

# **Eva Luna Study Guide**

## **Eva Luna by Isabel Allende**

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# Plot Summary

Eva Luna is the story of the main character, Eva Luna and the people and events in her life that shape her. Born to a servant in a South American country, Eva lives a varied life, sometimes exciting, sometimes, frightening, however she never lets adversity keep her down. Eva strives to persevere, and in the end, finds the happiness that eludes so many of her acquaintances through the years.

Eva is the daughter of Consuelo, a woman rescued by missionaries in the jungles of South America. Eva is conceived when the gardener for Consuelo's employer is bitten by a snake and Consuelo tries to help. The two wind up making love and when the gardener recovers he leaves. Consuelo is not bitter, having finally known love. Giving birth to her daughter alone in her room, Consuelo is helped in the end by the cook, who becomes Eva Luna's madrina, or godmother. Life for the girl is filled with love and adventure, growing up in the home of Professor Jones, surrounded by beautiful things and the mummies that the professor creates. Consuelo creates tales for her daughter about the mummies so that she will not be frightened. This is the first taste of fiction for Eva, something that will carry her through life.

The tragic death of Consuelo, followed by the death of the professor, changes life for Eva. As her madrina cannot take care of her, a home where Eva can work is found. Eva continues to flourish in the home of her first patrona and patron, a brother and sister. There Eva meets Elvira, the cook, and the two form a strong bond, one like grandmother and granddaughter. Eva is happy enough, though she struggles to find where she fits in life. During one outburst Eva finds herself in trouble with her patrona and flees. On the streets in the city, Eva meets Huberto Naranjo, a young boy who will be very important in Eva's life.

Eva's madrina finds herself in trouble which eventually causes Eva to lose her job. Moving from house to house, Eva meets many people, some who will have only a fleeting impact on her life and some who will be more important in the future. After reaching a breaking point with one employer, Eva flees again, once again meeting up with Huberto. The boy, now a young man, helps Eva, finding her a place to stay and giving her a sense of family for a brief time. Unrest and corruption in the country end things for Eva, who loses her friends and any sense of security. Fate brings Eva to Riad Halabi, a kindly man with a cleft lip who takes Eva to his distant village in the mountains and treats her like family.

Eva flourishes in Agua Santa, helping Riad in his store and caring for his wife, the spoiled Zulema. Learning to read and growing into a young woman, Eva is happy, but witnesses the beginning of the end when Zulema betrays her husband and then falls into depression. Eva is blamed for Zulema's death and is forced to leave her beloved village, but not before making love to the only man that has shown her kindness.

Back in the capitol, Eva meets up once again with her friend Mimi, once Melesio. Mimi is a transsexual that Eva had known in her youth. Mimi had been a prisoner in Santa



Maria prison for a time, but now lives happily with growing fame as an actress. The two live in the capital when Eva once again runs into Huberto, now a guerrilla fighter. Eva falls in love with Huberto once again, and helps him while he tries to change the government. Through Huberto, Eva meets Rolf Carle, a journalist who is making a documentary about the guerrillas and their fight against oppression. While Eva assists Rolf with the knowledge she has gained through the years, she falls in love with him and he with her. The two have lived similar lives of unstable childhoods and hardship, and have found their match in each other.



# Chapter One

## Chapter One Summary

In chapter one, Eva Luna tells the story of her life, beginning with the life of her mother, Consuelo. Consuelo, born in the jungle, is discovered as an infant by missionaries and raised with little fanfare. Despite this, Consuelo grows and learns from her life in the jungle, developing a wonderful sense of life and creating her own history. At the age of twelve, Consuelo meets an older Portuguese man and the two become friends. Consuelo spends the day with El Portuguese, catching the man's chickens as they roam the jungle, then slicing their gullets and removing the golden seeds that they eat while roaming. The seed provides the man with a living, and Consuelo has a wonderful time helping her friend. Upon returning to the Mission covered in chicken blood, Consuelo is informed that it is time for her to move to the city. Unhappy, but knowing that there is nothing she can do, Consuelo leaves her beloved home and is sent to the Convent of the Little Sisters of Charity. Consuelo stays at the convent for three years, not happy but resigned. When the Mother Superior realizes that Consuelo will not benefit from life in the convent any longer, the girl is sent to live in the home of Professor Jones.

The Professor is a strange man and though Consuelo is afraid of the man and his home at first, she adjusts. Consuelo helps the professor with his tasks which include treating cancer patients with swamp mosquitoes, and embalming the dead so that they appear alive. Though many people try to obtain the professor's secret formula, Consuelo is the only person who ever learns his secret. The formula works so well that the family of a prominent lawyer pays the professor to embalm their loved one, and then seats the dead man behind his desk, pen in hand. The lawyer had been killed on orders of El Benefactor, the leader of the country. Upon the death of El Benefactor, the family finally buries the lawyer, to the dismay of Professor Jones. Realizing that his greatest work will never be seen again, the professor has a stroke, and Consuelo is left to care for the aging man.

When the gardener is bitten by a poisonous snake, Consuelo disobeys her employer and tries to save the man rather than let him die and be embalmed. Consuelo does not miss the fact that despite the man's pain and fear of death, he is clearly sexually aroused by her. Deciding for once to pursue pleasure, Consuelo makes love to the Indian who surprises those around him by growing stronger as the days pass and recovering from the snake bite. It is on the death bed of the Indian that Eva Luna is conceived. The Indian moves on, leaving Consuelo with happy memories. She continues her daily routines until labor takes hold months later and she gives birth to Eva in her room. The cook arrives to help her and offers to be godmother to the baby, who Consuelo names Eva, meaning life, and Luna, as the tribe the Indian belongs to is the Luna, or Children of the Moon.

Eva grows up happily in the home of Professor Jones, following her mother and helping with chores. While working Consuelo is quiet and barely visible but at night in their



shared room Eva's mother shares the stories of her youth, creating a daughter with a vivid imagination. The two rarely leave the home of Professor Jones, living happily in the world created by the mummies that inhabit the mansion with the living, and sharing the wonderful stories Consuelo creates.

## Chapter One Analysis

The reader is introduced to Eva Luna, the narrator of the novel. Eva details the life of her mother and her own entrance into the world as she knows it. With rich detail, the reader learns that Consuelo, Eva's mother, was raised in a Mission after being discovered in the jungle by missionaries. The fact that the baby is a girl does not please the missionaries, and she is ignored for the most part, allowing her to grow and thrive in relative freedom.

At the age of twelve Consuelo is sent to live in a convent, where she learns the value of hard work and the ability to remain in the shadows. Though the convent is claustrophobic to the young girl that has grown up with such freedom, Consuelo does not despair, instead she draws on her inner strength until it is time to move on.

The home of Professor Jones provides Consuelo with a home as well as a place where her fertile imagination can flourish. The mummies that the professor has created with his secret embalming formula do not frighten the young girl and she grows to almost enjoy the company of the dead. The professor, though eccentric, is a good man and a fair employer. Though Consuelo works hard she does not feel oppressed in any way.

Life in the sprawling home shields the inhabitants from the civil unrest that takes place in the country around them until the professor is injured when the police respond to a student uprising. It is left to Consuelo to care for the man as he recovers. When El Benefactor, the leader of the country dies, Professor Jones suffers a stroke and Consuelo is left to care for him again. It is during this period of time that Eva is conceived on the deathbed of the gardener, an Indian who is never named. The reader only learns that he is a member of the Luna tribe.

The fact that Consuelo carries Eva to term and delivers her alone in her room speaks to the strength of the woman Consuelo has become. Orphaned and raised in the jungle, then sent to a convent, then to the home of the eccentric professor, Consuelo has simply moved along the different stages of her life, accepting what life deals her and moving on. Despite a life that could be harsh and cruel, Consuelo chooses to make the best of things and relies on herself to do so. This attitude toward life is handed down to Eva, and as the novel progresses through Eva's life, the strength of her mother is evident within the daughter.

The reader also meets Eva Luna, first through the story of her conception and birth, then as a young girl growing up in the strange home of Professor Jones. Eva is not frightened of the mummies in the home because Consuelo has invented stories about their lives, allowing Eva to picture them as kind spirits rather than anything sinister. Eva



thrives under her mother's care, and grows with the same sense of discipline and calm acceptance. Eva also develops her imagination, spinning tales in her mind that will serve her in the future.

Though the novel is in its early stages, the sense of feminism is already strong. Consuelo's life is not in her control as she is moved from the jungle to the convent and then to the home of Professor Jones. However, she quickly makes her place and becomes indispensable. Though the female is considered lesser than the male in society, Consuelo assumes a role of importance in the professor's home and is the only person he trusts with his guarded secrets. Consuelo also acts as father and mother to Eva, encouraging her daughter through all steps of life.



# Chapter Two

## Chapter Two Summary

Rolf Carle is born, the youngest son of Lukas Carle. Lukas is a horrible man, who terrorizes his family. Rolf's mother is often mentally tortured, being forced to parade around in red high heeled boots and nothing else when her husband wishes. Rolf's older siblings are Jochen, a weak young man in his father's eyes, and Katherina, a girl, unworthy because of a heart defect and mental retardation.

Life improves for the Carle family when Lukas goes to war. Despite the war around them the family is happy, relieved of the domineering presence of Lukas. Things change on the day that the Russian soldiers that have been living in the town herd all of the townspeople to the prison camp. On this day, they became aware of what was within the walls and fences. The soldiers order all that are capable to dig, and Rolf and his brother do so, with an eye to the bodies piled near the building like stacks of wood. Once finished digging, the villagers are ordered to bury the dead. Frau Carle cries for her sons as they move body after body to the large mass graves. Once the task is complete, the townspeople march through the camp, witnesses to the mass destruction and murder that has taken place so close to their home.

One week later Lukas Carle returns from the war, a deserter, less than happy to see his family. Katherina scrambles under the table to hide and her mother quickly covers the table hoping her husband has forgotten his daughter. Jochen stutters and stumbles, immediately cowed by his father's presence. Rolf was an infant when his father went to war, but is Lukas' focus at once, the school master declaring Rolf weak for being raised at his mother's apron strings.

The family has one more brief period of peace when Lukas is tried as a deserter and is sentenced to six months of hard labor. Rolf stuns himself by wishing that his father will die in prison. Lukas does not die, however, and returns to his home, visiting even more cruelties on his wife and children. Jochen and Rolf protect their sister as best they can. Rolf spends many nights with Katherina hiding under the table, watching their father through the sheer table cloth.

One night, the children are ordered to their room with instructions not to come out for any reason. Jochen makes a stand, breaking down the door to the living room and they witness the humiliation of their mother as she is forced to parade around in the red boots. Enraged, Jochen hits his father, breaking his jaw, and says goodbye to his mother. Frau Carle is despondent yet relieved that at least one of her sons will be safe.

Lukas Carle recovers and Rolf returns to daily life, now the focus of his father's wrath. Hiding with Katherina under the table, Rolf lives through the veil of the cloth, a memory he will carry with him to adulthood that will one day bring him to tears while sleeping under mosquito netting with the woman he loves.





