had this lab in Shottum's, he would use it to kidnap young street children and use them in his experiments to find a way to prolong his life. Eventually Shottum became aware of these murders and was killed when Leng caused a fire that burned down the Cabinet. Later, in the early 2000s, while excavating a site for a glass apartment building, a construction crew broke through to the basement room where Leng hid his victims. In an article about the site, Bill Smithback describes the killings in details, spanning what the press believes is a copycat killer dubbed the Surgeon.

Enoch Leng is later revealed to be Antoine Leng Pendergast, the great-grand uncle of Special Agent Pendergast. Leng has always been fascinated with science and magic, and had a deep devotion to his mother who died a young woman from an addiction to his father's magic elixir, the source of the Pendergast family's grand fortune. This leads Leng to his ultimate project, the destruction of all humans in an attempt to save them from their own cruelty. However, when technology develops to a point where the thermonuclear bomb is created, Leng decides that humans will annihilate themselves before he can, so he stops.

## **Mary Greene**

Mary Greene is the only identified victim of Leng's from his laboratory in Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. Mary was a prostitute who sold her body in order to care for her two younger siblings after the death of their parents. Mary was arrested and placed in a workhouse near Shottum's Cabinet. It is here that Mary met her killer. During her time in captivity, Nora Kelly believes she wrote her name and address on a piece of paper and sewed it into a patch on her dress in order to prevent dying nameless. It is Mary who inspires Nora to continue investigating these murders.

## **Reinhart Puck**

Reinhart Puck is the archivist at the Museum of Natural History. Reinhart Puck has worked for the museum for many years and has witnessed the once popular archives become neglected and ignored. When Nora goes to the archives to investigate Shottum's Cabinet, Puck is full of information on the subject and tells Nora that someone else was also interested in Shottum, opening a new line of investigation down





the road when she recalls his offhand remark. Puck is murdered in the archives, mutilated like the Surgeon's victims and left hanging from the tusks of a triceratops.

## John Cannaday Shottum

John Cannaday Shottum was a science buff in the 1870-1880s. Shottum bought a cabinet of curiosities from a man who had passed away and created a small museum of his own out of the items. Shottum was a member of the Lyceum and would often contact his friends through that organization for help identifying his newest acquisitions. In the early 1870s, Shottum was in need of a curator, so he hired Leng in exchange for use of his third floor. In 1881, Shottum became suspicious that Leng was doing something dangerous or illegal in his third floor lab. Shottum investigated the lab and found nothing. However, in the basement, Shottum discovered that Leng was doing experiments on living humans. Before Shottum could do anything, however, Leng killed him and burned down the cabinet.

## Tinbury McFadden

Tinbury McFadden was an early curator of the Museum of Natural History. Tinbury was not a scientist, but a science buff who liked to collect historical artifacts. Tinbury was a member of the Lyceum and would often advise other members on their collections. Tinbury was also in charge of buying out cabinets of curiosity as the museum ran them out of business. As part of his job, Tinbury was acquainted with Shottum and would often acquire pieces of his collection in payment for his help in identifying his acquisitions. One of these was a box made of an elephant's foot. It is inside this box that Nora and Pendergast found the letter accusing Leng of the murders in Shottum's Cabinet. Later, Nora learns that McFadden disappeared and his daughter suspected Leng of his death. This helps Nora to identify a skeleton as McFadden in the basement of a building that stands over what was once Leng's laboratory.

## Anthony Fairhaven

Anthony Fairhaven is the president of The Moegen-Fairhaven Group, a real estate development company. Fairhaven becomes fascinated with Leng when he comes across him in the Museum of Natural History archives because of his desire to find a way to prolong life. Fairhaven has feared death since he was a small child, forced to watch his older brother die of progeria, a disease that causes the body to age at an accelerated rate. Fairhaven uses materials from the museum to track Leng down and force him to reveal his formula. Unfortunately, Leng dies before he reveals the formula, so Fairhaven buys the land where Shottum's once stood in order to retrieve the artifacts from Leng's first laboratory. Here Fairhaven finds Leng's old research journals and the skeletons of his victims, giving him the information he needs to conduct similar experiments and recreate the arcanum. Through this research, Fairhaven kills several people by removing their caudus equina, becoming the Surgeon.





## Objects/Places

### Elephant Foot Box

Among McFadden's collection in the archives is a box made from an elephant's foot. Inside is a letter from J.C. Shottum accusing Enoch Leng of murder in the name of science.

