

Jitterbug Perfume Study Guide

Jitterbug Perfume by Tom Robbins

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Plot Summary

"The beet is the most intense of vegetables" (Today's Special, p. 1). This is the line that opens the whole saga of Jitterbug Perfume by Tom Robbins. Beets are different than other vegetables. Beets are not lusty as tomatoes. They are melancholy and can suffer; they can also be guilty, such as the murderer who returns to the scene of the crime. The beet was the favorite of Rasputin. There are different kinds of beets, but it is the red beet that is the subject of concern here.

The book begins with people in Seattle (Priscilla), New Orleans (Madame Devalier and V'lu) and Paris (Marcel and Claude LeFever) all receiving beets. The beets are just left at the doorstep or tossed in through an open window. In Paris, they are delivered with the mail. No one knows where they come from or what the reason is for the beets. These beets begin by tying three modern time frame groups together without the reader knowing why. After the introduction of these characters, the action skips back to medieval times and the Citadel, which is the home of King Alobar. King Alobar looks into a looking glass in his harem and panics. They don't know why but he walks out and takes his dog for a walk to a pond when he plucks out a grey hair.

The king is panicked at the existence of a grey hair because it is a sign of aging and in his kingdom it is tradition to slay the king at the first sign of aging. Alobar does not want to die and enlists the aid of one of his wives in helping him to escape. This begins what for him is a thousand year journey through time as he and a woman he meets, Kudra, learn the secrets of immortality. They travel around, meeting up with the god Pan on and off. Pan is a pagan god who is half goat and half human. Pan begins to weaken with the acceptance of Christianity so he becomes weaker and weaker throughout the book. The purpose of the fragrance is to try to cover up the horrid scent of Pan. They always know that he is there, even if he is invisible.

Immortality means certain things. It basically means that Kudra and Alobar can't stay in one place for more than fifteen or twenty years, or people want to know why they don't age. It also means they have to practice the processes that they learned in the Bandaloo caves if they are to maintain their immortality.

Jitterbug Perfume is an interesting and humorous book that will hold the reader's interest, almost like a who-dunnit will, as the reader wants to know what happens next. What is the significance of the perfume bottle that Priscilla has? Is it really some elixir that leads to immortality? What happens to Kudra when she disappears? Why can't Alobar find her?

The quest for immortality and the love story between Kudra and Alobar are the subject of the book and so interesting questions are brought up about death and immortality. Readers will also find the book fun to read.



Opening, pp. 1-13

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"The beet is the most intense of vegetables" (Today's Special, p. 1). This is the line that opens the whole saga of *Jitterbug Perfume* by Tom Robbins. Beets are different than other vegetables. Beets are not lusty as tomatoes. They are melancholy and can suffer; they can also be guilty, such as the murderer who returns to the scene of the crime. The beet was the favorite of Rasputin. There are different kinds of beets, but it is the red beet that is the subject of concern here.

Seattle is where Priscilla lives in a studio apartment, which is billed as a glamorous place where artists live. Priscilla isn't an artist but a waitress, but it is believed that artists live where they work. This isn't actually true because there isn't enough room. Priscilla enters her apartment after a hard day at work. She stuffs her coin tips into a fishbowl, vowing to open a bank account. She remembers the time at work and her encounter with Ricki, a co-worker who is a lesbian. Priscilla and Ricki often take their breaks together, locking themselves in the bathroom and smoking joints or blowing lines of coke. Priscilla finishes washing her hair and then puts on a lab coat. She returns to her living room where she fumbles with the contents of various vials and beakers for the rest of the night. She ignores a knock on the door, but at sunup, she opens the door to see if there is a note. Instead, she finds a lump that she identifies as a beet.

In New Orleans, Madame Devalier is asking what time it is. When she is told by V'lu that it is three o'clock, she wants to know if it is morning or night. She has petals percolating in her perfume shop, named *Parfumerie Devalier*. She comments on the strength of the jasmine and says that they must remember to buy more from the Jamaican. Outside on Royal Street, a thin black man stands and sniffs the aroma. Later, V'lu discovers a beet on her cot. It had been tossed in through an open window.

In Paris, a beet is setting on a silver tray in the middle of a marble desk, under a crystal chandelier. The office is in a skyscraper located across the street from a monastery and cathedral. The monks had made perfume in the thirteenth century as well as having operated a brewery. The basement of the skyscraper had remnants of both the brewery and the perfumery. The perfume business had been purchased by the LeFever family in the seventeenth century. The family, represented by Marcel LeFever, still operates the business with Marcel and his cousin Claude both serving as vice-president. Marcel handles the creative side of the business while Claude, with his education in accounting and law, handles the family finances. They are arguing at the present time, since they had an ongoing battle over the importance of whales to the perfume industry. Marcel felt they were indispensable; Claude felt the ambergris could be replaced by various substitutes. Marcel tells Claude of the beet that arrived that morning. This is the third beet they have received since Marcel returned from America. Each time, a strange odor preceded the arrival of the beet. Marcel can't place the scent, but he knows he has smelled it before. As they leave for lunch, Claude asks if Marcel has heard from V'lu.



Opening, pp. 1-13 Analysis

The book begins with a discussion of beets. There is a one and one quarter page discussion of beets and what beets are and what they aren't. The beet isn't lusty like a tomato, yet it is melancholy. It is like a murderer returning to the scene of the crime. The author sets the scene for action in three cities with different characters. Priscilla is in Seattle, Madame Devalier and V'lu are in New Orleans, and Claude and Marcel LeFevor are in Paris. All three are active in the perfume industry in one form or another. All three have received a beet from an unknown source.



Part I, the Hair and the Bean

Part I, the Hair and the Bean Summary

The action now jumps to a different place, back in time. King Alobar is awake, even though his wife, Alma, and dog, Mik, sleep soundly. He had another wife named Wren that he now wishes he had sent for instead of Alma. His castle had a slab of polished glass that had come from Egypt. People could see their images in the glass. Alobar was content to leave the glass in the concubine's quarters since the women all liked to look into the glass. He had spared a woman who dropped the glass and broke a corner of it. She later bore him twin sons so he now made it a habit to visit their quarters every new moon. He didn't want the glass to lose its powers. He stared into the glass, then thrust it into the arms of one of the concubines, Frol and left the room. He took his dog and went out into the forest where he pulled out the white hair that he had found.

The custom of the kingdom was to kill the king as soon as he began to show signs of age. "Kings were permitted to rule only so long as they retained their strength and vigor. Regarding its rulers as semidivine - god-men upon whom the course of nature depended - the clan believed wide-spread catastrophes would result from the gradual enfeeblement of the rule and the final extinction of his powers in death. The only way to avert those calamities was to kill the king as soon as he showed symptoms of decay, so that his soul might be transferred to a vigorous young successor before it had been impaired. One of the fatal signals of fading power was the king's incapacity to satisfy the sexual passions of his wives. Another was the debut of wrinkles of gray hairs, with their indiscreet announcement of decline" (Part I, p. 19).

Alobar had never thought the custom to be unfair. It was better than allowing a senile ruler to interfere with things. The execution was carried out with a great deal of dignity, since it was the first wife who fed her husband poisoned eggs. Alobar never had a problem with the tradition until now. He now felt that he betrayed his own people, himself, and his gods when he yanked out the grey hair. He wakes Alma, and tells her to leave and to send Wren to him. She tells him that there has been talk among the harem of his failing appetite, but that Frol is pregnant again.

Wren arrives and sits and listens to Alobar's story about the grey hair. She asks why he plucked it and why he is fighting fate. They talk of what they expect after death. Alobar says the clan recovers, but asks what about the person who dies. Alobar feels his own demise is now a possibility. Wren cautions him about Noog, the necromancer. If Noog finds out, the king will soon be eating the poison egg. Wren says she will help the king hide the fact of his aging if that is what he wants. Alobar says it won't last for long because more grey hairs will appear. Wren says she will examine his hair for him so he does not have to use the looking glass. Alobar and Wren carry this out. He sets upon his harem like never before, each night telling them to send Wren to him when they return to their quarters. The king is trying to prove his youth. Neither Wren nor Alobar are happy at their deception.



Noog is suspicious of the change in Alobar's sexual activity. He stands under the window of the bed chamber one day while Alobar is with Wren. His magpie flies in and plucks a white hair from Alobar's beard and delivers it to Noog. This is all the proof that Noog needs and the execution is duly scheduled. Wren serves Alobar the poison egg carried in on an ermine pillow. Alobar eats the egg and dies. Wren removes the throne from Alobar and crowns the new king. Frol then smashes the looking glass.

Alobar's body is buried outside the city. The only tears come from Frol. As soon as the funeral is finished and all the participants have departed, Wren goes to the mound and uncovers the body. She had fed Alobar a beverage to counter the effects of the belladonna she had put in the egg. She and Alobar had devised this scheme in the weeks before Noog discovered the grey hair. Wren stays with Alobar until she is sure that he is okay.

Alobar must decide which direction to travel in. He does not want to head west because it will take him to the land of the Romans, who are now accepting Christianity. He decides that he will travel to the east. He travels as soon as he feels well enough, swearing that no one in his kingdom will ever see him again. He travels as far as the spring and decides he will rest until daybreak. Frol appears at the spring, defending against the man who is grabbing at her legs. She faints when she recognizes Alobar. They discuss what has happened to both of them. Frol was banished for destroying the looking glass. Alobar has to convince Frol, who is carrying his child, that he isn't a ghost.

Frol is due to deliver at the next full moon and Alobar is more concerned with finding a safe place for them and their child than he is at heading for places unknown. He is even willing to settle in the Christendom of the Romans. They arrived in the village of Aelfric three days later, where they are warmly welcomed by the villagers.

Aelfric is a Christian community where the main vegetable is the turnip, instead of the beet. Alobar and Frol spent the next year working in Aelfric for the lord of the manor, Lord Aelfric. When they aren't working for him, they tend to their own land and chores. Alobar is almost completely grey now and Frol remains devoted to him as his one wife. This is a novelty for the former king who had had a harem full of wives. Frol bears him twins, one of each sex. Both Frol and Alobar adopt Christianity and agree to be baptized. They celebrate the holidays at the manor with the lord providing a feast for the serfs.

