

# **The Distant Land of My Father Study Guide**

**The Distant Land of My Father by Bo Caldwell**

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# Plot Summary

Anna's father had lived as a Shanghai millionaire in the 1930s. They had led the appropriate life style with chauffeurs, polo games, and night clubs. Her mother had died in 1955 and her father dies in 1961 in Los Angeles. While Anna is sorting through his belongings, she finds a letter on a box addressed to her. He explains that he has no estate to leave her, just his journals of his life in Shanghai. He had never talked to her about it but he wants her to know what is in the journals. Anna spends several months reading through the materials, as well as other books on Shanghai. This is *The Distant Land of My Father* by Bo Caldwell.

Anna is born in Shanghai to wealthy parents who live a storybook life. Although her parents are Americans, her father, Joseph had been born and raised in China since his parents had served as missionaries there . He loves Shanghai and shares that love with his daughter by teaching her about the city. Even though the Schoenes lead a charmed life, Shanghai is a dangerous place and Joseph's wife, Genevieve, does not share his love of Shanghai. She views it as a temporary residence.

The wealthy are the target of kidnappers in Shanghai. It is a very common practice and it happens to Joseph. He is released when the ransom is paid but the kidnappers want him to collaborate with the Japanese. When war begins with the Japanese, they eventually take control of Shanghai. Many foreigners leave, but Joseph refuses. When his wife and daughter leave for California, he says he will follow, but he doesn't. There are too many money making opportunities. He is eventually arrested and imprisoned.

When Joseph is released, he joins his family in California but he isn't happy. He takes a job in Chungking and when the war ends, he returns to Shanghai. He re-establishes himself in business and becomes wealthy again. When his wife and daughter arrive, he sends them back to California after two months. Shanghai is dangerous again because of the civil war between the Nationalist Chinese of Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists of Mao.

After the Communists take over, Joseph again remains in Shanghai and is eventually imprisoned. He is held by the Communists for four years before being released. When he tries to establish himself in Hong Kong, he is expelled. He eventually settles near Santa Barbara, California. By this time, Genevieve's divorce is complete, she is dying of leukemia and Anna is married.

Anna and Joseph meet again at Genevieve's funeral and the long process of reconciliation begins. He eventually becomes a beloved member of her family. After his death, she learns of his life from his journals.

The reader will thoroughly enjoy this book and the journey that the main characters make. The book is fast reading and well worth the reader's time.



# Prologue, Dust, Shanghai, pgs. 1-24

## Prologue, Dust, Shanghai, pgs. 1-24 Summary and Analysis

Anna's father had been a Shanghai millionaire in the 1930s. They had lived the appropriate life style with chauffeurs, polo games, and night clubs. Her mother died in 1955 and her father dies in 1961 in Los Angeles. While Anna is sorting through his belongings, she finds a letter on a box addressed to her. He explains that he has no estate to leave her, just his journals of his life in Shanghai. He had never talked to her about it but he wants her to know what is in the journals. Anna spends several months reading through the materials, as well as other books on Shanghai. This is *The Distant Land of My Father* by Bo Caldwell.

In *Dust*, Anna's family lives in a villa on Jungjoa Road in the western suburbs of Shanghai in June 1937. Anna is six years of age. Her father, Joseph Schoene, loves Shanghai. Her mother, Genevieve, regards the city as a temporary home. Her parents go out most evenings.

In Shanghai, Anna's father teaches her about Shanghai. He wants her to love the city as he does. Though wealthy, her family has only two live-in servants. Anna's parents had met while both were students at Vanderbilt University. After graduation, they go to Shanghai where he works in insurance, and then begins to import cars. He makes a good living and doesn't want to return to the United States.

Anna and her mother usually spend the hot and humid month of July at Tsiantao, an island on Kiaocho Bay but not in the summer of 1937. On Saturday mornings, Joseph takes Anna to the Foreign Correspondents Club. Joseph quizzes her about her knowledge of Shanghai and the various buildings. Then they walk through the Public Gardens and the Bund to Joseph's office. Joseph has Anna draw maps of China while he works.

Joseph's parents were missionaries in Shantung province. He was born in China and spent his early years there until he attended Vanderbilt University, where he met his wife, Genevieve. Joseph loves China and Shanghai and tries to instill his love of Shanghai in his young daughter, Anna. He wants her to know and love Shanghai and China as he does and he begins to patiently teach her the names of buildings and streets from her earliest days. Anna is curious and wants to learn, but most of all, she wants to please her father.



# Shanghai, Acrobats and Vinegar, pgs. 25-51

## Shanghai, Acrobats and Vinegar, pgs. 25-51 Summary and Analysis

Anna, who can't read Chinese, asks her father to explain the words on the world globe to her. He explains the designations on the globe to her. He identifies Japan which is trying to take over China. He tells her that no matter what Japan does, they will be safe in the International Settlement.

Anna tires of drawing maps and begins to explore the contents of the closet. She finds a cache of Japanese yen. He tells her that he uses the money for arbitrage which is part of his business. He gives her coins in exchange for the yen note she is holding and tells her that she can shop on the way home. Joseph places the money belt in the safe. While he is doing this, she finds another yen note on the floor and hides it in her shoe.

Joseph takes her to lunch at Jimmy's, his favorite eating place. They are joined by Will Marsh, a family friend. The men talk about the possibility of leaving Shanghai but Joseph says he won't leave. There have already been several border incidents with the Japanese. He tells Will that the war won't concern them and that they will be safe in the International Settlement. Joseph says he can't make money by leaving Shanghai.

Joseph and Anna walk down Nanking Road, the big shopping area. They are to meet Mei Wah, their servant and chauffeur, in front of the Park Hotel. When they arrive, two men in a black sedan grab Joseph and shove him in the car, then drive away. Mei Wah arrives and picks up Anna.

In *Acrobats and Vinegar*, Mei Wah speeds home and carries Anna into the house. He and Chu Shih, the cook, speak in Chinese, then Mei Wah leaves. Chu Shih says that Hsiao T'or took her father. He gives her some tea and she falls asleep.