## Chapter Two Analysis

Rolf Carle is introduced to the reader, and the early part of his life unfolds. Rolf grows up in a small village in Austria, the youngest son of the cruel school master Lukas Carle. Though Lukas has tormented Rolf's siblings for some time, his enlistment in the army saves the young Rolf from the same trouble in his early years. Though World War II rages around them, Rolf's younger years are filled with happiness as he grows and flourishes within the loving arms of his family. Rolf's joy in life is a bit over-shadowed by the fact that he believes himself to be unmanly because he can recognize the beauty of the world and enjoys poetry. Embarrassed, the young boy often hides his writings, afraid that others will see him as weak.

Though only ten years old, Rolf becomes a man on the night that he and the villagers are forced to dig mass graves for the victims of the prison camp on the outskirts of the town. Frau Carle is horrified, as she has tried to shield her children from the horrors of war, but Rolf does what must be done. While most of those present will try and erase that night from their memory, Rolf will become molded by it. His future will bring him fame and fortune as he documents history, making sure that no one will forget the things that take place around them.

Rolf's life changes after the war for the worse, when normally life would become better. The return of the hated Lukas changes the dynamic of the family once again. Terror reigns in the Carle home with Frau Carle giving up on life and religion. The poor woman cannot understand how a benevolent God would allow her children to live with such a monster. Becoming resigned to their fate, there is little Rolf's mother can do but try and keep the children out of sight.

The night that Jochen finally stands up to his father is important for many reasons. The oldest son, always a disappointment to his father, has proven himself a man, defending his mother and her honor from her husband's cruelties. Jochen's act also shows Rolf that the weak can overcome the strong if there is enough will and courage. Jochen's leaving, however, places Rolf directly in his father's sights, and he becomes the focus of Lukas' anger and disappointment. Young Rolf accepts his lot in life, unaware that there is anything different. He does his best to care for his sister and keep her safe. Hiding under the table with her, viewing the world through the veil of the table cloth, shows how Rolf's life is clouded, he does not see the real world, only the one in which he finds himself. The veil is lifted as he grows older, but the reference to his tears when he wakes under mosquito netting shows the reader how much he is affected by his youth.



# Chapter Three

## Chapter Three Summary

Eva Luna's mother dies, four days after the young girl's sixth Christmas. Consuelo tells her daughter that there really is no death as long as one is remembered. Eva promises never to forget her mother and fetches the cook, her madrina. The cook has promised to care for Eva Luna and does so to the best of her abilities, stating that she will burn in hell if she does not.

Life continues for a year until Professor Jones dies as well. As his last days approach it falls to Eva Luna to care for him. The old man is amazed by the young girl, telling the priest that visits him daily that Eva Luna is to be his only heir. The priest however, ignores the professor's wishes, and proceeds to loot the estate, closing the house. Madrina cannot care for Eva Luna on her own, so she finds a place for the girl to work. Eva Luna is taken in by a retired brother and sister, her now patrona and patron. She meets Elvira, the cook, who treats her as a grandchild. Elvira is a strange but loving woman, and the two get along well. Afraid to be buried in a pauper's grave, Elvira keeps a coffin in her bedroom and the two play games, pretending to attend each other's funerals, much to the annoyance of the maid.

All is well until one afternoon when the patrona catches Eva studying a picture of the sea that hangs in the dining room. The woman yells at Eva, and something snaps in the girl. She flies at the woman, tearing the elaborate wig from her head and fleeing the house. Outside, Eva is horrified and drops the hair in the street, then heads to the center of the city.

Eva meets a young boy, Huberto Naranjo. Eva tells him she is about nine, unsure of her own age, and that she is going to be arrested for scalping her employer. The boy is not worried in the least, explaining that as a minor Eva should be fine. The two spend several days together and Huberto takes care of Eva. Eva repays Huberto for his kindness by telling him elaborate stories, tales she has created from the bits and pieces of her life and the stories she hears on the radio. The two stumble across the area in town where Madrina lives, and Eva parts ways with Huberto. Eva's Madrina is not happy, beating the girl for her insolence and behavior toward the patrona. Four days later, after the worst of Eva's injuries have healed, Madrina returns her to the home of the patrona and the patron.

Eva works for the brother and sister for several years, spending her time with Elvira whom she loves and calls abuela, or grandmother. The world around them changes as another dictator takes over the country and political upheaval continues. Life outside the walls of the house does not affect Eva much and she goes about her business. Eva spends time in the kitchen with Elvira, spinning stories for the woman's enjoyment. Though life is not bad, Eva knows that she should not have returned to the house and thinks of Huberto often.



## Chapter Three Analysis

The life of Eva Luna continues, despite the tragic death of Consuelo. The young girl's mother tells her that no one truly dies if they are remembered, and Eva vows to keep her mother in her mind always. This is a key moment in the novel, as Eva begins to develop the wonderful imagination that will serve her through her life.

Several characters are introduced in this chapter, some more important than others. Though the characters are described in detail, only a few are referred to by name. These characters are the more important to Eva. The author does not give names to some, signifying that though they are significant to the person that Eva will become, they are not significant to the character of Eva.

Madrina, as Eva calls the cook who is her godmother, cares for the young girl as best she can, taking her in when Consuelo dies. Though her madrina does her best, she is not able to care for herself and the young girl when Professor Jones dies. The woman finds a home where Eva can work, providing her with a place to live and food. This seemingly insignificant act sets Eva on a path that she will return to many times in her life.

At the home of a retired brother and sister, Eva meets Elvira, the cook. Elvira takes Eva under her wing, happy to have someone to care for. The two develop a loving relationship, one that Eva cherishes. Though Eva already knows that her life will be filled with farewells, the two will be friends always. The games they play in the coffin that Elvira keeps create not only a deep affection for each other, but foreshadow events in the future that will bring them back together.

The sister and brother are never named, simply referred to as the patrona and patron. Though the years that Eva spends in their home shape her character, they are obviously not as important to Eva as Elvira. To the young girl, her employers are simply there, people that need to be dealt with, but then forgotten. Eva's relationship with the two is very different. The patron is a drunk who spends his time worrying about horse races. Though the man obviously notices the changes that take place in Eva as she grows, the extent of his attention is to have the girl help him bathe and dress. Eva takes this in stride, despite the fact that there is clearly a sexual undertone to the man's attention.

The patrona is more difficult for Eva to deal with, and it is a confrontation with the woman that leads Eva to flee the home. After snatching the wig from the woman's head, Eva runs to the city and meets Huberto Naranjo, a young boy who lives in the streets. Even at a young age, Huberto is smart, running cons on the people in the city and living as well as a street urchin can.

Eva and Huberto spend time in the streets and develop an affection for each other, though they are young and it is the relationship of siblings. This will persist throughout the novel, however the two will become more than friends eventually. This small

friendship will also become the basis of the woman that Eva will become, creating in her the ability to fend for herself, and more, giving her the knowledge that she can.



# Chapter Four

## Chapter Four Summary

The body of Lukas Carle is found hanging from a tree outside of town by the postman. Frau Carle and Rolf identify the body. Frau Carle has to hide her face to prevent the doctor from seeing her smile. Though the doctor tells the woman that it seems her husband has committed suicide, she informs Rolf that his schoolmates have killed Lukas. Rolf is stunned when his mother tells him that they should be grateful, as it means they will not have to kill the man themselves.

Rolf falls into a depression, unable to reconcile the death of his father with the fact that he wishes he had the personal resolve to have killed Lukas himself. When the five students that had killed Lukas begin wearing a patch on their uniforms in order to remember the event, Rolf becomes despondent, unable to eat or drink. Frau Carle decides to send the young man to live with a distant cousin in South America. Rolf does not want to leave his mother or sister but Frau Carle will not listen, and takes him to the ship.

Rolf spends a month on the ship where he recovers from his despair. Arriving in South America the young man is met by his Uncle Rupert. Rupert and his wife and daughters live in La Colonia, a village so like Austria that Rolf feels he has traveled back in time. Uncle Rupert and Aunt Burgel run an inn. In addition Rupert is a clock maker and a carpenter. The man hopes to teach Rolf the trade, as well as have him marry one of his daughters. Rolf feels immediately welcome and at home, the horrors of his life left behind in Austria.

Time passes and Rolf enjoys life in the village. Rolf and his cousins grow close, and the three become lovers, enjoying life to the fullest. The three young people hide their romance from Rupert and Burgel, though the adults seem to think that Rolf is working too hard because he always seems exhausted. Three years pass in this way, until the sisters decide that though they love Rolf they cannot both marry him. Always practical, the sisters decide to marry the sons of the local candle maker. Rolf is devastated at first, but quickly sees things their way. It is quite possible the three would have continued the arrangement forever, however a guest of the inn changes Rolf's life forever.

Senor Aravena visits La Colonia frequently, and always stays at Uncle Rupert's hotel. Aravena is a newspaperman and a film maker. Rolf becomes intrigued by the man and his job, impressed that Aravena is so well respected that even those in the government do not bother him. Though Aravena sometimes prints things that are not flattering to the man who rules the country and the head of the police, he is respected and therefore, tolerated.

Rolf tells his uncle that he does not wish to carry on the family businesses, but instead intends to make documentaries, preserving news and history for all time. His cousins try



to dissuade him, refusing to have sex with him, then change tactics, smothering him with attention. Rolf does not change his mind and two months later leaves for the university to study cinematography.

## Chapter Four Analysis

In chapter four, the reader once again returns to the life of Rolf Carle. The young man's world changes again when his father is found dead, hanging in a tree. Though there is evidence that the school master has met with foul play, no one in the town is willing to pursue the case. Frau Carle knows that her husband has been murdered, and is nothing but grateful to the school boys that have committed the deed so that she and Rolf will not have to do it themselves. The thought horrifies the young man.

Rolf becomes despondent, considering the thought that he had not been man enough to do away with his father himself. The fact that the five boys that had carried out the deed are proud of the act, flaunting it by wearing patches on their uniforms, makes matters worse for him. The young men will never be punished, as they are related to the law officers and judges in the town. That, coupled with the fact that Lukas Carle was disliked by all leaves Rolf alone in his anguish. Rolf does not miss his father, he despised him as well, but he is haunted by him regardless. The murder of Lukas, coupled with memories of the night at the death camp tear him apart, leaving him unable to eat or sleep.

Frau Carle sends her youngest child to South America in order to save him. Rolf's mother shows him a calm exterior, but the reader knows that she will miss Rolf. Her strength is only for his sake, so that Rolf will be able to leave her with a clear conscious. This is demonstrated by the fact that Frau Carle remains on the dock until the ship is out of sight, not knowing if she will ever see her son again.

La Colonia is a different world for Rolf, a village created in the style of a village in old Austria. Rolf feels as if he is stepping back in time, while in reality he is moving forward. Finally able to let go of the past, Rolf settles into the loving family of his Uncle Rupert and Aunt Burgel, as well as his two cousins. The love that is given openly to Rolf is foreign to him after so many years of living with the terror his father created, but he is able to move on.

Rolf becomes a dependable young man, flourishing in the care of his aunt and uncle, and learning the ways of sex and romance with his cousins. The two girls are not named, the same technique the writer uses when relating events in the life of Eva Luna. This seems to signify that though the characters are significant to the storyline and development of a character, they are not as important as others.

Rolf meets Senor Aravena and his life changes, though to what extent the reader will not learn for some time. In addition, the characters that Rolf interacts with will also have some effect on the life of Eva Luna.