Alobar is sitting in front of the hearth with his children while it is snowing outside. He is thinking of all the changes in his life since he found the grey hair. There is a knock at the door. Frol opens it to admit the neighbors, who invite them to the community lodge for the holiday festivities. The cider is flowing and there is dancing and singing at the lodge. He eats the cake that has been prepared and bites into something hard. The hard thing is a bean. The result is that Alobar is crowned the King of the Bean. He reigns supreme for twelve days, as is the custom. After his rule of the Day of the Epiphany, the festivities would end and the King of the Bean would have his throat cut.



Alobar tells the shaman that he is a king, a real king, but the shaman thinks he means the King of the Bean. The shaman tells him that he will be dead in twelve days. "I am twice king and twice condemned - and I am sick and tired of it. First a hair and then a bean. If death wants me, let him ride up on a pale mount, ashes in his mouth, ice in his testicles; let him swing a scythe and make horrible noises, let him come for me in person not send some hair, some fucking little black bean baked in a goody by mutton-butt peasant wives. Even then I might not go. Frankly, I do not like the way death does business" (Part I, pp. 40-41). Alobar proceeds to tell the shaman his story.

The shaman tells him that he must leave and travel to the east, beyond Egypt. The earth is round, he tells Alobar. He also tells Alobar that Lord Aelfric's men plan to attack Alobar's old kingdom in the spring. They will kill everyone who refuses to be baptized and his former kingdom will be just another outpost for Rome. Alobar feels that he must warn them, but the shaman tells him that there is nothing that they can do. They are fighting the whole Roman Empire. The shaman tells Alobar that he must put his old life and clan behind him and that he must now go forward to a new life. He leaves the shaman and heads east.

A few weeks later, Alobar awakens in a field. He finds that he can't stand up. Every time he tries he falls. When he finally managed to stand, he falls again and hears peals of laughter. He finds a strange creature, half goat and half human. The creature's name is Pan. Alobar tells him that he is running from death and Pan says that he is doing the same thing. Pan says that even though he is a god, he too can die. Alobar says that he isn't really Christian and that he just played along with the people at Aelfric. Pan tells Alobar to come with him, but Alobar cannot keep up with him, so he just follows the scent. He finds himself in a grotto with nymphs swimming in the pond. The nymphs tell Alobar that Pan is being weakened by Christianity. Pan awakens and leaves. Alobar continues on his long eastward journey.

There was a solar eclipse in Seattle and the clouds were supposed to be clear at the time. Ricki asks Priscilla if she saw it and she says she didn't. Ricki notices that there are several beets in Priscilla's apartment. Ricki waits while Priscilla showers. They both have Sunday and Monday off. The day before they went to see the football team. Today, they were going to a meeting of the Daughters of the Daily Specials, an organization of waitresses with college degrees. There were quite a few women in Seattle with degrees that were working as waitresses. They awarded a grant each year that allowed the recipient to work at her true calling, and Ricki was sure that Priscilla could qualify for one of their grants.

Priscilla tells Ricki that someone has been leaving beets outside of her door and she doesn't know who. They arrive at the meeting and listen to the stories. Ricki tells the women about Priscilla's lab and how they can make money when Priscilla succeeds. Priscilla is voted into the organization. The two go out drinking afterwards, and Priscilla has to drive Ricki home. When Priscilla arrives home, she finds another beet outside her door.



The air is heavy and moist in New Orleans and there is no air conditioning at the Parfumerie Devalier. Both Madame Lily Devalier and V'lu use paper fans to cool themselves. The news has the story of the eclipse as photographed by the Seattle Space Needle and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Madame Devalier sees the eclipse as an omen of success for her Parfumerie. V'lu reminds Madame Devalier that "she" is supposed to be in Seattle and that "she" has the bottle. It doesn't matter because they have the essences from Bingo Pajama, who will be returning from the island the next week.

Lily is having to make do without expensive equipment. She and V'lu have to do everything by hand because there is no money for expensive equipment. It is a slower way, but it produces a better oil. V'lu asks Lily about air conditioning the upstairs. Somebody keeps throwing vegetables through the open window and they keep landing on her bed.

Both Claude and Marcel LeFever watched the eclipse from their offices in Paris. Marcel spent the afternoon standing by the window, wearing his whale mask, and Claude spent the rest of the afternoon drinking Pernod. Marcel regularly visited a brothel on Saturdays and was called Bunny. Claude asks Marcel what he is thinking about behind his whale mask. Marcel says he had spent the last month perfecting the new scent, New Wave, for the company and he is worried about the scent. He says he sprayed it on his pillowcases and dreamed of fascism, violence, and domination.

Part I, the Hair and the Bean Analysis

Beets again figure prominently into the story. There is talk of boiled beets. The king's wife, Alma, outlines her lips with beet paint. There is a mirror that the king received from Egypt and he thinks the mirror has special powers, so he visits the harem every new moon. Today, when he looks into the mirror, he sees that he has a white hair. This is a sign of age that is literally fatal in his kingdom, since it is his people's custom to kill the king when he begins to show signs of old age. The fact that Frol is pregnant again is proof that his sexual performance isn't failing.

Alobar discusses the situation with Wren. He now feels that his own demise is a possibility, since the grey hair can be taken as a sign of old age. Wren, one of his wives, offers to help him hide the signs of his aging. She examines his hair for him to look for signs of grey and plucks them, at least once a week. Both had to live with the deception and were happy when it was brought to an end. During this time, they worked out a plan to substitute an egg laced with belladonna for the poison eggs. After the funeral procession, Wren secretly uncovers Alobar and revives him.

After Alobar and Frol settle in Aelfric, Alobar has another encounter with death. He is chosen as King of the Bean. After the twelve days of celebration, during which time he can do anything that he wants, he is to have his throat cut. He finally talks to the shaman and tells him his whole story and how he was a real king. The shaman finally



tells him to flee to avoid death and head to the east, which he does. He meets Pan along the way and learns that Pan is being weakened by Christianity.

In Seattle, Ricki gets Priscilla into an organization where she might be able to obtain a grant to devote full time to her lab work. Priscilla is so grateful to Rickie that she determines to sleep with her, but she just can't bring herself to do it. Priscilla isn't attracted to Ricki that way, she is just grateful.

Marcel and Claude also watched the eclipse in Paris. Marcel tells Claude that he has spent the last month working on the company's new scent, called New Wave. He is worried about the scent because of some dreams that he had when the scent was sprayed on his pillowcase. Marcel tells Claude what V'lu suggested since most synthetics are from petrol chemicals. Since the price of synthetics might become so high, V'lu suggested they look at flowers.



Part II, Looking Up Chomolungma's Dress

Part II, Looking Up Chomolungma's Dress Summary

For twenty years, Alobar has been at the lamasery. A woman named Kudra arrives dressed as a boy, and she is put to work moving stones. During the break, there is pressure on Kudra to disrobe and swim. Kudra goes to Alobar for help and tells him that he doesn't recognize her, that she is the woman he nicknamed Wren many years ago. "Of our nine planets, Saturn is the one that looks like fun. Of our trees, the palm is obviously the stand-up comedian. Among fowl, the jester's cap is worn by the duck. Of our fruits and vegetables, the tomato could play Falstaff, the banana a more slapstick role. As Hamlet - or Macbeth - the beet is cast. In largely vegetarian India, the beet is rarely eaten because its color is suggestive of blood. Out, damned mangel-wurzel. Alobar was remembering. . ." (Part II, p. 76).

In India there is a funeral procession. Alobar looks over the pyre with the corpse in the middle, knowing that it will be aflame in a few minutes. Alobar watches as the widow lights the four corners of the pyre and then lies down next to her dead husband. As the flames intensify, the widow tries to escape, but the Brahmans poked her with sticks to keep her to her suttee. She eventually escapes and runs off, but is captured and thrown back into the burning pyre. Alobar decides to help, but she is dead before he reaches the pyre. He flees from the area. After journeying after several miles, he meets a girl who is also fleeing. She has a basket of beets with her. Her father used the beets to make incense. The beets were used for the color. The girl's name was Kudra, but she reminds him of Wren. Before she leaves, he makes her promise that she would never succumb to suttee.

Kudra appears years later at the lamasery and recognizes Alobar, even though he does not recognize her. Alobar is given a riddle by the lama regarding water and stone and responds with an answer that wins him respect. He takes Kudra away from the area soon as she reveals who she was. They are on the slopes of Mount Chomolungma, and Alobar wants to know why Kudra is dressed as a boy. Kudra tells Alobar her story, and of the nightmares after the cremation. It took several months for the nightmares to stop.

Kudra is skilled in the art of making incense, and she had spent a great deal of time working in the business. She had accompanied her father and brother on a four-month business trip when she was twelve, traveling throughout much of India. On her fifteenth birthday, she is preparing a meal for her family, according to custom, when her father calls her into the incense shop. She thinks it is something to do with business, but is told that they have just arranged a marriage for her. Kudra says she does not want to marry, but wants to stay and work in the incense business instead. She is the reason why her father's business is so prosperous. However, he tells her that she can work in her husband's business. His family makes rope.



After her marriage, Kudra works with her husband in the rope business. She still has a variety of scents that her father sends her for her own personal use. These scents stimulate her husband and they have four children in five years. Her husband, Navin, had a dream of being in the warrior caste and riding horses. Kudra arranges a horse ride for him and he is killed in a fall from the horse. Kudra considers the possibility of suttee and considers her life as a widow. She would be under the power of her sons and could never remarry. She would have to remain in her husband's house and could not return to her parents or engage in sex. She could not use perfumes. Kudra dresses herself as a boy and flees during the night.

