

Knowledge of Angels Study Guide

Knowledge of Angels by Jill Paton Walsh

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Knowledge of Angels Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Prologue.....	6
Chapter 1.....	7
Chapter 2.....	9
Chapter 3.....	11
Chapter 4.....	13
Chapter 5.....	15
Chapter 6.....	16
Chapter 7.....	17
Chapter 8.....	18
Chapter 9.....	20
Chapter 10.....	21
Chapter 11.....	22
Chapter 12.....	23
Chapter 13.....	25
Chapter 14.....	26
Chapter 15.....	28
Chapter 16.....	30
Chapter 17.....	32
Chapter 18.....	33
Chapter 19.....	34
Chapter 20.....	36
Chapter 21.....	38



[Chapter 22..... 39](#)

[Chapter 23..... 40](#)

[Chapter 24..... 42](#)

[Chapter 25..... 43](#)

[Chapter 26..... 44](#)

[Chapter 27..... 45](#)

[Chapter 28..... 47](#)

[Chapter 29..... 48](#)

[Chapter 30..... 49](#)

[Chapter 31..... 51](#)

[Chapter 32..... 52](#)

[Chapter 33..... 54](#)

[Chapter 34..... 56](#)

[Chapter 35..... 57](#)

[Chapter 36..... 58](#)

[Chapter 37..... 60](#)

[Chapter 38..... 61](#)

[Characters..... 62](#)

[Objects/Places..... 69](#)

[Themes..... 72](#)

[Style..... 74](#)

[Quotes..... 76](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 78](#)



Plot Summary

Knowledge of Angels traces the stories of two outsiders, who change the medieval Mediterranean island of Grandinsula forever. The outsiders are discovered at about the same time. Their fates are intertwined, but they never meet. The novel is set in the time of the religious intolerance of the Spanish Inquisition, and the island is deeply affected by an Inquisitor, who comes to the island to flush out heretics.

Shepherds and local ice dealers discover Amara, a child who has been raised by wolves, high in the Grandinsulan mountains. She is wild and savage, and the men almost kill her before Jaime, a shepherd, realizes that she is a child. Jaime feels responsible for Amara, and eventually takes her to Severo, the island's Prince and Cardinal. Jaime is gravely concerned that the child is not baptized.

Meanwhile, a beautiful swimmer is found off the shore of a small fishing village. Miguel and Lazaro, two fishermen, rescue Palinor and bring him back to health. Palinor tells them he is from a far off island called Aclar, and he later reveals that he is an engineer, architect, and King of Aclar who fell off one of his ships while trying to free the rudder. He started swimming, and he ended up on Grandinsula. Everyone who encounters Palinor notices his regal manner and respectful ways.

Palinor tells the local prefect that he does not believe in God when asked what his religion is for a standard form. The prefect is taken aback, as everyone in Grandinsula is some form of Christian. Palinor is jailed for his heresy, as is law on the island, and eventually Palinor appeals to Severo. Severo takes an immediate liking to Palinor, and instead of having him burned according to law or sending him back to Aclar, Severo calls in Benedix, the island's leading scholar to convince Palinor that God exists.

Severo also has a plan for Amara, who he believes can prove that the knowledge of God is not innate. He sends Amara to Sant Clara, where a young novice, Josefa, is charged with teaching the wolf-child to talk, walk upright, and act civilized. Under no circumstances are the nuns to mention God to Amara. Once Amara can talk, Severo wants to question her about God, and when she was with the wolves.

Palinor never accepts any of Benedix's proofs of God, and eventually Benedix is the one who loses his faith. In a fit of anger, Severo turns Palinor over to Fra Murta, an Inquisitor. Palinor recants once under extreme torture, but later says he didn't mean it. Severo is unable to save Palinor, and the atheist is burned alive at a pyre outside the island's capital.

When Severo and Fra Murta first question Amara, who has learned to speak, she denies any knowledge of God. Fra Murta believes she simply did not understand the questions, so they return later. This time, Josefa coaches Amara, and she replies that she did sense God's presence, when she was with the wolves. In return, Amara gets her freedom from the convent, which she has been longing for, but her response does not help Palinor.

Jaime gets Amara a job taking care of the *nevados'* ice hut. As soon as Jaime leaves her there, however, Amara begins climbing the mountain. She climbs higher and higher, turning once to glimpse a large armada heading toward Grandinsula, which is a fleet from Aclar seeking revenge for Palinor's death. Amara stays above the fray, continuing to climb the highest summit.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The author states that this work of fiction is set during a time like 1450, but it is not really 1450. The island the story takes place on is like Mallorca, a Spanish island in the Mediterranean Sea, but it is not Mallorca.

The reader is asked to think about the island, and what it looks like from above. This view would reveal orchards and towns, mountains and valleys. This vantage point would be more like what angels see rather than islanders, and the reader's position is compared to that of an angel who hovers above and sees everything. The time when this story is set is "the time of angels."

The reader now sees two parties traveling on a mountain. One, a group of men and donkeys, is struggling to ascend the mountain. A young man dressed like a shepherd is heading down the mountain toward the same destination.

Prologue Analysis

The prologue raises questions of who has access to what knowledge that will permeate the novel. While the reader, like angels, will know what is going on with all of the characters and have a view of the bigger picture, the reader will encounter tragedy caused by people who cannot see or act beyond their narrow worldview.

The author also reminds readers that this story is an allegory, not a historical narrative. The issues raised in this setting are as applicable today, as they were in the fifteenth century.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

A group of 12 *nevados* are climbing up the mountain. It is April, and an unusual heavy snow has fallen late in the spring. The snowline is 40 feet lower than it usually is this time of year, and the *nevados* have to dig out the snow-house and treading platform where the men make snow blocks to sell in the town in the summer. The men begin dancing on the treading floor, packing down the snow until it is ready to cut into blocks. The work warms them, and they sing loudly as they dance on the snow.

The *nevados* soon see a young man dressed like a shepherd coming down the mountain. The shepherd tells them that something is stealing their sheep, and the shepherds need help. The shepherds don't know what it is, although they are sure it is not a wolf.

The three shepherds will live high in the mountains all summer tending their flocks. Jaime, the young shepherd who was sent to find the *nevados*, is staying for a month in place of his brother, who just got married. The shepherds tell the *nevados* that they set out a trap for the creature, staking out a weak lamb over a fishing net. They caught the predator in the net, when it tried to take the lamb, but it cut through the net and escaped, leaving the dead lamb behind.