# Chapter Five

## Chapter Five Summary

Life continues for Eva Luna until a scandal involving her madrina changes everything. Madrina gives birth to a stillborn infant, one with two heads, one black one white. The resulting uproar drives the madrina over the edge into madness. Unable to work because of the notoriety, she disappears for long stretches of time, then materializes, demanding Eva's wages. Madrina threatens and begs alternately, until the patrona becomes angry and fires Eva. Eva and Elvira are distraught at being separated, but Elvira always manages to find out where Eva is and visits when she can.

Eva finds work with a Yugoslavian woman who treats her well. The woman has invented a ceramic-like material she calls Universal Matter, with which she can recreate almost anything. Her creations crowd her home, from ashtrays to a complete shrine to an Egyptian pharaoh. Eva would be happy to stay with this woman, but a group of boys play a prank and the woman flees the country in fear.

Eva is next placed with a member of the Cabinet and life is amazing for a very brief period. The first night Eva is there, an elaborate banquet is thrown. Eva relishes all the sights and sounds, as she will no longer have to imagine them for the stories she tells. The excitement ends, however, when Eva realizes that one of her jobs is emptying the chamber pot of the patron. Disgusted, Eva puts up with things for five days, but finally she snaps, dumping the pot on the man's head and fleeing.

In the center of the city, 13 year-old Eva looks for Huberto. Finally exhausted, Eva finds a quiet alley in which to sleep. Huberto arrives, leery of who is searching for him. When he discovers the girl is Eva, Huberto is thrilled and falls back to the easy smile of his youth. Taking Eva to the bar of El Negro for a meal, Huberto then deposits her in the home of his friend, La Senora, instructing the woman to fix Eva up and teach her to read. Eva is excited by the thought of reading, but La Senora scoffs, telling Eva that there are more important things.

Eva lives with La Senora for several months. She meets Melesio, an effeminate Italian teacher who insists that he is not gay, but a woman in a man's body. La Senora finds Melesio a job in a cabaret where he performs while dressed as a woman. Melesio is the most popular act, and the wealthy citizens of the city flock to see his show. Melesio and Eva are fast friends, and La Senora seems to have developed a fondness for the girl as well.

Things change once again when a new police sergeant is assigned to the red light district and ignores the long standing habits of bribery and looking the other way. Life for all is a constant disruption of raids and problems. Melesio decides that the people in the area should send a letter to the authorities, reminding them of the benefits they have received throughout the years. The effect of the letter is not what the citizens have





hoped for and midnight raids are conducted. Melesio is arrested and Eva flees with La Senora. La Senora tells Eva to go away as she must concentrate on helping Melesio. Lost and alone, Eva feels abandon once again. The citizens of the area unite and the people of the red light district join in and a riot takes place over several days. The Revolt of the Whores does not last long, as the police step in, but chaos makes it impossible for Eva to find anyone she knows. Frightened, the young girl stays out of sight.

Days pass and Eva is on the streets, dirty and tired. A man calls out to her and Eva is not even strong enough to respond. The man takes her to a restaurant and gets her some food and water. The man asks Eva where her family is and she replies that she has no one. The man takes her to his truck and the two drive through the night. Eva sees the Palace of the Poor, a mansion of El Benefactor that has been taken over by squatters since the man died. The sight is beautiful to Eva. The truck finally arrives in a town surrounded by lush vegetation filled with fruits and flowers of all kinds. The man, Riad Halabi, tells Eva the town is called Agua Santa, and that they are home.

## Chapter Five Analysis

The life of Eva Luna changes drastically and the reader is witness to the strength of character that the young girl possesses. Though life working for the brother and sister is not easy, Eva had asserted herself and conquered the woman, allowing her the ability to work in peace. While there, Eva's relationship with Elvira thrives, and the two become as close as family. Eva continues to spin her stories for the older woman, and Elvira treats Eva as a granddaughter, sharing her bed and playing games in her coffin.

Eva's madrina ends things after the tragedy of her malformed stillbirth. The tragedy ruins the woman and her mind snaps. Unable to work and afraid to be seen by the public which hates her, madrina is in and out of Eva's life and frightens the girl when she does turn up. Eva's madrina causes her to lose the job with the patrona and the patron when she demands Eva's pay, accusing the brother and sister of compromising a minor. Fed up, the patrona fires Eva to be rid of the madrina.

The positions that Eva have later are many, but only two are highlighted. The first seems insignificant, with the exception of the strange Universal Matter that the Yugoslavian woman uses to recreate objects. The position does not last and Eva moves onto the home of the Cabinet Minister. The reaction that Eva has to the opulence around her can be expected, as she has grown up in a different lifestyle. Eva is thrilled that she will be able to add to the stories she creates. The day to day life in the home of the minister leaves something to be desired, however. Eva shows the reader that even though she is relatively young, at this point approximately 13, she is unwilling to settle for unfairness in life. Eva demonstrates this in a graphic way by dumping the chamber pot on the head of her employer.

Huberto enters Eva's life again, now more of a man than a boy. Eva has had a crush on him since they parted years earlier, and the handsome young man he has become brings a rush of feelings. Huberto looks on Eva as a sister, and instructs his friends to





do so as well. This frustrates Eva, as living with La Senora and learning about sex and relationships from the girls that work for her has opened Eva's eyes to a new world.

Eva becomes friends with Melesio, La Senora's best friend. Melesio is a bit of a lost soul, a woman trapped in a man's body. The cabaret where he sings at night allows him the freedom to be the person he believes he is. He flourishes there until the fateful night that the red light district is raided and he is arrested. La Senora leaves Eva, intent on saving her friend, and Eva is once again alone. Fate brings Eva a kind man, one who feeds her and takes her to his home, deep in the jungle. Eva will see her friends again, but it will be years.



# Chapter Six

## Chapter Six Summary

Riad Halabi, a gentle man with a cleft lip, takes Eva to town of Agua Santa, high in the mountains. The man tells Eva that he is known as the Turk and she is welcome to stay. Riad tells Eva that his wife needs to be kept company when he goes on buying trips for his store, The Pearl of the Orient, which he named for his wife Zulema.

Riad has arrived in Agua Santa after traveling and selling his wares throughout the area. Arriving in Agua Santa, Riad feels at home at once, though he arrives on a dark day. The son of the school teacher Ines had just been shot after taking a mango from a tree at a neighboring home. Riad takes charge at once, taking care of the funeral arrangements and arranging retribution for the killer. After the body is buried the entire town picks mangoes and carts them to the killer's house, filling it to the brim. The sun heats the mangoes, filling the house with ruptured fruit until it burst. The killer runs, never to return, and the town smells of marmalade to this day.

Riad builds his store, and when the time is right, returns to his homeland to take a wife. The ceremonies are conducted over five days and on the fifth night Riad meets his wife, Zulema, for the first time. Despite his kindness, Riad's cleft lip disgusts Zulema. Riad is brokenhearted, but takes his wife to Agua Santa, hoping that her love will grow.

Eva meets Zulema and greets her with an Arabic phrase that Riad has taught her. This is sufficient to melt the heart of the woman. For the first time, Eva is free to come and go as she pleases, and she cherishes the freedom. Eva looks on Riad as a father and the two share wonderful times, filled with laughter. Eva takes care of Zulema, a spoiled woman, with the care of a child, as she acts like one most days. The three fall into a comfortable family life, and Eva is happy. Riad arranges for Eva to take lessons from Ines the school teacher and the young woman discovers the joy of reading and writing. Eva's stories become more elaborate and her joy at writing them is almost as strong as her joy in telling them.

Life changes for Eva when Riad's cousin Kamal arrives, sent by his father to avoid the wars of their land. Kamal's arrival signals a change in Riad, who begins to spend all of his time with the young man, though he brings Eva little gifts to make up for his lack of attention. One of these trips changes things in Agua Santa for all. Zulema lusts for Kamal and when Riad leaves on a trip she sets out to seduce the younger man. He resists for as long as he can, but succumbs to Zulema's wanting. Eva witnesses the two making love, unsure of what is truly going on as the only experience she has is the tales she had heard at La Senora's apartment.

Zulema and Kamal make love all night and Kamal flees during the siesta the following day while Zulema sleeps. When she discovers Kamal is gone, Zulema is stunned and depressed, refusing to speak or move, sitting out in the rain until Eva is finally able to



make her go inside. Eva changes Zulema's clothes and puts her to bed, crawling in beside her. Riad finds the two there when he returns. Eva tells Riad that Kamal is gone, but nothing else. Everyone in the town knows that Zulema is lovesick but Riad refuses to recognize it, living in denial of the betrayal of his wife and cousin.

## Chapter Six Analysis

Eva's life takes a drastic and pleasant turn when she is rescued by Riad Halabi and taken to Agua Santa. For the first time in her life Eva does not feel like a servant, but a member of a family. Her duties are more those of a daughter than anything else. Even taking care of the spoiled Zulema is something to be looked forward to. Eva takes care of the woman as if she were a doll.

While with Riad and Zulema, Eva is given two gifts that she will cherish more than any other. Riad arranges for Eva to learn to read, something she has longed to do. Reading, coupled with writing, allows Eva to write her stories down. The stories that Eva tells are the one constant in her life, the one thing that she can count on as her own, as well as something that she can give to others. Having nothing of her own, Eva still tells stories as payment to those that have been kind to her. As her life progresses, her stories will have as much of an impact on things as the experiences she has.

Riad is a kind man, one who does not want to subject those around him to his birth defect. Eva looks at Riad's birth defect as a gift from God, something that makes him more special than others. Over time, Riad relaxes enough around Eva to stop covering his face around her. This is significant, though the reader will not learn how much until later.

The arrival of Kamal changes Eva's life once again when Riad's young cousin is seduced by Zulema. Eva witnesses the two making love, but cannot reconcile the stories she has heard at La Senora's to the act of sex itself. The fact that Eva has a crush on Kamal makes things even more confusing for her when the young man leaves. Eva is loyal to Riad and through him, to Zulema, and does not want to tell anyone the truth to avoid hurting the man she considers her father. Though Riad is sure to know the truth, his kindness prevents him from taking the revenge his ethnicity allows.

It appears to the reader that Eva constantly lands on her feet, despite the life that goes on around her. Taking each day as it comes, Eva triumphs over whatever life throws her way. It is clear, however, that the happy life she has in Agua Santa is not going to last much longer, through no fault of her own.



# Chapter Seven

## Chapter Seven Summary

Rolf Carle is working for Senor Aravena, who tells him that unrest is in the air. Rolf begins to check into things and discovers that his mentor is correct. The General, so long in power, is disliked by many, and protests begin in earnest and within days the powerful men of the country begin to flee. Though not without bloodshed and loss of life, the people successfully revolt and the first steps toward democracy are made.

In Agua Santa, Eva is unaware of the upheaval taking place as no one so far from the cities pays much attention to the politics of the country. Though news reaches the small town, Riad Halabi tells Eva that democracy has little to do with them and life will not change.

Huberto Naranjo also watches the changes that are taking place in the country. Things change when El Negro invites him to a secret meeting and Huberto meets guerrillas. Stunned, Huberto realizes that he is not alone in his thinking that life is unfair. Huberto enlists and works in the city, causing disruptions, painting walls, and handing out flyers. Sent to the mountains, Huberto realizes how hard things are for the young men that fight. As a guerrilla, Huberto learns new meanings for solitude, and silence. Living in the mountains is not easy, but somewhere along the way the young man realizes that this is what he is meant to do. The love he has for his men transforms him. It is in the mountains that Huberto meets Rolf Carle, and the two develop an unlikely friendship.