"So you ran away from death," said Alobar. He was obviously pleased. Kudra's flight brought back memories of the two times he had ducked the swipe of the Reaper's sickle. It meant that he and this woman had something in common, something revolutionary and scandalous that bound them together out on the edge of behavior where the bond is tightest and sweetest" (Part II, p. 89). Kudra says that she fled the corruption of the Brahmans and not death itself. She planned to go to Calcutta, but had remembered Alobar saying he was going to the Himalayas where there were masters who had power over death.

She tells Alobar that the people he has found are Buddhist monks and that they die like everyone else. They talk and he tells her of the different people that he has met. Kudra says that he does not look like he has not aged so he may have found what he was looking for. The monks, Alobar tells Kudra, don't enjoy life. This is their way of trying to tame death. Their discussion ends as Kudra announces that she is hungry. They return to the lamasery for a meal. After eating, he finds a place for Kudra to sleep in the stable.

After twenty years at the monastery, Alobar leaves and catches up with Kudra. They seem to have everything that they need except any influence over dying against their wishes. They are heading for the caves to find the people that Alobar met there once before, but when they arrive, the caves are empty. They make love and live in a cave.

In Seattle, Priscilla is at work, awaiting the opening of the restaurant with Ricki and the other waitresses. Ricki had received a promotion and is now an assistant bartender. Priscilla needs high quality jasmine oil that comes from France and doesn't have the money to afford it right now. The restaurant opens and both women work. During their break, they are interrupted in the bathroom by one of the other waitresses banging on the door and telling Priscilla that there is a Fedex delivery for her. She is afraid that it will be a box of beets, but instead it is an invitation to a dinner for a Nobel winning chemist. She peddles her bike past the Last Laugh Foundation where the dinner is to be held on her way home. She checks to make sure she still has the bottle safely hidden away, even though she doesn't open it. She decides to make a phone call to her stepmother, Madame Lily Devalier.

In New Orleans, Madame Lily Devalier and V'lu are dining on shellfish and oysters when the phone rings. Lily goes to answer the phone and is gone for ten minutes. When she returns, she tells V'lu that Priscilla was a Mardi Gras baby, but she doesn't remember her mother's name. Her father was Wally Lifter and he left the baby with Lily to raise. He



would return every year for Mardi Gras and shower the girl with presents, and then leave again for Mexico. When Lily's shop began to lose money, she went to Paris with her formulas, but couldn't work out any deals. LeFever was interested but they also turned her down. V'lu didn't overtly react to the name LeFever. Eventually, Lily told Priscilla the truth about her father; he wasn't the rich man that he presented himself to be.

When Priscilla was sixteen, she ran off with an accordion player and married. She traveled all over the country with his band, and when the band folded, he went home to Argentina. Priscilla had separated from him by that time and had been at her father's side when he died. Lily tells V'lu that Priscilla was looking for jasmine oil, which was why she called. Lily had turned Priscilla away three years earlier when Priscilla wanted to come back to the shop. Lily sees nothing wrong with sharing their jasmine oil with Priscilla, even though V'lu reminds her that Priscilla has the bottle. They hear a plop from the upper floor, and wonder if it is Pajama Bingo that keeps throwing beets through the window.

In Paris, Claude is summoned to his father Luc's office. Luc had been to the doctor's and found he had high blood pressure. Claude tells him of the Last Laugh Foundation and how he knew Wolfgang Morgenstern when he attended the Sorbonne. The two discuss Marcel and how he had abandoned the New Wave after working on it for so long. Luc gives Claude a folder which has a list of agents around the world. These people almost function as spies for the company. He flips through the file and sees the name V'lu Jackson.

Part II, Looking Up Chomolungma's Dress Analysis

Alobar's travels take him to India, where he learns of the funeral custom of suttee. This is where the widow joins her dead husband on the funeral pyre and is burned alive. Alobar is horrified at the custom and flees from the area. He meets a girl named Kudra, who reminds him of Wren. He makes her promise that she will never be a part of the custom. Kudra and Alobar travel together, looking for the caves where Alobar had found the Bandaloo doctors. When they arrive there, the caves are empty.

Priscilla receives an invitation to a dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation. This foundation is known to Claude LeFever in Paris, who mentions it to his father. Priscilla had been raised by Lily Devalier, who took the girl in from her father who deserted her. She had asked Lily if she could return to the perfume shop three years earlier, and Lily refused her. Priscilla called because she needed jasmine oil and couldn't afford it. Lily sees nothing wrong with sharing some of hers with Priscilla, even though V'lu cautions her that Priscilla has the bottle. V'lu's name is on a list of spies, the Luc LeFever gives to his son, Claude.



Part III, Promise Her Anything but Give Her K23

Part III, Promise Her Anything but Give Her K23 Summary

The philosopher Rene Descartes went to Stockholm to tutor the Queen. While there, he died. His body was returned to Paris for burial. and after the funeral, there was a very noticeable odor in the churchyard. No explanation was ever given for the odor.

"Kudra and Alobar argued late into the night in their flat. 'A pox on squabbling lovers,' muttered Pan. Pan needed to get some sleep. He'd been in bed for hours, but instead of dreams, what came to him were harsh voices through the wall. Pan tossed and turned and cursed a bit, although the irony of the situation (gods have ears for irony) was not lost on him: Alobar and Kudra were fighting over immortality, whereas Pan was craving sleep because he planned to get up early to attend a funeral." (Part III, p. 132).

It is 1666 and Pan is invisible. He is in Paris for the funeral of Descartes. Pan wonders what good his invisibility is if the odor gives him away. He leaves the churchyard and goes to the riverbank, hiding the wig that he had snatched from some unsuspecting man.

Alobar and Kudra had spent seven years living in the caves of the Bandalooop. They learned many of the Bandalooop secrets during that time, and Alobar felt they should have stayed there longer. That was the root of many of their quarrels in the seventeenth century. Ever since Kudra had been on the business trip with her father for the incense business, she had wanted to go out into the wider world. She didn't want to remain in the caves.

Alobar got a job working in a spice caravan and traveled to Constantinople. They decided to live in Constantinople for a while and sample luxury, thinking that that might be how immortality is attained. Alobar rose to a manager of the spice warehouses. He was earning a good living which allowed them many luxuries. They were perfecting the bathing and breathing techniques which were necessary to a long life. They were also students and practitioners of the Kama Sutra. Rumors began to circulate about the two, that they eat babies. They fled aboard a Greek ship while watching their home of thirty years burn. Alobar comforts Kudra by saying they have learned to slow the aging process by living in the caves of Bandalooop. They have also learned of the problems it creates in a society conditioned to old age and death.

Pan spies on the two as they travel. Pan finally recognizes Alobar from many years ago and realizes that Alobar is now one hundred and two years old. Kudra is sixty-six years old. They have a conversation with Pan, telling him where they have been living and what has happened to them. Alobar says they want to talk to Pan about immortality.



They stay in Pan's meadows and Pan comments about the smell of flowers. Kudra tells him that those are her scents and dabs some on him. They continue their discussion on immortality and Kudra comments that man is as entitled to immortality as the gods are.

Alobar and Kudra continue on their journey. The nymph Lalo thanks them for visiting Pan and giving him some cheer. Lalo tells them that gods like Pan live only as long as people believe in them. They travel across Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary and enter Bohemia in 1032. There is no trace of Alobar's former castle but Kudra has a déjà-vu feeling. They buy a sack of beets and head for Aelfric, which they find has grown tremendously. They survive many disasters together over the centuries. They had to move every ten or twenty years when it becomes known that they don't age.

They meet the gypsies at a faire in Beaucaire, France in the early thirteen hundreds. They spent the next half-century traveling with them. One day Alobar catches some of the gypsies going through their belongings looking for their elixir of youth. One day while cleaning the chief's cart Kudra finds his wife's crystal ball. She sees nothing in the crystal ball, but when she closes her eyes she envisions Alobar and herself being tied up and tortured by the people who want information on the fountain of youth. She and Alobar leave quietly during that night. She later tells Alobar of a second vision, of a black man who had a hat of bees.

The pair continue to live by working the faire circuit, selling fragrances. Kudra also dances gypsy dances for money when they needed it. After wandering around for several hundred years, Kudra announces that she would like to settle in Paris. Alobar tells her not to plan on staying for more than fifteen years because it takes that long for people to figure out that they don't age. She tells him that they can age if they want to. They stopped the aging process which means that they can start it again. They have been the same age for five or six hundred years and Kudra is tired of it. She says she is ready to age like normal people do. They then get into a discussion of whether or not they could stop the aging process if they start it again. Alobar says that they don't know if they can start or stop it; they only think they can.

They are about to move to Paris because Kudra wants to open an incense shop. He blames Kudra still for making them leave the caves of the Bandaloo before they learned all of the secrets. They make a deal for Kudra to allow herself to age for the four decade difference between her and Alovar's age, then she would stop the process if she could.

They move to Paris and open an incense shop across the street from a monastery and cathedral. They make a nice living from their shop. Alobar doesn't pressure Kudra to return to the caves of the Bandaloo because he doesn't think there would be any vibrations remaining there. The year 1644 is the closest they ever came to separating. They are living in Paris and it is a cold winter. After closing the store, Alobar suggests that they sail to the New World. She tells him that she wants to be alone for a while, so he puts on outer clothes and goes out into the cold night.



Alobar negotiates with a prostitute and finds that it is the nymph Lalo. They walk back to the incense shop together, where Kudra and Alobar learn that Pan is just about a ghost. He only visited men in nightmares now. Most of the nymphs were gone now. They had to become whores like Lalo did. They all retire for the night and Kudra and Alobar make plans to get Pan out of Europe. They would take him to the New World where they would establish a race of immortals with him as their god.

Kudra had not conceived by the time Alobar leaves for Greece to find Pan. Alobar is gone for eight months. When he returns, he finds that Kudra looks younger than before. She knew that Pan was there from the smell. They tell Pan he can stay with them and that there are parks around that he can roam through. Kudra would have to devise a scent to hide the odor. After Kudra extinguishes her own supply of scents without finding anything appropriate for Pan, she uses some of their New World funds to buy some scents from the monks. These monks were the main suppliers to the court of Louis XIV and were the forerunners of the LeFever perfume business.