At the age of six, Anna knows enough about kidnapping to know that they have to wait. Kidnappings are a part of life in Shanghai and the reason why Anna is never allowed out alone. The wealthy are common targets. Most employ bodyguards for protection.

Genevieve arrives home that night and tells Anna that Will Marsh is making arrangements to pay the kidnappers. Joseph should be home in a few days. When Genevieve goes to change clothes, Anna hides the yen note. Genevieve shows her a post card of Los Angeles and says she wants to take Anna there to visit.

Will Marsh and Joseph talk about the coming war between the Japanese and Chinese. Will says that they should leave Shanghai but Joseph says he won't. His businesses

and livelihood are in Shanghai and he feels that the war won't involve them. They will be safe in the International Settlement.

After Joseph's kidnapping, Genevieve thinks of the dangers of Shanghai and talks about taking Anna to Los Angeles. She has to be concerned for her and her daughter's safety.



# The Battle of Shanghai, The Wounded, pgs. 52-78

## The Battle of Shanghai, The Wounded, pgs. 52-78 Summary and Analysis

The next morning, Mei Wah drives Genevieve and Anna to mass at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius where Anna prays for her father's safety. They return home to wait. Genevieve and Will Marsh have paid the ransom. A week later Will receives a calls saying that Joseph will be released. When Joseph arrives home, he looks terrible.

Joseph says he had been kidnapped by Japanese who want him to be a collaborator. The situation between Japan and China is worsening and Japan is looking for support among the businessmen and try to do it by force. That is the only thing Joseph ever says about his kidnapping.

In the next few weeks there are many discussions about the war. Peking falls on July 28, 1937, and the Japanese begin to move southward to Nanking. War is declared on August 7. Martial law is declared in the International Settlement. After the death of two Japanese at Hungjao airfield, Japanese warships arrive. Chinese military divisions arrive the next day and demand the withdrawal of Japanese troops.

When Genevieve and Anna go shopping, they notice many refugees in the city. Since a typhoon is being signaled, Genevieve tells Mei Wah to take them home. When they arrive, Joseph shows them the fighting at Chapei from their veranda. They listen to the news on the radio.

The family goes to attend a wedding and finds Shanghai packed with refugees and many buildings are destroyed. They see bodies and can hear many explosions. The area around the Cercle Sportif, where the wedding is, remains untouched. The people there only know of a rumor that there is trouble around the Bund and after a brief stay, the Schoenes leave.

At home, Joseph learns that the bombings had been an accident. The Chinese were trying to bomb the Japanese ships and accidentally hit the Bund. That night, when her father comes to her room, Anna gives him the yen. He tells her that what has happened has nothing to do with her and that her mother wants them to move back to Los Angeles.

In The Wounded, the Battle of Shanghai continues. They are surrounded with the sounds of shooting and bombings. Joseph had predicted that the fighting would only last a week and he felt that it didn't concern them. He likes watching the battles from the rooftops with the journalists. The battle continues and Joseph constantly complains. Many of their friends have left Shanghai.



That September, Anna begins school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart. Her mother insists on a Catholic school. The war intensifies and meat becomes scarce.

The situation is tense as the war begins. Genevieve wants the family to go to Los Angeles. Joseph is undecided. His business and livelihood are in Shanghai but after the kidnapping, he should see the dangers of staying in Shanghai, especially since the Japanese are trying to force him into the role of collaboration. Even though many of their friends leave Shanghai, the Schoenes do not and are there when the Japanese take over the city in November.





# After the Fall, pgs. 79-112

## After the Fall, pgs. 79-112 Summary and Analysis

After the Japanese takeover of Shanghai, life returns to normal. Many people who have fled the city now return. The only difference is a ten o'clock curfew. Businesses and trade flourish. Joseph is very excited about the business opportunities and begins to deal in raw materials.

Anna thinks the city is very different with Japanese sentries all over the place. Genevieve still wants to leave Shanghai but Joseph does not.

At this time, Joseph becomes involved in the smuggling business including yen trading. He is often away from home and he does a lot of shopping. He sometimes takes Anna on his outings even though Genevieve objects. They drive through the Japanese sector with her father pointing out the sights. They arrive at the Hsin Hung Chong where Joseph must photograph some equipment for an insurance claim.

While they are photographing the equipment, five gendarmes arrive and question Joseph. They dump out the contents of his briefcase and then leave. Back in the car, Joseph tells Anna that the gendarmes had been looking for yen, which are hidden in his money belt.

On the way home, they walk along the Bund to Liu and Company. This is what Anna calls the paper store and it is one of her favorite places. Anna is allowed to select three items. When they arrive at the bridge where they are supposed to meet Mei Wah, they find the Japanese sentry has Chu Shih and another man and is beating them. Joseph intervenes. They take Chu Shih in their car with them.

Anna is sick with fever that night and her father spends the night in a chair next to her bed. In the morning, he apologizes for taking her out the day before.

The fall of Nanking occurs in December. One night, Will Marsh and Dr. McCain come to dinner. Anna asks to be excused after the meal saying she is tired. She searches her parents' room to see if they have purchased the stilts she wants for her birthday. In the process, she finds some photos of the war atrocities.

Joseph refuses to believe that the situation in Shanghai is different after the Japanese takeover. He is involved in several different businesses including insurance, raw materials and smuggling. He doesn't hesitate to go into the Japanese sector taking Anna with him, in spite of her mother's objections. She is just a child and is frightened by some of the talk and activities. Even though her parents try not to talk in front of her, she is learning about war and atrocities.



# Stilts, The City of Angels, pgs. 103-128

## Stilts, The City of Angels, pgs. 103-128 Summary and Analysis

As the danger in Shanghai intensifies, Genevieve talks more about returning to Los Angeles and it seems to be a question of when, not if they will go. She finally purchases tickets for the trip and finds that Joseph needs time to close down his businesses. Genevieve has never been comfortable in Shanghai and has always viewed it as a temporary home. For Anna, it is the only home she has ever known. On Anna's seventh birthday, Genevieve takes her to mass and then for a hot cocoa, even though it is a school day. She shows Anna the three travel tickets for Los Angeles and says that they leave in a week.

