

Kane and Abel Study Guide

Kane and Abel by Jeffrey Archer, Baron Archer of Weston-super-Mare

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Plot Summary

Kane and Abel by Jeffrey Archer follows the lives of two boys, born on the same day to very different circumstances. Baby Wladek is born in a forest in Poland, found shortly after his mother died giving birth to him. A young hunter finds the baby and takes him home, making nine mouths to feed in the poverty stricken home. On the same day in Boston, William Lowell Kane is born to a banker and his wife with all the conveniences a 1906 hospital has to offer. Upon taking the baby home, there are nine people in the Kane household, if you count the servants.

A good education is destined to be part of William's future. Shortly after his birth, his father enrolls him in a prestigious private school. Wladek's educational opportunity comes by sheer luck. Word of his intelligence makes its way around the Polish countryside, and a Baron seeks him for a playmate and classmate to be tutored privately in his castle with his own son, Leon. Young Wladek will not go alone and asks to take his older foster sister Florentyna with him.

Both young boys deal with tragedies that children should not have to endure. William's father went down with the Titanic. William and his mother would have been on the ship with him if William hadn't gotten sick on their trip to England. The mother and son stayed behind until it was safe for the sick boy to travel. They learned of Mr. Kane's death in newspaper headlines.

Wladek's best friend Leon is killed when Germans take over the Baron's castle. Wladek, the Baron and Florentyna are held among other prisoners in the dungeons of their own homes. Wladek, who had played hide and seek in the dungeons, knows them inside and out and takes control of the prisoners to make sure they all sleep and eat each day. Shortly before the Baron dies in captivity, he bestows his silver bracelet upon Wladek and gives him the castle. Upon his death, Wladek learns that he, too, is the Baron's biological son, for they share a similar birth defect. The Russians take over the castle and take the prisoners to a concentration camp. Wladek is eventually able to escape, also striving to make his father proud and to take back the castle that is rightfully his.

When Wladek starts his new life in America, he adopts the name Abel Rosnovski. He and William Kane cross paths several times throughout their lives and find themselves as arch nemeses with a little too much in common.



Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 1-4

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 1-4 Summary

Wladek and William are both born on April 18, 1906. Wladek's mother dies in childbirth, having her baby in a forest in Poland. William is born in a hospital, the son of a wealthy banker. The book follows their lives and the similarities, and brings the two together as financial contemporaries and enemies.

In Chapter 1, a young hunter finds a woman who has given birth alone in the forest. The baby begins crying when it hits the ground and the mother dies. The hunter takes the baby home to his mother. Helena, the hunter's mother, takes care of the baby. Since she has a six-month old baby herself, she is able to breastfeed the new baby boy as well.

Chapter 2 takes place in a Boston hospital. A baby boy begins crying when its bottom is slapped by the doctor. Richard Kane never gave any thought to having a daughter. His first born would be a son - one to take over the bank. When doctors ask if the father if he has a name picked out, he promptly answers William Lowell Kane.

In Chapter 3, the father, Jasio, discovers that the baby has only one nipple. Helena insists the absence is a sign from God. Jasio says it is the mark of the biological father's bad blood. When the mother and children decide on a name for the baby, they have him christened the following Sunday at the chapel on the Baron's estate. The Baron issues a goose for the family's celebratory dinner.

In Chapter 4, William's mother is still in the hospital, dealing with the embarrassment and modesty of breastfeeding in front of the nurses who had to help her and the baby get started.

Richard inspects his son and finds no defect that might embarrass him. Richard makes arrangements for William to attend a private school when the boy turns 12. The baby is christened at the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul's in Boston.

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to one of two main characters, baby Wladek, and the conditions to which he was born. His foster father resents him for being just another mouth to feed. Their own infant must do without dinner so the new baby may have Helena's breast milk.

Another key to note is that the baby born in the woods began crying when it hits the ground. As the author will show throughout the book, that baby grows into a man who only gets stronger every time he hits the bottom.



Chapter 2, also very short, introduces the surroundings of the Kane child. We learn that both babies were born on April 18, 1906. This baby is born to an affluent family in a hospital with all the amenities, including electricity. This baby is given his first breath of life by man — the doctor who held him upside down and spanked his bottom, unlike baby Wladek who began crying when he hit the ground.

We also learn in this chapter that gender is important. While there is no doubt that Mr. Kane would have loved a daughter, having a son was of great importance to him. Boys were the only acceptable heirs to family wealth.

We see another difference between the babies and their families. Mr. Kane has no reservation about naming his child and promptly told the doctors the baby's name.

Chapter 3 provides more introductory information, showing us the kind of life the baby and his foster family live. While they are a poverty-stricken family, they know how to take care of each other and how to rely on themselves.

Once a name is decided upon and Jasio resigns himself to the fact he has another child to feed, the family takes the baby to church to be christened. This shows their religious beliefs are strong, despite the poverty that is working against them. They worship as a family. Their faithfulness is recognized and celebrated when the Baron provides them with a goose for dinner.

The single nipple will play an important role throughout the book. In this chapter, it is a defect spotted by a foster father who already resents the baby's existence. Later, the birth defect will play an important role in the boy's future — something he can be proud of — and will also serve as an embarrassment to him.

The difference between an unexpected child to a poverty-stricken family and a planned child to a family of wealth is demonstrated in Chapter 4.

Anne, a first-time mother, was embarrassed about breastfeeding the newborn. She knew if she expressed her modesty, the nurses and possibly her family members, would look down on her. So, she accepted the chore as something she had to do. In comparison, Helena knew of no other way to feed her babies. She had nursed six of her own babies and the found baby Wladek was the seventh. She could not afford to be modest with that many people living in their small shack. In that way, it seems, modesty is reserved for the wealthy.

The Kanes also christened their baby in church. However, their christening was more of a show than a religious rite. It was expected of them among their social class.

Gifts that Anne received in the hospital were scrutinized by the grandmothers. Only gifts from their social class mattered. In the previous chapter, the only gift the foster family received was a gift of food, which was most welcomed and appreciated.

It's important to note that Mr. Kane checks his baby's body for defects, too. He finds none. Mr. Kane wastes no time in enrolling the baby in a private school, too. Education

is the last thing Wladek's family could think about. Their immediate concern is to feed and clothe him.



Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 5 & 6

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 5 & 6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Wladek attends school with his favorite sibling Florentyna as soon as he is old enough. Wladek learns quickly, and by age five is at the top of every subject in his class.

In 1911, Baron Rosnovski tells Jasio and Helena that his six-year-old son Leon needs competition. He is being reared by the Baron and his staff as his mother had died while giving birth to a second child. He asked if Wladek could leave the village school and join Leon to be tutored in the Baron's castle.

Jasio told the Baron he'd be honored to have his child live in the castle. The boy burst into tears and said he would not go without Florentyna. The Baron offered to take her along, too, to work in the kitchens. Both children reported to the castle the next morning.

Wladek and Leon became fast friends and excellent competition for each other. When the first holiday arrived and Wladek and Florentyna returned home for Christmas, the boy missed his new friend and the castle. It was during Christmas break that Wladek learned that he was not a natural brother to his siblings. The news was a relief to him. When summer rolls around, the boys convince the Baron to allow Wladek to stay with them. He never visited his foster family again as a child.

In 1915, the Baron left for three and one-half weeks for a trip to Warsaw to put affairs in order. Just a few days after arriving home, the Baron told the boys they would soon leave for a long journey to hide from the Germans. Servants began packing up the home, but the family didn't make it out in time.

The boys heard guns outside and very soon Germans burst into the room where the children were studying. Leon cried out to ask where his father was, but when a soldier asked who had spoken, Wladek took the blame. The soldier hit him with the butt of his gun, knocking him out. Leon jumped on top of the boy to prevent a second hit. The soldier struck Leon on the back of the head, killing him. Wladek found the Baron still alive.

Back in the Kane household, Anne announces that she is pregnant again. She miscarries the baby during her sixteenth week of pregnancy due to high blood pressure. The doctor advises her not to have other children.

William grows quickly. He is schooled by tutors at age five. The boy learns reading and writing quickly, but math is his favorite subject. His banker father is pleased.

Richard, Anne and William head to Europe to combine work and pleasure. Richard has to tend to the bank's London branch when its chairman dies. Anne looks forward to the



trip because she has never been to Europe. William is going to see all the places he has learned about from his tutor.

Once in London, Richard attends to business and the family sees all the important sights. Before leaving, William accompanies Anne to a tea party and catches the measles. Instead of leaving the next day, William and Ann stay in London and Richard boards the Titanic for home. The mother and son learn of Richard's death in a newspaper.

The boy is heartbroken and spends his nights crying in his mother's lap. His grandmothers decide he needs the company of other children and sends William to school.

Richard leaves most of his estate to his son. The inheritance is in the family trust until the boy turns twenty-one. Anne receives \$500,000 and then \$100,000 a year for life, which will stop if she remarries. She receives the house, a summer home, another home, and a small island. All those belongings will pass to William upon her death. The grandmothers each receive \$250,000 and letters letting them know Richard's wishes for his son's upbringing. William's trust is handled by the bank and his godparents.

When William is told by his grandmother of the huge fortune he will someday manage, it gives him purpose to recover from his father's death. William begins to immerse himself in his schoolwork, determined to make his father proud.

His grandmothers give him a ledger when he is seven and allow him one dollar per week. Within two years, William saves more than fifty dollars. He keeps the ledger until his twenty-first birthday and builds quite a list of assets for himself in addition to the inheritance he receives.

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 5 & 6 Analysis

Chapter 5 is much longer than the previous ones and is full of action.

We learn that Leon's mother died while giving birth to a second child. At this point, it appears to give us a common denominator between both Leon and Wladek. Actually, it is foreshadowing of the fact that Wladek is really the Baron's child.

Other foreshadowing that Wladek actually belongs at the castle instead of the shack of his foster family is revealed by seeing the boy's degree of comfort at the castle. He dreads leaving the castle during holidays. When the Baron tells the boys they will have to make a journey to escape the war, Wladek gives no thought to his foster family. He feels like family with Leon and the Baron for a reason.