## Chapter Seven Analysis

Years pass for the different characters of the novel. Rolf Carle grows into a man, intent on making a name for himself, but at the same time he sees the changes in the world around him and is drawn in. Though his intent is to document history, he also feels for the people around him and helps where he can. This can sometimes be tricky, as the country is still corrupt, despite the overthrow of the government. Though democracy is making headway, the exiled leaders of the past are returning and the people in the country are set in their ways.

Eva still lives her quiet life in Agua Santa. The remoteness of the village is highlighted to the reader when the news of the overthrown government and the introduction of democracy does not interrupt the party that Riad Halabi is throwing to raise money for a new school roof. Though Eva greets the man with the news of the upheaval, he is not concerned, explaining that what is happening so far away will not affect them.

Three main characters are obviously headed for some type of connection. Huberto has discovered his calling as a guerrilla. Fighting for freedom and living in the mountains is a far cry from the cons that he used to run in the city, however he seems truly happy with his new mission in life. The fact that Huberto is operating in the mountains will put him in

closer proximity to Eva. The two have not seen each other since before the Revolt of the Whores, and both have changed dramatically over the years.

Rolf Carle is changed as well, using his skills with documentaries to make sure that the revolution and birth of democracy is recorded. Despite his effort to maintain his status as an observer and recorder of news, Rolf is drawn into the battle as well, helping those when he can in an effort to birth democracy. Working in the fields, Rolf too earns the respect of the citizens and his honesty and integrity are well known. As a result of this Rolf meets Huberto Naranjo.



# Chapter Eight

## Chapter Eight Summary

Two years have passed since Kamal left Agua Santa and life continues for Eva Luna. Zulema recovers from her drastic decline, but never fully recovers any will to live. Riad Halabi takes her to the hospital but they can do nothing for her and suggest electric shock. Eva cares for the woman, telling her stories and reading her articles from magazines, and this seems to bring the woman some happiness at least. Eva and Riad fall back into their familiar routine, playing dominoes, taking care of the store and going to the movies. The man suggests that Eva take courses to be a secretary so that she can depend on herself someday. Eva is happy in her life and does not wish to leave Agua Santa.

The time comes for Riad to head to the capital for more supplies. Eva is afraid to be in the house alone with Zulema, feeling like the place is still haunted by the ghost of Kamal, but Riad explains that he must go as a matter of business. Zulema does not realize her husband is gone for a day, and when she does seem relieved. Eva takes Zulema onto the patio so that she can get some sun and digs up the jewels that the woman hides there. Zulema tells Eva to bury them again and returns to bed. Eva prepares her dinner and goes to bed herself.

The following morning, Eva finds Zulema dead, having shot herself in the head. Eva cannot bear to have anyone see her patrona this way, so she set about cleaning the woman, changing her clothes, and returning the gun to the drawer of Riad Halabi. The first customer of the morning arrives, the chief of the local tribe. The chief finds Eva sitting quietly with Zulema, telling her stories. Word spreads through the village until the police arrive. The police conduct a raid, finding the gun and the soiled clothing. Eva is taken into custody in handcuffs and led away. The schoolteacher Ines tries to speak to her but the lieutenant will not allow it. The police simply takes Eva to the station and begins to question her. Eva is mute with fear, unable to describe the way she found Zulema. The lieutenant beats Eva, demanding to know why she killed Zulema and where she has hidden the woman's jewels. Eva calls on the ghost of her mother to help her and remains silent.

Riad Halabi arrives and demands Eva. The lieutenant accepts a bribe and allows the young girl to go. The entire town is outside, and they are as outraged as Riad about the condition that Eva is in. Riad and Ines take Eva home and care for her, then get her ready for Zulema's funeral. Everyone from the village shows up and gives their condolences to Riad and Eva, in solidarity and in defiance of the lieutenant.

Despite the fact that Eva has been in the town for years, rumors start anyway and the lieutenant returns to Riad, demanding more money to keep Eva out of trouble. The news has spread beyond the village and Eva is in the newspapers as well. Riad can no longer control what is going on, so he tells Eva that she must leave in order to be safe.



Eva is heartbroken, refusing to go, but the Turk insists. Eva realizes that she loves Riad not as a father, but as a lover and kisses him on the mouth, the first person ever to do so. The two go to bed and make love through the night. In the morning Riad takes Eva to the bus stop and sends her away. Eva begs to stay but Riad tells her that he has lived his life and it is time for her to live her own.

The bus takes Eva to the capital. Once there, Eva finds a hotel and begins to look for work. The routine is the same each day, and the owner of the hotel takes pity on her and gives Eva the address of a place that might be hiring. Heading in that direction, Eva realizes that she is near the Calle Republica, the red light district. There is a disturbance in the street and Eva is unable to head back, instead she dashes into a church and sits quietly, waiting for the noise to die down. A beautiful woman is in the church as well, and asks Eva if she had been caught up in the turmoil. Stunned Eva and the stranger realize they know each other, the woman is Melesio, now known as Mimi.

Melesio had been arrested the night of the Revolt of the Whores and taken to Santa Maria, a prison camp on an island. He had stayed there for a year, being brutalized in the cell for homosexuals until La Senora had been able to buy his way out. Melesio was taken to a hospital and cared for, but La Senora had to flee the country. Sending women overseas for work had been the way La Senora had earned the money to free her friend, but the women had been taken to brothels and become prostitutes. La Senora was considered the mastermind of a slave ring and fled for safety.

Melesio, now Mimi, invites Eva to her apartment, declaring that loneliness is not good for a person. The two live together happily, with Eva telling Mimi stories and Mimi explaining that with one more operation he will finally become a woman completely. Eva struggles to understand why Mimi would want to be a woman when all her life Eva has cursed the fact that she herself was female. The two share life and romance, but no serious relationships, and Mimi explains the beliefs of the Maharishi, her spiritual advisor. Eva is once again relatively happy.

## Chapter Eight Analysis

Eva tries to live her life as best she can, but once again is the victim of circumstances beyond her control. Life in Agua Santa has returned to a somewhat normal state, with Riad and Eva sharing fun times together like a father and daughter, and Zulema acting like a spoiled child. Though Riad tries to help his wife, it seems she is determined to live her life wallowing in self-pity, and nothing can be done for her.

Eva tries to help Zulema as well, and does not dislike the woman despite the fact that she had been unfaithful to Riad and is the reason that Kamal has left the village and Riad. Always encouraging and thinking of others, Eva takes Zulema outside and tries to get her interested in herself again by digging up the woman's jewels, one of the few things that has brought her joy. Even the jewels do not work, and Eva buries them again, though they will become important as the story progresses.



Zulema kills herself, and Eva, once again thinking of others, cleans the scene and her patrona, unwilling to let others see Zulema at anything but her best. Riad is still away, and Eva does not know what to do, so she simply waits, convinced that the ghost of Kamal has caused the problem at hand. The villagers arrive and they pity Eva, not only because of the situation, but because the police arrest her for murder. The statement that Riad made about democracy not being important to the people so far from the capital is haunting at this point, as the corrupt lieutenant beats Eva to get her to confess. Eva, unsure of what is happening or why, is mute, calling on the ghost of her mother for strength.

Riad is able to bribe the lieutenant and get Eva out of jail, stunned by what they have done to the young woman. The villagers are equally angry, though the schoolteacher Ines warns that despite this, gossip will soon spread. This is sadly the case, especially when the story of Zulema and Eva hits the newspapers. Riad has no choice but to send Eva away, promising to always take care of her. Eva does not want to leave the man that has shown her only kindness and love, allowing her to feel as if she has a family for the first time since her mother's death. The love Eva feels for Riad is overwhelming, and she demonstrates it by kissing him on the mouth, something that no one has ever done because of his cleft lip. Eva shares that no one has ever kissed her on the lips either, thus the two are sharing a gift with each other. Making love, Eva gives herself completely to Riad, as she has nothing but herself to give. Riad still send Eva to the capital, knowing that she will have no life in Agua Santa now that the gossip is in place.

In the capital, Eva tries to find work, the schooling that she has received giving her a better chance than she would have had. Despite this, work is hard to come by and her money is running out. The unrest in the streets is far different from the small village of Agua Santa, and signifies that despite the new democracy that is in place, the people of the country are still unhappy with the way things are.

Eva reconnects with Melesio, now Mimi, when swept up in such unrest. The two are thrilled to be together again. Mimi tells Eva what happened to him after the Revolt of the Whores, brought about by the letter he had written about police corruption. Mimi had spent a year in a penal colony until La Senora had been able to buy his freedom. From there he had recuperated in a hospital and begun taking the hormones that would transform him into a woman. Only one surgery remains, and needs to be conducted in Los Angeles. Once Mimi saves the money, she will go to the United States and return, a true woman. Eva has difficulty with this idea, not because she feels that Melesio is still a man, but because being a woman has never been easy for her, and she cannot understand why anyone who is lucky enough to be born a man would want to change that.





# Chapter Nine

## Chapter Nine Summary

Rolf Carle continues his life making documentaries and becomes somewhat famous. He lives to document history, but when not doing so, visits his family in La Colonia often, playing with his uncle's dogs and his cousins' babies. Rolf seems content and happy.

Eva runs into Huberto in the capital, a changed man. He recognizes her at once because of her eyes and the two share a happy reunion, having coffee and then making love. Mimi is not as pleased as Eva, telling her friend that Huberto has always been trouble and will stay that way. Eva does not like Mimi's opinion and quiets her.

Life has changed once again for Eva. Mimi has become a well known actress and the money she makes allows the two friends to move to a more spacious, beautiful apartment. In the capital, Eva looks for her madrina, finding her a shriveled old woman, almost mad. Eva places her madrina in a hospital, but the old woman slits her own throat, torn apart by the life she has led. The madrina is then placed in an institution, but Eva cannot bear to see her suffer there. Mimi finds a private clinic where madrina can stay and pays for one month. Eva takes a job in a factory in order to keep her madrina there. Mimi encourages Eva to make a living writing but she does not see this as a possibility.

Eva continues to see Huberto, longing to make him love her and stay with her, but he continues to be mysterious, telling Eva that she must keep their relationship a secret or he might be injured. Eva allows Huberto to control their relationship, never mentioning her past or her relationship with Riad, for fear of making Huberto jealous.

The truth about Huberto becomes known when two policemen are killed outside the factory where Eva works. Eva is upset because she knew the men and they had families. Eva realizes that Huberto is involved with the terrorists, though he explains that he fights so that the terror visited on his countrymen stop. Eva realizes that to Huberto, like so many others, women do not matter, that men need to make the decisions. How women fare after the revolution will not be important. For the first time Eva and Huberto part in anger, but Eva takes him back when he returns two weeks later.

## Chapter Nine Analysis

Rolf Carle is briefly mentioned, as are his growing fame and the work he loves. Rolf lives to document history, winning awards and growing famous in many countries. Carle also still cherishes his family, visiting his uncle, aunt and cousins in La Colonia as often as he can.