Anna receives the gift of the stilts later that afternoon. Joseph tells Genevieve that he can't leave as early as next week. Anna and Genevieve will have to leave without him.

When Anna packs, she doesn't pack her toys and books. When her father asks why, she says that she will be back. Anna and Genevieve leave on January 24. Anna cries as she says goodbye to Chu Shih. Joseph accompanies them to the ship along with Mei Wah. Genevieve tells Joseph that she and Anna will be fine. They have an emotional goodbye when the non-passengers have to disembark. Anna stays on the deck staring at her father until he is out of sight.

In *The City of Angels*, the ship arrives at San Pedro Harbor in Los Angeles on February 15, 1938. Genevieve's mother is at the harbor and it is the first time Anna meets her grandmother. They stay with Gran for a few days and then move into their own house a few blocks from Gran. Anna is enrolled in the Oneonta Grammar School. She doesn't easily make friends and finds it lonely. Gran keeps telling her that things will get better.

Gran shows Anna around Los Angeles and takes her shopping. Anna's favorite store is Vroman's Bookstore since she is learning to read. Gran always buys her one book a week with the understanding that she has to read the book before she can have another one. Anna is introduced to Nancy Drew books which becomes her favorite, even though she needs help reading them.

Genevieve enrolls in an accounting course and Anna slowly begins to make friends. She wants her father to arrive.

Anna and Genevieve live in South Pasadena, a few blocks from Gran. Having a grandmother is a new experience for Anna, but she and Gran like each other. Gran spends time with her and helps her to adjust to her new life in California.



# The City of Angeles Lost Horizon, pgs. 128 - 149

## The City of Angeles Lost Horizon, pgs. 128 - 149 Summary and Analysis

Anna finishes her first year of school. She is also learning to do things that the servants did in Shanghai, like clearing the table. Anna notices the changes in Genevieve. She dresses differently and wears her hair differently. Anna thinks that her Shanghai mother is hidden underneath the changed Genevieve. She continues to miss her father.

In *Lost Horizons*, Joseph is dining with Will Marsh in Shanghai. It is January 1940. As they walk to the theater, they come upon a crowd surrounding the decapitated head of a Chinese journalist. Attached to it is a note about what happens to journalists who oppose the Japanese and their puppet government. Violence and assassination are now very common in Shanghai.

The United States government urges Americans to leave Shanghai because of the danger. Joseph keeps postponing his departure because of the business opportunities. There is too much money to be made in Shanghai. He closes the house in the summer of 1941 and moves to the American Club near the Bund. American troops leave Shanghai in November. The McLains leave the following month.

Joseph is still in Shanghai when the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor on December 8. Foreigners cannot go outside the city limits. The night before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Joseph is awakened by the sound of explosions and goes outside to see what is happening. He learns about the attack and that Japan is at war with the United States. He returns to the American Club, realizing that he has been wrong to stay in Shanghai.

Joseph goes to his office and hides money and some other belongings under a floorboard. He burns papers that could cause problems with the Japanese. When he returns to the American Club, he learns that it is becoming the Japanese Naval Headquarters and that he and other residents have to leave. He is moved to the Methurst Hotel and then learns that the government has frozen bank accounts and other assets of foreigners. Allied nationals can only withdraw the Chinese equivalent of fifty dollars a week. No communications are allowed with the outside world. American, Dutch, Belgian and British nations are required to register and cannot change their residences without a permit. Soon Allied nationals begin to be arrested and disappear.

Before reporting for registration, Joseph moves to a rented room above a rice and grain shop. He sells or trades what he can of his belongings. He obtains two pigeons for the eggs they will lay. The Japanese confiscate motor vehicles in early 1942 so Joseph trades his gold watch for a bicycle. Joseph hopes for the possibility of repatriation and learns from Will Marsh that a ship will be arriving, but most of the spots will be for

government personnel. Joseph is not able to secure a position and has to say goodbye to Will Marsh when he sails.

Genevieve sends Joseph a fifty dollar draft which he decides to use to escape from Japanese held China, but he is arrested before he can try.

Joseph finally realizes that he has waited too long to leave Shanghai. He had been too greedy about the lucrative business opportunities to leave. Once the Japanese declare war on the United States, it is too late and Joseph knows this. He knows that he misjudged the situation and that he should have left sooner. He is determined to survive. He is no longer a Shanghai millionaire. He is now poor and trying to survive like everyone else. It is only a matter of time until he is arrested.



# Haiphong Road, pgs. 150-172

## Haiphong Road, pgs. 150-172 Summary and Analysis

Joseph is interned in the former United States Marines barrack on Haiphong Road. The room is crowded with men who are waiting, just as he is. Colonel Odera tells the interns that they will be okay if they obey the rules. If not, they will be dealt with harshly .

Joseph is assigned to a room with thirty other men. Two internees are placed in charge of the men. Hugh Kelley is in charge of the British and John Barrows is in charge of the rest of the internees. Barrows selects Joseph as his assistant. Joseph moves into better quarters with the three men. It is called the office.

They arrange for food and supplies to be delivered by the American Association. The men are allowed to obtain supplies from different organizations. The men in each room select a captain who will attend monthly meetings. They are assigned jobs. The only news they receive is from the Shanghai Times and a Russian radio station. They only learn of Japanese victories and then they find that the Japanese are billing their home governments for their keep.

For the most part, the prisoners can only leave the camp if they are near death. The only other reason is to bring people in for questioning. Questioning means torture, as Joseph learns from a journalist named Peter Young whom he had helped bring in. He then cares for Young after the questioning at Bridge House.

Joseph tries to adapt to the situation. He finds comfort in staring at photos of Genevieve and Anna.

Joseph and others are allowed to attend a funeral in the summer of 1943. A friend tells him that negotiations are taking place for repatriation.

One day Joseph is accused of witnessing a prisoner, Richard Fletcher, asking to have a letter smuggled out of the camp. They are taken to Bridge House. Joseph is placed in a cell with twenty-five other people. His interrogations are always late at night. Torture is a part of the interrogations. One day, he is returned to the camp with no explanation given. He has been gone for eleven days. Fletcher dies as a result of his treatment at Bridge House.