Galceran, one of the *nevados*, tells the shepherds they will find and kill the creature. The *nevados* are hungry for adventure and excitement. The shepherds show the *nevados* the creature's unusual inverted footprints, which have front claw prints behind the footprint, rather than in front of it.

The creature steals another lamb overnight, and the group begins tracking the creature's prints early the next morning. They notice it leaves leg marks and footprints in the snow at times. They follow the trail to the door of a small cave, which is piled with scraps of blood, feathers, and bones. They hear the creature snarling and growling inside.

The creature is feasting on a lamb hock and doesn't hear the group enter its cave. Galceran raises his weapon to kill it, letting out a bloodthirsty yell. As Galceran swings at the creature, Jaime yanks Galceran's sleeve and deflects the blow. Jaime has noticed that the creature is a human child. The child is naked, and its long hair is a matted mess that covers its back and shoulders. It holds an old rusty knife and runs around the cave on all fours. The men easily capture the child, beat it until it drops the knife, and carry it to a sheep pen outside the shepherd's cave.

The men try to feed the child, but it will only eat the raw scraps from a carcass. The men guess the child is about 9-years-old and believe that it has been suckled by a wolf. They wonder what to do with it, and then they discuss that if Galceran had killed it he would



have murdered. They can't kill it now, because there are too many witnesses, and someone would eventually let the information slip.

The child begins to howl in the moonlight, and it cowers, when the men enter the cave with a torch. Juan, a *nevado*, says they could make a lot of money charging for looks at the "wolf-boy" at markets. Four men hold the child down while Galceran cuts its hair. Jaime cries in the corner, because he has seen that the child is a girl.

The *nevados* stay on the mountain for three more days, keeping the girl tethered at their camp while they pack and cut snow blocks. They carry the girl down the mountain bound and slung on a pole and then beat her unconscious to get her into a cage. Galceran gives the child to Juan in exchange for a bottle for each man and a basket of olives they can share.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces the first of two outsiders who will change the island forever. Although the creature is human, she appears to have had no human or civilizing influence in her upbringing, as she cannot speak, only eats raw meat, is savage, and moves on all fours. While the men treat her like an animal, beating her and caging her, they realize killing her would have been murder, because she's a human. The wolf-child's natural state will come into question throughout the novel as the island's religious leaders use her in an experiment to determine whether knowledge of God is inborn.

The theme of whether coincidences or luck have a place in a world supposedly ruled by God also comes into play in this chapter. The wolf-child is saved from Galceran's weapon by Jaime. He's a shepherd, who is only in the mountains, because he is filling in for his brother, who has gotten married. As the religious leaders later try to make sense of the wolf-child's existence and justify using her in their experiment, questions about whether God intended them to encounter the wolf-child at all will be raised.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The chapter begins with a description of the island, Grandinsula. The landscape is hilly and mountainous, and the towns are set among the hills. The island has historically faced danger from pirates, so the towns near the coast are fortified. The only large safe location on the coastline is in the south, where the main city of Cuidad (Spanish for city) is located. The rest of the coastline is occupied by fishermen, who ply their trade in a leisurely manner, because fish is popular among islanders, and they can sell everything they catch.

Miguel and Lazaro, two fishermen, are mending their nets by the shore early one morning. As they stare out over the sea, they see a swimmer approaching the shore. The swimmer seems to be tired, as he is swimming very slowly and sometimes appears to drift back offshore. Miguel and Lazaro jump in their boat and head out to rescue the swimmer. They see no signs of a shipwreck.

The swimmer's skin is swollen and wrinkled, and he obviously has been in the water for a long time. He is only wearing a loincloth, and he is a beautiful, middle-aged man with bronzed skin, dark hair, a beard, and a good build. The fishermen give him water and rub olive oil on his feet and hands before leaving him in a sailcloth tent to sleep. When the swimmer awakens that afternoon, he tells Miguel and Lazaro that he will reward them with gold and rubies.

The swimmer causes a great stir, when Miguel and Lazaro take him into the fishing village that evening. The village people cloth and feed the swimmer, who is still unsteady on his feet. He tells the villagers his name is Palinor, and that he is from Aclar. Palinor will only say he was swimming, because he fell in. He also says that he needs a moneylender to pay for passage home.

The villagers don't understand the world of moneylenders and passages on ships, so they take Palinor to the local prefect. As Palinor sleeps at Lazaro's house, Lazaro tells his mother that Palinor offered him gold. Lazaro's mother asks if Lazaro noticed Palinor's hands, which are uncallused with neatly cut nails. They could be the hands of a Prince.

Palinor goes to see the prefect the next morning at the citadel, one of four on the island. The prefect tells Palinor that no one can land on the island outside of Cuidad, and foreigners need warrants to travel around the island. The prefect begins taking Palinor's information, and then he asks Palinor for his religion. Palinor replies that he is not a Christian, Jew, or Saracen, and he requests that the prefect write "none" for his religious preference. The prefect tells Palinor that he must be locked up, because "a man of no religion might do anything." Palinor is taken away to jail.



Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 introduces the second outsider who will throw the island of Grandinsula into an upheaval. Palinor is the complete opposite of the wolf-child in many ways. He is handsome, well mannered, and obviously important. Rather than fighting the people he encounters, he is polite and promises them great riches for saving his life. Like the wolf-child, however, Palinor is not a Christian. He asks the prefect to write "none" for his religious preference.

The question is raised about why Palinor washed up on Grandinsula. Was his being knocked overboard a coincidence, as was his decision to swim blindly toward Grandinsula? For Palinor, this happening is just the unfortunate result of a series of misfortunes. Others later may see Palinor's arrival as an act of God.

The first inklings of the great conflict between Palinor's atheism and the island's mandatory religious adherence are introduced in this chapter. When the prefect immediately throws Palinor in jail for not having a religion, it is clear that the island has no tolerance for dissenters, despite their station in life. Part of that intolerance is driven by fear, as the Christians on this island believe that religion keeps lawlessness at bay. Ironically, Palinor, a model of politeness and respect, has broken no moral code nor harmed anyone on Grandinsula, when he is thrown into jail.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Jaime stands just inside a cathedral door. He looks like a timid country boy as he begins walking down the aisle. The cathedral was built with a simple design, but it was later decorated with elaborate embellishments of jewels, marble, and carvings. Jaime prays before a painting of St. Jeronimo, which portrays a statue of a wolf with children reaching for its teats in the background.