The upper social class' difference between boys and girls is seen. Florentyna had been attending school in the village. But when Wladek is recruited to become Leon's classmate, the girl is demoted to full-time kitchen duty. This is why Florentyna does not

mind leaving the castle for school breaks but Wladek does. He enjoys being at the castle, learning and playing with his new friend. It is only work, however, for Florentyna.

Anne's miscarriage due to high blood pressure will be an important factor when she remarries later in the book.

William, like young Wladek, is learning quickly for his age. In addition to academic learning, he is able to enjoy the sights of Europe that have been taught to him by his tutor. William also learns about losing a loved one when his father dies on the Titanic. The loss of his father is so devastating that the grandmothers think it would be best for William to have classmates so he would be less lonely.

The inheritance left to William by his father will be important to remember when Anne later remarries.

William's grandmothers give him a ledger when he is seven and tell him to keep track of his assets in the book. This is our first glimpse at William's investment savvy. They teach him to give a percentage to charity, invest some, and to keep a little for spending. These traits stick with him for life.



Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 7 & 8

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 7 & 8 Summary

Wladek, Florentyna and the Baron are still among prisoners in the Baron's castle. As Wladek is washing himself in a puddle of water, the Baron calls out to him. Wladek dutifully goes to the Baron, who for the first time notices that the boy had only one nipple. "'My foster mother used to say it was the mark of God the Father upon me,' he tells the Baron."

"'Stupid women. It is the mark of your own father,' the Baron replies."

The Baron tells Wladek that the war is going to last much longer than anticipated and that the Baron will not survive. In the spring of 1918, the Baron sends for Wladek. In the presence of two servants, the Baron gives a verbal last will and testament, leaving all power and possessions to Wladek. He gives the boy the family band, a silver bracelet.

Wladek cries in the Baron's arms throughout the night until he can no longer feel him breathing or his heart beating. The next morning, guards allow Wladek to bury the Baron next to his son Leon. He digs the grave with his hands. When putting the Baron into the grave, his shirt falls open, revealing that the Baron also had only one nipple.

Wladek's inheritance is 60,000 acres, a castle, two houses, twenty-seven cottages, paintings, furniture and jewelry.

Days later, Russians defeat the Germans and take over their prisoners. Florentyna is raped by 16 Russian soldiers as Wladek is made to watch. He and two servants carry her to the river to clean her up. Then, he wraps her in his jacket, holds her and cries until she dies. He digs yet another grave by hand, burying Florentyna next to Leon. He falls asleep on their graves and does not care if he ever awakes.

In Chapter 8, William schemes to make money on two ventures. He writes to matchbook companies and asks them to send him free samples. He sells his free samples at school. He invests some of his earnings in the stock market based on Wall Street Journal recommendations, only to end up losing twenty dollars. A second scheme makes up for that loss. William dresses shabbily and carries luggage for train passengers. He saves them the cost of a taxi, a scheme hated by taxi drivers. They each pay him 50 cents to stop the scheme.

Whenever William makes money, he dutifully donates 10 percent to a charity. One he chooses is the YMCA, which is beginning to offer aid to immigrants coming to the U.S.

By his eleventh birthday, William's ledger shows a profit of more than \$400. He begins his new prep school at 12, just like his father had planned. There he meets his best friend, Matthew Lester, who is also a banker's son.



With William away, his mother grows increasingly lonely. Her best friend Millie sets her up with Henry Osborne. Anne begins dating the handsome younger man and the two announce their engagement the following spring. William does not like Henry.

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 7 & 8 Analysis

The Baron notices Wladek's birth defect and advises him that it is the mark of his father. This foreshadowing is complete a short time later in the same chapter. Later in the chapter when the Baron dies and Wladek sees that he, too, only has one nipple, he understands what the Baron was trying to tell him.

Wladek demonstrates great strength and leadership as he organizes the prisoners at the castle. We will see these skills later in Wladek's life as he strives for freedom and builds a career. The way he deals with loss is important. When he loses Florentyna, the last loved one he has, Wladek feels he has nothing else for which to live. Where William in the previous chapter is encouraged by his grandmother to pull through and make his father proud, Wladek has no one to encourage him. It's also important to note that even money — his large inheritance — is not important to Wladek at this point.

As taught by his grandmothers, William always makes a donation to charity from his profits. His support of the YMCA which was aiding immigrants to the United States, is important to note. It is relevant in showing William's interest in investing in the future of immigrants, later on, in one specific immigrant.

William's money-making schemes and keen sense for investments are growing right along with the profits in his ledger. His friendship with Matthew Lester is one that changes his life. Both are the only sons of bankers and know and accept the pressures put on them to follow in their fathers' footsteps. William shares his hopes and dreams with his friend. The introduction of Matthew here brings in a supporting character that remains with William throughout most of the book.



Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 9-11

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 9-11 Summary

In Chapter 9, the Russians take their prisoners from the Baron's castle on a journey of more than 900 miles to Camp 201. The Baron's butler, one of the two witnesses to the Baron's will, dies on the trip. Wladek fights a Russian soldier and gets his leg cut. When the leg becomes stiff and painful, a guard makes him see the doctor.

The doctor tells him he will always limp, but that his leg will be fine. Wladek tells the doctor he plans to escape the camp and the doctor cautions him not to speak of his hopes.

When Wladek's leg doesn't get better, the doctor assigns him to kitchen duty. Knowing that the boy will have to return to chopping wood within a week, the doctor plans an escape for Wladek. He gives Wladek 54 rubles he has saved and a suit he bribed from a guard 12 years earlier. He informs Wladek of the escape plan.

Wladek escapes on a train, changing out of his own prison uniform and into the suit the doctor gave him. When he takes his seat, a woman tries to strike up conversation. When the ticket collector comes around, the woman tells the him that Wladek is her son, the man goes away. Once home, the woman's husband gives Wladek a train ticket to Odessa and ride to the station. He wants nothing to do with the escapee for fear of what officials would do to him and his wife for aiding a prisoner.

Upon arriving in Odessa, he finds an old train car in which to sleep. The car is occupied by a boy about Wladek's age. Stefan teaches Wladek how to steal produce from street vendors and how to find his way to Turkey.

Once in Turkey, as the Turks are about to cut off his hand for trying to steal produce in the marketplace, Wladek's silver band falls from his elbow down to his wrist. A British soldier sees the bracelet and stops the punishment. The Englishman tells the Turk that Wladek is English, and they take him to the British embassy. Wladek feels safe for the first time. From there, Wladek is turned over to the Polish Consul where he stays until deciding to go to America.

Anne is anxious in Chapter 10 because Henry doesn't have a job yet. She gives Henry \$100,000 to start a real estate company.

Henry is asking for more money from his wife. All the while, Anne is getting anonymous letters claiming that Henry is cheating on her, including one that claims he is cheating with Anne's best friend Millie. Anne eventually gives over all her money to Henry, then announces she is pregnant.

William hires a law firm to answer questions regarding the birth of a half-brother or sister. He wants to know: 1) if the second child would have any right to his family trust;



2) if he has any legal obligations to Henry because he is married to William's mother; and 3) at what age could William kick Henry out of his house where Anne and Henry were living.

Anne meets bank chairman Alan Lloyd for lunch and discovers that Henry has asked for yet another loan directly from the bank. He informs her that Henry already has approval from Millie, to loan Henry \$500,000 from William's trust. Anne decides to hire a private investigator to find out if the anonymous notes are true and who is sending them.

Upon learning of the \$500,000 loan request from his trust, William contacts Lloyd to make his feelings known. In addition to his disapproval, William tells the bank chairman that Henry is having an affair with Millie, that he is a gambler, and that the loan was to pay off an old gambling debt in Chicago not for a real estate investment.

The first week's investigation into Henry reveals nothing. Anne gives her signature for the loan from the trust. Lloyd tries to delay the loan, but Anne insists he push the loan through.

William receives notification of the loan on the day that Henry is supposed to be awarded a \$5 million contract to build a new hospital. It is the same day that Anne got bad news from the private eye. The anonymous letters were coming from Henry's much older ex-fiance. He dumped her for Anne who was wealthier and a little younger. In addition, investigators confirmed hotel meetings with her friend Millie. Henry had never attended Harvard or been in the Armed Forces. His Henry Osborne identity was fake.

Henry does not win the hospital contract. The information is too much for Anne, whose blood pressure causes her to go into premature labor. Both she and the baby die. Henry was absent for all the turmoil but finally shows up drunk. William kicks him out of the house.

In 1921, Wladek makes his way to Ellis Island in New York on the S.S. Black Arrow to start a new life. He bunks with another boy about his age named Jerzy Nowak. Wladek's stories of prison camp and war fascinate the boy. Jerzy's tales of sexual escapades with various women are new and unusual to Wladek. Wladek loses his virginity on the trip with a Polish girl named Zaphia.

Jerzy decides to take on an American-sounding name: George. Wladek couldn't think as fast when asked his name, so the immigration worker recorded the name engraved on his silver bracelet, Baron Abel Rosnovski.

Part 1, 1906-1923, Chapters 9-11 Analysis

The silver band given to Wladek by the Baron saves his hand in a Turkish jail in Chapter 9. This band is important to Wladek because it was given to him by his powerful father. It has significance in the story because it is an easy identifier. As the story progresses and Wladek begins a new life in America, the silver bracelet will be one of the ways William continues to recognize him.



Several secondary characters play important roles in this chapter. Stefan is important because he introduces Wladek to the people who will further his travels. He also teaches him how to steal food. There's the doctor who helps orchestrate Wladek's escape from the prison camp and the woman on the train who helps him reach safety. The British ambassador who saves his hand from being cut off in the Turkish jail is another important character to this chapter.

The foreshadowing of Anne's blood pressure issues comes to fruition in Chapter 10. She dies when her blood pressure sky rockets after learning about Henry's affairs and business lies. The baby was stillborn due to Anne's condition.