Joseph's internment has lasted for ten months. In September, Colonel Odera tells the men that the Americans and Canadians will soon be repatriated. They are taken to the ship Gripsholm on September 15, 1943. Joseph manages to smuggle his journal out. He is finally leaving Shanghai.

Once he boards the Gripsholm, he knows he is heading for a different life. His thinking turns to the future.



# Waiting, pgs. 173 - 205

## Waiting, pgs. 173 - 205 Summary and Analysis

Genevieve receives a letter from Joseph in May 1942 that is postmarked Java. Dr. McLain had posted the letter. Joseph, not yet interned, tells of the changes that have taken place. There is no mention of his planning to leave Shanghai. Anna finally tells Genevieve that she thinks that Joseph didn't come with them because of something she did and Genevieve tells her that it isn't true. They both try to assure each other that everything will be all right, just as they have for the last four years.

After Pearl Harbor, they hear nothing from Joseph. In March 1943, Genevieve receives official word from the International Red Cross that Joseph is a prisoner. That summer, there is talk of repatriation. Anna looks up the word in her grandmother's dictionary. She is notified in September that Joseph will arrive in New York in mid-December.

Anna awaits the arrival of her father and is a little nervous. She and her mother have both changed, and she assumes that Joseph has also changed. Genevieve tells Anna that Joseph will need time to adjust.

Joseph is scheduled to arrive in Los Angeles on December 17. Gran drives them to the train station to meet him. They show him the house. Joseph says he likes it. He spends a lot of time at the library learning about the news. Anna watches him and spends as much time as possible with him. She notices that he can't sit still for long on their outings or at home.

He is nervous about money because his United States assets are frozen by the Office of Price Administration. In April, Genevieve tells him to find a job, but he instead begins to work on the garden at the house, which upsets Genevieve. Anna works with him, and the garden work is therapeutic for Joseph and for Anna. After Joseph has been there for ten months, Anna begins to feel that things are right.

Joseph receives a job offer from a Shanghai friend who is now General Shang Chen. The position is in Chungking as liaison between Chinese and American troops. Joseph says if he doesn't take this position, he will probably be sent to the fighting in Europe. Both Genevieve and Anna feel that Joseph had known he would only be with them on a temporary basis and that it wouldn't be permanent.

Joseph leaves for Chungking ten days later.



# A Happy Man, Tickets, pgs. 206 - 231

## A Happy Man, Tickets, pgs. 206 - 231 Summary and Analysis

Joseph is in Chungking for eleven months until September 1948. As soon as the war ends, he returns to Shanghai which is controlled by the Nationalist Chinese government. Joseph goes to his office on Yuen Thing Yuen Road. The items he hid under the floor board are still there as is his furniture. His journals are also there. He is happy to be in Shanghai. It is home to him, even if his wife and daughter aren't there. He had never really been happy in California because he had never felt like he belonged there.

Joseph walks around the Bund. The shopping area is busy with many goods to sell. He sees his old Packard being driven by a Chinese man and reclaims it in the name of the government. The man gives him the keys. He opens the house on Hungjoa and hires a Chinese couple to care for it. Joseph obtains an import license and begins to import cars and trucks. Within a few months, he is making a lot of money. As the restaurants and nightclubs begin to open, Joseph's life returns to normal. On New Year's Eve, he learns his United States assets have been released and total around four hundred thousand dollars. It is enough to take care of his family.

In Tickets, Genevieve still hopes that Joseph will return to California but she doesn't hear from him after the Japanese surrender. At the end of September, he sends notice that he is in Shanghai and has opened up the house. Gran tells her that her father thinks only of himself and that Anna should distance herself from him to keep from being hurt.

They receive two more telegrams that fall giving them no reason to believe he would return to them. It is an emotional time for both Genevieve and Anna. When she graduates junior high, her mother and grandmother take her to a famous Hollywood restaurant to celebrate. Her grandmother gives her an Elgin watch. Genevieve gives her tickets to Shanghai saying they are going to visit Joseph. They will leave in one month. Anna is not happy at leaving her grandmother and friends.

They sail on the Laura Maersk. Genevieve is in a bad mood most of the trip and Anna is left to entertain herself. She is now looking forward to Shanghai and can't understand her mother's mood since the trip is her idea.

They arrive in Shanghai and spend several hours going through Customs. Joseph picks them up in the Packard and insists that they go to restaurants without giving them a chance to freshen up. Joseph has arranged an apartment for his wife and daughter for a while until the house is ready. Joseph remains distant from them both although he makes sure they have plenty of money. Joseph's reaction to his wife and daughter is strange. Joseph provides for them financially but gives little of himself. Genevieve accepts his excuses about business. She is probably hurt at the reception they receive

from him. Anna just becomes angry. She is too young to realize that her mother is trying to save her marriage.





# Tickets, Graduations, pgs. 231 - 251

## Tickets, Graduations, pgs. 231 - 251 Summary and Analysis

Genevieve and Anna live in the apartment for a month when Genevieve says they are moving to Hungjoo. She says she will tell Joseph that evening. When Joseph doesn't appear, Genevieve decides they will eat dinner at Jimmy's. They find Joseph sitting there with a Chinese woman. Joseph sees Genevieve and Anna as they are walking out.

Joseph comes by the apartment after Anna is in bed. She hears her father say that he doesn't want them in Shanghai and that he doesn't want a family. Later he comes up to Anna's room and tells her that Shanghai is not safe for a young girl. He promises her that she will see him again once they leave Shanghai.

Genevieve and Anna leave Shanghai on October 8, 1946. Anna knows that it is permanent this time. They will not be returning. Anna decides that she will never allow Joseph in her life again.

In Graduations, Anna realizes later in life how much she owes Joseph. She has developed her stability and curious nature from him as well as her wariness of deceit. When she had departed Shanghai she had vowed never to be like him or to have anything to do with anyone like him.

Genevieve and Anna return to South Pasadena. Even though many things are the same, they are no longer waiting for Joseph. At dinner with Gran the first night back, Anna begins to feel hopeful for the first time. She attends South Pasadena High School and resumes her social life making it clear that she doesn't want to talk about Shanghai. Genevieve just says that Joseph is no longer a part of their lives.