The most effective scent Kudra could find was jasmine. It lasted longer than any other scent but wasn't long lasting enough. Kudra decides to use the jasmine to develop her own scent. She spends several months trying to find the appropriate mix. They begin to quarrel again about immortality, and finally Kudra tells Alobar the truth that Lalo did not run off but died. "Their quarreling chewed through the curtains, pierced the casements, and rattled over the cobblestones outside. How strange it must have sounded, this quarreling about dematerialization, voluntary aging, goat gods, and immortality, to a city that was primed for the Age of Reason, a populace that was beginning to put Descartes before des horse" (Part III, p. 174).

There is a discussion regarding dematerialization. Kudra was willing to experiment where Alobar was afraid to. Dr. Wiggs Dannyboy, of the Last Laugh Foundation believes in dematerialization and rematerialization even though he is a few hundred years into the future. People are made of subatomic particles with spaces between them and their cells have an electrical pulse. People like Alobar and Kudra learned how to put their own electrical pulses on a frequency consistent with eternity. People who are able to change their rate of vibration can walk through fire without being hurt and achieve dematerialization.

Pan drags the wig back to the incense shop following the funeral of Descartes. He gives the wig to Alobar, feeling that if Alobar wears the wig, no one would ever see any grey hairs and then maybe Alobar and Kudra would stop quarreling. He finds them in a good mood when he returns, having made the decision to dematerialize. At the appointed time, they sit cross legged on the floor, with Pan monitoring them. A ruckus in the street has them send Pan to find out what the problem is. Seems the monks in the monastery across the street have been having a problem with erotic dreams. The monks were patrolling the neighborhood when they found the glass blower's assistant trying to enter the incense shop with a glass bottle that had been ordered. They tear open the package and find a blue glass bottle. They are about to break it when it floats away from them and around the corner.



Pan takes the bottle upstairs to Kudra. They decide if they can dematerialize and rematerialize themselves in the New World, they won't need a fragrance to cover the smell of Pan. Embossed on the glass bottle is an image of Pan. As they continue with the experiment, Kudra tells them that the bottle must be filled.

Alobar goes through the ritual and watches his life pass before him, from the time he was a small child. He embraces his dog Mik and recognizes the odor. He recognizes the odor of the beet and keeps repeating to Kudra that he has the answer. Beet musk would counter Pan's scent. When he comes to, the empty bottle is at his feet and Kudra is gone. Pan tells him that both of them were going but Alobar came back, and Kudra didn't. He waited until dawn, but Kudra didn't come back. The police arrive and arrest Alobar for heresy, blasphemy, Satanism, and witchcraft. They claim that the glass bottle is evidence.

Pan helps Alobar and the bottle escape from the Bastille. They return to the incense shop, but Kudra has still not returned. Alobar leaves a note telling her to meet him in the beet fields of Bohemia. Alobar considers several reasons why Kudra didn't reappear. One was that she was irretrievable. Once she began to fall, she just kept falling. Second, she may have been reunited with her family and would not rematerialize because she could not reproduce after seven hundred years of contraception. The third and fourth reasons he considers are that she is on the Other Side. She thinks he is lost or she can't find her own way back. The last reason he considers is that she is waiting for him and Pan in the New World. For the last three reasons, the perfume is vital to them finding each other again. He takes the perfume equipment and the bottle with him to Bohemia.

Alobar arrives in Bohemia in time for the beet harvest. He needs to find the beet pollen. He and Pan collect it in beakers. He leaves Pan to guard the equipment and travels to the Russian border to a vodka maker, who distills the beet pollen for him. He returns to the camp with the distillate. He experiments and finally finds the ideal mixture of jasmine, citron, and beet distillate and calls it K23. They test the mixture and it is effective in covering the goat musk.

Pan and Alobar return to Paris to the incense shop. He doesn't know that the monks have sold their perfume business to Guy LeFever, who also wants to buy the contents of the incense shop. The monks told him not to. Pan and Alobar enter the incense shop and find that nothing has been touched. He uncorks the bottle of K23. He awakes the next day and notices that the note and Kudra's shoe had been moved from where he had left them but he doesn't know when they had been moved. He notices a word written in the dust by the fireplace and that the word was written in the language of Wren, from his days as a king. It said lighten up, or Erleichda. They repeat the ritual with the bottle for a week and every morning check for messages, but there are no more.

They pack up, Alobar dons the wig that Pan had brought him, and they make their way to Marseilles where they sail for New France. Alobar gives his age as forty-six when they sail on the Mississippi Poodle. The men on board soon begin to have erotic and other strange nightmares. Alobar spends most of the voyage thinking, and decides that



if Kudra is really dead, then he will have to curtail his grief and get on with his life. However, if she has dematerialized and gone to the Other Side, it is possible that she will reappear, but he must be prepared to make his own life if she doesn't appear. He thinks of Wren. She is the one who helped him escape death over seven hundred years ago.

Pan does not fare so well on the sea voyage. He does not have grass to eat and he is seasick. He is also becoming sick from the perfume because it separates him from his persona. Pan finally throws the jug of K23 and the blue perfume bottle over the side of the ship.

In Seattle, Ricki tells Priscilla that she has heard that the Daughters of the Daily Special are having a meeting and that they will approve Priscilla's grant. Ricki heard they will give Priscilla \$2,500. That would be enough to buy the jasmine oil that she needs and give her a little to live on for a few months. Ricki tells Priscilla that her infection is cleared up and they can spend tomorrow night together. Priscilla reminds her that she has the dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation, but gives Ricki her spare key so she can wait for her.

Priscilla takes a cab to the Last Laugh Foundation, since it is raining and she can't bicycle in her best dress. She recognizes a fragrance wholesaler among the guests. Just as Priscilla is about to introduce herself, Dr. Dannyboy enters. Priscilla is seated next to Dr. Dannyboy's daughter when Professor Morgenstern enters the room. The seat across from Priscilla is empty. She then notices three raw beets in the table centerpiece and wonders if Dannyboy is behind the beet deliveries to her door. As soon as dinner ends, Priscilla begins to say her goodbyes. She says she doesn't know why she was there in the first place. She finally asks about the beets on the table and finds out the beets have something to do with a janitor who is described as a thousand years old and his perfume. Dannyboy then mentions the name of Marcel LeFever. Priscilla decides they had better talk.

Ricki arrives at Priscilla's apartment and finds the door open with items strewn all over the place. She decides to clean it and spends more than two hours straightening up.

V'lu Jackson arrived back in New Orleans from Seattle. Lily meets her and finds that she wants to stop and eat some ribs. Lily didn't understand why V'lu went to Seattle. She knew they received an invitation to a dinner but didn't know who Morgenstern was. But she knew that Priscilla's name was on the guest list, but Lily wouldn't attend herself. V'lu tells Lily that she didn't see Priscilla because she, V'lu, didn't attend the party. She stole the bottle from Priscilla.

Priscilla had spent one year studying chemistry in college, using her settlement from her husband to cover her expenses. While she was gone, Lily hired V'lu as her assistant and rejected Priscilla when she tried to enter the business. Lily only allowed her to stay the summer. Then some people brought in an old perfume bottle that they found in the mud of the Mississippi. There were a few drops of perfume in the bottle when Priscilla and V'lu removed the top. That night Priscilla left, taking the bottle with her.



Lily tells V'lu she does not approve of V'lu taking the bottle from Priscilla. V'lu wants Lily to smell the scent but she says not in the restaurant. When they leave, she sniffs the scent. After a while, she tells V'lu that it is magnificent. There isn't enough left to have it analyzed chemically, but she will find what it is and match it. As they walk, a black man emerges from the shadows and gives her a bouquet of jasmine branches. He is soon shot dead by two men from the other side of the street.

In Paris, Claude enters his father Luc's office. Luc is listening to a tape of a speech made by Marcel, also known as Bunny. Luc is trying to figure out how Marcel was invited to a dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation. Claude wants to talk about the agent file since V'lu Jackson's name was in it, but Luc is listening to the tape. As Claude turns to look at his father, he notices him slumped over his desk, with his face beet red.

Part III, Promise Her Anything but Give Her K23 Analysis

This part begins with quotes and comments about love. Alobar and Kudra have been together for quite a while, moving through time together, looking for the secrets of life longevity and immortality. They have learned what they could from the caves of Bandaloo and now have decided to see if luxury is a factor, as they move to Constantinople. After thirty years of not aging, they had to flee as their house is burned. They are suspected of eating babies as the way they stay young.

Alobar and Kudra meet Pan after they leave Constantinople. They spend a few days with him and discuss the subject of immortality. They tell him that they are just as entitled to immortality as the gods are. They travel with the gypsies for quite a few years until Kudra has a vision after looking in the gypsy chief's wife's crystal ball. The vision is of her and Alobar being bound until they reveal the fountain of youth to the gypsies. They quietly leave that night and eventually end up in Paris.

In Paris, Kudra tells Alobar that she is tired of immortality and wants to age naturally. She feels that she can turn it on and off; he feels that they don't know if they can turn it on and off. They bring Pan to live with them, deciding they will sail to the New World and give him another chance at life. Kudra is trying to develop a fragrance that will cover Pan's odor in Paris.

They decide to try dematerialization to reach the New World, and Kudra disappears during the experience. Alobar and Pan leave for the Bohemian beet fields to mix the fragrance that they need to find Kudra. Alobar calls it K23. It is strong enough to hide Pan's goat musk but it makes Pan sick when he and Alobar are on the Mississippi Poodle. Pan eventually throws it overboard along with the blue perfume bottle.