This is the first time we learn that Dr. MacKenzie will discuss private patient issues with others. He reveals that he had advised Anne against getting pregnant. He will later reveal important private information to William about Matthew. MacKenzie does not release any information in malice, but his disregard for total privacy does help William understand things in a clear perspective.

William's concerns about Henry Osborne prove to be valid. He was a bad investment of money, time, and his mother's love. While Anne and her baby die in a hospital, Osborne was no where to be found. At age 16, William becomes the man of the house, taking charge and kicking out Osborne.

Wladek is headed for freedom and for America in Chapter 11. This chapter introduces us to a new main character: Baron Abel Rosnovski. Wladek cannot speak when asked his name, so he is addressed by the name on his silver bracelet. The significance of the name is two part. One, Wladek in the previous chapters proved that he really was "able" — able to learn, able to lead, able to survive, able to escape, able to be free. Two, the name Abel is important to the book in its whole title, Kane and Abel. The book title alludes to the biblical brothers born of Adam and Eve. In the biblical story, Cain kills Abel due to jealousy and pride.

Another supporting character, George Novak, is also introduced.

Wladek tells Zaphia, his first lover, that he will find her and marry her in America. This is not foreshadowing, just a simple, innocent statement from an adolescent boy. When he does finally meet up with her in Chicago, he has long since forgotten her and his promise to find her.



Part 2, 1923-1928, Chapters 12-14

Part 2, 1923-1928, Chapters 12-14 Summary

In Chapter 12, William finds out that Matthew has been sexually active since the previous summer. William's first sexual experience is with his tutor's wife, who seduces him into a week-long fling.

William wins a prestigious mathematics award and is invited to celebrate with Matthew's family in New York. William notices a silver band worn by their waiter. It is the first chance meeting of William Kane and Abel Rosnovski.

The chance meeting with William gives Abel something to think about in Chapter 13. Abel decides he wants to be an equal to the Williams of the world.

George is still collecting girls so Abel spends his nights studying English. He works his way up at the Plaza Hotel, becoming a waiter in the Oaks Room where the richest families dine. Abel studies them to learn what makes them different from the rest of society. He uses tidbits of overheard conversations to buy stocks, a system which proves to work well for him.

Abel becomes a U.S. citizen just days before turning 21. He and George celebrate with a double date. Abel's date ends after sex, with the woman telling him how poor his performance was. Abel decides to hire a prostitute for a week of sex lessons. She always left her stockings and garter on in order to hold her money she collected.

Abel meets Davis Leroy, a southern hotel owner who offers Abel the job as assistant manager of his Chicago hotel. Abel accepts the offer and moves.

In Chapter 14, William and Matthew begin their freshman year at Harvard. In his junior year, William turns 21 and receives his whole inheritance. The \$32 million family trust does not mean as much to him as the money he has earned himself. His goal is to personally make \$1 million before graduating Harvard.

Both his grandmothers die within six months of each other.

Upon graduation, William is offered a job as junior director of investments at the bank Kane and Cabot. He accepts the job and asks to name Matthew as his assistant. Lloyd denied the request, afraid that Matthew would learn information that could benefit his own father's bank.



Part 2, 1923-1928, Chapters 12-14 Analysis

The first chance meeting of William and Abel happens in Chapter 12. While celebrating his receipt of a mathematics award from college, he notices a striking silver bracelet worn by the waiter.

The chapter is also important because William loses his virginity. He, like Abel, was encouraged by his closest friend to have sex. Note how Wladek had to pay for "training," while the wealthy William was seduced.

Three significant things happen in Chapter 13,

Abel has no idea who William is, but after overhearing the comment about his accomplishment, he wants to be like him. He begins studying the hotel's richest customers and learns dress, behavior and business tips from them.

Another character is introduced. While he is a supporting character, Davis Leroy will later affect Abel's entire future by giving him a hotel chain.

Abel, confronted with the claim that he was a horrible lover, seeks sex lessons from a prostitute. The fact that she left her stockings on to insure she didn't lose her collections will be important in another chapter when Abel has sex with Davis Leroy's daughter Melanie.

Short Chapter 14 provides information about William. The most important fact it revealed is that upon his hiring as a junior director at his family's bank, Kane and Cabot, his judgment is not wholly trusted. William wanted to name Matthew as his assistant but is denied.

Both of William's grandmothers exit the story. Their death signifies the fact that William is truly an adult and on his own.

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Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 15-17

Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 15-17 Summary

In Chapter 15, William falls in love with a young widow named Kate. He meets her while discussing her deceased husband's debts. He returns from tending to Kate's financial affairs just in time to hear the news that Wall Street has collapsed.

William's boss is sent to manage the London bank, giving William a promotion. This time when he asked to name Matthew as his assistant, there was no problem getting approval.

William and Abel meet for business in Chapter 15.

In Chapter 16 flashbacks, we learn Abel gets Davis Leroy's approval to fire lazy people, streamline payroll, and to fire employees who were stealing from the company. Leroy was so impressed that he made Abel manager of his hotel chain. Abel has so much confidence in the hotel chain that he buys 25 percent of its stock, with the blessing of Leroy.

Abel's physical advances are rejected by Leroy's daughter. She tells him it would never be acceptable for a southern lady to marry a first generation Polish immigrant. She advises him to find a nice Polish girl to marry.

Davis makes a special trip to Chicago to let Abel know the banks have repossessed all his hotels. He tells Abel of financial hard times and about a young Boston banker from Kane and Cabot who wouldn't bail him out. After spending the evening getting drunk together, Leroy commits suicide by jumping from a seventeenth-story hotel window.

Abel discovers three letters written by Leroy: one to his daughter, one to a Dallas lawyer, and one to Abel. In Abel's letter, Leroy leaves his 75 percent of hotel stock to Abel who already owned the other 25 percent. Abel blames the banker for Leroy's suicide and vows revenge.

In Chapter 17, Abel meets William to discuss the details of the hotel chain. To keep it, Abel must come up with \$2 million in 30 days. During their conversation, William notices Abel's silver band but can not recall where he has seen it before.

Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 15-17 Analysis

The bank directors begin to trust William's judgment more and in Chapter 15 allow him to appoint his friend Matthew as an assistant at the bank.

Another important supporting character is introduced — Kate who will become William's wife and mother of his children.



The most significant event in this chapter is the first business meeting of William and Abel. We learn that Davis Leroy's name has been scratched off a file and replaced with the name Abel Rosnovski, foreshadowing that shows a change of ownership has taken place. A flashback in the next chapter explains the details.

Flashbacks in Chapter 16 detail how Abel comes to manage the Chicago hotel and own the entire chain of hotels established by Davis Leroy. The chapter is also important because of words spoken by Desmond Pacey, a minor character whose actions affect the story later. When Abel became the new manager and fired Pacey, the man warns Abel not to turn his back. The foreshadowing shows that Pacey will inevitably do something to get even for his termination.

Before Leroy's suicide, his daughter rejected Abel's sexual advances because he wasn't good enough for her. This prejudice was based on his socio-economic status and his nationality. Each discrimination or obstacle Abel faces seems to only make him stronger. Remember his birth — whenever he hits the ground, he catches his breath and survives.

Melanie's advice for Abel to marry a nice Polish girl is a bit of foreshadowing that will come back to haunt her.

Chapter 17 reveals the familiar silver band to William. Abel asks William for a bank loan to cover Davis Leroy's debt. The bank denies the request due to economic hard times, but William sees merit in Abel's request, although he does not outwardly show it. Remember, William once donated funds to the YMCA because it helped give immigrants a start in the U.S. He understands Abel's misplaced anger and a call to his attorney, Mr. Cohen, is a clue that he himself is interested in learning more about Abel and the hotel chain he inherited.



Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 18-20

Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 18-20 Summary

The Chicago Richmond burns in Chapter 18. There are clear signs of arson and no insurance money will be collected if a connection between Abel and the arsonist is discovered. Abel writes William to inform him of the fire. He then visits his own banker to ask for help finding a financial backer for the hotel chain. A month later, Abel learns that the arsonist was Desmond Pacey, former hotel manager.

Abel meets Henry Osborne for the first time. Osborne, an insurance rep, is sickened to learn that Abel is dealing with William at Kane and Cabot. He lies and tells Abel he knows William because his insurance company had sued that bank.

David Maxton, owner of another Chicago hotel, offers Abel the job of manager. Abel considers the job while hoping to find a \$2 million backer for his own hotel chain. He is honest with Maxton about his plans, and Maxton seems very interested.

While dining with Maxton, he notices something familiar about their waitress. It was Zaphia! They have several dates that week.

Abel contacts his banker after lunching with Maxton. He learns there is an anonymous backer for his hotel chain and assumes it is Maxton.

Abel is happy to call William to tell him he has a \$2 million backer. After hanging up the phone, Abel vows to buy Kane and Cabot to make William want to jump from a seventeenth floor window.

In Chapter 19, William's best friend Matthew accepts the job as his assistant at Kane and Cabot. Kate, finally closing out her deceased husband's estate, moves to Boston to be closer to William. The bank's chairman announces his pending retirement. William and London bank chairman Tony Simmons are up for the job. The board is tied and the outgoing chairman has to cast the final deciding vote - for Tony Simmons. William is devastated, but politely accepts the position of vice chair and his friend Matthew is appointed to the board of directors.

In Chapter 20, Abel begins rebuilding his hotel chain. He makes a trip to New York to recruit additional staff members. George is out of work and glad to work for Abel.

Henry Osborne contacts Abel with a \$750,000 settlement for the Chicago hotel fire. Abel thinks the price is fair and agrees to settle. Osborne suggests Abel holds out for more...then split the difference with him. Abel does not like Osborne's dishonesty.

In 1932, Abel receives a letter from Melanie Leroy. They have dinner; she seduces him, and he spends the night. The next morning as he is leaving, Melanie wonders aloud what kind of woman Abel might marry. He says he will take her previous advice and find



himself a nice Polish girl to marry. Just one month later, Abel and Zaphia are married and buy their first house.