Joseph sends Anna a set of pearl earrings for her seventeenth birthday. Anna promptly sells them at a jewelry store. She donates the money to the church. Genevieve files for divorce which becomes final the following March when Anna is a senior in high school. That same day Anna learns that she is accepted by the University of California at Los Angeles. That night at dinner, Genevieve announces that she has changed the spelling of their names to Schoen.

That September, Joseph's agent sends Genevieve a sizable check through his agent. Joseph does not bear her any ill will. Genevieve uses it to buy the house from her mother.

That fall, Anna falls in love with Jack Bradley. He has all of the qualities that her father doesn't since she would never have anything to do with anyone like her father.



# The Poor in Spirit, pgs. 252-281

## The Poor in Spirit, pgs. 252-281 Summary and Analysis

In April 1949, Joseph often sleeps in his office. One night he awakens in the middle of the night. He notices that it is very quiet and decides to walk along the Bund. Joseph is prevented from entering the area by Nationalist soldiers who tell him to leave the area. He sees a group of coolies loading packages on a freighter and wonders if Chiang Kai-shek is moving gold from the vaults. His journalist friend confirms the act.

Civil war is taking place in China between China's Nationalists troops and Mao's Peoples Liberation Army. Shanghai is more dangerous than it was under the Japanese. There is guerrilla activity in Hungjao so Joseph buys several guns. By the winter of 1948, foreigners begin to leave the city. Joseph again remains, thinking the Communists would not gain control of China. He is making a lot of money in China and he feels he really has no place to go. Part of his motivation is again greed. He is making a lot of money in Shanghai which he expects to continue to do. This shows that he knows nothing about Communism.

Mao's forces enter Shanghai on May 24, 1949. The Nationalist troops have surrendered the city and departed. The city slowly returns to normal. The government suddenly eliminates the money changing business. The government control spreads to other aspects of daily life. Businesses like Joseph's are investigated. The Communists view Joseph's business as a form of exploitation. There are many informers and mass public trials and executions.

The city changes as nightclubs and restaurants close and the streets are renamed.

On April 27, 1951, Joseph is arrested along with twenty thousand other people. Joseph should have known that it was only a matter of time until his arrest. He is accused of being a spy and is held in a cell for three weeks without being questioned or charged. Then he is moved to a room with more than forty people where he is held for sixty one days and then is moved to the Loukawie Jail. He is a prisoner until January 1954. He is moved several times during those years. Prisoners have to fill out questionnaires and write their confession several times.

Joseph is questioned about the guns he owned. Instead of being killed, he is placed in solitary confinement. At night, he listens to the sounds of thousands of men marching to their execution. Joseph is forty seven years old and in failing health at the time.



## Headlines, pgs. 282 - 300

### Headlines, pgs. 282 - 300 Summary and Analysis

Genevieve and Anna learn of Joseph's imprisonment in spring of 1952 from a Life Magazine article. Anna is in her junior year at the University of California at Los Angeles and is deeply disturbed by his imprisonment. She marries Jack Bradley in 1953 after graduating from college. Anna works at the San Marino Library which keeps her mind from dwelling on her father's situation. Jack and Anna live in South Pasadena a few blocks from her family.

In January 1954, Genevieve calls to tell Anna that a newspaper articles says that Joseph has been released and is in Hong Kong. Anna reads the newspaper article. This is the first of several articles that would appear in the coming months. When Hong Kong orders him to leave, he refuses and is arrested. He stages a hunger strike and is hospitalized until he sails for Vancouver. Anna, who thinks she is happy her father is out of her life, finds the situation different when she learns he is a prisoner. She thinks and worries about him constantly. Her not wanting him in her life may have been a defense mechanism and a way of keeping from being hurt again.

Genevieve hosts a party to celebrate Anna and Jack's first wedding anniversary. Genevieve is wearing a pink Cheongsam from her days living in Shanghai. After the guests leave, Genevieve shows Anna a letter from Joseph. He asks to borrow money. He is living in Carpentaria near Santa Barbara where he is trying to start a chicken farm. Anna is upset that her mother is corresponding with Joseph and thinking of lending him money. She is afraid of being hurt again.

Anna tells Genevieve that she is pregnant.



# A Promise, pgs. 301 - 316

## A Promise, pgs. 301 - 316 Summary and Analysis

In early August, Genevieve and Anna go for breakfast after mass one Sunday. Neither is very hungry. Anna notices that her mother isn't well. They soon learn that she suffers from leukemia. Anna reads about the disease at the library. She faints at the library and when she regains consciousness, the librarian tells her to relax and that Jack is on his way.

Anna quits her job in October during her sixth month of pregnancy and spends a lot of time with her mother. She watches her mother transform herself again as she becomes more open and talkative. Genevieve talks a lot about Shanghai. She hopes to live long enough to see Anna's baby which is due in February. She asks Anna to promise to forgive Joseph. Anna agrees to do so so she doesn't upset her mother, but she doesn't know if she can forgive Joseph.

Anna's daughter is delivered by cesarean section on January 31. Genevieve is at Anna's side when she awakens. Jack and Anna tell her the baby's name is Genevieve and they will call her Eve.

Anna's mother is hospitalized several times in March, as her condition worsens. She dies in her home on April 1.

Anna goes to the mortuary to be alone with her mother. While she is sitting there, her father walks in. He doesn't see Anna and she doesn't make her presence known. He goes to the casket and cries, and then leaves. Anna never says a word to him. They do meet at the funeral and their conversation is very stiff. When Joseph walks away, Anna follows him to the graveside where they hug and cry. They are both missing someone who is important to them.



## **New Moon, pgs. 316 - 343**

### **New Moon, pgs. 316 - 343 Summary and Analysis**

Anna inherits most of her mother's estate and she, Jack and the baby move into the house in Bucknell where Genevieve had lived. Anna misses her mother very much. After two months, she receives a brief letter from Joseph. He includes a picture of his chicken business and a silver locket for the baby. She writes a brief postcard in response.

Joseph writes frequently and sends gifts at Christmas. Anna feels obligated to send him gifts in return. Jack tells Anna that Joseph is trying to get reacquainted with his daughter.