Jaime enters a confessional and tells the priest he is not there to confess. He needs help. Jaime is afraid that a girl will die unbaptized.

The priest at the cathedral will not help Jaime, and eventually another priest takes Jaime to see Severo, the Cardinal and Prince of the island, in Ciudad. Severo has a palace, but he prefers to live in simplistic quarters above the cloisters. Jaime does not realize who Severo is because of Severo's plain robes, and the priest is dismayed by Jaime's disrespectful behavior.

Severo tells the priest to leave Jaime alone and to get Jaime something to eat. As Jaime and Severo share bread and olives, Jaime tells the story of finding the wolf girl. When Jaime returned from his month on the mountain, he tracked down Juan, who was exhibiting the girl at local markets. Juan is keeping the girl in a cage, and she is starving. Jaime tells Severo that the girl is terrible and is "the worst thing you could ever know."

Severo orders Rafal, a monk, to give Jaime shoes and a place to sleep. The next morning, Severo will send Rafal with a letter of authority and a purse to find the girl and bring her back. Speaking in Latin so Jaime cannot understand, Severo tells Rafal that Jaime wants the girl to be baptized, but Jaime doesn't realize he could baptize the girl himself. Severo also is curious as to why the priest in St. Jeronimo would not baptize the girl.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Severo, the Prince and Cardinal of Grandinsula, is introduced in Chapter three. Severo is not a typical leader, as he prefers simple garments and lodging. In contrast to the many local priests whom Jaime has approached about Amara, Severo is kind and treats Jaime as an equal. The two break bread together while Severo listens to Jaime's story of Amara. Intrigued, Severo orders Rafal to retrieve Amara from Juan. The reader later learns of Severo's interest in the foreign and in intellectual challenge, attributes that set him apart from typical priests who narrowly follow the religious code to the letter. Severo's treatment of Jaime and his immediate willingness to save and baptize Amara reveal his tendency to see beyond obvious.



Also of note in this chapter is Jaime's pause to pray before the picture of St. Jeronimo. While the priest at the church named in honor of St. Jeronimo refused to baptize Amara, the saint himself is portrayed surrounded by animals, including a wolf. This image blurs the question of whether a girl raised by wolves, not humans, can have knowledge of God. In this portrait, a wolf is a companion to a saint.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Palinor has been in jail for several months, when a clerk in Cuidad comes across his request to travel to Cuidad. The clerk asks Laurenx, his superior, what they do with atheists. Laurenx believes that atheists are burned if they don't recant.

The prefect receives an order to transfer Palinor to Cuidad. The note conveys no other details, and the prefect wonders if Palinor is considered a criminal or if he really is important. Palinor, who has received food from Lazaro's mother Esperanca for months, is allowed into the sunlight for the first time in months. The prefect tells Palinor that he will be traveling to Cuidad, and Palinor asks if he may bathe first. The prefect is annoyed that he does not intimidate Palinor.

Palinor and his escorts travel to Cuidad on horseback, and the prefect notices that Palinor sits well on his horse and expertly soothes it, when it becomes jittery. Palinor asks the prefect questions as they ride. Palinor wonders why the island does not have a secular government and why there are so many windmills. Palinor appears nervous for the first time, when he asks the prefect what will happen to him.

The Consistory Court hears Palinor's story. Palinor tells them he had no intention of coming to the island and certainly no intention of subverting the Christian faith there. He tells the court that he is a King, a title he has earned in his land through his achievements as an engineer and architect. Palinor says he was sailing with a fleet of seven ships, when he agreed one night to take the tiller from the young steersman, who was tired. Palinor fell overboard while trying to free the rudder from a snag, and no one noticed. He began swimming, shedding his jeweled garments that were weighing him down.

Palinor stresses that he does not believe in God and says that in his countrymen are free in matters of the conscience. The court tells him he must appeal to Severo, which Palinor asks to do.

Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter further reveals Palinor's background and his good character. Palinor's only request after being jailed for months for a charge that would be nonexistent in his own country is to bathe and put on a clean shirt. Rather than emerging sullen and angry over the injustice of his imprisonment, Palinor is pleasant and asks the prefect questions about Grandinsula as they ride. Palinor tells his entire story to the court, telling them that he rose to power through his achievements and respect of his fellow countrymen, attributes that are necessary to gain authority in the theocracy of Grandinsula. When the court tells him that he must appeal to the island's top ruler, Palinor does not hesitate to make that request.

The only time that the confident Palinor shows any nervousness is, when he asks the prefect what will happen to him. While Palinor is secure in himself and his adherence to atheism, perhaps his beliefs do not accommodate a plan for death or an afterlife.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The valley of the Galilea monastery is a two-day journey from Ciudad. The monastery has become a famous center of learning over the centuries, and its most celebrated resident is Benedix, who is writing a treatise on the knowledge of angels.

As Benedix writes about how nothing in the world can happen without the intervention of invisible angels, he sees a rider in the distance. A messenger climbs to Benedix's cell, which is built high on a cliff, and delivers a message from Severo. The note reads: "A hard thing must be decided. Come to me." Benedix's departure causes a stir, as he rarely leaves Galilea.

Benedix arrives in Ciudad late in the evening and settles into a room in Severo's residence. Benedix is noted for his humility and how he fair treatment of everyone. He remembers the names of the clergy in Ciudad, and he makes no demands on them.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Like Severo, Benedix is a just, compassionate, and unselfish religious leader. Unlike Severo, however, Benedix lives a secluded life, cut off from the real world. He immerses himself in thoughts of angels, who he imagines know and intervene in everything. Although Benedix does not know why Severo has summoned him, this rare trip out of his isolated world will change him forever.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Severo and Beditx, who are good friends, debate the issue of Palinor's lack of belief in God. Severo says that Palinor appears to have learned about the Gospels but has concluded without a doubt that God does not exist. Beditx replies that knowledge of God is inborn, and men like Palinor refuse to be enlightened. Severo questions whether knowledge of God really is innate. Beditx asks for a few hours to prove to Severo that he is right.