Priscilla attends the dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation. While she is there, Dr. Dannyboy's daughter tells her the seat across from her is empty because a woman didn't come. That woman turns out to be V'lu Jackson, who was ransacking Priscilla's apartment at the time of the dinner. She took the bottle of perfume that Priscilla had



hidden and returned to New Orleans with it. V'lu gave the bottle to Madame Lily Devalier who smelled it for the first time and said that both V'lu and Priscilla recognized the magnificence of the scent and that she would track it and make it. In Paris, Claude finds his father Luc listening to a tape of Marcel's speech, trying to figure out how Marcel became involved with the Last Laugh Foundation. Claude finds his father slumped over his desk, with his face as red as a beet.



Part IV, Downwind From the Perfect Taco

Part IV, Downwind From the Perfect Taco Summary

Alobar is now in Concord State Prison. He now feels that he can smell his body aging. This began during the first year of his sentence. He could not perform all of the needed rituals in prison; he could only do the breathing exercises. "Now, in his third year behind bars, he could smell, taste, and hear the accelerated aging going on inside him. It smelled like mothballs. It tasted like stale chip dip. It sounded like Lawrence Welk" (Part IV, p. 234).

Alobar had lived in Livingston, Montana, where he had owned and operated a spa. This allowed him to take the hot baths that were part of the immortality process. This allowed Pan to roam the area with the spirit of Coyote. The residents became curious when Alobar didn't age, so he knew it was time to move on. He had never made another batch of K23 after the first batch, but he felt confident that he could duplicate it. He read an article about the work of geneticists at Princeton and decided to go and work for them as a janitor. He sabotaged their experiments in any way that he could.

He meets Einstein at Princeton, where he is usually working late at night. They have many conversations. Alobar was being blackmailed by the chief custodian, who caught him sabotaging the experiments. The experiments ended in 1956. Alobar lost his job when the chief custodian turned him in. Einstein had died, with a nurse saying his last words were in German and something like "Erleichda".

At the exact moment that Alobar, who calls himself Albert Barr, is wondering why his ears are burning, Priscilla is hearing from Dr. Wiggs Dannyboy the story of the thousand-year-old janitor and his perfume. They are drinking and talking after the dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation. Priscilla falls into bed with Wiggs. While she is with Wiggs, she is aware that Ricki is waiting for her at her apartment. Priscilla asks Wiggs why she was invited to the dinner, and he answers because of smell. He has learned a lot about smell since he met Alobar and he knew that Priscilla made perfume. "He cleared his throat and, tapping his patch with a wooky-scented knuckle, commenced to pin a tail on the beet" (Part IV, p. 245).

Alobar is aging while he is waiting for the parole board to release him. He decides he will send Dr. Wiggs Dannyboy the formula for K23 and have him make a batch for him if the parole board doesn't act soon. He does not want to go to the Other Side without the perfume.

Wiggs and Priscilla discuss Alobar and the idea of immortality. Priscilla says that anything that has been born has to die and that that is a law of the universe. Wiggs says that it is a habit and that habits can be broken. As they are talking, Ricki drives back to her own apartment in the rain, while V'lu is lying in bed dreaming of a creature that is



half goat and half man. She removes the perfume bottle from under her pillow and hides it under the clothing in her suitcase.

In the meantime, Priscilla is telling Wiggs that aging is a natural process, even though he believes that most of mankind's problems stem from mortality. He tells Priscilla that aging can be prevented. Wiggs gets back to his story about Alobar and immortality. He tells Priscilla how he became interested in immortality while he was at Concord State Prison and how he spent his time researching the subject. Then there was a bombing of the labs at MIT by Al Barr, who arrived at the prison. The two became cellmates, and Wiggs heard the life story of Al Bar. Wiggs knew of the perfume and that it contained jasmine, citron and a base note of beet. But he did not know of the beet pollen. He was sworn to secrecy about the beet being the secret ingredient in the perfume, so he does not mention the beet to Priscilla, but goes on to tell her the rest of the story.

Wiggs tells Priscilla that Alobar and Kudra developed their program of immortality based on the four elements: air, water, earth, and fire. The element of air concerns controlled breathing exercises, which helped to rid the body of toxins. Water was used for relaxing baths. Hypothermia, the lowering of the body temperature, is known to inhibit the aging process. Alobar and Kudra had a process of soaking and relaxing in the shade that they repeated several times. Earth refers to nutrition and diet. Alobar and Kudra ate a diet which included beets. The element of fire refers to sex, which eases stress. Alobar and Kudra kept their bodies at the peak of sexual maturity even though they never reproduced.

Wiggs goes on to say that man is programmed to die from his first breath. It is what he expects. It is basically a mind over matter phenomena. Alobar is in a fix because he is stuck in prison where he can't follow the process that he and Kudra developed. Wiggs says that his purpose in founding the Last Laugh Foundation was to examine the psychological barriers to immortality. Priscilla falls asleep while Wiggs is still talking. Wiggs places a beet next to the sleeping Priscilla and then goes upstairs to his room.

Alobar finds out that the parole board has delayed his hearing until after the holidays. He didn't know which holiday, since Thanksgiving was three days away. Back in Seattle, Priscilla wakes up and finds a beet on the pillow next to her. She dresses and walks home. She thinks about the bottle as she is walking and how it fits into the story of the thousand-year-old convict. She arrives home, bathes, dresses, and heads for the meeting of the Daughters of the Daily Specials. When they announce the candidates for the grant, Priscilla finds she is not among them. Ricki, who was her sponsor, called and canceled her nomination. She left the restaurant and cried all the way home. Ricki was not answering her phone. Priscilla's one consolation was that she had the bottle. She did not yet know that it was missing.

Priscilla learns that the bottle is missing when she checks for it at home. Priscilla finally reported the missing perfume bottle to the police. She accuses Ricki of stealing it. Priscilla has her attorney call Ricki, who says she didn't have the perfume bottle. Wiggs invites Priscilla to a Thanksgiving dinner for Marcel Le Fever and Dr. Wolfgang Morgenstern at the Last Laugh Foundation. After another fight with Ricki at the



restaurant, Priscilla is fired. The dinner at the foundation is canceled when Marcel returns to Paris due to the death of his uncle.

Wiggs comes to visit Priscilla and continues with his story of Alobar. He tells her of Pan and the horrible smell in the jail cell. It was the same smell that he had experienced in New Orleans when LeFever was escorting the black woman. Dannyboy obtained the names from a convention where he also obtained Priscilla's name. She also finds out that Wiggs Dannyboy has been delivering the beets to her door. He has also been delivering them to V'lu and has had a friend of his in Paris deliver them to Marcel. Wiggs takes her out for dinner, but declines to spend the night with her since he has to be home for his daughter, Huxley Anne.

Wiggs invites Priscilla to the house for some time in the hot tub. They talk some more about Alobar and Kudra and the whole immortality issue. They talk about the Hindu concept of predestination and reincarnation. Wiggs tells her that he isn't afraid of death because death can't hurt people. After their time in the hot tub, they dress and Priscilla departs. As she is leaving, he asks how the perfume is coming. She asks about the beet being the bottom note in K23. He replies that he thinks so.

A few days later Wiggs tells her that they are planning another dinner for Marcel. He also tells her that V'lu had been in Seattle for the dinner for Morgenstern but hadn't attended. She returns to New Orleans the next day. Priscilla tells him that she is making a quick trip to New Orleans but doesn't tell him why. She'll be back in time for the party.

In New Orleans, the talk is about the shooting of Bingo Jamaica, a black flower peddler. He was killed by two-off duty cops who claimed they were trying to arrest him since he was a suspect in the death of another officer. The shooting was causing racial tension in the city, especially since the blacks gave Bingo Jamaica a jazz funeral. A commission was appointed and it was known that Lily Devalier was a witness to the shooting.

The day after the shooting the crime scene area was infested with bees. Bingo Jamaica had lost his hat of bees at his death. Bee keepers were called in to deal with the swarm but they could not do anything. The swarm departed at nightfall but returned again the next day. The bees also followed the funeral procession, but didn't sting anyone as they had at the crime scene. After the funeral, they appeared sporadically throughout the area. This is the New Orleans that Priscilla returned to, finding the shop of Madame Devalier's closed. Lily and V'lu had fled to Baton Rouge after the shooting since they were receiving threatening phone calls.

Lily and V'lu were at a motel under the protection of the governor until the hearing was held after the holidays. The hearing had been moved to Baton Rouge. Priscilla could not see them so she stayed at the Y in New Orleans and looked for work as a waitress. She missed the dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation. Priscilla learns that Marcel is staying until after the New Year, even though she isn't there. Huxley Anne grows jasmine plants in the foundation greenhouse with the help of her father.



As soon as the holidays were over, Alobar received his parole from prison and the Baton Rouge hearings began. Wiggs and Marcel flew to Boston to meet Alobar when he was released. Alobar agreed to come to Seattle to the Foundation. Wiggs tells Priscilla that Marcel is going to New Orleans to see V'lu, and that he and Alobar might come also. The hearing in Baton Rouge concluded with the recommendation that the men stand trial for manslaughter. Since there had been a cross burning incident at the perfumery, Lily and V'lu were to remain in protective custody until after the trial.

Marcel, Alobar, and Wiggs were airborne when the crown broke into and ransacked the last Laugh Foundation. Morgenstern was killed and Huxley Anne was seriously injured. Priscilla called Wiggs at the hospital to find out about Huxley Anne. He tells her not to come to Seattle when she offers. The child's mother will be arriving soon and he doesn't want Priscilla around. The prognosis was that Huxley Anne would be a vegetable, but after a month, she woke up with no signs of brain damage.

Alobar and Marcel are coming to New Orleans for Mardi Gras and Wiggs and Huxley Anne will arrive as soon as the doctors give the child permission to travel. Priscilla sublet a flat, assuming that Marcel would foot the bill. Priscilla meets Marcel and Alobar at the airport and accompanies them to the sublet flat, where they can watch the festivities of Carnival from the balcony. A package arrives from Seattle. Wiggs has sent them beet suits for Mardi Gras. They wear the costumes to the parade which they planned to watch from Royal and Canal. V'lu appears wearing a turban and gown. The beets split, one of them making his way to V'lu. A second beet makes it to the perfume shop and finds it opened with Lily inside. The beet finds the perfume bottle and grabs it.