Eva's life changes for the better again, as Mimi becomes a famous actress and the two are able to live comfortably. This comfort drives Eva to find her madrina, whom she



takes care of as anyone would if they found family in such a situation. Mimi's immediate assistance provides the reader with insight into the depths of friendship the two share. It appears that Eva has finally found someone like herself, caring and considerate of others with whom to enjoy life.

It seems that several years pass, though no sense of time is given. The fact that Eva attends the university to obtain a bachelor's degree while working in a factory brings the passage of time to the reader's awareness. The fact that Eva works in a factory that makes uniforms for the police and the army seems insignificant, but will be important later in the novel.

The return of Huberto Naranjo to Eva's life has seemed predestined and the two are happy to see each other. Huberto finally sees Eva as a woman and Eva is allowed to love the man that she has worshiped for so long. Huberto urges Eva to keep the relationship a secret but refuses to tell her why. The only person that Eva tells is Mimi, who tells Eva that she has known Huberto since he was a boy and he will never amount to any good. For the first time the two disagree and Mimi backs down, watching unhappily as Eva becomes more enthralled with Huberto.

Eva has two revelations in this time period. The first is that Huberto is a guerrilla, working to undermine the government. Eva is stunned. Though her life has improved dramatically, Eva has not turned a blind eye to the unrest in the country, and having someone she loves directly involved in it allows her to see things from a different perspective. The second thing Eva realizes is that Huberto talks of changing things and making the country a better place where they can live and love openly, the only changes he really wants are for men. Women are still a sub-culture—there, but not really important.



# Chapter Ten

## Chapter Ten Summary

Rolf Carle returns to the country and Senor Aravena tells him of the unrest. Aravena wants Rolf to contact his friend, Huberto Naranjo and find out what the guerrillas are up to. Rolf is unsure if the man he knew is even alive, but he decides to try. Huberto, now known as Comandante Rogelio, is still living in the mountains, surrounded by his men and the new recruits that keep arriving. Living in the trees, directing his men and fighting for what he believes in is now Huberto's life.

Rolf stops at El Negro's bar and leaves a message, then returns each night until he is granted a meeting. Blindfolded and taken into the mountains, he spends five days being moved around like freight. Rolf respects the men for the way they treat each other and Rogelio for of the care he shows the people and his men. While considerate to others, Rogelio would do away with a traitor in his midst with no problem. Aravena tells Rolf to hide the film he has made, as the government will most certainly want it. Rolf takes the film in a locked suitcase to La Colonia and instructs his family to hide it.

Colonel Tolemeo Rodriguez arrives at the uniform factory where Eva works for an inspection. Rodriguez sees Eva and, that evening, has his driver ask her to meet him for dinner. Eva refuses to Mimi's consternation. Three weeks later she returns to her apartment to find Rodriguez with Mimi sharing coffee. Mimi is frantic, as the colonel is the man who made the quarterly inspections at the penal colony while she was a prisoner. With her friend pushing, Eva accepts a dinner invitation with the Rodriguez.

The two enjoy a nice meal and small talk until Eva shocks the colonel by asking him if he wishes to have sex with her. Flustered, Rodriguez admits that he does. Eva tells him that sex without love is nothing. The colonel is unsure of what kind of woman he is dealing with and grows angry when Eva suggests that they simply get the act over with so he can move on. Mimi is distraught, the colonel is a powerful man and can make trouble for them, so Eva resigns her position at the factory the following morning. Mimi is relieved, and tells Eva that now she can be a writer.

Eva does write, unable to stop the flow of words once they start. The words flow and after three weeks Mimi gets an appointment with the Director of National Television, Senor Aravena. Aravena shows no interest at first but Mimi flirts unmercifully, inviting the man to the apartment for a small dinner. Aravena agrees and the two leave the office with some hope for Eva's writing.

At the dinner party, Aravena arrives with Rolf Carle in tow. Eva senses that she knows the man from somewhere. Mimi asks Eva to tell a story and she does, enthralling those around her with her tale. Carle is taken with her and the two seem to have some type of connection, something intangible. They talk for hours.



Aravena calls a few days later and tells Eva that he will put her script on the air. Excited, Eva and Mimi celebrate while it rains for days. The news broadcasts tales of destruction and sadness, but with one happy ending. A woman had been found, peacefully asleep, floating in a casket. Eva rushes to the hospital and reunites with Elvira who moves into the apartment with her and Mimi. Once again Eva's life seems to have completed a circle.

Rolf returns from a trip to Prague and calls on Eva and the two spend a lovely evening together, sharing tales of their lives. Eva tells him of her life, leaving out Huberto so that she will not endanger him. Rolf tells Eva about his life and his childhood. Saddened for Rolf, Eva creates a new ending for his mother and sister, happy to be able to give her new friend a better memory.

## Chapter Ten Analysis

Interesting things begin to happen in the lives of all the characters in the novel as their lives begin to intersect. Rolf Carle once again meets up with Huberto, now known as Comandante Rogelio. The easygoing nature of Huberto has been replaced with a man who is extremely cautious. Rolf is blindfolded and transported over a period of five days until he is deep in the jungle and in another world.

The life that Rogelio lives is far different from the life in the capital of the country. A war rages around him, one that the government is trying to keep from the general public's awareness. Though Rolf is a bit frightened at times, he lives the life of a guerrilla, deep in the jungles of South America. Rolf documents the lives of the guerrillas, and sees first hand the deep affection that Rogelio has for his men. The difficulties of the life sometimes cause a man to crack and Rogelio calms them, caring for them like a family member. A strong leader, Rogelio would have no trouble killing the same man if he was found a traitor. The life of the guerrilla is filled with peril and Rogelio explains to Rolf that the men all expect to die, so living is what they do until then.

Eva meets Colonel Rodriguez while she is working in the uniform factory in the capital. In her office, Eva is intrigued, even though the two never exchange words. The invitation by the colonel to dinner is a surprise to Eva who turns it down to Mimi's dismay. Eva is uncomfortable with the colonel's interest, and worried that meeting him would put Huberto in danger. Despite her refusal, Eva is still curious about the colonel and almost disappointed when he does not approach her again. When Rodriguez arrives at her apartment to ask her to dinner again, Eva accepts, as much from curiosity as to save Mimi. Mimi has discovered that Rodriguez is the same man that had conducted quarterly inspections at Santa Maria. Though there is little likelihood that the colonel would connect the ravishing beauty with the pitiful creature from the prison, Eva takes the man away and gives her friend peace.

At dinner, Eva displays her bluntness, asking the colonel if he is after her for sex. Astonished, the colonel quickly grows angry at Eva's seeming lack of decorum.

Rodriguez considers Eva a challenge and tells her that he will win her over. In order to avoid further confrontation, Eva quits her job so that she will not see Rodriguez again.

This is the start of yet another chapter in Eva's life, as she begins to write in earnest. Though she has always written her thoughts in notebooks, Eva begins to tell a tale, weaving the facts of her life into characters on a page. For three weeks this continues until Mimi arranges a meeting with Senor Aravena. Mimi invites the man to a meal at their home and it is here that Eva meets Rolf Carle. The evening is the beginning of something important for all parties, for more reasons than one. Aravena is entranced by Mimi. Eva is not sure if this man can provide Mimi with what she needs and allow her to flourish and become the wonderful person that she is, but does not interfere. Eva in turn is drawn to Rolf, and he to her. The tales that Eva weaves draw the journalist in and he cannot get Eva from his mind.

The rains that bring tragedy to so many in the surrounding countryside bring Eva's beloved abuela Elvira back to her. The coffin that Elvira has had for so long provides her with safe passage through the floods. Having purchased the coffin for her passage to death, Elvira is now sure that she will not need it, as it has provided her with passage to life. Mimi is at once taken with the kindly grandmother and Elvira moves in with the two women, creating a larger, stronger family.



# Chapter Eleven

## Chapter Eleven Summary

Rolf documents a brutal murder of guerrilla prisoners and takes the pictures and video to the opposing party of the president. The president promises a full investigation but instead a full cover-up takes place. To placate the opposition, nine guerrillas are moved to the penal colony on Santa Maria and the uproar dies down.

Elvira tells Eva that a ghost is haunting their house, but in reality it is El Negro, looking for Eva. Huberto wants Eva to draw up plans for the uniform factory so that the guerrillas can steal uniforms and free their comrades from Santa Maria. Mimi catches wind of the plan and begs Eva to stay out of it. Eva argues that they cannot keep turning a blind eye but Mimi argues that by doing so they are living quite well.

Eva meets Huberto at the zoo with Mimi in tow. The three meet several times over the next few days, and Huberto comes up with a plot to kidnap Colonel Rodriguez in order to exchange him for the prisoners in Santa Maria. The idea ebbs and flows, and a timeline is argued about. Mimi's knowledge of the inside of Santa Maria is very helpful, and she continues to help for Eva's sake. As the deadline draws near, Eva suddenly remembers Universal Matter and another plan comes into play.

Eva is spirited into the mountains by El Negro and they stop in Agua Santa. Unable to stay away, Eva stops at the Pearl of the Orient to see Riad Halabi. Now married to a young girl, Riad does not recognize that Eva is in his store and he does not even look up to answer her queries. Eva is happy for him. Luna makes El Negro stay until dark when she searches the outskirts of the jungle and digs up the jewels she buried so long ago.

In the jungle, Eva mixes the dough that will become Universal Matter. Rolf arrives to her surprise, to cover the story that Rogelio has told him will take place. Eva sleeps fitfully, dreaming of an unknown lover. Waking she stretches and goes outside to find Rolf and the two sit quietly waiting for dawn. Eva discovers that she is once again menstruating, something she has not done in years. Eva looks at this as an omen, that she will no longer dream of Zulema. The plan is in motion before Eva realizes it and she is taken to the local bus stop by El Negro. Arriving at home late that night, Mimi and Elvira greet her happily, wondering what has gone on as there has been no news on the radio. Eva explains that this is good news. If the escape was a success the government would not want the news broadcast. Rolf arrives later with the news that the prisoners have escaped successfully with no injuries. Carle takes Eva and they drive to La Colonia, where Eva can be safe until things blow over, on the off chance that someone in Agua Santa recognized her. There Eva meets Rolf's family, who love her as much as she loves them on sight.



Rolf relates the tale of the escape for Eva that evening. The prisoners used the smuggled in Universal Matter to make items shaped like grenades. Huberto and his men had shown up at the gate in stolen uniforms and no one had thought to question them as the guard is changed on Saturday. Eva wishes that people could know the truth of what happened and Rolf tells Eva that they will broadcast the report and if all else fails she will write it into her storyline. Eva does, titling her project, Bolero, which becomes very popular in the country.

Eva is summoned to the Department of the Defense to meet with now General Rodriguez. Rodriguez wishes for Eva to change portions of her story so that the government does not look so foolish in the retelling of the escape. The General also asks Eva to intervene with Comandante Rogelio and have the man surrender, promising he will not be harmed. Eva does not trust the general but refrains from saying so. The general bids Eva farewell, expressing regret for letting her go. Eva comments that he must be referring to her relationship with Rolf Carle and that she hopes it lasts forever. The two part, not enemies, not friends, and Eva moves on in life once again.

## Chapter Eleven Analysis

The novel continues to move at a very quick pace as the lives of the main characters intersect as the conclusion draws near. Rolf becomes more involved with the movement of the guerrillas, documenting atrocities against prisoners that come back to haunt the government. The attempt at a cover up is not possible as long as the political powers know that Rolf's documentation exists. Trying to calm the public outrage, prisoners are transferred to Santa Maria, the prison where Mimi was held so many years ago. Coincidentally, Santa Maria is not far from the village of Agua Santa, where Eva was so happy with Riad Halabi.