Beditx returns with a dirty, bedraggled woman and her baby. He brings her right into the cloister, though women are not allowed there. Beditx tells disapproving clergy that "nothing is forbidden to the pure in heart." He drags the woman into Severo's cell and places the newborn baby on the table. Severo looks into the baby's eyes and says he sees infinity. Beditx replies that at first, babies only see God.

In response, Severo takes Beditx to meet the wolf-girl. Jaime is taking care of the girl, who is in a cage. Jaime releases her, and she runs around on all fours, snapping and growling in the dark. As the girl eats a meal of raw meat, Severo raises a lantern. He tells Beditx he is looking at an unbaptized child.

In Severo's cell, the baby is crying. The woman asks for permission to feed the child. Severo and Beditx are surprised, when she sheepishly uncovers her breast for the infant. When she finishes suckling, Severo holds the child, baptizes her, and then gives her mother enough money to feed the child for seven years and to buy herself a blue silk shawl.

Beditx and Severo remark that they have only seen such a scene between mother and child in paintings of the Virgin. It has never occurred them that such a scene could be real, but then they had thought the same about an atheist and a wolf-girl.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Beditx and Severo, while compassionate religious leaders, appear not to deal much in the everyday life of the real world. They are amazed to see a woman breastfeeding a child, a scene they previously had seen only depicted in religious art. In contrast to the judgmental inquisitor they will encounter later on, Beditx and Severo approach the unknown - in this case the wolf-child and the atheist - with kind of an intellectual wonder, not with hasty judgment.

This chapter also introduces Beditx and Severo's long struggle to reason with Palinor until he is convinced that God exists. Beditx is certain that knowledge of God is inborn, while Severo is not so sure. Beditx naively believes that he'll only need a few hours to convince Palinor to embrace his inborn knowledge of God.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Margalida, who has been married to the widow Taddeo for less than a year, orders her stepdaughter Josefa to hoe the garden at midday. The heat is stifling, but Josefa finishes her chores and finds Margalida in the house taking a siesta. Margalida orders Josefa to iron some sheets, but Josefa refuses and goes to her room to rest.

Margalida, who is only three years older than Josefa, tells Taddeo later that Josefa has been insolent and will not obey her. Taddeo worries that his daughter and his new wife cannot get along, and Margalida suggests that they send Josefa to Sant Clara, a nunnery. Josefa asks her father if he will find her a husband, and Taddeo tells her she is ugly, and he cannot afford a dowry. Josefa looks in the mirror and for the first time despairs, when she sees her reflection, which reminds her of a startled horse. Taddeo gives Josefa the choice of staying at the house or going to the convent, and she chooses Sant Clara.

The road to Sant Clara is gray and desolate, and Josefa is pleasantly surprised at the lush beauty of Sant Clara's remote valley. Taddeo and Josefa meet with Mother Humberta, who likes Josefa's humility. Mother Humberta asks Josefa if she can read and write, and Josefa writes out a Christian creed. Taddeo did not know his daughter was literate, and Josefa tells him her mother taught her.

Mother Humberta agrees to accept Josefa as a novice in exchange for a donkey and a cart, which Taddeo will fetch and bring back to the nunnery. Josefa does not rise from her chair, when Taddeo says goodbye.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter sets up another player in Amara's integration into human civilization. Josefa, who is abused by her young stepmother, gladly leaves her father's house for the convent at Sant Clara. The spineless Taddeo, who must be a Christian, because he resides in Grandinsula, sides with his cruel wife and agrees with her plan to get rid of Josefa. While Taddeo and Margalida break no laws, their heartless treatment of Josefa brings up questions of what is the true nature of Christian love, especially between a parent and a child.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Severo and Benedix are talking to Palinor, who continues to insist that he is an atheist. Severo notes that Palinor approached the meeting with confidence, as if he were an invited guest rather than a man arguing for his future. Palinor asks the men how they define an atheist, and Palinor says he does not fit the definition of one who rebels against God and is murderous and full of rage.

Palinor says he better fits the second definition of an atheist, which is someone who has convinced himself by false reasoning that God doesn't exist. He says in Aclar religion is a private matter, and atheists are as likely to break the law as Christians. Palinor adds that rational men find logical reasons for obeying the law rather than out of a desire to please God.

Palinor then asks if he can leave the island rather than be burned for his atheism, as he arrived by accident. Severo responds that there are no accidents, because everything has a purpose in the eyes of God. Palinor says he should have swum the other way.

Severo's mind wanders during high mass that day, and he thinks about several weeks during his youth, when he went on a foreign mission. He realizes that going somewhere unfamiliar sharpened his senses, and when he returned to Grandinsula, he was more acutely aware of the island's qualities. He realizes that talking with Palinor about atheism is exhilarating for his intellect, and he is hungry for more of the joy he finds in experiencing strangeness.

Severo and Benedix discuss whether the knowledge of God is inborn or bestowed at baptism. Benedix believes that even the wolf-girl, who cannot speak and has never heard of God, was born with knowledge of God and that her terrible childhood has a godly purpose.

The men decide to perform an experiment on the wolf-child. Severo will have someone try to teach her to speak, all the while not mentioning God, to see if she knows about God without instruction. In the meantime, Benedix will continue reasoning with Palinor and try to prove God to him. Severo, who has admired Palinor's courage and unwillingness to lie to save himself, tells Benedix that Palinor has a soul worth saving.

Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter elaborates on some of the primary religious questions raised in the novel. Palinor believes he arrived on the island by accident, while Severo and Benedix believe his presence must have a godly purpose, as must the wolf-girl's terrible life. These men are able to attribute even the most horrendous circumstances, including a child being raised by wolves, to an act of God.



Severo and Beneditx disagree on, when the knowledge of God is obtained. The wolf-girl will play a central role in discovering an answer to this question, as Severo appears to pin a godly purpose on her wretched life by making her the center of an experiment. Perhaps the men also believe that Palinor's swim to Grandinsula was God-ordained so that the atheist might be converted.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Severo decides to baptize the wolf-child. He reasons that Benedictx believes that baptism does not affect one's knowledge of God, so baptizing the child will not affect their experiment. Severo knows that the child's unbaptized state weighs on Jaime, who has become her caretaker.