### J.C. Shottum's Letter

Nora gives a letter written by Shottum accusing Leng of murder to Smithback, who uses it to write an article for the New York Times.

### Cabinets of Curiosities

Cabinets of curiosities began as cabinets filled by rich men with natural artifacts, displayed for the pleasure of family and friends. These cabinets expanded, taking up whole rooms and buildings, becoming some of the first museums of natural history. However, the artifacts were meant to shock and entertaining; therefore, many of them were fakes.

### Arcanum

Leng's arcanum, a long sought after secret, is his formula for prolonging life.

### Old Surgeon's Tools

The copycat killer, the Surgeon, uses old surgeon's tools once belonging to Leng in order to kill his victims.

### Ledgers

O'Shaughnessy finds two ledgers in an old chemist shop that could hold the identity under which Leng bought chemicals in the early part of the twentieth century.

### Cauda Equina

The cauda equina is a bundle of nerves at the bottom of the spinal cord that Leng and the copycat extracted from each of their victims in order to find a way to prolong human life.



## **Smithback's Article**

Smithback writes an article based on the Shottum letter that outlines how Leng killed his victims. This article is accused of outlining the procedure for use by a copycat killer.

## **The Moegen-Fairhaven Group**

The Moegen-Fairhaven Group is a real estate development group headed by Anthony Fairhaven. This group owns the land on which Shottum's Cabinet once stood and uses their influence to have the site declared a crime scene, not an archeological site.

## **Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities**

Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities is a small museum that houses real and fake artifacts. Some of these artifacts are intended to teach science, while some are designed to frighten and entertain museum visitors. Under the site where this building stood, construction workers discover the skeletons of over thirty people.

## **Leng's House**

Leng has a house on Riverside Drive that Smithback discovers the location of by stealing papers from his personnel file at the Museum of Natural History.

## **Museum of Natural History**

The Museum of Natural History is a museum in New York City that opened in the 1860s. This museum was the setting of a previous Preston-Child book in which several murders took place. This is also where Nora Kelly works in this novel.

## **New York City Library**

Pendergast has a friend in the New York City library who helps him find rare research materials to help his investigations.

## **Construction Site on Catherine Street**

Construction is being done on a corner of Catherine Street to build a glass apartment tower. During construction, the remains of more than thirty people are discovered.



# Themes

## Murder to Further Science

Enoch Leng killed young, poor people so that he might experiment with their bodies and find ways to prolong his own life. Leng, a trained scientist, believed it was in the name of science that he was killing these innocents. When a construction crew breaks through the ground on the sight of Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities, they discover the skeletons of thirty-six of Leng's victims. Each one shows damage to the bottom section of the spinal cord where the cauda equina is located. This bundle of nerves is the largest section of nerves in the human body and Leng hoped that they would provide him with the important element of his life prolonging serum.

Nora Kelly becomes involved in this investigation through Special Agent Pendergast with the FBI. As they investigate, Nora finds a note sewn into the dress of one victim that gives her name and address, as though the young girl did not want to die anonymous. This causes Nora to get involved in the investigation, eventually finding more victims attributed to Leng and his experiments. During this time, Smithback has written an article about the murders that has spurred a copycat killer who appears to be continuing Leng's work.

However, Leng's great-grand nephew knows that prolonging his life is just a tool for Leng. Leng has a greater project in mind, and for this reason he has prolonged his life because he knows it will take two or more lifetimes to complete his more important project. This project, Pendergast finally discovers, is a method by which he could annihilate the entire human race to save them from themselves. To do this, Leng has created many different poisons and searched for methods of transmission. However, in 1954, the first thermonuclear bomb is detonated and Leng decides humanity will annihilate themselves; therefore, he stops his research. However, in the course of his experiments, Leng has been forced to kill many people in his experiments. After him, the Surgeon also kills many for the sake of research. For this reason, murder to further science is a theme of the novel.

## Trust

Nora Kelly and Bill Smithback met while on an expedition into Utah that eventually resulted in the discovery of a city Nora's father thought was the mythic Quivira. When Nora first laid eyes on Bill, she thought he was arrogant and untrustworthy. This impression lasted through the first half of the expedition. However, when Nora and Bill find themselves thrown together on several occasions and placed in a situation that could have meant both their deaths, Nora finds herself trusting him. Now, Nora and Bill are lovers living in New York.