Part 3, 1928-1932, Chapters 18-20 Analysis

It is no surprise that the fire was caused by Desmond Pacey. He gives a full confession, satisfied that he had ruined Abel.

Zaphia is re-introduced into the story. She and Abel begin dating, and he guesses she might just be the "nice Polish girl" he should marry.

Abel declines Maxton's job offer because a backer comes through for his own hotel chain. When Maxton replies, "That doesn't surprise me," it gives Abel the wrong assumption that Maxton is the backer.

The author uses foreshadowing in the statement, "Abel thought with satisfaction how galling his news must be to Kane." The news was not a surprise to Kane at all and nothing about his conversation sounded surprised. Abel did not pick up on this.

Chapter 19 brings two important support characters into William's story. Both Matthew and Kate are important as William deals with the stress of banking during the Great Depression and of losing the bank board chairmanship to another man.

George is re-introduced into Abel's story in Chapter 20. His old friend is not quite the lady-chaser he used to be and proves to be a trusted business ally for Abel. This will contrast with Matthew's behavior in the next chapter.

Osborne's attempt to get Abel to be dishonest and split a settlement with him tips Abel off to the man's dishonesty. However, Abel lets the fact that Osborne hates William Kane outweigh his unethical behavior. This foreshadowing shows us to expect additional unethical behavior from Osborne.

Abel is surprised that Melanie Leroy seduces him. Although he has been dating Zaphia, he does not fight his chance to have sex with the woman that previously thought herself his superior. Sex with her proves that he has achieved a certain financial status and that because of that status, his nationality no longer matters.



Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 21 & 22

Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 21 & 22 Summary

After losing the election to be chairman, Chapter 21 takes William and Kate on a much needed vacation to Europe. When stranded with car trouble, the couple got married so they could spend the night in the one last room the hotel had to offer.

Once back in Boston, William has a difficult time working under the new chairman. Matthew is coming to work late, drunk sometimes, and his womanizing reputation is growing fast. William is trying to work extra to cover for Matthew. William's home life is happy, especially when Kate announces she is pregnant.

Richard Higginson Kane was born six weeks premature, but healthy. William immediately wires the church school and enrolls the boy to start in 1943.

At the bank, Simmons tells William that he doesn't trust Matthew's judgment since he is coming to work drunk. William leaves Simmons' office angry and decides to have it out once and for all with Matthew. When Matthew shows up, the friends have a confrontation. Shortly afterward, Matthew disappears for the remainder of the afternoon.

When the Kanes arrive at Dr. MacKenzie's party that night, they find Matthew there, already drunk. Embarrassed for his friend's actions, William apologizes for Matthew's behavior. Dr. MacKenzie pulls the Kanes aside and tells them that Matthew is terminally ill with Hodgkin's disease.

Later that night, William finds Matthew drunk, wandering the streets. William takes him home. The next morning, they talk and Matthew realizes his friend knows his secret.

Matthew asks William to tell his father of his disease. Matthew doesn't want to tell his father because he fears his illness will disappoint his father. The next morning William goes to New York to tell Matthew's father of his son's illness. Matthew stops drinking and works diligently at the bank until his death.

In Chapter 22, we learn that the hotel business is faltering, but President Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chat on the radio uplifts Americans to believe in their country's economy again.

Zaphia gives birth to a daughter, named Florentyna after Abel's foster sister. Shortly after, Abel begins working to rebuild the Chicago hotel. It opens in 1936. In memory of previous chain owner Davis Leroy, the hotel has no seventeenth floor.



Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 21 & 22 Analysis

Kate becomes a permanent character in the book when she and William are married in England. This chapter starts by showing us their love for each other and creating the atmosphere in which William and Kate live. Kate provides William the balance between life and banking. Until Kate, William does not realize there is a difference.

Matthew's behavior is getting William in trouble at work, a contrast to George and Abel's relationship. Matthew is increasingly obsessed with woman-chasing and drinking. Dr. MacKenzie lives up to earlier foreshadowing that he is not good at keeping patient issues private.

Another important character is introduced to the story. William and Kate have a son, Richard. At this stage in his life, Richard is a minor character. His role is much larger when he grows up. Richard is born of the same pretenses his own father was — private tutoring then school at 12, followed by college and business school.

William's relationship with Matthew's father grows closer after Matthew's death, foreshadowing the fact that Mr. Lester might consider William to be his own son and leave him what would have been Matthew's inheritance.

In Chapter 22, Abel and Zaphia's daughter is born. It makes no difference to Abel whether he has a son or a daughter. The baby is the love of his life.



Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 23 & 24

Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 23 & 24 Summary

William is pleased to see an article about the opening of the Chicago hotel because it proves that his judgment was right on target and that the bank had missed out a good investment. William sees a photo of Abel with Henry Osborne and calls attorney Thomas Cohen to hire a private detective to look into Osborne's affiliation with Abel.

Two weeks later, William receives a report explaining that Abel met Osborne as an insurance representative when the Chicago hotel burned. Now, Osborne is an alderman with dreams of becoming a congressman. William cannot help worrying about their relationship.

Charles Lester, Matthew's father, dies. His will states that William succeed him as the new chairman of Lester's Bank.

One board member befriends William right away. Peter Parfitt invites William to dinner to discuss business. William offers to stay in town another night to visit the bank, but Parfitt discourages him. When the bank's board of directors meet the following week, they do not vote for William to assume the role of chairman. Parfitt calls him to explain that the board wants a chance to consider its own candidate. Parfitt supposes that candidate would be Ted Leach.

The next day, William talks of the results with Simmons, who was heading to New York for a banking conference. Simmons calls William very early in the morning to tell him what he has learned: it is actually Parfitt who is being considered for the position of chairman. Ted Leach is actually on William's side.

William meets Leach and a few others for lunch to discuss Parfitt's underhanded plan and William's strategy to overcome it. William gets the men to call an emergency meeting of the board. William asks for an immediate vote and wins by a single vote. William demands a resignation from Parfitt. and appoints Leach as vice chairman.

The Kanes move their family to New York. At the end of William's first year as chairman, profits are up. In 1939, Hitler leads troops into Poland The mention of Poland makes William think of Abel again.

William meets with Tony Simmons to discuss banking issues, especially overseas banking. Kane and Cabot is planning to close its London bank, but William says Lester's would stay open. Simmons suggests the two banks merge to create a stronger position for both banks.

It takes a year to work out the details, but the merger is a success. A press announcing the merger is planned for December 8, 1941, but is canceled because of the Japanese



attack on Pearl Harbor a day earlier. William decides to enlist in the armed services to fight in the war.

In Chapter 24, Abel almost overlooks the news brief about William's bank merger due to the newspaper's coverage of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It has been about 10 years since Abel last visited William in Boston. Since then, Abel has prospered, paying back his anonymous backer as outlined.

Abel decides to enlist in the armed services to protect America. First, he has a personal war to fight. Abel tells his banker, Curtis Fenton, to buy stock in the newly merged Lester, Kane and Company. He instructs Fenton to discover who the shareholders are and what percentage they own. Fenton agrees to report back to him, although he is confused and surprised by Abel's request.

As Abel is trying to enlist, he is recognized by a general who asks if the army can use his New York hotel as a headquarters. Of course, Able agrees, but he still wants to fight in the war. Instead, the general asks him to be quartermaster for the Fifth Army while they are fighting on the front line - a job with the rank of major. Abel agrees, then informs his wife and daughter of his intentions. Three months later, Abel reports for active duty. He finally has his time on the front line when Nazis killed many American soldiers in the 9th Armored Division. Abel and his kitchen crew are instructed to go into the field and return as many dead and wounded soldiers as possible to the medical crew.

The last soldier Abel carries back to the medics is a young captain. Abel was afraid he had died during the journey back to camp and is excited to see the captain open his eye and try to raise his arm. Abel salutes and prays that the captain will survive.

Part 4, 1932-1941, Chapters 23 & 24 Analysis

The narrator comments that William is happy to see the rebuilding of Abel's Chicago hotel because he had tried to talk the bank directors into backing the project. However, this is really foreshadowing the facts we later learn — that Kane is the anonymous backer. He is glad to see Abel's venture doing well because he had personally invested in it.

This chapter shows William's growing concern that Abel and Osborne are conspiring against him. It also builds the story by providing information about William's rise to chairman of the Lester Bank, then ultimately to chair a merger between Kane and Cabot and the Lester Bank.

Chapter 24 shows Abel's loyalty and the lengths he will go to in order to get revenge.

His loyalty to old friend Davis Leroy is the reason he waged the personal war on William. Loyalty to his new home prompts him to enlist in the Army to protect it.



Abel wants to see front line action in the Army because he personally wants to kill Nazis. Remember, Nazis had held him as a prisoner, killed his best friend and tormented the Baron and his foster sister until they finally died under Russian command. The fact that he will risk his life for the satisfaction of killing his enemy shows how determined he is for revenge.

Abel saves a wounded captain on the battlefield. He carries the captain back to medics for treatment, not knowing that the captain is William.



Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 25-28

Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 25-28 Summary

Capt. William Kane is injured in the war. Unable to see or hear, he did recognize something familiar about the limping colonel that saved his life. William's initial jobs were mostly observatory until the Americans advanced to cross the Rhine River. William is sent home from the war. The chapter ends with attorney Thomas Cohen calling to wish William a speedy recovery and sharing with him a bit of news that angers William.

Upon his return from the Army in Chapter 26, Abel finds that Zaphia has lost interest in him and shows little interest in his accomplishments or his work. He begins traveling alone, taking only his daughter with him during her school vacations.

Abel talks again with banker Curtis Fenton. Fenton tells him that Matthew's sister Susan might be interested in selling her six percent of shares in Lester, Kane and Company. Abel tells the banker he is appointing Congressman Henry Osborne to the board of directors for his hotel chain and is also putting him in charge of the Kane account.