Jaime tries to capture the wolf-child, but she severely mauls him. Severo and Rafal help him, and they eventually secure the girl in a cloth while Severo pours water over her head, careful not to mention God. They name her "Amara," which means "bitter" in Latin.

The infirmary treats Jaime's wounds, and he spends the night in Severo's cell. Severo then gives Jaime enough gold to buy three fields and asks him to leave and think of the girl no more. Jaime says that will be difficult, and he asks Severo what will happen to Amara. Severo just repeats his command for Jaime to go.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Severo baptizes Amara, giving her a name that means "bitterness" and well-describes what the men view as her terrible uncivilized upbringing. Even though Amara does not understand baptism, in the eyes of Christians she has now been forgiven of all of her sins, no matter how great. Severo is careful not to mention God so that their experiment will not be marred.

Severo uses his power and position to order Jaime to leave Amara, whom the shepherd clearly has come to care for despite her savageness. Jaime wonders what will happen to Amara, but Severo again commands him to leave and does not tell Jaime that Amara will become part of a great religious experiment.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The nuns of Sant Clara are frantically cleaning the convent in anticipation of Severo's arrival. Josefa works hard in the sweltering sun, and tells Sor Coloma that she does not mind working, when everyone is working. Josefa also says she likes Sant Clara, because the nuns are kind, like mothers.

Josefa is sent to watch for Severo's arrival and alert the nuns, when she sees him. Severo and Rafal carry a large basket between their horses, and they leave the unopened basket in the shade until dusk. Severo tells the old abbess, who has poor vision, that he has brought the nuns a child to train. He gives her strict instructions that the child must not be taught anything about God, as he wants to find out whether knowledge of God is innate. The abbess protests, saying children learn best from other children, but she obeys Severo's requests.

Severo insists that Amara's sufferings have a God-ordained purpose, perhaps to offer proof of where the knowledge of God comes from. If that is the case, he tells the abbess, the nuns will be doing God's work.

As it gets dark, Severo and Rafal release Amara in the nunnery's hermitage. Amara hides in a dark corner, and her legs collapse, because she is weak from hunger. Rafal says Amara only eats raw meat, but the nuns have taken vows to observe perpetual lent and do not eat meat. Rafal solves the problem that night by feeding Amara a live chicken from the farmyard.

Severo gives all of the nuns strict instructions on Amara's care and teaching. Josefa, blushing and nervous, tells Severo that she has not yet taken her novice vows and volunteers to feed the child at the nunnery. Severo thanks God for Josefa and administers her novice vows on the spot, leaving out the part about never again touching raw meat. As Severo rides away from Sant Clara, Josefa's face is in his mind, and he remembers that he does not believe in accidents.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Severo gets further proof of his belief that all things are God-ordained, when he encounters Josefa at Sant Clara. His experiment was in danger of failing, when the nuns insisted their vows would not allow them to touch the raw meat that Amara eats. Josefa has not taken her vows yet, however, so Severo again uses his power as Cardinal to alter her vows so that Josefa can serve Amara the meat and participate in the experiment. Severo is comforted in his recognition of God's hand in Amara's life and Severo's plans for the wolf-girl. What one man sees as evidence of God's work, however, may look like a series of coincidences to another.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The nuns of Sant Clara live a self-sufficient life of simplicity, and they serve God through their devotion to prayer. They find joy in cleanliness and domestic order, and their lives are simple yet comfortable. While these nuns have always been under the bishop's command, they have never received a task on the scale of taking care of Amara.

As soon as Severo leaves, a small group of nuns, including Josefa, head to the hermitage. Sor Coloma tries to hold the wolf-girl, but Amara bites and scratches the nun. After another nun is injured, they approach Amara again using pieces of fence as shields. They corner the girl and see that she is bluish and has a monstrously large head.

The nuns decide that Amara needs her nails cut, but first they must drug her with poppy water. Amara refuses to drink the water from a bowl, but Josefa tricks her into drinking it by pouring the poppy water into a puddle of rainwater. The nuns carry the limp wolf-girl to the infirmary, where they bath her, cut her nails and hair, and dress her in a simple shift. Amara now looks like a tiny and emaciated child, but her legs seem bent into a permanent fetal position. Her elbows and knees have thick calluses.

Amara suddenly awakes and leaps off the infirmary table. She furiously tears the shift off with her teeth and feet, and then soils herself. The nuns decide that, because wolves tend to keep their lairs clean, Amara perhaps could be taught to use a litter box. Josefa says she believes Amara is unhappy and wants to run free. Their only hold on the wolf-girl is the meat, and Josefa thinks Amara will do things for them, such as wearing a shift, if they withhold food. They then agree they need to talk more to the creature and that part of their undertaking is to love her.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The nuns of Sant Clara, like Benedictine, live cloistered religious lives that rarely intersect with the real world. Their focus is on prayer and domestic life, and the training of Amara is a task unlike any they've ever undertaken. The nuns make their first attempts to de-animalize Amara, cutting her hair and her fingernails and washing her. She now looks like a little child, but cosmetic changes cannot overcome Amara's wolf upbringing as she rips off her shift and soils herself. The nuns decide that they must train Amara by withholding food, a method that likely is common in domesticating wild animals. The question remains as to Amara's true nature, as so far she is unwilling to embrace human ways, when they are shown to her. In fact, Josefa notes that Amara truly wants to be free.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The people in Lazaro and Miguel's village know that the swimmer had promised them gold and rubies. Esperanca, Lazaro's mother, is teased often she also is expecting a reward for bringing Palinor food every day while he was in prison. Esperanca looks at some of the clothes that belonged to her brother, who drowned 25 years ago, and believes if she alters them she could make an outfit for Palinor to wear home. Lazaro, Miguel, and Esperanca thought a rider would return soon with gold and rubies, but no one has come.

At Sant Clara, Amara has taken immediately to defecating in the litter box. She refuses to urinate in the box, however, and scratches at the door so she can go outside. The nuns are working hard to teach Amara to wear a shift, but the child tears off her garment as soon as she finishes her food and sleeps naked.

One day unexpected visitors arrive at Sant Clara. A hunting party, led by Guillem Nagarri, is lost and wants to stay there. The abbess is annoyed but agrees to let them stay in the guesthouse as long as the men do not enter the cloister.