Priscilla makes her way back to the parade, holding the bottle up for Alobar to see. She trips as she nears him and the bottle rolls into the path of the parade. Priscilla claims that she was pushed, but they said that no one was near her. There was a strong goat odor that appeared as the float of Pan passed by. The bottle was crushed by the float and the marvelous fragrance filled the area.

Hours later, all of them are sitting in the perfume shop talking about the incident. Alobar finally tells them that the secret ingredient is beet pollen. As they are all talking about the beet pollen and the fragrance, they fail to notice V'lu slipping out the door to go to a phone booth to call Luc LeFever's successor, Claude. V'lu is on the LeFever payroll and would receive a big bonus if the formula was successful. As V'lu is stepping into the phone booth, the bees appear and begin attacking her. V'lu runs for cover and waits until after dark to go to the phone booth. As soon as she reaches the phone booth, the bees appear again and attack her. V'lu runs back to the perfume shop and finds that Alobar has decided to dematerialize in Paris where Kudra last appeared. He is also giving the K23 formula to Marcel. LeFever would distribute the perfume on an international basis, but it would be manufactured by Devalier and carry her label. They would split the profits with Lily receiving fifty percent, Marcel thirty percent, and Priscilla and V'lu ten percent each. They would split Lily's share when she died. They decide that Dr. Dannyboy should receive a share of the profits for his efforts with the bees. The next day is Mardi Gras and the group celebrates in private and they decide to name the fragrance Kudra. Wiggs and Huxley Anne will arrive on Friday.



Dannyboy has a theory that is based on the death of Pan. This signals the beginning of the floral stage of evolutionary development. The newly evolved brain converts light to other forms of energy. Telepathy will increase as floral consciousness develops. A floral brain will lead to immortality. Bingo Jamaica was said to be a floral man whose brain produced a sort of honey that attracted bees. When Wiggs and Huxley Anne arrived at the airport, the bees appeared and landed on the head of Huxley Anne where they stayed without hurting the child.

While watching television, Priscilla learns of a new dance craze in Argentina. It is called the bandaloo. She sees from the television that the dance is what she saw Professor Morgenstern doing at the Last Laugh Foundation. The two worked together in the Patagonian wilderness. The man responsible for the dance is her former husband, Efecto Partido, who has opened a bandaloo club in Buenos Aires. His club is called Priscilla, for the only woman he ever loved. It has made him a millionaire. Priscilla calls Ricki and asks her if she wants to go to Argentina to join her ex-husband.

In Paris, Claude meets an Asian woman on the street. She seems confused and says she thought she was back and that she had only been gone for an hour or two. The woman is Kudra, who went to the Other Side. Claude thought that she was talking of the River Seine and begins to talk of the Right and Left Banks. Kudra was transported to a place where there was a great wharf where people had their hearts weighed. If the hearts were feather light, they were granted immortality. The last person who achieved immortality was apparently Bingo Jamaica. She is directed to a door that is marked with the word Erleichda. This is the story that Kudra tells Claude. She accompanies him to Orly to meet his cousin Marcel and his new wife V'lu.

"The lesson of the beet, then, is this: hold on to your divine blush, your innate rosy magic, or end up brown. Once you're brown, you'll find that you're blue. As blue as indigo. And you know what that means: Indigo. Indigoing. Indigone." (Part IV, pp. 341-342).

Part IV, Downwind From the Perfect Taco Analysis

Priscilla learns about Alobar and the perfume from Wiggs Dannyboy. She learns that she has the bottle of K23, the only available supply of K23, as Wiggs tells her about immortality and Alobar. He explains to her how Alobar and Kudra developed a method of immortality based on the elements of air, water, earth, and fire. Wiggs never told Priscilla about the beet and Priscilla never told Wiggs about the blue perfume bottle.

Priscilla learns from Wiggs that V'lu was in Seattle for the dinner but never attended and returned to New Orleans the next day. She travels to New Orleans, and arrives when V'lu and Lily are in protective custody, having witnessed the shooting of Bingo Jamaica. Lily stays at the Y and takes a job as a waitress, waiting until she can see V'lu and Lily.

During Mardi Gras, Priscilla is with Marcel and Alobar. V'lu appears at the parade and Priscilla, dressed in a beet costume like the two men, goes to the perfume shop and



takes the bottle. As she is showing it to Alobar at the parade, she drops it and it is crushed by the float of Pan. Afterwards, they are all at the perfume shop talking about the fragrance when Alobar tells them that the secret ingredient is beet pollen. V'lu sneaks out to phone Claude with the information and is attacked by the swarm of bees. Returning to the shop, she finds that they have worked out a plan for the marketing of the perfume with each of them receiving a share of the profits. The idea for the perfume marketing is that it will make them rich, not immortal.

In the end, Kudra returns. Alobar is not there but Claude LeFever is. She is confused, not knowing where her shop is and thinking that she has only been gone an hour or two. She tells Claude of the Other Side and the meaning of the word Erleichda.



Characters

King Alobar

King Alobar is the leader of a tribe in Bavaria. The custom of the tribe is to kill the king as soon as he begins to show signs of age. This is why Alobar panicked when he looked in the mirror and saw a grey hair. He plucked the hair. His wife Wren helps him to escape the tradition by giving him a bogus poison egg laced with belladonna and digs him up from his shallow grave, thus setting him free.

He meets Frol, who is pregnant with his children, and they settle in the village of Aelfric, where the twins are born and they all convert to Christianity. After a few years, Alobar is chosen King of the Bean. This means that he has twelve days of rule and then he is killed. He talks to the shaman about his past, and the shaman tells him to flee to the east, which he does.

He meets Kudra in India and spends quite a few years traveling with her. They learn some of the secrets of staying young together. Alobar is separated from Kudra when they try to dematerialize. He eventually travels to New France with Pan, looking for Kudra, who was trying to devise a perfume to cover the smell of Pan. This perfume would also be used to locate each other after they materialize, so Alobar mixes a batch called K23.

Alobar's time in prison in Concord disrupts his practice of the immortality techniques. He begins to age as he is awaiting parole. In the end, he returns to France to try dematerialization again in the hopes of finding Kudra.

Priscilla

Priscilla is a waitress who lives in Seattle, Washington. She is unmarried and lives in a studio apartment. Priscilla was a Mardi Gras baby whose father was Wally Lifter. Wally had Lily to babysit for his daughter one day, and then disappeared for a year. Madame Devalier agreed to raise the baby, Priscilla. Priscilla had been married to an Argentinean band leader. When the band split up, he divorced Priscilla and returned to South America. Priscilla uses the money from the settlement to attend one year of college.

Priscilla has the blue glass perfume bottle that Kudra had made in Paris. Pan had thrown the bottle overboard when he and Alobar were traveling to America. Priscilla received the bottle at Madame Devalier's perfume shop and departed, taking it with her. The bottle is stolen from its hiding place in her apartment while she is at the dinner at the Last Laugh Foundation where she learns of the story of Alobar, the thousand-year-old janitor and his perfume.



Priscilla receives a \$25,000 advance on the royalties for the new perfume and decides to go to Argentina to join her husband. He has developed a new dance and owns a big dance hall and is a millionaire.

Kudra

Kudra is the young girl that Alobar meets in India after he fled from a funeral where he witnessed the practice of suttee. Kudra is carrying a basket of beets which her family used for the color in them and to make incense. She reminds Alobar of Wren, and he gave her the nickname of Wren or Wrenna. Kudra studied immortality with Alobar in the caves of the Bandaloo and moves through different places in time with him throughout the book.

Kudra and Alobar quarrel often over time as to the importance of immortality. Kudra decides to stop doing the exercises to allow herself to age since she is four decades younger than Alobar. Kudra disappears when she and Alobar try to dematerialize and doesn't reappear until the end of the book.

Madame Lile Devalier

Madame Lily Devalier is the stepmother of Priscilla and lives in New Orleans. She owns and operates a perfume shop called the Parfumerie Devalier. She has taken over the business that her father operated for more than fifty years and has run it herself for forty years. She is known as the Queen of the Good Smells in the Latin Quarter. She had agreed to raise Wally Lifter's daughter Priscilla.

When Priscilla left for college, Lily took in V'lu as an assistant and then didn't have room for Priscilla. Lily and V'lu are also trying to make a jasmine themed scent and are using flowers from Bingo Jamaica, who's shooting she witnesses.

Wren

Wren is one of the wives of King Alobar. She is the one that he can talk to without having her talk to others of their conversation. The king tells her of his grey hair that he plucked. She wants to know why he is trying to defy fate. She tells him to beware of Noog, the necromancer. She also tells Alobar that she could not feed him the poison egg and would not be happy at his death. She offers to help him hide the secret of his aging, if that is what he wants. The deception is hard on both of them. Wren and Alobar work out a plan where she drugs him and digs up his grave after the funeral. She sets him free.



V'lu Jackson

V'lu is a maid of Madame Devalier's and her assistant. She works with her at the perfume shop. She was educated in French finishing schools with the white children of the plantation and was hired on by Lily Devalier. She also worked as a spy for Luc LeFever, the owner of the French perfume company. V'lu steals the bottle of fragrance from Priscilla.

Marcel LeFever

Marcel LeFever is a vice-president of the family owned LaFever perfume business in Paris. The LeFever family had purchased the business from the monks in the eighteen hundreds and have operated the business ever since. Marcel grew up working in the labs of the perfumery. He was in charge of the creative side of the business. He is called Bunny by his friends.

Frol

Frol was a member of King Alobar's household. She once dropped the looking glass and was sentenced to banishment. Rather than see her banished, Alobar intervened. She later bore him twin sons. After Alobar's staged execution, Frol smashed the mirror. The new king banished her for her act. As she is roaming through the forest, she meets Alobar, who she thinks is a ghost.

Claude LeFever

Claude LeFever is the cousin of Marcel LeFever and also a vice-president of the family owned perfume business. Claude handles the family's finances, since he has degrees in both accounting and law.