Abel meets Osborne for lunch to discuss business. Osborne lets Abel know that he has made arrangements for some paperwork to be pushed through so Abel can begin building a new hotel in Atlanta. Osborne assured him the deal is not out of line. Abel invites Henry to be a director with the hotel chain and to be the director of the Kane account.

Abel runs into Melanie Leroy. They have dinner together and have sex that night. He asks her to leave her stockings and garters on.

Abel continues to have flings with many women. Zaphia finds out and divorces him. He moves his official headquarters to New York.

William wonders why Abel bought six percent of stock in Lester's. He employs attorney Thaddeus Cohen to do work similar to what his father had done: anonymously find answers to several questions. William wants to know why Abel is investing so heavily in his bank and wants to know the role Henry Osborne plays. Thaddeus reports back that Abel is willing to pay \$750,000 for another two percent of stock so that he will have as much control over the bank as William.

Abel lobbies Congress to take a stance against Russia for its control of various European regions. Abel talks with a former history professor. The professor tells Abel that Americans have sent people to Russian concentration camps. Abel, initially with faith in the American Congress, finds that he is dodged by one Senator and offended by Communist witch hunt leader Senator Joseph McCarthy.



Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 25-28 Analysis

Chapter 25 is relatively short and outlines William's military career in flashback. His recovery at home is a minor part of the chapter. At the end of the chapter, the author foreshadows what will be learned in the next chapter: that Abel is seeking to buy stock in William's bank.

The story unfolds in Chapter 26 as to how Abel plans to buy shares in William's bank. Abel questions Osborne's ethics, but still employs him simply because of their shared hatred for William.

Abel's fling with Melanie Leroy is important for him. For one, he realizes he no longer finds her desirable. Not only did he not find her desirable, he looks at her as a mere prostitute. That is why he asks her to leave on her stockings and garter — like the prostitute Abel hired years earlier to give him sex lessons. Second, the conscious decision to cheat on his wife led to many other liaisons with women.

Short Chapter 27 introduces Thaddeus Cohen, attorney, into William's life. Thaddeus was the son of William's previous attorney and had been his debate opponent at college.

The next short chapter shows Abel's growing involvement in American politics.



Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 29-32

Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 29-32 Summary

William's bank sponsors a \$30 million project for a new airline company, putting all its resources behind the venture. William discovers that 10 percent of the airline is owned by one of Abel's smaller corporations and confides his fears of Abel's attempted takeover to Tony Simmons and Ted Leach. They convince William to meet with Abel.

William calls but Abel is not interested in meeting. Abel tells him that his intentions differ from the Book of Genesis. He also tells William he plans to acquire a full eight percent of stock, too. William tells him he needs to discuss a personal matter that only involves the two of them, but Abel will not listen.

After hanging up on William, Abel immediately calls Osborne. Osborne vows to push for another two percent of Lester stock. Abel calls his banker, Curtis Fenton, and fires him, believing Fenton must have betrayed his confidence and told William of all his financial holdings.

Abel and Florentyna take a trip to Europe for three reasons: 1) to finalize contracts to build a hotel in London; 2) to give Florentyna a trip before she started college; and 3) to visit Abel's old castle.

Abel takes Florentyna to the small shack where his foster family lived, surprised to find that Helena still lives there alone. She does not know who he is even after he tries to tell her. They visit the castle only to find it has been destroyed.

Abel is happy to return to London. He reads in a newspaper that an airplane from the company in which he owned stock has crashed. He calls Osborne with a plan to irritate William.

William is surprised to see \$1 million worth of airline stock placed on the market, but he personally buys the stock. But as more stocks are placed on the market, the stock begins to fall. Abel is the one dumping his stocks, selling while they were at the top, then slowly buying them back from the bottom. Thaddeus Cohen informs William that Abel's actions are illegal. The bank sends out a press release stating they believe the stock shares were sold with the intent of making an illegal profit. They ask for a full investigation by the exchange commission.

The Securities Exchange Commission meets with William several times but never reveals its findings. In the 1952 election, Henry Osborne was defeated for re-election to his Congressional position.

Richard would turn 21 in 1953, so his father revises his will, leaving the bulk of the family fortune to his only son. Richard graduates from Harvard with a degree in math then moves to Boston to start his graduate studies.



Part 5, 1941-1952, Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Abel refers to the Biblical story of brothers Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis. In the Bible, Cain kills Abel because he is jealous when God accepts Abel's sacrifice of a lamb but not his sacrifice of produce. Abel vows to reverse the story — Abel to kill Kane. Abel's intent is to create a miserable situation for William (as he believes William's bank did for Davis Leroy) so that Kane will also commit suicide. At this point, William is planning to reveal to Abel that he is the anonymous backer, but Abel will not listen.

The information in Chapter 30 further builds on Abel's plan to destroy William. Upon taking his daughter to visit his old castle, Abel leaves depressed, knowing the splendor of the Polish castle that was so important to the Baron, then to him, no longer exists. Visiting the site makes him determined, however, to build a luxury hotel in Warsaw.

This chapter shows William's chance at revenge — an investigation into Abel's stock-dumping antics. It also shows that Abel's interest in politics is also for personal gain. He reveals that he makes political campaign contributions and expects favors in return.

The fact that the SEC never reveals its findings insinuates a political cover-up. With Osborne defeated in Congress, he loses some of the important ties with people who did favors for him and Abel. Richard's twenty-first birthday and move back to Boston give the story new direction.



Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 33-36

Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 33-36 Summary

Abel opens hotels in Paris and London. Florentyna is graduating from college and Abel offers her a spot on the hotel chain's board of directors and a position over all the gift shops. She decides she wants real life work experience first, and convinces her father to allow her to work elsewhere on her own merits.

To avoid preferential treatment, Florentyna applies for a job at Bloomingdale's using a fake name, Jessie Kovats. Florentyna and her work partner Maisie start in cosmetics but quickly work their way up in the sales department. Within six months, Florentyna is junior supervisor.

One day at work, a nice looking young male customer asks her out. She accepts his dinner invitation. Upon meeting him in the restaurant, they exchange names. His name was Richard Kane; she used her fake name.

They begin spending a lot of time together, and Florentyna realizes she needs to tell Richard the truth about who she really is.

Richard falls in love with Jessie. He worries about telling his father he wants to marry a Polish girl who sells gloves in a department store.

He decides to drop in on Jessie at the store, but she left early that day to prepare for their date. He sees her go into a bookstore and becomes curious when he sees her sign for her purchases on credit. Next, he sees her stop in a dress shop to pick up an expensive evening dress. He follows her to her apartment and confronts her. He accuses her of having a lover who pays for the apartment. She slaps him. They collapse and do not speak for some time, then make love. After that, they talk and Florentyna confesses her real identity.

Richard recognizes the name right away and knows that their fathers hate each other. Florentyna has never heard any of the details because her father protects her from that part of his business.

The couple spends a month learning as much as they can about their fathers' bitterness. They pick a day to inform their families of their intent to marry.

Neither take the news well and both vow to disinherit their children. Florentyna and Richard run away together.

Abel and George rush to Florentyna's apartment, finding a note left by his daughter. Knowing William will want the marriage stopped as much as he does, Abel decides to give him a call. William accuses Abel of setting up the marriage as part of his revenge and hangs up on him.



Abel learns that Florentyna is trying to get a loan to start her own business. He supplies the money with the stipulation that it look like a bank loan without any involvement from him. He also learns that Henry Osborne is trying to blackmail him to get money to pay off gambling debts.

William regrets his fight with his son and tries to put it out of his mind. Virginia announces her engagement. Richard and Florentyna have a baby.

Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 33-36 Analysis

Chapter 33 is important because it introduces two characters to each other. The harmonious relationship between Richard and Florentyna is a stark contrast to the relationship of their fathers. However, neither realizes the connection in this chapter. The author also shows that Florentyna is much like her father — determined to "make it" on her own merits and driven to succeed.

It seems Richard's biggest worry would be telling his parents he wants to marry a girl of lower financial class. When Richard uncovers his girlfriend's secret, his first thought is that she was a "kept" woman with a rich boyfriend paying her rent and expensive tastes. When he hears the whole truth, he reveals their fathers' ongoing hatred. Despite that, they vow to be together, knowing their love is more important to them than the hatred shared by their fathers.

Abel calls William to ask for help in stopping the marriage of their children. William accuses Abel of arranging the whole thing and hangs up on him. This shows that William believes Abel will stop at nothing to get his revenge.

Abel, although vowing to remove her from his will, secretly funded a loan to his daughter so she could start her own business. This demonstrated that his daughter is still very important to him and that he wanted to see her succeed.

Short Chapter 36 shows William loves and misses his son, despite all the things he said in their argument. However, William remains stubborn. He permits of no discussion of Richard and will not even let Virginia open a gift from him at her own wedding.



Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 37-40

Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 37-40 Summary

Abel is still contributing to political campaigns in return for favors. He asks presidential candidate John F. Kennedy for an appointment as Polish Ambassador.

Abel is proud to see in a newspaper that Florentyna opens a third shop. Abel reveals just how much he knows about William and Henry Osborne.

William becomes proactive against Abel, giving his lawyer \$25,000. The money is used by the lawyer for reasons undisclosed in this chapter. The outcome of their actions will be seen in Chapter 39 with details of their scheme outlined in Chapter 40.

Abel returns from a trip to Turkey, is met by the media in the airport. Reporters are asking if allegations are true, but Abel has no idea what is going on.

George explains that Abel is facing seventeen counts of bribery and corruption of public officials in fourteen states. Officials locate Henry Osborne just three days before Abel's trial begins. Osborne is charged with conspiracy to defraud and is denied bail. Osborne has already made a deal with the government, testifying for the state rather than for Abel's defense.

Abel's lawyer is able to discover that Osborne sold his old files to a man named Harry Smith, who in turn sold those files to William Kane. Convinced Kane's connection would make a difference in Osborne's testimony, Abel talks his lawyer into informing Osborne of the information. Osborne never testifies in the trial because he hanged himself in his cell with a Harvard tie.