Huberto gets in touch with Eva, hoping that she will be able to provide him with the layout of the uniform factory, unaware that she no longer works there. Eva tells Huberto about her friendship with Colonel Rodriguez and though he does not react visibly, Eva knows that he is angry. This proves Eva's feelings that Huberto does not consider women as important as men. Huberto has controlled their relationship from the beginning, yet Eva is expected to wait for him, no questions asked for weeks or months at a time. As a result of this, Eva does not tell her lover about the changes that have taken place in her life, or her budding relationship with Rolf.

Despite the fact that Mimi lives as a woman, she speaks in her man's voice when telling Huberto exactly what she thinks of involving Eva in his plans. Huberto is even more stunned when Mimi draws him a map of the inside of Santa Maria, something that will help immensely when it comes to breaking the prisoners out of the prison. The final piece to the escape plane comes when Eva remembers Universal Matter. The question of smuggling weapons into the prisoners has been solved. The men inside will not have real weapons, but the guards will never know.





All of the important people in Eva's life converge, including Elvira, her beloved abuela. When Eva travels into the mountains with El Negro to put Huberto's plan in motion, she makes the man stop in Agua Santa so that she can check on Riad. Eva is pleased that the man she loved has found happiness and that he has prospered. The last stop for Eva in the village she called home for so long is to dig up Zulema's jewels. Eva will give them to Mimi so that she can have the operation she desires to make her a true woman.

Rolf's arrival in the mountains to document the escape seems a sign from Eva that they are destined to be together. That evening Eva dreams of an unknown lover, one that she is drawn to in an almost violent way. Waking in the morning, Eva discovers that she is menstruating again. To Eva, this is a sign that she will finally be free of Zulema haunting her dreams and thoughts.

The escape works, and Huberto is able to free his men with no violence. The government is embarrassed, especially when Eva includes the details in her television drama. A phone call from Colonel Rodriguez, now a General, frightens Eva a bit, but she holds her head high when meeting with him. The general knows that Eva must have some inside knowledge of the escape, but does not threaten her in any way. Instead he simply asks Eva to make some slight changes so that the government does not look so foolish. The general's request that Eva intervene with Huberto is met with resistance, simply because Eva cannot fathom the idea that Huberto would give up his ideals.



# A Final Word

## A Final Word Summary

Eva writes that Rolf left her in La Colonia and returned to the capital to keep track of events, but was detained for recording matters that the government did not want seen. Senor Aravena intervened, sending Rolf back to his village so that he would not get in further trouble.

Rolf arrives in La Colonia and seeks Eva out at once, finding her sitting under a tree in the garden. The two kiss and Rolf's uncle and aunt fetch the best wine to celebrate the new love. Life goes on for Eva and Rolf, though it is never clear how they end up as Eva refuses to reveal how she has written the story.

## A Final Word Analysis

The novel ends with some questions and some answers. Eva tells stories with many different options for endings, enjoying allowing her listeners to decide for themselves how things will turn out. Even with questions and possible alternatives offered, it seems clear that after a life filled with challenges and uncertainties, Eva Luna has finally found herself a place to belong, as well as happiness.



# Characters

## Eva Luna

Eva Luna is the main character in the book and the majority of the novel is told from her standpoint. Born to a servant, without a father, Eva lives a relatively normal life, filled with love, until her mother dies when she is six years old. Eva is raised from that point by her madrina, or godmother, the cook at the estate where Eva's mother Consuelo worked. When Professor Jones, their employer, dies, madrina is forced to find another place of employment for Eva, even though she is only seven. Eva finds happiness with the employer because it is here she meets Elvira, a kindly woman who looks on Eva as a granddaughter. However, there are troubles between Eva and her patrona, a spinster who employees her. After a conflict with the woman Eva flees, and meets Huberto Naranjo, a young boy who will have a profound influence on Eva's life.

Eva winds up in the village of Agua Santa after many years of trials, and finds the family that she has longed for. Living in the home of Riad Halabi and his wife Zulema, Eva feels as if she belongs. It is here that Eva learns to read and write, and is finally able to give voice to the many tales that she carries in her head. Though Eva has no wealth, she has always shared her stories with others, using them as a form of payment for those who have been kind to her.

Throughout the years Eva works many places and suffers many setbacks, however she does not allow life to hold her back in anyway. Whether Eva is learning the consistency of Ultimate Matter, a ceramic matter that will provide the means of freedom for a band of guerrillas, or telling tales that she uses to pay those who have been kind to her, Eva always stays strong. Despite bumps in the road that would normally stop a person in their tracks, Eva finds a way to stay on track and focused, reuniting with friends from long ago, taking care of those that have cared for her, and finding true love along the way.

## Rolf Carle

A journalist who develops a skill for making documentaries that catch the attention of the masses and win him fame and fortune, Rolf Carle starts life as the youngest son of a cruel school master in Austria. Rolf spends his earliest years in fear of his father, but when Lukas joins the army, what should have been a hard time for his family becomes wonderful years of peace and love. Despite the war that rages around them the Carle family feels secure with each other and in themselves.

Things change for Rolf when he grows older and reaches his tenth year. First the Russian soldiers that have occupied his village make all of the townspeople bury the dead in a concentration camp that is on the outskirts of town. Shortly after, Lukas Carle



returns to once again rule his family with an iron fist. Rolf's life is once again filled with terror, even though he barely remembers his father.

The horror his father brings divides the family when Rolf's older brother finally becomes strong enough to stand up for his mother. As a result Rolf is left as the only other man in the house and the target of Lukas's wrath. Protecting his mother and his younger sister is a difficult job, but Rolf tries as hard as he can until the day his father is found hanging in the forest, murdered by some of his students. Though Rolf is relieved that Lukas is out of his life, his guilt at not being able to save his family is overwhelming and he becomes sick, feeling he is a failure. Rolf's mother sends him to South America, to the home of a distant cousin, hoping to bring her son back from the brink.

The trip does save Rolf, who thrives in La Colonia, a small town in South America that has maintained the feeling of a town in Austria. Rolf learns about life from his uncle and aunt, and learns about love from his cousins. He also meets his mentor, Senor Aravena, a journalist who encourages Rolf in his documentary skills. Rolf learns as he works, documenting history in the country, learning about the people and their struggles, including Huberto Naranjo, a guerrilla fighter struggling to free the people from a corrupt government.

While dealing with his job and his ideals, Rolf meets Eva Luna, a woman like no other. Despite her upbringing and the trials that she has experienced, Eva is a breath of fresh air to Rolf. The two work with Huberto in a daring raid to free guerrilla prisoners from a penal colony and in doing so draw even closer to each other. In the end, the reader is unsure how the lives of Eva and Rolf turn out, but knows that whatever time they have spent together has made them happy.

## Huberto Naranjo

Huberto Naranjo meets Eva when she is a young girl and he is a street urchin. Naranjo has lived on the street since he was old enough to take care of himself. Huberto takes Eva under his wing when she runs away from the spinster patrona's home after snatching the wig from her employer's head. Huberto teaches Eva the ways of the street for the few days that she is with him, as well as some of the cons that he works on the people of the capital.

When Eva returns to the capital after fleeing the house of the Cabinet Member, she once again returns to Huberto, but finds him a handsome teen, well in control his life. Eva is immediately infatuated with Huberto who is pleased to see Eva, but looks on her as a sister. Huberto takes care of Eva, placing her in the house of La Senora and providing the money to support her. Eva wishes their relationship was something more but Huberto still sees her as a girl.

Things change when Eva returns to the capital after Zulema's suicide. The two see each other by chance on the street and Huberto realizes that Eva is now a woman. Huberto is now a guerrilla fighter known as Comandante Rogelio to his men. Huberto joined the



guerrillas after attending a meeting by chance and finding his true calling. Huberto longs for the freedom of the people and fights to end the oppression by the government. Huberto, long without family, finds that his men are his brothers and he is happy in the jungle with them. Huberto and Eva become lovers, and Huberto loves Eva as truly as he can. Eva does not know the truth about what Huberto has become until two police officers are killed and Huberto's opinion differs from hers. Despite this, Eva still loves Huberto and sees him whenever he is able to.

Huberto works with Eva and Rolf Carle when he plans to break nine of his guerrillas out of Santa Maria, the penal colony. Eva supplies the recipe for Universal Matter so that the prisoners can make fake grenades to scare their captors. Huberto and his men walk through the front gates in stolen uniforms and free their comrades without firing a bullet. By the time the mission is complete, Eva is in love with Rolf, and Huberto knows that the life he lives is not one that Eva can share with him.

## Consuelo

Eva's mother, Consuelo is rescued as an infant by missionaries and lives in the jungle until she is approximately twelve years old. The missionaries then send her to a convent so that she can learn how to act like a young girl instead of an animal. Consuelo stays with the sisters at the Convent of the Little Sisters of Charity for a few years, until the sisters place her in the home of Professor Jones. In the professor's home Consuelo works hard but is happy. The professor trusts Consuelo and depends on her without question. Having developed a formula that mummifies people perfectly, the professor's talents are always in demand. Though many try to discover his secret formula, Consuelo is the only person trusted with it.

Consuelo is loyal to her employer and always does as she is told until the day the gardener is bitten by a poisonous snake. The professor instructs Consuelo to bring the man to him when he is dead to be embalmed, but instead Consuelo tries to heal the man. Taking care of the gardener as best she can, Consuelo discovers that the only thing that makes the man feel better is sex. A virgin at 30, Consuelo decides that she is deserving of some joy as well. Eva Luna is conceived during Consuelo's ministrations. The gardener recovers and leaves Consuelo, but she is not sad, instead she is happy that he has left her with a child.

Consuelo delivers Eva alone in her room. The cook arrives and offers to be Eva's godmother. Consuelo consents and tells the madrina that her child will be named Eva, which means "life," and Luna as this was the tribe of her father. Eva is raised with love for six years until Consuelo dies after swallowing a chicken bone while celebrating Christmas. Before she dies, Consuelo tells Eva that she will always be with her, as long as the young girl can remember her.



## Professor Jones

Consuelo's employer, Professor Jones is a highly intelligent but focused man, who often misses what is occurring right under his nose. Consuelo works with the professor while he embalms bodies, creating such lifelike mummies that the families of the deceased often dress their loved ones and display them at home. The professor also has ideas of striking people with mental deficiencies in the head to restore common sense, and infecting cancer patients with malaria as he has observed that cancer is not as common in countries that have outbreaks of the disease. While Professor Jones is extremely intelligent, he treats Consuelo with medication when she gets pregnant, believing her swollen abdomen is due to indigestion.

The professor dies the year after Consuelo. Eva Luna cares for him in his hour of need and the professor who had never known the girl was in the house grows to love her, believing that she is his family, or perhaps wishing she was. Despite his request that Eva inherit his estate, the church ignores his wishes, leaving the girl to the life of a servant. Despite the odds, Eva takes the things she learned in the professor's home and uses them to her advantage in life, becoming stronger from the lessons she has learned.