Noog

Noog was the necromancer of Alobar's kingdom. He is the one who will make the decision regarding the poison egg when the king shows signs of aging.

Pan

Pan is a mythical creature, half goat and half human. Alobar meets him after he leaves the village of Aelfric, on the advice of the shaman.



Wiggs Dannyboy

Wiggs Dannyboy is the founder of the Last Laugh Foundation. He met Alobar at the Concord State Prison, where both were serving time.

Ricki

Ricki is a co-worker of Priscilla's and a lesbian.



Objects/Places

Seattle

Seattle is a city in the state of Washington where Priscilla lives. Seattle is a part of the modern storyline.

New Orleans

New Orleans is the city in Louisiana where Madame Devalier lives.

Citadel

The Citadel is the name of King Alobar's castle.

Alefric

Alefric is the village that Alobar and Frol arrive at after three days of travel. The village is located forty miles west of Alobar's former castle.

India

India is the land on the Ganges where Alobar travels to. There he is horrified at a funeral and the practice of suttee.

Constantinople

Constantinople is the capital of the Byzantine Empire and a place where Alobar and Kudra lived.

Arkadia

Arkadia is the pastureland where Pan dominates.

Russia

Alobar goes to a town on the Russian border to see a vodka maker who distills his beet pollen.

Paris, France

Paris is the home of Claude and Marcel LeFever. It is also a place where Alobar and Kudra lived.

New France

New France was the area of the New World that was in the American Midwest.



Themes

Avoiding Death

The most prevalent theme of the book is that of avoiding death. This begins with Alobar when he first sees the grey hair. One of his wives has to help him in his deception so that he isn't killed, since the custom in his kingdom is to kill the king at the first sign of age. She feeds him an egg with a drug in it instead of poison and digs him up from his grave to revive him. Then he is free and leaves the area.

When he is with the Christians he is dubbed King of the Bean. He has anything he wants for twelve days. At the end of this period, his throat is to be slashed. He talks to the shaman of the situation and tells him of his past. The shaman tells him to travel to the east. Rather than be killed, he flees again.

In India he watches a wife try to avoid the practice of suttee. She tries to escape but is thrown back into the burning pyre. He meets a young girl, named Kudra, after he flees. They talk of the practice of suttee and he makes her promise to never submit to the practice. Years later, when her husband dies, she flees to avoid death.

People like Priscilla don't see any point in trying to avoid death. Things that are born are things that die. That is a part of the universe from her point of view.

Different Religions

The different religions and the different practices are a theme of the book. The reader first enters the fields of Bohemia at the end of paganism. Pan is a pagan god who is becoming weaker as Jesus Christ and Christianity become accepted. Alobar is not very accepting of Christianity, although he lives as a Christian for many years to avoid being killed. However, he finds that many of the new Christians still cling to many of the pagan beliefs and practices, as the King of the Bean situation showed.

In India and Asia, Alobar comes across the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Hinduism is the religion of caste and Kudra is locked into the caste of her family. When she marries, she is locked into the caste of her husband's family. Part of the Hinduism of the time was the practice of suttee, where the surviving wife joins her dead husband on the funeral pyre. Alobar could not accept this practice, and Kudra fled, leaving her children behind, rather than be a victim of suttee.

When traveling through the east looking for those who know how to stall death, Alobar does not know who to look for. Kudra says the people he has found are Buddhist monks and that they die just like everyone else. They finally spend time in the caves of the Bandalooop where they learn the practices of longevity from the vibrations in the caves.



Sense of Smell

The sense of smell is another recurring theme of the novel. Kudra grew up in a family that sold incense. It was her family caste in India. She developed a keen and discriminating sense of smell that allowed her to mix various formulas. She used the incense as a body perfume from the time she was a teen, to cover the obnoxious odors of the body.

Marcel LeFever is also supposed to have a very keen sense of smell. He is known for his sense of smell and has one of the finest noses in the perfume business. Lily Devalier is another one with a gift of smell that makes her a natural for the perfume business. She is also trying to make a certain scent and can do much of it mentally. Priscilla is also trying to make a scent but doesn't have the know-how or nose that Lily has.

Throughout the book, Pan is associated with a bad smell. The whole purpose of Kudra trying to develop a fragrance was to try to cover the goat musk scent of Pan.

Style

Point of View

The story of *Jitterbug Perfume* by Tom Robbins is told in the third person. Most of the point of view is determined by the character. For example, Alobar doesn't want to die because his hair is starting to turn grey. He works out a deception with one of his wives that allows him to escape being put to death. Several times during the course of the book, Alobar flees from an area before he is put to death. They have to move every fifteen or twenty years because the neighbors begin to notice that they don't age. This may not seem like much until one realizes that Alobar is over one thousand years old.

Tom Robbins is a well known author who has written several other books. He writes in a humorous fashion and wants his readers to share in the humor of the situation. The book is billed as an epic and a saga as it skips around time with two characters who have obtained immortality. The book is intended to be humorous and it is. The reader wants to know what is going to happen next to the characters and what is the purpose of the beets. Robbins wrote an interesting book that the reader won't want to put down until all of the questions are answered.

Setting

There are several settings for the book. The modern days settings are in Seattle, New Orleans, and Paris, France, and these places and characters are introduced right at the opening of the book. The reader doesn't know why these people are all receiving beets from an unknown source.

The setting that moves through the time of Alobar and Kudra's lifetimes changes as they move around. Alobar's story begins in the forests of Bohemia and then moves through Europe to India, Russia, and America. Alobar and Kudra spend time living in Paris where they operate an incense shop. They have also lived in Constantinople and have traveled around Europe with the gypsies, working the trading fairs.

Language and Meaning

Most of the language in the book is easy to read and understand. There isn't much jargon from the Middle Ages, even though the patterns of speech are a little different. This really has no affect on the story itself and adds a little more reality to the time period of the story. There is the character Wiggs Dannyboy who affects an Irish brogue. This slows the reader down a little bit.

There is some technical jargon when it comes to the perfume. The book uses the terms base notes and themes, which are technical terms having to do with perfume making



and the ingredients that are used. But this is nothing that slows the reader down or detracts from the meaning of the story.

The scenes in New Orleans also contain some local jargon. This also slows the reader down a bit, but it is nothing that the reader cannot overcome. The use of the local jargon tends to add more reality to the story.

Structure

The structure of the novel is a little different than usual. The book opens with a discussion of beets. This tells the reader that beets are going to figure prominently into the action of the novel, even though the reader does not know why. The book has four parts or divisions, each of which is preceded with the modern day action in Seattle, New Orleans, and Paris.

The book runs four different time frames simultaneously. Part I begins with the action in eighth century Bohemia. Then at the end of each part, the reader is brought up to date on events in Seattle, New Orleans, and Paris. Then the next part picks up on another part of Alobar's life in an earlier period of time, until at the end of the book, Alobar is in present modern times.

The story jumps around a little chronologically and sometimes the reader is a little confused as to where exactly in history the characters are. But for the most part, it follows a chronological progression.



Quotes

"The beet is the most intense of vegetables. The radish, admittedly, is more feverish, but the fire of the radish is a cold fire, the fire of discontent not of passion. Tomatoes are lusty enough, yet there runs through tomatoes an undercurrent of frivolity. Beets are deadly serious.

Slavic People get their physical characteristics from potatoes, their smoldering inquietude from radishes, their seriousness from beets.

The beet is the melancholy vegetable, the one most willing to suffer. You can't squeeze blood out of a turnip. . ." Today's Special, p. 1

"She blew her nose on a washcloth (she had been out of toilet tissue for a week), tossed her clammy hair, pulled on a lab coat over her underwear, and stepped into the living room cum bedroom cum laboratory where, over an assortment of burners, beakers, and bubbling glass tubing, she would toil with uncharacteristic fastidiousness until dawn." Seattle, pp. 5-6

"Since there were no witnesses, it is impossible to say whether that man was responsible for the single garden-variety beet that V'lu discovered on her cot - tossed in through the open second-story window, perhaps - when she went to lay herself down that night (and thanks to some mediation strongly resembling hurricane drops with which her employer had treated her headache, it was still night, wasn't it, V'lu?)" New Orleans, p. 9

"King Alobar did not sleep at all. He was as awake as the guards at the gate. More awake, actually, for the guards mused dreamily about mead, boiled beets, and captive women as their eyes patrolled the forested horizon, while the king was as conscious as an unsheathed knife; coldly conscious and warmly troubled." Part I, p. 17

"The kings of your ancestors have been celebrated around many a bonfire. But celebrated for cunning and for brawn. Wisdom, true knowledge, has been the province of the necromancer alone. You have changed all that, and Noog does not like it. You must forgive what I am about to say, for it is fact. There are men inside these city walls more powerfully built than you, Alobar; more adept with the spear. Men who can run faster, hurl a stone farther, face an awesome enemy with an equal absence of trembling, and pacify a harem with as sturdy a shaft. But you, well, while I cannot imagine how you acquired it, you have a brain. Time and time again, you have demonstrated your unusual ability to see inside of men and to interpret the silent pleas they aim at the stars. In the past, many kings have ruled this people. You have governed them." Part I, p. 23



"Here the people bury their dead not in communal mounds but in individual graves. Now that I have come to regard death as a private challenge rather than as a social phenomenon to be exploited - once it has occurred - for the common good, as my clan regards it, I wonder if Christianity may not have something in its favor, after all." Part I, p. 34

"That is between you and the wind. You seem to be searching for a kind of immortality. With that I cannot help you. In the realms that I inhabit, death is a companion. One does not quarrel with one's friend. If you desire to meet masters with power over death, I suggest you travel to the distant east." Part I, p. 43

"You misunderstand me. I do not fear death. I resent it. Everything must die, apparently, and I am no exception. But I want to be consulted. You know what I mean? Death is impatient and thoughtless. It barges into your room when you are right in the middle of something, and it doesn't bother to wipe its boots. I have a new passion, my darlings, a passion for being myself, and for being more than previously has been manifested for a single lifetime. I am determined to die at my own convenience. Therefore, I journey to the east, where, I have been told, there are men who have taught death some manners." Part I, p. 51