Abel accepts a plea bargain and changes his plea to guilty. Once released with a suspended sentence and a \$25,000 fine, Abel decides to offer Peter Parfitt \$1 million for his two shares of stock in Lester, Kane and Company.

Part 6, 1952-1963, Chapters 37-40 Analysis

The author builds anticipation as the reader waits along with Abel for his special political appointment. Abel is happy to see his daughter's success. Despite their feud, he is still very proud of her.

Abel reveals that he thoroughly checked out Henry Osborne's past before ever doing business with him. Despite knowing his shady past, Abel still chooses to work with Osborne simply because they both share a hate for William.



Thaddeus Cohen tells William about Abel's campaign contribution with the stipulation that Poland gain "most favored nation" status and about Abel's pending appointment as a Polish ambassador.

William agrees with Cohen's plan to make Abel's bribes known, as long as he has no direct affiliation with the scheme.

William's plan from Chapter 38 unfolds here. With allegations against Abel, he will not receive the appointment as ambassador to Warsaw. Instead, the position is given to a man named Cabot, one of William's cousins.

Abel once again shows that when faced with an obstacle, he becomes stronger. The remaining two percent of stocks he needed in order to control William's bank are out there, and he is determined to force William out of his job.

William has two heart attacks in Chapter 40. After two near-death experiences, he wants to reconcile with his son, meet his daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. Kate makes the arrangements for the visit.

Abel succeeds in removing William from the bank. He resorts to bribing one of the young directors in order to buy the shares needed to push William off the board of directors and out of the bank all together. He devised the entire revenge plan, only to turn control over to someone else. Since the game is over and he wins, Abel no longer has any interest in the bank.



Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 41 & 42

Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 41 & 42 Summary

Abel does not enjoy the revenge as much as he thought he would. Abel wants to see his daughter and grandchildren but insists he cannot see Richard as long as his father is still alive. Depressed, Abel does not leave his penthouse for six months.

The New York Florentyna's opens in March 1967. Kate and Lucy Kane attend the opening as did George. Neither Abel nor William attend with their families.

William dresses and leaves the house alone. Due to his declining health, he has not left the house unaccompanied in some time. He makes his way to Fifth Avenue to see the new store. A few yards away, he sees an old man standing away from the crowd. They walk toward each other and William sees a silver band fall to the other man's wrist. It all fits into place for William for the first time: the Plaza luncheon, Boston, Germany and finally the opening of Florentyna's. The two never speak but simply tipped their hats to each other.

William hurries home. He has to be there when his grandchildren visit for the first time. When the family arrived, they found William dead, sitting in his favorite chair.

Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 41 & 42 Analysis

The author plants the thought that William dies before Abel. Abel said he could not meet his son-in-law while his father is still alive. As mentioned earlier, Abel wanted to reverse the Biblical version of Cain and Abel, meaning that Cain (Kane) would die first.

William and Abel literally cross paths in Chapter 42. Both sneak out for a peak at the grand opening of the New York Florentyna's.

William notices the silver bracelet on an old man at the grand opening. They recognize each other. William, however, makes a bigger connection. He realizes that Abel was the waiter at a luncheon he had with the Lester family while still in college as well as the colonel who saved his life in the Army.

As they pass each other, they simply tip their hats, a sign of mutual respect. Abel shows no signs of continued hatred — his revenge had not felt as sweet as he had thought it would. William shows no hatred. After all, he was the victim of hatred from the beginning. He had initially thought well of Abel and that is why he invested in his hotel chain.



Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 43 & 44

Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 43 & 44 Summary

Abel receives a letter from the lawyers of the late Curtis Fenton, his former banker. The letter reveals that his anonymous backer from 1929 had been William Kane.

Abel and George quietly attend William's funeral to pay last respects - or possible first ones. Abel sends George to invite Florentyna and Richard to visit, which they do. Abel tells his daughter how proud he is of her accomplishments and tells Richard how foolish his vendetta had been. Abel tells them that he and William both attended Florentyna's grand opening in New York.

Abel dies, leaving his fortune to Florentyna. She opens his prized hotel in Warsaw, sad that her later father could not be there for the honor himself. In his will, Abel left his engraved silver bracelet to his only grandson, William Abel Kane.

Part 7, 1963-1967, Chapters 43 & 44 Analysis

The story's climax begins with Abel's receipt of Fenton's letter. The banker writes two letters before he dies: one to be delivered to Abel if William dies first and the other to be sent to William if Abel dies first. This letter fills in the entire story about William's anonymous funding of Abel's hotels.

The author finally reveals the name of William and Abel's grandson: William Abel Kane. We also learn that Abel adopted his American name from the inscription on his silver bracelet, "Baron Abel Rosnovski."



Characters

Baron Abel Rosnovski

Baron Abel Rosnovski started life as Wladek Koskiewicz, a baby born in the Polish forest to a mother who died in childbirth.

After surviving imprisonment by Germans, then Russians, the boy finally escapes and seeks a new life in America, where immigration officials get his name from a silver bracelet given to him by the man he discovers is his father, Baron Abel Rosnovski.

From an early age, Abel had the desire and capacity to learn. When reaching America, he worked and studied English at a university, eventually getting his degree. He also learned by watching people. He became entranced with the lives of the rich people he served as a waiter at a New York hotel and decided his goal was to become an equal to them.

His work ethic and drive earned him the respect of his employers. One left him his hotel chain as noted in a suicide letter when the man jumped out of a hotel window during the Depression. This death changed Abel, who vowed revenge against the banker who pursued bankruptcy against his friend.

Abel is the antagonist of the story. He generally makes the first moves toward revenge even though banker William Kane gets a punch in every now and then.

William Kane

William Kane lost his father at a young age and used his ambition to help hide his grief. William knew he would inherit great fortune and wanted to make his father proud. He kept that in mind in everything he did. His grandmothers instilled a spirit of giving and saving in him by giving him a small allowance and a ledger in which to record his monetary activities.

William was a smart young boy, too. He had all the luxuries his family's money could buy. He won mathematics scholarships that would have made his father very proud. He tried to follow exactly in his father's footsteps, and when that wasn't possible, he became disappointed in himself.

William was in not reactive, except in most of his dealings with Abel. William was very proactive in managing his trust fund and in keeping tabs on his mother when she began dating (then married) a con man.

William is the protagonist of the story. One definition of protagonist is "champion." William, even though he is dethroned from his bank position by Abel, does win in the



end as he is viewed as a martyr. This is the reverse of the story of Cain and Abel in the Bible.

Richard Kane

Richard Kane, William's son, likewise wants to make his father proud. Banking is a tradition in the family, and Richard is also good with numbers. However, his interests expanded to include playing cello and baseball. While Richard appreciated tradition, he did not thrive on it as his father did. This straying from tradition carried on in his choice for a marriage partner, too.

Richard went against the tradition of marrying a woman from a "proper" Boston family when he chose to marry Florentyna. Although her family was just as wealthy as his, the fact that she was Polish did not make Richard's father happy.

Where William Kane was meticulous about doing exactly what his father would have expected of him, Richard was not. He wanted to follow his heart. Part of Richard wanted to make his father happy and proud, but Richard was not going to sacrifice his personal happiness. Richard's mother Kate played a big role in building this trait in him. She encouraged him to explore different interests, such as music and sports.

Richard fell for Florentyna much the way his father fell in love with Kate. Richard was not supposed to fall for a woman of supposed lower standards just as William was not supposed to fall in love with one of his clients.

Florentyna Rosnovski

Florentyna was the love of her father's life. As an only child, she was due to inherit the fortune he had built. Because of her family's money, she was afforded opportunities to travel and to attend college. Florentyna, however, never took those opportunities for granted.

She could have taken the easy way out when she graduated from college. A position as vice president of her father's hotel chain was waiting for her. However, she wanted to test her own skills to see if she could be recognized for her own work ethics and merits. Her job as a sales clerk proved that she, like her father, had a knack for watching people and learning from them. She rose up the ladder quickly, all on her own merits.

Succeeding on her own merit was so important to Florentyna that she insisted on using a fake name during her work. It was the only way she could be certain it was her work that gained her promotions and not merely her name.

While testing her own success was fun, Florentyna did not like using the pseudonym when she realized she was falling in love with Richard. She wanted to be honest with him, but he caught on before she had a chance to tell the truth.



Florentyna, along with husband Richard, began building their own empire in the fashion industry. Together they were wildly successful.

Baron Rosnovski

The Baron was a kind man who sought young Wladek to be a classmate and companion for his only son, Leon. The Baron was impressed with Wladek's ability and desire to learn.

The Baron was Polish nobility. The chapel on his grounds served the poverty stricken families in the neighboring woods. He invited many of the villagers to celebrate Christmas in his castle and gave the children gifts. His caring and giving nature was a welcome change for young Wladek whose foster father was so belittling.

It was the Baron who told Wladek that his single nipple birth defect was a mark of his biological father. Wladek was surprised, but comforted, to find that the Baron had only one nipple, too, and therefore was his father.

Richard Kane, the elder

Richard Kane, Williams' father, was a true banker, an accountant at heart. Banking was his first love — family took second place. He married his wife, Anne, because she was of proper lineage. While he enjoyed her companionship and did not disrespect her, he seemed to look upon her as an heir producer rather than a human being.

Richard did love his family. Love was emotional and he did not care much for expressing emotions. Emotions didn't calculate well into his well-planned daily schedule.

Helena Koskiewicz

Helena was the Polish woman who raised baby Wladek as one of her own children. She was a God-fearing woman who always saw a bright side to situations, even in her family's impoverished circumstances. While her husband saw the baby as a burden — another mouth to feed — Helena saw the baby as a gift from God.

She loved her family and taught them all to take care of themselves at a very early age.

George Novak

George Novak's given Polish name was Jerzy Novak. The boy decided to change the first name to George to sound more American.

George was Abel's best friend. George was typical for his age, girl crazy, and looking for as many adventures as he could have with girls. He was surprised to learn that although



Abel had been through many adult situations such as being a prisoner of war, being out on his own on the streets, and being arrested in Turkey, that he had never experienced a physical relationship with a girl.