## Mimi

Mimi, a transsexual, meets Eva when Eva is a young girl. When Eva first meets Mimi, he is known as Melesio, a male Italian teacher and is the best friend of La Senora. Melesio gets a job as a singer in a cabaret, singing dressed as a woman. Melesio's act is the most popular on the stage, and people of all walks of life come to see him perform. All is well for Melesio and he is happy until a corrupt police lieutenant takes over the area of the red light district. The officer demands more of the people than any other has before and Melesio pens a letter to the authorities, reminding them that they will lose out on their benefits in the area if the lieutenant continues in this manner. Rather than calm the situation, the authorities raid the district and Melesio is taken to Santa Maria, a prison on an island. The man lives there for a year in a group of homosexuals, being abused in horrific ways. La Senora is finally able to free him with bribes and he is taken to a hospital to recover.

Melesio remakes himself, becoming Mimi, a beautiful woman and actress. The country loves him and the intrigue about whether he is a man or woman. Despite the fame, Mimi still longs for one thing, unconditional love. Surprisingly, she finds it in Senor Aravena.

## Riad Halabi

Riad Halabi rescues Eva from the streets of the capital after the raid in the red light district and takes her to Agua Santa. Known in town as The Turk, Halabi is a kind man, always more concerned for others than himself. A cleft lip makes the man self-



conscious, and he carries a cloth to cover the lower half of his face whenever he is with someone.

Halabi moves to South America to make his fortune and support his family when he is a young man. A traveling salesman, he never makes a fortune, but does manage to send money to his family so that his brothers can go to school and provide his sister with a dowry. After years of travel, Halabi settles in Agua Santa and builds a shop, The Pearl of the Orient. Halabi names the shop for his wife Zulema. The two marry sight unseen after an arrangement with their families. Zulema cannot get beyond the cleft lip and hates her new home. Despite this, Halabi loves his wife and showers her with presents, hoping to make her happy.

Riad Halabi cares for Eva as a daughter and the two live happily for several years. Even Zulema accepts Eva, and theirs is the first family that Eva is a part of. Things change when Zulema kills herself and Eva is blamed for her murder. Though Riad bribes the officials so that Eva does not remain in jail, the rumors in the small town begin to spread and Riad sends Eva away, unwilling to subject her to the talk. The night before she leaves, Eva kisses Halabi on the lips, the first person ever to do so, and the two make love. Eva longs to stay with him but Riad remains firm, unwilling to allow the girl he loves to sacrifice the life she might possibly live.

## Zulema

The wife of Riad Halabi, Zulema is a selfish woman, intent on remaining unhappy in her marriage. Zulema agrees to marry Riad, believing him to be a wealthy merchant. Despite the fact that Riad does well, Zulema cannot get past the fact that he has a cleft lip. Riad is accustomed to covering his mouth to keep others from seeing his face, but the fact that he must do so for his wife wounds him deeply.

Zulema spends most of her time in bed ignoring people until Riad's cousin Kamal comes to stay with them. When Riad leaves on a trip, Zulema seduces Kamal and the act is witnessed by Eva. The house is never the same, and Zulema slips into a depression when the young man runs away. Though Riad never mentions it, he is aware of what happened while he was away.

Zulema returns to her attitude of uncaring until Riad leaves on another trip, refusing even to be brought out of her depression by Eva draping her in jewels. The woman kills herself while Eva sleeps, leaving Eva to be blamed for her murder. Though Riad does not believe that Eva committed the crime, he knows that Eva will not be able to live in the small town with the gossip that has already started to surface. As a result of Zulema's selfishness, Eva must leave the first place that she felt at home.

## Lukas Carle

The father of Rolf Carle, Lukas is the head school master and a cruel man. Lukas is murdered by a group of his students after the annual school outing. The young men are



never punished, as no one in the town likes Carle at all, and their parents hold higher positions in town, such as the judge and police chief.

A horrible man, Carle abuses his children in his effort to raise them as he sees fit, and believes that there is nothing they can do right. The only respite the family gets from his cruelty is when Lukas enlists in the army during World War II. While in the army Lukas can be as cruel as he likes and be commended for it.

## **Jochen Carle**

The oldest child of Lukas and Frau Carle, Jochen is a disappointment to his father. Despite his size, Lukas considers Jochen a waste, repeating it so often that the boy has no choice other than to believe him. When Lukas is in the army during WW II, Jochen steps up and becomes the man of the family, caring for his siblings and hunting for food. Lukas' return sets the young man back, but he is able to stand up to his father when the man humiliates Frau Carle. Knowing that nothing will ever change, Jochen says goodbye to his family and leaves to make a life of his own.

## **Katherina Carle**

The second child of Lukas and Frau Carle, Katherina is mentally disabled and spends most of her life hiding under the table to avoid her father. Katherina loves her brother Rolf and follows him around like a puppy. Rolf does not want to leave his sister when he goes to South America, but does so as he knows she will not live much longer.

## **The Madrina**

Though she is never named, Eva's madrina, or godmother, is the cook for Professor Jones when Eva is born. Consuelo consents to have Eva baptized at the cook's insistence. When Consuelo dies, madrina takes care of Eva as best she can. After the death of Professor Jones, madrina finds employment for Eva so the young girl will have room and board.

Eva's madrina eventually goes mad, after giving birth to a deformed baby with two heads, one black, one white. The child is stillborn, but madrina is accused of murder. Unable to find work after all of the news involving her, madrina winds up in a mental hospital where Eva finds her years later. By this time Eva is a grown woman and she finds a better home for her madrina where she can live the rest of her days in peace.

## **Spinster Patrona**

Eva's first employer after the death of Professor Jones, the character's name is never revealed to the reader. A retired bookkeeper, the patrona gives orders faster than she can remember, giving Eva some freedom in her daydreams. When Eva becomes





infatuated with a seascape hanging on the wall the woman grows angry, thus invoking the rage of Eva. Eva claws at the woman, snatching the wig from her head. In Eva's youth and confusion, she believes she has scalped her boss, and flees to the city, meeting Huberto for the first time.

## **Bachelor Patrona**

The brother of Eva's first employer, the bachelor brother spends his time drinking and gambling. When Eva matures he has the girl wash and dress him, but never molests her in any way. Though his sister is clearly in charge, there are times the brother speaks up and protects Eva.

## **Yugolsavian Patrona**

An unnamed character and one of Eva's employers, the Yugoslavian woman teaches Eva how to make things using Universal Matter, a ceramic-like material.

## **La Senora**

The woman whom Eva lives with after leaving the Cabinet Minister. La Senora is a friend of Huberto's and makes her living in the red light district in the capital.

## **Senor Aravena**

Senor Aravena is a journalist at the beginning of the novel, and meets Rolf Carle when he stays at his family's inn. Aravena becomes Rolf's mentor, encouraging him in journalism and his desire to create documentaries. Rolf winds up working for Aravena when the man becomes the National Director of Television.

Aravena produces Eva's story after Mimi arranges for him to read the manuscript. Aravena falls in love with Mimi after the meeting, accepting her/him, for what she is, and loving her unconditionally.

## **General Tolomeo Rodriquez**

Eva first meets Rodriquez when he is a colonel who visits the uniform factory where she works. The colonel wants Eva to become his lover, but she refuses. As time passes Rodriquez is promoted to the position of general and the two meet again after Huberto frees the guerrillas from Santa Maria. The general does not punish Eva for her obvious involvement, instead he asks that Eva convince Huberto to accept an offer of peace.





## **Elvira**

The cook at the home of the spinster sister and brother, Elvira takes Eva under her wing and cares for her like a grandchild. Eva and Elvira are separated when Eva is fired, but reunite years later when Elvira is deposited in the capital in her coffin after a flood.

## **El Negro**

The owner of a bar in the red light district, El Negro helps Huberto by relaying messages for him.

## **Uncle Rupert**

A distant cousin to Rolf's mother, Rupert lives in South America with his wife and daughters. Rupert takes Rolf in when he flees Austria and treats him as his own son.

## **Aunt Burgel**

Rupert's wife, Burgel treats Rolf as her son as well. Burgel makes sure to give Rolf a sense of family, and wishes that he would marry one of her daughters.

## **The Cousins**

Rolf's cousins are never named and, as they do everything together, are like one character. The sisters love Rolf when he arrives and as they all mature the three become lovers. The two cousins share Rolf as they do everything else. When Rolf leaves, the two sisters marry two brothers.



# Objects/Places

## South America

The novel takes place in South America, though the specific country is never named.

## Calle Republica

The name of the street in the red light district where Eva lives with La Senora.

## Agua Santa

The small village in the mountains where Eva lives with Riad Halabi and his wife Zulema.

## The Pearl of the Orient

The store in Agua Santa owned by Riad Halabi.

## Santa Maria

The island penal colony where Melesio is imprisoned for a year. Later in the novel Eva and Rolf assist Huberto in breaking nine guerrilla fighters out of the prison.

## Universal Matter

The material that Eva learns to make while working for a Yugoslavian woman. The material can be molded into anything and then painted. Eva helps Huberto smuggle the Universal Matter into the prison on Santa Maria. The prisoners use the matter to create lifelike grenades, fooling their captors into thinking they are armed.

## La Colonia

The village in South America where Rolf goes to live with his aunt and uncle. The town resembles a village in Austria, Rolf's homeland.

## The Red Light District

A section of town in the capital, the red light district is where questionable activities take place, such as gambling and prostitution.



## **Ministry of Defense**

The offices of General Rodriguez, where Eva is summoned and the general asks her to convince Huberto to accept a peace treaty.

## **Austria**

The country where Rolf Carle was born. Rolf lived in a village with his parents and siblings until his father was murdered and Rolf was sent to South America to live with family.



# Themes

## Fortitude

There are many examples of fortitude in the novel, the most obvious being Eva Luna herself. Born to an unmarried servant, Eva spends the first part of her life in the home of her mother, Consuelo's, employer. Eva is happy, secure in the love of her mother, creating a world of her own with her imagination. Life changes for Eva when her mother dies on her sixth Christmas. The loss is overwhelming, but Eva is still secure in her mother's love, able to call her on the memory of her mother when life gets too difficult.

Throughout her life, Eva overcomes many obstacles, always working to live, but also to help those around her. Though her life is difficult Eva never questions the lot she is dealt, she simply does what needs to be done and moves on. Eva's youth is sometimes underestimated by those around her, but despite her lack of experience, Eva stands up for herself when necessary, whether angrily snatching the wig from one employer's head, or dumping a chamber pot on the head of another. This ability of Eva's makes it almost impossible for her to fail in her life. In the end, despite the difficulties Eva experiences, she achieves her dreams, even though at times she is not even aware of what they are.

Other characters in the novel show great fortitude as well, and this may be why they are drawn to Eva, as she is to them. Eva's best friend when she returns to the capital is Mimi, a beautiful transsexual that Eva knew as Melesio when she was a young girl. Mimi left his home and his vicious father to move to the capital where he taught Italian. Melesio begins working in a cabaret and realizes that performing is what he loves. Life takes a turn when Melesio is arrested and taken to Santa Maria Prison and he spends a year on the island being abused by the other inmates. Once free, Melesio recuperates and transforms himself into Mimi, the actress. Mimi achieves great fame, and finally finds someone to love her for who and what she is.