"An omen. A sign. Paris is eclipsed. New Orleans basks in light. The perfumes of Devalier have always been as good as any in France, and now they are going to be better. Parfumerie Deavlier is going to Prosper, and Paris - proud, arrogant, pompous Paris - is going to play second fiddle.' Madame touched the avalanche of her bosom with her fan, nodded three times, and smiled." Part I, p. 61

"The carrot symbolizes financial success; a promised, often illusory reward. A carrot is a wish, a lie, a dream. In that sense, it has something in common with perfume. A beet, however . . . a beet is proletarian, immediate, and, in a thoroughly unglamorous way, morbid. What is the message a beet bears to a perfumer? That his chic, elitist ways are doomed? That he might profit from a more natural, earthy, straightforward approach? This beet, this ember, this miner's bloodshot eye, this apple that an owl has pierced, is it a warning or friendly advice?" Part I, p. 63

"As the afternoon progresses, our shadows grow longer. At night, in the dark, we become our shadows. That is as true today as then. In the old days, people were aware of it, that's all. In the old days, the whole world was religious and full of interest." Part II, p. 75

"The girl made a face. 'Nobody eats these ugly things,' she said. She went on to tell how her family boiled down beets for the color that was in them. Her father had dispatched her to gather this batch so that he might dye the strips of cotton cloth in which he wrapped the aromatic cones and sticks that he made and sold. She had been born, eight years earlier, into a caste of incense makers, and since business was flourishing at the hold sites along the Ganges where pilgrims bathed, and since she had but one



brother, she was frequently called away from household chores in order to help in the trade." Part II, p. 78

"It was then that she realized that it was the odor of the incense that had intrigued her all along, only now the smells filled in the fantasies that heretofore had been mere outlines, smeary contours scrawled in ghost chalk. Perhaps the most terrible (or wonderful) thing that can happen to an imaginative youth, aside from the curse (or blessing) of imagination itself, is to be exposed without preparation to the life outside his or her own sphere - the sudden revelation that there is a there out there." Part II, p. 83

"The Bandaloo doctors are much despised by my superiors, and I risked reproachment for directing you to them. They practice a base, orgiastic form of religion that we cannot condone. But they are powerful magicians and healers and fortune-tellers, and I thought they might assist you in your obsession with your earthly vessel. Forgive me." Part II, p. 95

"He is overwhelmingly exciting, she thought. Then she added, Not in any sexual way, of course. He excited her because he was as damned as she was, yet had no regrets. He actually made damnation seem attractive. She had heard of men who rejected the gods, who professed not to believe, but here was a believer who refused to grovel, a man who stood up to Shiva, to Buddha, to the gods of his own race, whoever they might be, who stood right up to them and demanded an accounting for a system in which pleasure must be paid for with pain, a system in which the only triumph over suffering was hard-won oblivion, a system that offered its captive audience little choice in matters concerning duration of performance." Part II, p. 100

"I mean that any day Marcel might up and decide to swim to Tahiti. Look at the way he's abandoned New Wave, attacking it as if it were some sort of dangerous political movement, rather than a highly promising perfume in which we've invested millions, and which he, himself, developed. Now he's talking about making scent from seaweed. He thinks women will pay a thousand francs an ounce to smell like low tide. I thought most women bought perfume to avid smelling like the mouth of the Amazon." Part II, p. 126

"The highest function of love is that it makes the loved one a unique and irreplaceable being. Still, lovers quarrel. Frequently, they quarrel simply to recharge the air between them, to sharpen the aliveness of their relationship. To precipitate such a quarrel, the sweaty kimono of sexual jealousy is usually dragged out of the hamper, although almost any excuse will do. Only rarely is the spat rooted in the beet-deep soil of serious issue, but when it is, a special sadness attends it, for the mind is slower to heal than the heart, and such quarrels can doom a union, even one that has prospered for a very long time." Part III, p. 132

"Pan suspected, and rightly so, that the couple's gaiety, their cockiness and élan, was somehow the result of Alobar's successful petition against death, and, more than anyone else, the beleaguered god probably could have imagined the anguished expression mined into the other side of the immortalist coin." Part III, p. 142



""Two things I wouldst say to thee on that account,' responded Lalo. 'First, the conclusion that a wise homer - forgive the expression, sir - wouldst draw from Pan's admission that he lives only so long as men believe in him, is that men control the destiny of their gods. Thou mightst even say that men create their gods, as much as gods create men, for as I, untutored or read that I be, understand it, it is a mutual thing. Gods and men create one another, destroy one another, though by different means.'" Part III, p. 149

"At any rate, Alobar and Kudra survived wars, robbers, fires, pillages, plagues (including the Black Death of 1347-1350) and the intolerances of the church; survived freezing winter, famines, Gothic art, and uncomfortable furniture; survived, most importantly, the 'natural' process of aging, which, according to Dr. Wiggs Dannyboy, is so unnaturally cruel that only man could have ordained it - neither nature nor God would stoop so low." Part III, p. 155

"Kudra's plan was that they should slow themselves down until their 'humors' buzzed at a rate below that of the visible world, then merge with the vibrations and broadcast themselves through a crack. Which crack? Why, the crack at the top of the Indian rope trick. Okay. Alobar would give it a whirl. After all, his goal always have been to be complete, and were he restricted to occupancy of this one world, as round and fully packed as it might be, he supposed he could not claim completion. He was as nervous as a praying mantis at an athesists' picnic, but he bore down gently, intensifying his concentration, letting go of his attachment to gravity, applying the brakes to his bodily functions. Just before he abandoned himself to the process, however, he heard Kudra whisper, 'The bottle must be filled.'" Part III, p. 182

"Twelve hours later, he awoke and set at once to mixing the beet pollen distillate with jasmine oil and citron essence, in varying proportions. After five days of experimenting, he hit upon what seems the ideal mixture: one part beet to twenty parts jasmine to two parts citron, a ratio that inspired him to name the scent K23. The K was for Kudra." Part III, p. 189

"'Right! I want to know why I was invited here tonight and why the center of your dining room table bears a striking resemblance to my doorjamb.'
Her tone was so firm that he could have set his brandy on it.
'Ah. Indeed, Yes. Well, to be perfectly frank, Miss Partido, darlin', there was a ration o' beets on my table tonight because there has been beets at your very own door - but alas, I'm not sure o' the connection myself. Except that it has something to do with the thousand-year-old janitor and his perfume.'" Part III, p. 211

"On numerous occasions during the past three centuries, Alobar had come to the brink of suicide, driven there not by despair, or even boredom, but by the longing for reunion with Kudra and the wish to prove incorrect her accusation that longevity for longevity's



sake was for him a limiting obsession. To some degree, Kudra's charge must have been accurate, because he never lowered the shade. He would decide that he was finally ready to die, or, at least, to dematerialize, for he had no intention of leaving his dear body behind to be poked at by policemen and lied over by priests, but always something would come up at the last minute to change his mind." Part IV, p. 235

"One thing was certain, he didn't intend to risk the Other Side without a splash of K23, and he was starting to wonder if he shouldn't have gone ahead and given Wiggs Dannyboy the formula for it. Dr. Dannyboy could have had some made and smuggled it in to him. His intense secrecy about K23, his long-standing refusal to tap its commercial potential, was a bit irrational, he must admit. But then, were he a rational man, he would have been dead a thousand years. Ho." Part IV, p. 246

"Why, yes, Wiggs. Of course. Everything that's alive was born, and everything that was born has got to die. There's no getting around it. It's the law of the universe." Part IV, p. 251

"(Dr. Dannyboy felt a wee bit guilty about bringing up beets in the context of nutrition while saying nothing about their application in perfumery, a subject that, for the present, at least, was a hell of a lot more interesting to Priscilla. In the neat darkness, he watched something flicker in her tired violet eyes at his mention of beets. Surely the poor girl didn't think that a good Samaritan was sending her beets in order to improve her diet?)" Part IV, p. 261

"The idea of a thousand-year old convict with a dematerialized wife and Pan for a pal was difficult to swallow, and the goings-on at the Last Laugh Foundation were enough to strain the elastic on the cerebral panty hose. Ah, but then there was the bottle! In the past, the bottle had meaning to her only as a means of getting rich - of getting even - but now . . . now, she sensed that the drop or two of exquisite fragrance in that weird old vessel had greater worth than she had imagined. The bottle seemed charged with omen and portent, it had a mojo working, as Madame Devalier and her black friends used to say. That bottle was a link to something. It could melt the ice on the dog dish of destiny, and it was hers!" Part IV, p. 267

"'Tis me left all the homely little vegetables at your door. 'Tis me leaving' 'em with V'lu Jackson. I've spend a small fortune flyin' to New Orleans and back. Fortunately, I have me royalties. And 'tis a friend o' mine from the acid days been droppin' 'em off for Marcel LeFever. He's a professor in Paris and his son works in the mailroom at the LeFever Building. Were ye aware that Marcel and V'lu have been getting' beets, as well'" Part IV, p. 276

"In a hundred different ways, we have mastered the art of space. We know a great deal about space. Yet we know pitifully little about time. It seems that only in the mystic state do we master it. The 'smell brain' - the memory area of the brain activated by the olfactory nerve - and the 'light brain' - the neocortex - are the keys to the mystic state. With immediacy and intensity, smell activates memory, allowing our minds to travel freely in time. The most profound mystical states are ones in which normal mental

activity seems suspended in light. In mystic illumination, as at the speed of light, time ceases to exist." Part IV, p. 323



Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of the beet?

What is the element that is common to Seattle, New Orleans, and Paris?

What is the significance of the grey hair that Alobar finds?

What problem does Alobar have in Aelfric? Why does he have to leave?

Why do Kudra and Alobar quarrel so much over immortality?

What are the circumstances surrounding Kudra's disappearance?

What was K23? What was the significance of K23?