On Anna's twenty-fifth birthday, on January 17, 1956, she tells Jack that she is expecting their second child. Her father appears at the front door that day around eleven o'clock. He gives her roses and perfume. This takes courage on Joseph's part because of the strong possibility that Anna will reject him. Anna wants him to leave but doesn't tell him that. She goes to dress the baby who awakens from her nap and brings her to the living room. He is awed by Eve and says he wants to get to know Anna and the child. He invites them to lunch and they accept.

They go to a nearby Chinese restaurant where Joseph speaks Mandarin with the staff. He tells Anna that he has sold his chicken business and moved to Bunker Hill in Los Angeles.

When Anna passes her due date, Joseph calls one day and there is no answer. He goes to the hospital where he finds Jack viewing his new granddaughter in the nursery. Joseph visits her at home two weeks later. He gives her the small teak box that contains his chop, which she remembers from Shanghai.

Anna invites Joseph to meet her in-laws and he accepts. The family, including Gran, all welcomes him that Thanksgiving. By spring, he is a part of the family. He does the gardening for them.

Anna knows little about Joseph's life. One day when she is downtown, she stops by the building where he says his office is located. She learns that he is the night janitor. She realizes that he has little money, yet he never asks for anything and he never talks about the past, yet he would tell stories to the children. The only favor he ever asks of Anna is to be executor of his estate.



## Debt, Epilogue, pgs. 344 - 373

### Debt, Epilogue, pgs. 344 - 373 Summary and Analysis

Anna begins to worry about Joseph after their discussion about the will. Anna's relationship with Joseph deepens. She realizes that she has always loved and missed him. One day when Anna and the girls arrive home from the beach, Jack tells her that Joseph is not feeling well. When Anna calls Joseph, he says that he is okay.

Two years later in May 1961, he collapses when visiting at their house. Anna calls for an ambulance but Joseph dies soon after reaching the hospital. Gran comes over when Anna and Jack arrive home.

That night Anna sits outside in the garden while the others sleep. She thinks about her father and the loss she feels.

The next week Anna goes to clean out her father's room at the rooming house. She has to force herself to go through his belongings. Anna finds a stack of bills. She realizes that he could never have recovered from his debt.

Anna begins to read the journals in the evenings. She becomes totally engrossed in the journals and becomes distant from her family for the next year but finally finds comfort in her family.

In the Epilogue, it is April 1981 and Anna's family has given her two tickets to Shanghai for her fiftieth birthday. Heather, her second daughter, will accompany her. Heather makes all of the arrangements for their two week trip. After all these years, Anna is ready to return to Shanghai, the place of her birth.



# Characters

## Joseph Schoene

Joseph Schoene is born in Tsao Chow Fu in the province of Shantung. He is the son of missionaries and never comes to the United States until he is sixteen years old. His parents return to China but he stays in the United States to attend Vanderbilt University where he meets Genevieve. They marry after his graduation in 1931 and then go to China. Joseph, who wants to help at his parents' Chantung clinic, wants to study medicine at the Rockefeller Institute in Peking but Peking is not safe at the time. When he and Genevieve arrive in Shanghai, he takes a job as an automobile claims adjuster. Within a month, both of his parents die of diphtheria. Joseph begins to import cars and makes money. He doesn't want to return to the United States as his wife does. When his family sails to Los Angeles in January 1938, Joseph stays in Shanghai saying he will join them after making business arrangements. He keeps postponing his departure because of all the lucrative business deals. In summer of 1941, he closes the Jungjoa house and moves to the American Club near the Bund. When Japan declares war on the United States, he has to move out of the club. He realizes that he has stayed in Shanghai too long and after a while, he is arrested by the Japanese and placed in an internment camp. He remains there for ten months and is tortured along with others. He is repatriated on September 15, 1943 and travels to South Pasadena to be with his family. He returns to China and after the war, settles in Shanghai. When Anna and Genevieve arrive, he sends them home after two months, and is imprisoned again by the Communists. He goes to Hong Kong after his release but is expelled. He settles in California. He doesn't reconcile with Anna until after Genevieve's death and then becomes an integral part of the family. He dies in May 1961.

## Anna Schoene

Anna Schoene is born in Shanghai, China to Joseph and Genevieve Schoene. Her father is a Shanghai millionaire and the family lives in a villa on Hongjoa Road in the western suburbs of Shanghai. Even though her parents are Americans, her father, the son of missionaries, has always lived in China except for the years he attended Vanderbilt University. He loves Shanghai and tries to instill this love in her. She is six years of age when the war between the Japanese and Chinese breaks out and her father is kidnapped. She begins school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart during the fighting. After the Japanese takeover of Shanghai, her father takes her to the Japanese sector where they have problems with the gendarmes which scare her. A week after her seventh birthday, Anna and her mother sail for Los Angeles, arriving on February 15, 1938. They live in South Pasadena a few blocks from Anna's grandmother. She attends the Oneonta Grammar School for first grade and then South Pasadena Junior High. She is fourteen when her father is repatriated and comes to South Pasadena to live with them, and then returns to China ten months later. When Anna and Genevieve travel to Shanghai, things don't work out and the women return home. Anna knows that she will



never return to Shanghai and that there is no more waiting for her father. In California, she attends South Pasadena High School and then the University of California at Los Angeles. She marries Jack Bradley in 1953. They have two daughters, Genevieve and Heather. Anna reconciles with Joseph after Genevieve's birth. In 1981, Anna and Heather visit Shanghai.

## Genevieve Schoene

Genevieve Schoene is the wife of Joseph and the mother of Anna. She is born and raised in South Pasadena, California and meets Joseph when they are students at Vanderbilt University. She had never been comfortable in Shanghai and had always viewed it as a temporary residence. With the situation in Shanghai becoming increasingly dangerous, she and Anna move to California in early 1938 and settle in a South Pasadena house that her father had owned. Joseph is supposed to come to California as soon as he closes his business in Shanghai. While waiting for Joseph, she enrolls in bookkeeping courses. Her mother, who lives a few blocks away, is always there to watch Anna when Genevieve isn't home. Genevieve divorces Joseph. She never remarries and dies of leukemia in April 1955.