Esteban, who takes care of the hunting party's hounds and horses, lets the dogs out early the next morning, because they are restless. The dogs run through the cloister garden and to the hermitage, where they circle and cry. The startled nuns protest, but they are too late. Esteban opens the barn door, and Amara runs out.

Amara joins the pack of hounds, holding her own as she grabs for scraps of meat that Esteban feeds them. One nun tells Esteban to get the child out of the pen where he has enclosed the hounds, but the dogs protect the wolf-girl. Esteban finally catches Amara, and she bites him as he tries to hand her over the fence to the nuns. He drops her, and Amara runs away into the forest.

The abbess is seething, and she orders Guillem and the hunters to find the child, bring her back, and not mention God in front of her. The hunters leave, and Guillem wonders if all of the nuns are as crazy as the abbess.

Chapter 12 Analysis

There is a glimmer of hope for the nuns as Amara takes to the litter box. Her savage nature, however, is once more revealed as she immediately is accepted into a pack of hunters' hounds. The dogs even protect Amara, who has fought successfully for scraps of meat that Esteban feeds the dogs. While Amara is a strange and wild being to her human captors, she is clearly recognized as kin by the dogs. Any work the nuns have done trying to civilize Amara is instantly lost, when Amara joins the dogs. Amara

viciously attacks Esteban and escapes over the fence, proving Josefa's theory that she was unhappy at the nunnery and longed for the freedom that her wolf kin enjoy.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Palinor reveals to Severo that he has a wife and son at home. Palinor will stay at the Saracen's House, a luxurious dwelling about two-hour's ride from Cuidad that belongs to Severo. The house is too fancy for Severo's tastes, but Severo believes it is a good place for Palinor and Benedix to stay while Benedix tries to reason with the atheist. Benedix says he needs more books to undertake his attempt to convert Palinor, so he returns to Galilea for a few days.

Rafal secures a brother and sister, Joffre and Dolca, to serve Palinor at the Saracen's House. Severo sends Palinor new clothes and a variety of books, including the Scriptures and Orosius' *History Against the Pagans*. Palinor regains his health at the Saracen's House, and he awaits Benedix's arrival as a chess player would a worthy opponent.

Chapter 13 Analysis

This chapter reveals the esteemed regard with which Severo holds Palinor. Religious law holds that heretics must be burned, but Severo likes Palinor and is willing to suspend the law while Benedix reasons with the atheist. Palinor is outfitted at a luxurious house that is more fitting to his role as King, and Severo makes sure he is comfortable while he recovers from his prison stay. The house will serve as a secluded retreat for Benedix and Palinor to spar over Palinor's atheism. Palinor clearly looks forward to the intellectual challenge.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

It has been seven days since the hunters left Sant Clara. The nuns are worried that Amara cannot fend for herself, because they have cut her claws. Sor Agnete, however, says that maybe Amara's escape is for the best, because she was making so little progress at Sant Clara and Amara may be only fit to live in the wild. Josefa is weeping and distraught.

The hunters return on the eighth day. They have captured Amara, and she is tied over the saddle of Guillem's horse. When they remove the wolf-girl from the saddle, she is rigid and curled in a ball, grinding her teeth with her eyes rolled back in her head. Guillem says he must speak to the abbess alone. He tells the abbess he is willing to kill the girl, and no one would have to find out.

The abbess protests that killing the child would be murder, and Guillem replies it would be mercy. He tells her the girl stole a lamb from a group of rough shepherds, who then laid her over the back of a ram and repeatedly raped her. The girl might be pregnant, Guillem said. He defends the shepherds, saying they are rough men and usually only find sexual relief in ewes. The sight of a naked girl running amongst their flock obviously was tempting. The abbess faints.

Pare Aldonza, the abbey chaplain who serves Sant Clara, is summoned to the distressed abbess's bed. He does not like being the bearer of harsh truths, but he tells the abbess that the shepherds often confess to him their sexual relations with ewes. The abbess asks what is the penance for such a terrible sin, and Pare Aldonza replies that the shepherds are given three days of breaking stones and filling the road. That's how the way to Sant Clara is kept in good repair.

Chapter 14 Analysis

This chapter raises questions of what is human and what is animal, as well as questions of sin and forgiveness. Amara, who the nuns are trying to reform from her wolf-like ways, is treated horribly when she is gang-raped by shepherds. The abbess's hysterical visit with Pare Aldonza only worsens this behavior when he tells her that shepherds often freely confess having sex with sheep. Pare Aldonza seems to take bestiality in stride, as he has a standard penance for those who confess it. While Amara's behavior is understandable, because of her upbringing with wolves, the shepherds commit animalistic sin with full knowledge that it is wrong.

The gang rape of Amara and the easy forgiveness and justification of bestiality questions that nature of Christian forgiveness. While Palinor, who has committed no wrong against another in Grandinsula, has been jailed and mistreated for stating his

beliefs, shepherds who bring great harm to an innocent child and who have sex with animals are offered the protective cloak of God's mercy.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Benedix and Palinor are sitting outside their rooms at the Saracen's house, and Benedix makes his first attempt to convince Palinor that God exists. He asks Palinor to imagine God in his mind, which Palinor says he does. Benedix then believes he has triumphed, stating that if he can imagine something, it must be real.

Palinor laughs at that proof, and Benedix doesn't reveal that Saint Thomas also believed this proof had no substance. Palinor says he would like to imagine a ship from Aclar coming to save him and have the ship appear, but that is unlikely to happen. Benedix's proof does not connect with reality, Palinor says.

Trying to convince a doubter of the existence of God is different than convincing someone who has never doubted, Palinor says. In Aclar, Palinor and his friends often have discussions about God, and many of his friends believe in God. Palinor tells Benedix that he may know more about God than Benedix has given him credit for.

Benedix tries another tact. He asks Palinor if there is such a thing as truth, and Palinor says yes. Palinor must believe in God, then, because God is truth, Benedix says. Palinor responds that he believes there can be many truths, and truth is not like a great ocean but many rivers. It will be difficult, Palinor says, to convince him that a truth of God overrides all other truths.

Benedix ends their discussion for the day so that he can think further. Palinor says he is bored in the hours he is not talking to Benedix, and he asks if he can work on improving the flow of water in the gardens. With Benedix's approval, Palinor begins following the streams in the garden, which flow from a single source. This natural example that supports Benedix's argument about truth is of no use to Palinor. He begins making engineering drawings and finds out where he can get clay pipes.

Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter reveals the first chink in the solid arguments Benedix believes should easily convince Palinor that God exists. Benedix previously has stated that his conversion of Palinor should only take a few hours, but he is finding it a more daunting task than he anticipated. Palinor easily counters Benedix's first proofs, and even Benedix admits to himself that these first arguments were not that foolproof. This scholar who has dedicated his life to learning and contemplating knowledge of God is now being confronted, for the first time, with someone who also has thought a lot about God but has come to a different conclusion. Grandinsula's religious governance and belief system is based on an island-wide assumption that God exists, and Palinor is questioning its very foundation.

Palinor's request to reengineer Saracen House's water system reveals that, unlike Beditx, the atheist also is a student of the practical world. While Beditx is concerned with the unseen, namely angels and the existence of God, Palinor extends his reach to architecture and engineering, using his skills to improve practical human existence. Such cannot be said for a cloistered scholar.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

At Sant Clara, Sor Agnete asks Josefa if she has observed any blood, when she cares for Amara. They bathe Amara and do find some blood. The wolf-girl is less wild now since her escape, and she seems almost able to discern human friend from foe. She even sometimes tries to put on the shift.

Amara falls very ill. She becomes covered with oozing blisters, and she refuses to eat. She is moved to the infirmary, and the abbess contacts Severo about the illness. The abbess does not tell Severo about Amara's escape. Severo dispatches Melchor Fortessa, a famous doctor and Jew who has converted to Christianity. Such doctors were believed to be more skilled, as Christian doctors often advised patients to submit to the will of God and they would get better.

Melchor has never seen a patient like Amara. He wonders what caused her crooked limbs, and tells the nuns that malnourishment is causing her sores. He gives the nuns an elixir, which Amara will become addicted to after ingesting only a few drops. Melchor advises the nuns to put the elixir in food and drink, which Amara will take to soothe her addiction. Weaning her off the elixir will be difficult, but she needs the elixir to save her life. Melchor estimates that Amara is about 13-years-old, and he says she likely is not pregnant.

Because Sor Blanca has arthritic hands, Josefa is trained to feed Amara and massage her bent limbs. Josefa and the wolf-girl develop a mother-child bond, and Josefa dedicates herself to Amara's recovery. Josefa realizes her importance to the nunnery, as she is the one carrying out the Cardinal's orders to tend to the Amara. Josefa massages the girl's legs seven times a day, and she begins to notice that they are less bent. Josefa discovers that if she holds the plate of food high in the air, Amara briefly will stand upright in her desperation to get the elixir-laced dish.

Amara starts to improve. Her fever abates, and the sores begin healing. She becomes comfortable around the people she is familiar with, and she even starts wearing a shift. Josefa, however, falls ill after months of faithfully tending to her charge.

Chapter 16 Analysis

There is great relief that Amara is not pregnant, and the gang rape has subdued her and she allows herself to become somewhat domesticated. When she becomes ill, Severo makes a practical choice and sends a skilled Jewish convert rather than a Christian doctor, who would be likely to advise that healing would come by submitting to God's will. This choice illustrates Severo's trust and interest in things outside of Christianity, and his apparent belief that in some cases, Christian teachings, prayer, and submission

to God may not be the most effective means. In fact, an addicting elixir and Josefa's faithful care eventually heal Amara, not religious observance.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Benedix is bothered that his first attempts at proofs failed to convince Palinor of God's existence. He worries for Palinor, as people who hear the truth of God yet denounce it are the worst types of heretics and deserving of death. Palinor does not have the excuse that he is stupid or has been misled.

Benedix is still confident that he can convince Palinor through reason, and he has faith in the five proofs that Saint Thomas did believe were valid. He approaches Palinor for another try.

With great eagerness, Benedix first tells Palinor that everything in nature moves, which means everything must be moved by something else. Likewise, one thing causes another in the sensible world. The chains of movement and causation must be traced back to a single source, which is God. Benedix adds a third proof, stating that at one time there must have been nothing in existence. God is the only power that doesn't need another power to bring it into existence, so God is the source of all existence.

Palinor listens intently to Benedix, who comes across like an ambitious child who does not realize the futility of his efforts. After contemplating Benedix's proofs, Palinor responds that Benedix is overly concerned with needing an explanation for everything, and Benedix believes God is the ultimate explanation. Palinor, on the other hand, does not see a need for God or a need to explain everything. What people can see, taste, touch, and smell is what exists, he says.

Benedix is undeterred, and he tells Palinor that he will bring more proofs. He is sure that Palinor will see his point.

Chapter 17 Analysis

This chapter illustrated the difference between Benedix, a great student but childlike in ways of the world, with Palinor, who is intelligent, learned, and articulate as well as being a student of all things practical. Benedix's proofs are based on book knowledge, reasoning, and faith, and Palinor finds them almost amusing in their simple assumptions that God is the source of everything. Palinor has come to his conclusions by combining thought and his experience in the world, while Benedix's faith seems more of a blind belief based on an assumption the scholar has never questioned.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Amara reverts to her old ways in Josefa's absence. She stops standing upright, refuses to wear her shift, and spends a lot of time skulking in corners. Sor Blanca now takes care of Amara, and one day she realizes that the "Ssfa! Ssfa!" sound that Amara makes is the child's attempt to say Josefa. Sor Blanca rushes Amara to Josefa's bed, and Amara curls up at Josefa's feet.

The nuns begin teaching Amara the names of things, and soon she has a vocabulary of several dozen words. After so many months of little change, Amara is now rapidly transforming. She learns quickly, and now walks upright on straightened legs. Unless someone saw Amara eat, they might think she is a regular 13 year old.

Josefa notices, however, that in many ways Amara is very different than Josefa's younger brothers. The brothers never sat still, and they talked about events that happened yesterday and what they would do tomorrow. They sought Josefa's comfort for even the tiniest scratch. Amara, on the other hand, is content to sit alone for hours, as if she doesn't need anything to do. She cannot seem to learn the word "mine," never initiates conversation, and only names things she can see in front of her. Josefa knows also that although Amara does not resist massages, she hates to be touched.