Nora is aware that Bill is highly ambitious and that he wants desperately to win the Pulitzer. However, Nora finds herself giving Bill information, unaware that he wants to use to write an article for the newspaper. Bill writes this article with the misguided idea that it will help Nora. Instead, the article causes Nora to nearly lose her job, a job that is highly important to her. Nora loses all trust in Bill and refuses to speak to him for a large part of time.

At the same time, Nora finds herself reliant on Special Agent Pendergast for information. Nora and Pendergast are not friends, but they come to rely on one another for information in the investigation into Leng. When Nora is nearly killed by the copycat killer, she turns to Pendergast, determined to complete the investigation into Leng in the hopes of identifying this new killer. Later, Nora and Pendergast are taken captive by the Surgeon, forced to rely on one another for survival. If not for trust, one or both might have perished, making trust an important theme to the novel.

## **Greed**

The Moegen-Fairhaven Group is a real estate development company that is building a large apartment tower on the site of what was once Shottum's Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. This tower must have a deep foundation; therefore, the construction workers dig deep to provide for this. In the process, the construction workers discover an old basement that once was used as a coal storage area for Shottum's building. Inside there are multiple alcoves that hide three bodies each, coming to a total of thirty-six bodies.

There is a law in New York that a construction site must report and halt production when a site of interest to archeologists is found. On this occasion, however, Anthony Fairhaven pulls strings to have the site declared an ancient crime scene rather than an archeological site. The reason for this is that Anthony Fairhaven is a very rich man who supports the current mayor and he does not want to lose the time and money it would take for archeologists to survey the site. Therefore, the site is emptied and destroyed out of greed, making greed a theme of the novel.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. This point of view moves from character to character, allowing multiple characters to tell the story through their own thoughts, emotions, and opinions. This includes a narrator who is not clearly identified by the narration except as the copycat killer known as the Surgeon. This point of view allows for the reader to get information from various narrators and to see actions within the plot that might not be seen or known by other characters in the novel.

The point of view of this novel allows a very broad view of the plot from multiple view points. The narrators differ from chapter to chapter, giving the reader insight on events within the plot that might not be known or seen by other characters. This includes the anonymous narration of the copycat killer known as the Surgeon, who is not given a proper name until the end of the novel. By using this type of narration, the authors allow the reader to see all aspects of the plot from multiple view points and opinions without being tied down to one reader who might not be aware of the actions of other characters within the plot.

## Setting

The novel is set in New York City, both in modern times and the late nineteenth century. The setting of this novel allows the reader a unique view of a city that has been featured in multiple books, both fiction and non-fiction, that includes an antique view at life as it was over a hundred years ago, just years after the Civil War that nearly tore this country apart. The setting gives both a modern feel to the novel as well as an historical view, that perhaps reveals a part of this well known city that many Americans are not aware of.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot because the plot takes place both in modern times and in the past. New York City is a busy place with a rich history that allows for the types of behaviors that take place in this novel. Leng's behavior might have been noticed in a small town in the late nineteenth century; therefore, it is important that the setting of his crimes be a large city like New York City. The modern city, also, has a connection to several of the characters in the novel, including Nora Kelly and Bill Smithback, that makes it the perfect location for their current adventure. Therefore, the setting is ideal for this plot.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is both formal and informal. There are characters in this novel who have little education outside of high school; therefore, they think and speak in a language that is simple and often filled with certain types of slang. On the other hand,



there are characters in this novel who are highly educated and well read. These characters think and speak in a more formal language that is often punctuated with foreign phrases and quotes from literary works that might not be readily identified by readers. These people also use words that are specific to their trained field, such as Nora's use of archeological phrases.

The language of this novel is a combination of formal and informal language that makes the novel fascinating for readers of all ages. The language is authentic to the characters who populate the novel and gives the novel as well as its dialogue a sense of reality that is not often found in modern novels. The language is easy to understand, even the technical and foreign phrases, because of the context in which they often appear. Therefore, the language of this novel is appropriate to the novel and highly entertaining to the reader.

## Structure

The novel is divided into multiple parts with unique names, each of which has its own set of chapters. Each set of chapters begins with one, creating multiple chapters with the same number, separated only by the part in which they appear. The novel is written in both exposition and dialogue, showing the reader the plot rather than telling the reader about the plot. The novel is told in a linear fashion. However, there are many sections in which the reader is taken back to the late nineteenth century in order to explore the world of Enoch Leng and the victims he took in the name of science.