## Will Marsh

Will Marsh is a businessman in Shanghai and a close friend of the Schoenes. He sends his family away from Shanghai when the war begins. Will helps secure the release of Joseph when he is kidnapped. He works at the American Consulate.

## Jack Bradley

Jack Bradley becomes Anna's husband in summer of 1953. They meet as students at the University at Los Angeles and marry after graduation. He is a history teacher at Flintridge Preparatory School.

## Gran

Gran is Anna's grandmother who lives in South Pasadena. She is a widow who works part time as a bookkeeper. She is ninety six at the end of the book.

## Mei Wah

Mei Wah is a servant who lives at the Schoene home in Hungjoo. He also functions as a body guard and chauffeur.





## **Chu Shih**

Chu Shih is the cook at the Schoene home in Hungjoa. He also lives at the home.

## **Genevieve Bradley**

Genevieve Bradley is the oldest daughter of Anna and Jack Bradley. She is Joseph's oldest and first granddaughter born in 1955.

## **Heather Bradley**

Heather Bradley is the youngest daughter of Jack and Anna Bradley born in 1956.



## Objects/Places

### Bunker Hill

Bunker Hill is a section of downtown Los Angeles, California where Anna's father lived in a rooming house.

### Shanghai

Shanghai is a city on the eastern coast of China.

### Hungjao

Hungjao is a western suburb of Shanghai where the Schoenes live.

### The Bund

The Bund is the shopping area of Shanghai close to the office of Joseph.

### South Pasadena

South Pasadena is a suburb of Los Angeles, California where Anna and Genevieve move.

### Haiphong Road

Haiphong Road is the Shanghai location of a former United States Marine barracks that the Japanese use as an internment camp.

### Monterey Road Apartment

Monterey Road Apartment is the South Pasadena residence of Jack and Anna after they marry.

### Ward Road Jail

Ward Road Jail is the Shanghai jail where Joseph is held prisoner by the Communist Chinese.



## Hong Kong

Hong Kong is an island off the eastern coast of China that is a British colony.

## Carpentaria, California

Carpentaria, California is near Santa Barbara and is where Joseph settles when he arrives from Hong Kong.

# Themes

## Greed

Greed is a theme of the book even though it is an understated theme. Joseph is basically greedy. He wants to make a lot of money and this turns out to be the problem for him and his family. Joseph becomes a millionaire in Shanghai and he and his family lead the storybook life of the rich, even though Shanghai is a dangerous place. The wealthy are frequently kidnapped and held for ransom, which happens to Joseph. Most foreigners leave Shanghai when war breaks out between the Chinese and the Japanese, especially when the Japanese take control of Shanghai. Joseph refuses to leave, even after his wife and daughter leave for California. The same situation occurs when the Communists take control of Shanghai. Joseph's reasoning is that he can't make the kind of money he is making in Shanghai any place else in the world. He is engaged in smuggling among other activities. Whatever people need, he would buy cheap and sell for a profit and he becomes very wealthy doing this. Even though the situation is very dangerous, he remains in Shanghai because of the good business opportunities. In each case, he ends up in prison as a result of his greed. The opportunity to make a lot of money had been more important than his own personal safety or being with his family. Joseph dies penniless and in debt, but reconciled with his daughter Anna and her family. He learns that family is more important than money.

## Relationship of Genevieve and Joseph

The relationship of Genevieve and Joseph is another theme of the book. They meet when they are both students at Vanderbilt University and marry after graduation. They come from different backgrounds. Genevieve comes from a southern California middle class family while Joseph is the son of missionary parents who work and live in China. Joseph loves China and insists that they live in China and work at his parents' clinic, but his parents both die while he and Genevieve are in Shanghai. Joseph finds a job in Shanghai and begins building his personal fortune. He and Genevieve lead the charmed life of the rich, even though it is dangerous for the wealthy in Shanghai. Joseph loves the city and tries to instill that love in his daughter, Anna. Genevieve views Shanghai as a temporary residence and looks forward to the day when the family returns to the United States, which she considers home. When she and Anna return to the United States, her marriage to Joseph basically ends, even though he eventually joins them in California for several months. He returns to China and again settles in Shanghai after the end of the war. Genevieve takes Anna back to Shanghai in an attempt to save her marriage, but the marriage is over and Joseph sends them home after two months. She eventually divorces him after several years, but she remains in love with him.



## Relationship Between Joseph and Anna

The relationship between Joseph and Anna is another dominant theme of the book. Like most little girls, Anna adores her father. He spends time with her taking her on special outings and tries to share his love of Shanghai. Anna is separated from her father for the first time when Genevieve takes her to live in California. Shanghai has become too dangerous. Anna waits for her father who eventually comes to live with them in California, but he doesn't remain. Anna believes that he never meant to stay with them. He returns to work in China and then returns to Shanghai after the war. When Genevieve and Anna return to Shanghai, Joseph has them live in an apartment instead of with him at the house. Anna hears Joseph tell Genevieve that he doesn't want them in Shanghai. When she and her mother leave Shanghai, Anna locks Joseph out of her life. She decides that she will never associate with anyone who has the qualities that her father has. She is reacting to the hurt that she felt at her father's rejection. She is concerned when she learns that he is imprisoned by the Communists and follows his release and his Hong Kong problems in the media, but she doesn't want anything to do with him. She does not want to associate with him when he settles near Santa Barbara and does not see him until her mother's funeral. This begins their reconciliation and he eventually becomes a beloved part of Anna's family. It is Joseph who has to initiate the contact between them.