George stayed in New York when Abel left for Chicago and they didn't see each other for a few years. When Abel needed help rebuilding a hotel staff, he looked up his old friend. He knew he could count on George's loyalty.

Anne Kane

Anne was William's mother. When her husband Richard died on the Titanic, she became very depressed. Richard had always taken care of the family's money and she was not adept at such tasks. When her son William went away to school, she became very lonely.

Anne was lonely, but not desperate. She had many blind dates that she was not interested in pursuing. But, she was enamored by the good looks of Henry Osborne and his fascinating stories. She put her trust in him and let him rob her of all her inheritance from Richard. She wanted to please him so she got pregnant, even though her doctor advised her years earlier not to have any more children.

Kate Kane

Kate Kane was William's wife. Her temperament was a good balance for William. Her beauty and life-loving attitude gave William more than a career in banking to look forward to in life.

Kate wanted her children to have a bounty of experiences and interests. She persuaded their three children to participate in the arts in addition to their academic studies.

Zaphia Rosnovski

Zaphia was the first girl Abel had sex with, and he married her after living in the United States for several years. She was a traditional Polish girl and did not ever adapt to Abel's success. She was uncomfortable with his position in society.

Worried that they would never have a child, Zaphia was thrilled to give birth to their daughter, Florentyna.

Matthew Lester

Matthew and William were best friends and like brothers. Both had been only children. Matthew was the athletic one. William was the studious one.

Matthew's family played an integral role in William's life when his mother remarried. William began spending vacations with the Lester family instead of going home. Matthew's father gave William the position of chairman of his bank when he died.



Objects/Places

The Koskiewicz Cottage

The Koskiewicz Cottage is the home where baby Wladek is reared for the first years of his life.

The Red House

The Red House, in a prominent Boston neighborhood, is home to the Kane family.

The Baron's Castle

The Baron's Castle becomes home to young Wladek and eventually becomes his prison when captured by Germans.

The Ritz Hotel

While having breakfast in bed at the Ritz Hotel, Anne and William learn of Richard's death on the Titanic.

St. Paul's Prep School

William met Matthew at St. Paul's Prep School. The school was picked out by William's father, and he was enrolled in a slot there the day he was born.

Camp 201

Young Wladek and other prisoners of war were taken to Camp 201 in Russia. Wladek escaped from Camp 201 with the help of a doctor.

The Renska

Wladek was a stowaway on the Turkey-bound ship called The Renska.

Polish Consulate

Wladek stayed at the Polish Consulate for a year while deciding where he wanted to make a new start.



The Black Arrow

Wladek and Jerzy set out for America on The Black Arrow. Wladek lost his virginity in a life raft on the ship.

New York's Plaza Hotel

Abel was a waiter at New York's Plaza Hotel. The first encounter between William and Abel occurred at New York's Plaza Hotel.

The Chicago Richmond Hotel

From the Plaza, Abel was offered a job as assistant manager at The Chicago Richmond Hotel owned by Davis Leroy.

Hamilton Memorial Mathematics Scholarship

William, like his father, won the Hamilton Memorial Mathematics Scholarship at Harvard University,

The Porcellian Club

William and Matthew belonged to an exclusive club called The Porcellian Club. Both young men resigned when the group did not welcome their new Jewish friend inside.

Kane and Cabot Bank

William's father left him a large trust, including a majority of stock at Kane and Cabot Bank. William was not elected chairman of the bank due to his young age when chairman Alan Lloyd retired.

The Lester Bank

Matthew's father was chairman of The Lester Bank in New York. Matthew's early death left Mr. Lester without an heir. His will appointed William as chairman.

The Richmond Group

Davis Leroy's hotel chain was known as The Richmond Group. In his suicide note, Leroy left the chain to Abel.



Great Western Casualty

Abel's insurance representative with Great Western Casualty was Henry Osborne. Osborne tried to talk Abel into holding out for more money from the company then splitting the difference with him.

Hodgkin's Disease

Matthew Lester was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease. Then, it was a terminal diagnosis. Today, the cancer has seen successful treatment with chemotherapy and other medications.

Lester, Kane and Company

The bank merger between The Lester Bank and Kane and Cabot became known as Lester, Kane and Company. William was chairman.

The Baron Group

Abel changed the name of his hotel chain to The Baron Group.

The New York Baron

The New York Baron hotel became Abel's business headquarters and his home after his divorce.

Social Sensitivity

In Kane and Abel, Archer creates a character who embodies the American rags-to-riches success story, symbolizing opportunity for those who are diligent and persevering. Abel Rosnovski, one of the novel's two main characters, is a penniless Polish refugee when he comes to this country. Through hard work, he educates himself and makes his fortune. He must earn his way and by doing so, epitomizes the American work ethic.

In contrast to the concept that diligence and hard work reap their own rewards is the negative picture that Archer paints of business ethics and white-collar crime. The author depicts bank officials manipulating stock shares and bank policies to further their own careers. Although the honorable and wealthy William Kane triumphs over these unprincipled men, the reader is still aware of their ominous presence.



Techniques

The events in the novel are arranged chronologically. The first two sections of the book juxtapose the two main characters. Kane and Abel officially meet in Part II of the story, setting up the conflict which will direct the remainder of the tale.

Archer uses world history as the backdrop for the novel, which in part reads like historical fiction. Abel is victimized by the Russians and is held prisoner. Kane's father goes down with the Titanic. When the author does not use historic events, he "name drops."

Archer liberally sprinkles his book with famous personalities. Abel works for General Mark Clark during World War II. Later he tries to get assistance for Polish refugees from Senator Joseph McCarthy, who criticizes him instead.

The book is filled with irony and twists of fate. Archer has his two main characters unknowingly interact and aid each other. During World War II Abel saves Kane's life on the battlefield. The silver bracelet that Abel wears is a symbol constantly appearing throughout the story. Archer keeps the reader in suspense as to the identity of Abel's unknown benefactor. The astute reader may enjoy deciphering the clues.



Themes

Vengeance

Vengeance is Abel's reason for plotting against William. He believes the bank, as represented by William, drove his friend Davis Leroy to commit suicide.

Vengeance is also what made Abel enlist in the Army. He volunteered to fight in World War II because he wanted to fight the Germans and Russians since their troops had held him and his family prisoners for so long. Germans killed his best friend Leon and the Baron, while the Russian guards killed his foster sister Florentyna.

Abel refers to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel several times when talking with William. In the Biblical version, Cain kills his brother, upset that God accepted his brother's sacrifice of an animal but not his sacrifice of produce. Abel vows to turn the tables, meaning he will kill Kane by robbing him of his position at the bank and creating circumstances in which Kane will also commit suicide.

While Kane did not commit suicide, he did die after suffering several heart attacks that seemed to be induced by stress caused directly by Abel's scheme.

In the Bible, Abel is seen as a martyr because of his death. In this book, Kane is seen as a martyr. Not only did Abel succeed in killing him, he had been the one anonymous man who believed in Abel's managerial skills enough to invest in him.

Success

Success is a theme of this book. The author shows how both main characters succeed in similar, yet very different, circumstances.

Both William and Abel grew up without their fathers. William dealt with his grief by setting out to live the life he knew his father would have outlined for him. Abel, however, did not discover his father until the Baron died. He simply found strength in his family lineage to survive and succeed.

William succeeded because a plan was outlined for him. Since his father died when he was a child, William's grandmothers were sure to pass along his father's wishes for traditional upbringing, career, and marriage. Success was waiting for him to turn 21 in addition to his own assets he had built.

Abel was also left a hefty inheritance by the Baron; however, it was all destroyed by the war. He had to build his success from scratch. He lucked into positions and investments due to his work ethic as a waiter at a hotel in New York.



Both men were successful investors. William operated on his own maverick sense of investing. Abel watched his wealthy customers in the dining room and learned from their conversations.

William was a more successful family man than was Abel. William adored his wife and children. He respected his wife's opinion and often sought comfort from her during stressful times. Abel's wife, Zaphia, however was not interested in her husband's ascent to the top. She didn't understand his desire to succeed. They divorced once she proved his infidelity.

Discrimination of the Wealthy

Discrimination and prejudice are themes that go hand-in-hand in this book.

From the beginning, we see that the wealthy discriminate against women. For example, Florentyna Koskiewicz, left her poverty-stricken home every day to attend school in a nearby village. However, when Wladek and his foster sister went to the castle, only the boy was tutored. The sister was hired on a kitchen help.

In another example of discrimination among the wealthy, Richard Kane was relieved when Anne gave birth to William, a boy. He could only leave his family's fortune to a male heir. William was likewise relieved to have a son to which to leave the family's fortune.

The situation was different for Abel, who came from a very meager background. Abel was a little disappointed that he and Zaphia would not have more children (including a boy as heir), but he was content to leave everything to his daughter. Gender did not mean as much to him

The wealthy also chose to discriminate based on race and nationality. William and his friend Matthew learned about discrimination against the Jews when they tried to take a college friend to an exclusive club. Both young men resigned and forfeited membership in the club.

When Richard announces that he wants to marry Abel's daughter, William asks him why he can't marry someone of his own status and background instead of a full-blooded Polish girl born of immigrants.

Significant Topics

This novel portrays how destructive and obsessive revenge can be. As in the biblical tale, this story pits a man named Kane against one named Abel.

Because of a misunderstanding, the two become enemies, although they later learn that they unknowingly aided one another through the years.



The enmity that they feel robs them of the joy and love of their children. Archer emphasizes how destructive the need for revenge can be when he has his two characters cast out their beloved children rather than befriend one another. Kane dies before he ever gets to meet his grandchildren, while Abel isolates himself from his daughter, the only person he truly loves.

A second theme dominating the story illustrates how powerful ambition can be when it is fueled by diligence and perseverance. Abel, and later his daughter Florentyna, are presented to the reader as models to emulate. They achieve their goals through intelligence and hard work. At the same time they are charitable. Archer seems to suggest that those who work hard and deserve to succeed will do so.