The novel contains one main plot and multiple subplots. The main plot centers around the discovery of thirty-six skeletons in the basement of what was once the Shottum Cabinet of Natural Productions and Curiosities. These skeletons appear to be murder victims, leading Nora Kelly and Special Agent Pendergast on an investigation into the identity of the murdered and his modern day copycat. Some of the subplots revolve around Nora and her boyfriend, Bill Smithback, while others center on the police involved in the case and their agendas. The subplots all come to a satisfying conclusion about the same time as the main plot.



## Quotes

"Skulls, bones. Piled up. Dozens of them." Part 1, Boneyard: Chap. 1, p. 4

"He had his hand extended. Nestled within it was a small, brown skull." Part 1, Boneyard: Chap. 2, p. 11

"Parts of it were stained and faded, but it read unmistakably: i am Mary Green agt 19 years No. 16 watter street." Part 1, Boneyard: Chap. 7, p. 39

"The Museum's vast Central Archives lay deep in the basement, reachable only through several sets of elevators, winding corridors, stairs, and passageways." Part 2, Men of Science: Chap. 1, p. 49

"His smile widened as he saw a look of irritation cloud the FBI agent's face for no more than an instant. He had finally gotten to him." Part 2, Men of Science: Chap. 3, p. 67

"There would be dirt, and he would find it. Yes, there would be dirt. By God, there would be dirt." Part 3, The Appointed Time: Chap. 3, p. 137

"There was an undertone of fear. More than fear, actually: closer to ill-suppressed hysteria." Part 4, Many Worm: Chap. 1, p. 205

"We've got a skull here." Part 4, Many Worm: Chap. 6, p. 228

"Museum wags liked to speculate that, were the police to remove the bones for examination, half of the city's missing persons cases still on the books would be solved immediately." Part 5, Horse's Tail: Chap. 1, p. 249

"He breathed in the air and thought once again what a dazzling reporter he was." Part 6, The Old, Dark House, p. 291

"The Surgeon could hardly believe his eyes. Where Pendergast should have been lying dead in a pool of blood, there was nothing. The man had vanished." Part 9, In the Dark: Chap. 5, p. 410

"Can't you see? This formula would have destroyed the world. Leng already had the answer to his problem right in his hand. Had he released this into the world, it would have been the end. He only lacked the objectivity to see it." Epilogue, Arcanum, p. 466



## Topics for Discussion

What is found under the ground of an old tenement building on Catherine Street? Why did the construction workers dig that deep? Why was this structure left behind after the building above it burned to the ground and was later rebuilt? What did this structure once house? What was found in the structure? Who used this material for personal purposes?

Who is Nora Kelly? Where does she work? What does she want more money from her bosses for? Why does Nora not get what she wants? Why does Nora begin working with Special Agent Pendergast? Why does Nora not want to work with Pendergast at first? What does Nora find that draws her into Pendergast's investigation? How does this investigation lead Nora to be held captive? By whom? For what purpose?

Who is Bill Smithback? What is his occupation? How does Bill use his occupation to offend his girlfriend? Why does Nora stop speaking to Bill? What does Bill attempt to do to make up with Nora? Where does this action lead Bill? Where does Bill go? Why is Bill taken captive? What does Bill's captor want to do with him? How does Bill survive this episode? What might have happened if Bill were not rescued? For what reason?

Who is Special Agent Pendergast? Why is Pendergast interested in a hundred and thirty year old murder case? What connection does this case have with Pendergast's family? How does Pendergast know this? Why does Pendergast want to hide his family's connection to this case? What does Pendergast believe his family member has done? For what reason? How does Pendergast figure out his relative's ultimate goal? What does he do about it?

Who is Anthony Fairhaven? What work does Fairhaven do? For what reason? Why does Fairhaven begin building an apartment tower on Catherine Street? What is Fairhaven's ultimate goal? What is his motivation? How does Fairhaven go about his goal? Why does Fairhaven begin targeting Nora Kelly and her companions? What do they know that Fairhaven wants kept secret?

What is a cabinet of curiosities? Who began these collections? For what purpose? What eventually happened to many of these collections? Why? Were all these collections authentic? Explain. How are these cabinets of curiosity connected to the Leng murders? Was Leng a collector? What did he collect? Why?

Discuss Antoine Leng Pendergast. Why did Pendergast seek to prolong his life? What reason did Leng have to live a long life? What was Leng's background? What gave him the education and the knowledge to pursue his goal? Was Leng insane? Why would a sane person want to live a long life, to learn how to annihilate the entire human race? Why did Leng stop his experiments?