# Style

## Perspective

The book is Anna's story and Anna telling the story of her family and what happened to them. She is telling the story in her own words in everyday vernacular, which adds to the realism of the story. The action of the novel takes place on two continents. The United States and China are both settings for the novel which opens at the Bunker Hills boarding house room of Joseph Shoene. After her marriage to Jack, Anna and her family lived in a South Pasadena apartment on Monterey Road for the first year of their marriage and then move to the bungalow she inherited from her mother. Gran also lives in South Pasadena. There are also scenes in restaurants and other places as the characters move around. Joseph at first settles in Carpentaria when he returns to the United States. The other major setting is in Shanghai. The Schoenes live in a villa in Hungjoa, a western suburb of Shanghai. His office is located in Shanghai near the Bund, which is the main shopping area. There are many scenes in this area as well as the area known as the French Concessions as the characters attend different events. This is the area where they take apartments when Shanghai becomes dangerous. Joseph is imprisoned at the Haiphong Road facility under the Japanese and at the Ward Road Jail under the Communist Chinese. There are also scenes in Hong Kong where Joseph tries to settle but is expelled.

## Tone

The tone of the book is subjective in that the author tries to convey what her life had been like and how it had changed due to World War II and events in China. The book adequately explains the story of Anna and her father and how she came to reconcile with him over the years. It is written in a tone that allows the reader to empathize with Anna and what she went through. The writing style of Bo Caldwell makes *The Distant Land of My father* a very readable book. The book is written in everyday English making quick and easy reading. There are some foreign language terms, mostly Chinese Mandarin throughout the book and the author is careful to explain the meaning of these terms wherever they occur. Instead of slowing down the reader, the use of these terms adds to the mood and the character of the novel. They make Shanghai and Anna's Chinese experience seem more real to the reader. The everyday English writing style of the book is also very appropriate to the novel. A more formal writing style would destroy the atmosphere of the novel. The approach of Bo Caldwell makes the novel very interesting and enjoyable reading for the reader. The language and meaning are very suitable to the novel.

## Structure

The structure of the novel is designed for quick and easy reading. The story is divided into chapters denoted by chapter titles with the titles pertaining to the subject matter of the chapter. There are no chapter numbers in the book. There is also no Table of Contents showing the chapter divisions but one is really not required for a book of this nature. There is also no Introduction or forward showing the author's intentions, but again, none is needed.

There is an Author's Note at the beginning explaining the method used for the Chinese spellings in the book. The Wade - Giles system was selected because it is appropriate to the time period of the novel. There is also a sketch of a map showing the Shanghai of the time. Various buildings, roads and locations are shown to help orient the reader to the Shanghai of the time. This also helps create the realism and the mood of the novel as the characters move around from place to place.

The structure of the novel will be appreciated by the reader because it adds to the ease of reading the novel.



## Quotes

"Thinking about the city my father loved eased the huge ache that his death had caused. And as I read and imagined and began to understand, senses from my childhood played before me like long-forgotten photographs, and I found myself in the distant land of my father." (Prologue, pg. 5)

"Shanghai isn't going to stay peaceful. That may mean a lot of trouble for us, or it may just mean inconvenience, but either way, we're about to become onlookers of a war." (Shanghai, pg. 32)

"My father looked toward the hallway. 'Your mother's afraid,' he said, and he paused and looked at me carefully. 'She wants to go home. To her home.'" (Battle, pg. 66)

"We tricked them, all right. They don't own me. Nobody owns Joseph Schoene." (Fall, pg. 92)

"Shanghai has become too dangerous. We have to leave, but only for a while, only because of the war. While we're gone, he'll close up his business and then he'll come to California, too. And when it's safe to return to Shanghai, we'll come back." (Stilts, pg. 111)

"Those who were taken were often not seen again. And if they were, they were not the same, and they never spoke of what had happened to them during their imprisonment." (Angels, pg. 141)

"And as he listened, he developed a new theory about why they were here. Maybe Young was not an isolated case. Maybe he wasn't the only one who was wanted for questioning - he was just the first. Because perhaps that was what all these men had in common: they were all wanted for questioning by the Gendarmerie, and it was just a matter of time before each man's turn came." (Haiphong, pg. 158)

"Maybe he would like it here, too, maybe he would love the things I loved; the beach, the warm days, the orange groves, the dark purple mountains against the pale blue sky." (Waiting, pg. 179)

"From there he walked toward the Whangpoo, and when he first set foot on the Bund again and gazed around him and breathed in the sharp scent of the muddy river, he laughed out loud, for he knew one thing: that he would stay in Shanghai, no matter what. He was home - his real home this time, no bungalow, no city of angels. It was his home now more than ever, because he'd tried someplace else and he'd found it wouldn't work." (Happy Man, pg. 208)





"But it was too late, for I saw that he was with a Chinese woman I'd never seen before. She was leaning against him familiarly, and just as I looked, she said something and my father laughed and kissed her cheek." (Tickets, pg. 233)

"To my father, it seemed that the Communists took control of the country so quickly and easily that it was as though he had glanced up from his desk one day and found China permanently changed." (Spirit, pg. 255)

"It was one thing to think that my father was in Shanghai living it up; it was quite another to know that he was in prison, that his future was uncertain, and that there was nothing anyone could do about it." (Headlines, pg. 284)

"During those fall and winter days of 1954, I watched my mother transform herself yet again. Since that first time we'd left Shanghai when I was seven, I'd come to understand that she was someone who changed with her environment and the circumstances of her life, so I shouldn't have been surprised at this latest transformation." (A Promise, pg. 305)

"Those things never happened. He never asked for money, he never let me down. He was as faithful as anyone I'd ever known, and when my grandmother told me to look carefully at who he was, what I saw was a changed man, a man whose presence calmed and cheered me. And in the end, I abandoned her warnings and let myself be reclaimed." (New Moon, pg. 339)

"In twelve hours, everything had changed, and I found myself faced with something I'd never imagined: the world without my father, a far more desolate place than I could have imagined." (Debt, pg. 354)



## Topics for Discussion

How do the Schoenes come to live in Shanghai? What is Genevieve's attitude toward Shanghai and China?

What business or businesses is Joseph Schoene in? How does the war affect his business(es)?

Why does Joseph Schoene refuse to leave Shanghai after the kidnapping and the outbreak of the war with Japan?

How does Joseph return to China after he is released by the Japanese? Why?

Joseph misjudges the situation between the Nationalist Chinese and the Communist Chinese and remains in Shanghai. Why? What does this say about Joseph's character?

Why is Anna so opposed to allowing Joseph back into her life? Why does this change?

What does Anna learn about Joseph after his death? How do her views about China change?