Rolf Carle shows fortitude when he leaves the pain of his youth behind him and travels to South America to stay with his uncle and aunt. The horrors of his youth and the abuse of his father might have made Rolf a weak man, but with strength of character he triumphs, pursuing his dreams. Riad Halabi does the same. Cursed with a cleft lip, Halabi creates a life for himself in sales, truly cherishing the interaction with his customers. Halabi shows fortitude by not allowing himself to avoid people, instead he seeks them out. The only concession the man makes to his disfigurement is to cover his face around others. Even this is not for his sake, but for the sake of others, not wishing to upset them.



## Love

Despite the difficult lives that the characters in *Eva Luna* sometimes lead, there is an undercurrent of love throughout the novel. Eva knows that she is loved, from her first memory and even past her mother's death, simply because her mother had told her this was so. After Consuelo's death, Eva still feels her mother's love, as well as that of her madrina, though the cook has a different way of showing it. The madrina shows her love by providing what she can for the young girl, and teaching her the things she knows to be true. Life is difficult, but Eva thrives, knowing that despite the hardships, she is loved.

Eva's first sense of romantic love occurs when she reunites with Huberto Naranjo in her teens. Eva has a crush on the handsome young man and he loves her, but as a sibling. This changes drastically when Eva and Huberto meet again as adults. To Eva it seems that she has been waiting for Huberto all of her life. The two meet when they can, as Huberto is now a guerrilla, fighting in the jungles of South America. Though they love each other, it seems that they need each other more to remember where they have come from and the adversity they have faced, than to plan for the future.

Eva's relationship with Riad Halabi is at first the love of a child for a parent, which turns into something more when Eva is forced to leave him. Eva is grateful to Halabi for giving her a family and stability and shows him by kissing his lips, something no one has ever done. In doing so, Eva unlocks deeper feelings between the two, and they make love, sharing their joy in each other and the sadness in their parting. Eva had long been taught that by giving away her virginity she would lose her worth, but Riad makes Eva feel the exact opposite, as if the man who cared for her has finally made her a woman.

The love of Eva and Rolf is true love, the two seem to have a spiritual connection, each thinking at separate times that they seem to know each other from somewhere. It seems that the difficult paths each has followed through their lives has lead them to each other. The author does not reveal the end of the lovers' story, but it is insinuated that their happiness is everlasting, created by them, for them.

## Sex

Sex is an important theme in *Eva Luna* from the outset. *Eva Luna* is conceived when her mother, Consuelo, is nursing the gardener back to health after a snake bite. Though the usual remedies seem to fail, Consuelo notices that the gardener responds positively when touched. Consuelo believes that if pleasure will save him she should have some pleasure as well. From that point on, sex is the medicine of choice. Though the gardener leaves, Consuelo does not regret her choice, as she has Eva as a gift.

Eva herself uses sex as a gift when she is leaving Riad Halabi after his wife's suicide. Though the two had been father and daughter to that point, Eva realizes as she is saying goodbye that she loves Riad. The young woman feels no shame as she gives herself to the man she loves and considers that she is receiving a gift as well. Though it might be a bit shocking, the act does not come across as incestuous at all. To Eva, and



therefore to the reader, sex with Riad is simply an expression of love, as well as regret that they will be parted. The fact that Eva kisses Riad on his cleft lip, the first person to do so, shows that Eva's gift is freely and lovingly given.



# Style

## Point of View

Eva Luna is written from two different points of view. The portions of the novel that involve Eva Luna directly are written in the first person from Eva's point of view. This is extremely helpful to the reader as the novel is basically about Eva and the events that shape her life. The writing is very descriptive with large portions of exposition so that the reader can get a better sense of the world which Eva lives in. As the novel spans approximately 30 years, the writing helps the reader to understand how Eva as a child viewed and perceived things, and how her views and perceptions altered as she matured. Eva Luna is an extremely intelligent person with a rich imagination. The main character in the novel, Eva shares stories that she creates with those she cares about, and sometimes offers them as payment for the kindness of others. The novel is written from Eva's point of view, and the style of this writing is carried through even when Eva is not the central focus of a portion.

Some parts of the novel are written in the third person, when the events taking place do not involve Eva. This occurs during portions of the novel that center on Rolf Carle or Huberto and during sections where the reader is given back story to get a better feeling or a character, such as Riad Halabi. This is also very helpful to the reader, as one is better able to understand the actions and reactions of each character, as well as their motivations.

## Setting

The novel Eva Luna takes place in South America, though the specific country is never named. It is clear from the descriptions of the many places that Eva visits during the novel that the climate is tropical. At different times in the novel Eva lives in the capital of the unknown country. Eva also spends many years living in Agua Santa, a small village in the mountains surrounded by jungle. Various other locations are visited and though the writer provides graphic and detailed descriptions, they are never named. The reader is able to get a true sense of the places that Eva lived because the writer uses graphic, descriptive text throughout.

Rolf Carle's early life in Austria is described, as well as the small town he grew up in. On the outskirts of the town, the townspeople are forced to dig mass graves for the victims of a concentration camp as World War II ends. After that experience, followed quickly by the murder of his father, Rolf moves to the same South American country where Eva was born, but to a small town called La Colonia. Here, the original settlers have reconstructed the home of their ancestors back in Austria.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is a bit formal, but not overly so, allowing the reader to easily follow the plot and enjoy the novel. There is some dialogue, but the majority of the novel is large descriptive passages, describing the picturesque views of Eva Luna as she grows and matures. Eva has a very active imagination and eventually becomes a writer after enduring many trials throughout her life. The novel, written from Eva's point of view for the most part, allows the reader to see not only what Eva sees, but how she feels about it and why. Reading *Eva Luna* is almost a tactile experience, written in such a way that one cannot help but feel immersed in the surroundings of the characters.

The characters are all well spoken, though there is a definite class difference expressed between the servants and the employers. This is sometimes not expressed so much in speech, but in the way different characters interpret the actions of others. The beliefs of the characters also separate the classes. An example of this is when Eva's madrina uses a rope with seven knots to measure Eva's head to ensure that she is still a virgin. The lower classes tend to meld their beliefs together, creating a melting pot of religion rather than following a strict doctrine. The author expresses the difference in the classes very well, allowing one to easily understand how and why people behave the way they do.

## Structure

The novel *Eva Luna* is divided into eleven chapters of varying length, and also includes a titled epilogue. The chapters vary in length from ten pages to almost thirty. At the outset each chapter involves one character and the events in their life, allowing the reader to gather more knowledge and a deeper understanding for each. As the novel progresses the chapters begin to weave the characters together so the reader can see how they begin to interact and the paths that lead them to each other.

The epilogue, titled "A Final Word," provides some closure for the reader, giving one the impression that Eva and Rolf are finally happy, finding their true mates in each other.

The plot of the novel is fairly straight forward, detailing the life of Eva Luna over a period of approximately thirty years. The author describes the people and places with great detail, allowing the reader to feel as if they are part of the novel. *Eva Luna* is a very enjoyable novel which transports the reader into the lives of the richly developed characters.





## Quotes

"Consuelo was seduced by the idea of being born in the midst of all that fear, in spite of the rumor that babies born during that period were abominations and would remain so years after the comet had faded from sight as a ball of ice and stellar dust."  
Chapter One, p. 6.

"In their hearts they knew that from that moment they would try to forget, to tear that horror from their souls, resolved never to speak of it, with the hope that time would erase it. Finally, slowly, exhausted, feet dragging, they returned home. Last came Rolf Carle, walking between two rows of skeletons, all equal in the desolation of death."  
Chapter Two, p. 34.

"'Take good care of my girl, madrina. I'm leaving her in your hands,' my mother said, discreetly wiping away the thread of blood trickling down her chin. Then she took my hand and, with her eyes, kept telling me how much she loved me, until a fog clouded her gaze and life faded from her body without a sound. For a few seconds I thought I saw something translucent floating in the motionless air of the room, flooding it with blue radiance and perfuming it with a breath of musk, but then everything was normal again, the air merely air, the light yellow, the smell the simple smell of every day. I took my mother's face in my hands and moved it back and forth, calling 'Mama, Mama,' stricken by the silence that had settled between us."  
Chapter Three, p. 44.

"Do you touch yourself with your hands"?

"Yes..."

"Often, daughter?"

"Every day."

"Every day! How often?"

"I don't keep count...many times..."

"that is the most serious offense in the eyes of God!"

"I didn't know Father. And if I wear gloves, is that a sin, too?"

"Gloves! But what are you saying, you foolish girl? Are you mocking me?"

"No-no," I stammered in terror, at the same time thinking of how difficult it would be to wash my face, brush my teeth, or scratch myself while wearing gloves."

Chapter Three, p. 49.

"It was not a suicide. Your schoolmates killed your father," Frau Carle declared once they were home.

"How do you know that, Mama?"

"I just know, and I am grateful they did it, because if they hadn't, we would have had to do it ourselves one day."

"Don't talk that way, please," whispered Rolf, frightened. He had always thought that his mother was resigned to her fate, had never imagined that her heart harbored such rancor against her husband. He thought he was the only one who hated his father. "It's all behind us now, we must forget about it."



"No, on the contrary, we must always remember it." She smiled with an expression he had never seen before."

Chapter Four, pp. 81-82.

"As long as you're untouched, you're worth something, she would say; but when you lose it, you're nobody. I did not understand why the part of my body that was so sinful and forbidden could at the same time be so valuable. "

Chapter Five, p. 106.

"The competition was fierce and the possibilities for advancement almost nil; for him, the only virtue in being a salesman was his pleasure in bargaining, which he did not use to drive a hard bargain but as an excuse for exchanging ideas with customers and making friends."

Chapter Six, p. 140.

"The dictatorship has collapsed," I said the minute he came in. I had spent the day looking after Zulema, who was suffering one of her crises, and I was waiting up for him in the kitchen.

"I know, child."

"That's what they said on the radio. What does it mean?"

"Nothing that involves us. It happened a long way from here."

Chapter Seven, p. 179.

"Why did you kill her? To rob her? They say the Turk's woman is rich, and has a treasure buried in the patio. Answer me, whore! Where did you hide the jewels you stole from her?"

Chapter Eight, p. 194.

"How we've changed! No, don't look at me like that. I'm not gay, I'm a transsexual."

"A what?"

"I was born a man, but by mistake, and now I'm a woman."

Chapter Eight, p. 207.

"Do you want to go to bed with me, Colonel?"

He dropped his fork and for nearly a minute stared at his plate.

"That's a crude question and it deserves a crude answer," he replied finally. "Yes, that's what I want. Do you accept?"

"No, thank you very much. Sex without love makes me melancholy."

Chapter Ten, p. 248.

"But if he can't change things, who can?"

"You and I, for example. What has to change in this world are attitudes. But we're a long way from that, and since you've made up your mind and I can't let you do this alone, I'll go with you to the zoo. What that imbecile needs isn't a plan of the uniform factory, but of Santa Maria."

Chapter Eleven, p. 268.



## Topics for Discussion

How was Eva Luna conceived? What does her name mean?

What happens to Eva's mother? Who cares for Eva?

Why does Rolf move to South America?

How does Huberto Naranjo change throughout the novel? What is his greatest love?

What gift does Eva offer those she cares for?

Why does Eva have to leave Agua Santa? When does she return and why? What has changed in that time?

What gift does Riad Halabi give Eva that she cherishes more than any other? How does this gift serve her in life?