Although this seems unrealistically idealistic, it is poetically just.

Style

Point of View

The author tells the story of Kane and Abel through third person omniscient narrative.

The chapters jump back and forth between the lives of the two main characters so the reader can see them both at the same points in the characters' lives. For instance, Chapter 1 shows the birth of Wladek, and chapter 2 shows the birth of William. This allows the reader to make connections between the development of both characters. Even under drastically different circumstances, the two main characters share many similarities, including the date of birth.

As the boys mature and begin dealing with each other on a business level, the chapters follow the story along in sequence. For example, in one chapter Abel angrily hangs up on William. The next chapter starts with William being amused by the hang-up. The next chapter then picks up with the same amount of time passing for Abel.

As the story line progresses, it sometimes gets ahead of itself. So, when one chapter leads William to a certain point, the next chapter has to backtrack to catch up Wladek's story. This is especially true late in the book when both characters are serving in World War II. We learn of William's entire military career in the form of a third person flashback.

Setting

The story has several settings, especially in the life of Abel.

First, Abel lives in a small cottage in the forest, then in a castle, then a Russian prison camp, onto the streets of Moscow, Turkey, the Polish Consulate and finally America. Once in America, we follow Abel from New York to Chicago, Dallas and many other stops. Abel travels often to seek new opportunities to expand his hotel chain world wide. He ultimately ends up with headquarters in New York City.

For the Kane family, the setting is generally Boston. It's a traditional home that's been part of the family for years. England was another important setting in the story. William's father was killed on his way back to the United States from England when he booked travel back to the states on the Titanic. A happier memory of England comes later when William and Kate are married there while vacationing. The Kane family also ends up living in New York.

The various settings show the trials of each main character's life. Abel has obviously had more to overcome, being held prisoner and having a rocky escape from the Russian prison camp. The paths of both characters take them to the same, final setting,



however, showing that they both reached the same degree of success despite their differences.

Language and Meaning

The author uses straightforward language that is easy to understand and enjoyable to read.

As with any good story, he matches appropriate languages to his characters. For example, chapters 11 and 12 reveal the loss of virginity for Able and William. Chapter 11 reveals Abel's first time and several discussions with his friend George about sex. The author chooses to use slang to refer to sexual terms because it best fits the socio-economic background of those two characters. However, in Chapter 12, the educated boys Matthew and William have the same discussion, but it is much more polite.

The author does not use a lot of hidden meaning in his novel. There is some foreshadowing in the style, but it is nothing that must be dissected in order to find the meaning.

Structure

The book has seven parts and consists of 44 chapters.

Some chapters are very short and are only four to five pages long. Others are longer and cover more ground. The chapters are arranged so they alternate the story of either Abel or William. The book starts with the birth of Abel (Wladek). Chapter 2, then, tells the events of William's birth. This allows us to see the development of each character for a specific, particular amount of time.

As the story unfolds, the chapters tend to be longer. Instead of viewing the characters side-by-side, the longer chapters take the reader from one point in time to the next between the characters. For example, in Chapter 22, a photographer snaps a picture of Abel and Henry Osborne at a hotel opening. Chapter 23 opens with William reading the article and seeing that photo in the newspaper. We know that a short time has passed, but just enough time to get a photo developed and meet a newspaper deadline. So, the end of Abel's day in one chapter leads directly to the beginning of William's morning.

The structure is not difficult to follow and flows quite well.



Quotes

""The ugly little bastard has only one nipple?""
Chapter 1, Kane and Abel, p. 21

""But I want us to remember him — always.""
Chapter 6, Kane and Abel, p. 54

""My friend carries my purse.""
Chapter 9, Kane and Abel, p. 107

""I shall do as you command, O Master.""
Chapter 21, Kane and Abel, p. 318

""Ich.""
Chapter 5, Kane and Abel, p. 41

""We have wooden swords and shields. We are not afraid of Germans or Russians.""
Chapter 5, Kane and Abel, p. 40

""Doing something worthwhile for a change.""
Chapter 24, Kane and Abel, p. 387

""You're a real friend, Abel. I swear I'll never come back again — I promise you that.
Never again.""
Chapter 35, Kane and Abel, p. 480

""Draw the curtains and light the candles on the dining room table. There's so much to
celebrate.""
Chapter 42, Kane and Abel, p. 533

""He would have understood.""
Chapter 44, Kane and Abel, pg. 539

""Why are you looking so sad, beautiful lady?""
Chapter 21, Kane and Abel, pg. 325

""A guest in the house is God in the house.""
Chapter 1, Kane and Abel, p. 13



Topics for Discussion

Traditionally, the men of the Kane family left their fortunes to the eldest son of the family. Abel, however, was happy enough to leave all his possessions to his only daughter. Discuss whether William's father would have left all his possessions to an only daughter.

William was Abel's anonymous financial backer. What qualities did William see in Abel that made him confident that the hotel chain was a good investment?

George was Abel's best friend. Matthew was William's. How are George and Matthew similar and how are they different?

The well-meaning fathers had plans for their children. William planned for Richard to go into banking. Abel wanted Florentyna to be part of the hotel company. Discuss two ways that each child demonstrated their independence.

Why was it important to Abel to build hotels in Istanbul and Warsaw? What does this show us about his character?

Abel and William were both against the marriage of their children. We know Abel's reason was due to his hatred of William. William asks Richard why he doesn't marry someone of his own background. Do you think he meant society/class background or nationality? Do you think he would have been upset if the Polish girl his son wanted to marry was not Abel's daughter?

Compare William's education to Abel's. How were they similar? How did they differ? Who do you think got a better education and why?

Why does the author choose to use slang language for Abel's character early in the book, but less so as the story unfolds?

In the Army, Abel saves an injured young captain. Would he have risked his own life to save the captain if he knew the man was William Kane? Discuss why or why not.

Literary Precedents

Archer's style and characterizations in both *Kane and Abel* and the sequel, *The Prodigal Daughter* are reminiscent of the work of Howard Fast. Abel Rosnovski's rise is similar to that of Dan Lavette in *The Immigrant* (1977). Both are self-made men who come to America seeking fortune. Like Archer, Fast emphasizes plot rather than characterization.



Related Titles

Perhaps in an attempt to imitate the success of Kane and Abel, Archer repeated much of the plot of that best seller in *The Prodigal Daughter*. The story opens with a touch of foreshadowing as Florentyna Rosnovski, a determined eleven-year-old child, announces her plan to become president of the United States. Given the nature of her character, the reader has little doubt that she will achieve her goal.

The story unfolds through chronological development. The events of the story so closely parallel those of Kane and Abel, particularly in the first half of the book, that the reader has a sense of *deja vu*. Even some of the same dialogue is repeated, although the emphasis has shifted from the father to his daughter.

The story is punctuated by actual historical events. As bankers and later as politicians, the Kanes are directly affected by world events. Archer uses some name-dropping as Florentyna encounters people like John F. Kennedy. The technique is effective; meeting the celebrities is enjoyable.

Florentyna Rosnovski Kane is the central character of *The Prodigal Daughter* (1982). The only child of a self-made Polish refugee, she makes her own fortune by opening a national chain of clothing stores. In spite of her father's money, she struggles against social and class prejudices. Placed in situations where wealth will not help her, she always emerges victorious.

Although politically naive and idealistic, Florentyna is a character too perfect to be true. She is ambitious, intelligent and attractive. She is unscarred by her parents' divorce and unruffled by the estrangement from her father that her marriage has caused. She never seems to get personally angered (except by social injustice) and certainly is never vindictive.

Halfway through the book, Florentyna meets and marries Richard Kane, a husband worthy of her in perfection.

A flawless character, he is the ideal helpmate. He and his wife always support each other emotionally and financially. They never argue and hardly seem realistic. Richard is so shallowly portrayed that readers may find it difficult to feel any sense of grief when he dies. Perhaps this is because he seems too perfect to have lived. In reviewing the book, reviewers criticized the characters' flawlessness. Yet despite their unrealistic perfection, the characters were likeable. One critic indicated that if Florentyna were to run for president, she would certainly vote for her.

The Prodigal Daughter portrays several American values. Foremost among them is the need for ethnic pride.

Throughout the story, Florentyna Rosnovski Kane, daughter of Kane and Abel's Abel Rosnovski, constantly reaffirms her pride in her ethnic background. She overcomes the



childhood pain of being labeled a "Dumb Polack" and is able to proudly tell her tormentors that her family has been in this country for three generations, and that she can trace her lineage for over one thousand years. As Florentyna rises meteorically up the political ladder, she boasts of her background and continues to recognize the need for pride in one's roots and one's heritage. Once she establishes a private fortune, Mrs. Kane creates a scholarship fund for immigrants so that they will be able to make successes of themselves.

Archer depicts the social class prejudices which separate people. Florentyna is rejected by the son of an upperclass Brahmin Boston family because she is not of the same social class. The experience is painful but enlightening.

In addition, Archer, a former British MP, expresses concern about political corruption. He holds a mirror up to the American political system and uses the idealistic Florentyna to represent the reader. She is disturbed by the seniority system of the House of Representatives' committees. The heads of the committees are determined by seniority rather than by merit. As a representative, the naive Kane reveals widespread bribery practices and she is almost swept away by the floods of retribution her revelation of the scandal releases.

In *The Prodigal Daughter* Archer combines two interrelated themes. He shows the reader how important commitment is for personal satisfaction.

Along with this, the author adds a subtler theme which reveals how the driving force of ambition can be realized and to what extent people will go to reach their goals.

The positive characterization of Florentyna Kane is contrasted with the harsher, more realistic image of politicians reneging on their campaign promises. The reader sees politicians lying to gain office and accepting bribes to remain in office. On the other hand, in spite of family money, Florentyna makes her own fortune through hard work. Realizing the need for personal involvement, she becomes active in politics. She gives of her time, even sacrificing family, to change situations to which she feels committed. Through the mouths of his characters, Archer instructs the reader that one cannot merely rest contently with that which one has. One must become involved to "give back some of what you have taken from others."



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