Chapter 18 Analysis

In many ways, Amara is making remarkable progress. She almost appears to be a normal girl, as she begins talking and walking upright. Amara's upbringing by wolves, however, seems to have altered her in ways that cannot be changed, such as her dislike for human touch and contact, things that humans have long assumed are necessary for healthy living. Like an animal, Amara only seems to live in the present and seems unaware of how the past and future affect her. She seems content to live a purposeless life, sitting alone and doing nothing. All of those attributes, which seem innate in Amara, counter the island-wide assumption that everyone knows about God. Amara is showing no signs of ever having encountered God or that God is presently at work in her life. Instead, she is an example, like Palinor, that life can be lived without God.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Severo spends part of the day dealing with the business of the diocese. He works his way through the pile of documents, and then decides to visit Benedix and Palinor at Saracen's House. Severo has not seen them in months, and he's interested in whether Benedix has made any progress with Palinor.

During the two-hour ride, Severo thinks about his older brother Gaspar. Severo and Gaspar lived at Saracen's House as boys. Severo remembers a time their father had beaten him for risking Gaspar's life climbing a sheer rock face. Severo was resentful because, in actuality, Gaspar had been leading Severo, and Severo knew that Gaspar mattered more. Gaspar was supposed to be the Prince of Grandinsula, and Severo was slated to be a regular priest. Gaspar died in his bed of port fever, however, and Severo was named Prince and Cardinal.

As Severo rides up to Saracen's House, he sees an amazing fountain has been built in the front. Rafal, who is accompanying Severo, tells him that the atheist has been improving the waters. Palinor invites Severo to bathe in the fountain to wash off the dirt from the trip, and soon the two men are laughing and running naked through the fountain. Rafal joins them, but Benedix cannot bring himself to such frivolity. Benedix removes his monk's robe and sits on the edge of the fountain until Severo laughingly pulls him into the water.

After their refreshing bath, the four men sit down to dinner in the beautiful, cool setting. Benedix tries another proof on Palinor. Everything in the world is in degrees of "more" or "less," Benedix says. That means that there must be a "hottest" or a "coolest," a perfect source and cause for everything. The source of all goodness and perfection, then, is God.

Palinor shows Severo and Benedix that his hand is warm from heat his body has generated. Palinor rubs two sticks together, creating heat. In those instances, Palinor says, fire is not the ultimate source of heat as Benedix had stated in an illustration for his proof. Heat is a result of process, not a source. Palinor tells Benedix that all of his proofs trace attempt to connect reality to a source. Palinor argues that there are no absolutes, and he repeats his assertion that God does not exist.

The debate ceases, when Palinor and Benedix notice that Severo has fallen asleep in his chair. They instantly begin laughing and order Rafal to put his master to bed. In the cool evening air, Severo lies on his pallet and wonders who he is. Benedix is a nightingale, who expounds the truths of his faith. Palinor is a "force of cold clear water." As Severo ponders this question, he falls asleep.



Chapter 19 Analysis

While Beditx attempts and fails again to convince Palinor of God's existence, more importantly in this chapter the men find friendship that transcends their differences in belief. They get great joy from frolicking in the fountain, which is a creation of Palinor, not God. Palinor and Beditx instantly leave their religious debate behind and laugh together, when they see that Severo has fallen asleep during their discussion.

The evening the men spend together illustrates good qualities of life outside of religious study and discussion. Severo and Beditx, who devote a great deal of time to religious pursuits, let loose and enjoy the simple pleasures of water, beautiful weather and scenery, and good company. They find common ground and enjoy each other's company despite their opposing viewpoints on God, perhaps widening Severo and Beditx's narrowly defined world a slight bit.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Amara is now helping the nuns with simple chores. She can knead bread, feed the farm animals, and card wool. As a result Amara is given more freedom in the convent, although she is still closely watched.

On a particularly hot day, Josefa asks permission to take Amara to shore to help her gather mussels. As the shining sea comes into sight, the girls run to the beach and play in the waves. Josefa knows that this section of beach is not visible from Sant Clara, so she strips her heavy garments and swims naked into the water, enjoying the cooling waves. Amara whimpers from the shore, and Josefa leads her into the waves by the hand. The girls swim for a while before stretching out on rocks to dry.

Amara begins licking the backs of her hands, seemingly enjoying the salty taste. Suddenly Amara puts her arm around Josefa's waist and licks her naked breast. Josefa pushes Amara away and quickly puts on her shift. Amara, unperturbed, resumes licking salt from her own arms. Josefa knows that God saw that she swam naked, but she realizes that God has become distant to her, because she does not think about him or mention him in front of Amara. Her days have not seemed empty without God.

Benedix struggles through the night with anger. He remembers his mother, who was single and provided for her son by mending linen and making clothes. The only thing that made her angry was, when her sewing tools were blunt or her thread would break. Benedict feels like his arguments with Palinor have been like those blunt tools, and he is angry that he did not recognize the errors that Palinor has pointed out. Benedix knows his sin is pride in his own intelligence, and he has never before experienced the pain of defeat. Suppressing his panic, Benedix tells himself he will find the winning argument.

Severo wakes up happy. He has enjoyed conversing freely with his companions and setting aside the dignity required of his office. Severo joins Benedix at his morning office, and when the prayers are complete Benedix asks Severo to relieve him from his task of converting Palinor. Benedix says he is afraid of Palinor, then admits he has one argument, the best one, remaining. Severo asks Benedix to try to the last proof, and then he can return to his study of angels.

Benedix argues that there is an intelligent maker behind the world who has designed purposes for things such as rocks, which themselves are unintelligent. Palinor agrees that the existence of an unknown designer may partially explain the purposes of the earth, but not all of them. For example, he says, when a bellmaker is asked why bell metal gives out a certain note when shaped a certain way, he replies, "It just does." Palinor argues further that the world tends to descend into chaos, which would undermine Benedix's assertion that the world is a projection of divinity. Benedix's argument, Palinor says, does not address why there is suffering and evil in the world.



In response, Beditx takes the men to Sant Vicente, an old church near Sant Clara. Inside is an amazing mural depicting a scene from heaven. Beditx shows Palinor that to make the bright and shimmering mural, dark and ugly tiles had to be used for contrast. Likewise, blackness has a place in the wholeness of God's transcendent beauty.

Palinor ponders the mural for a while, noticing two women in the distance on the water's edge. Severo and Rafal pray. Palinor finally responds that he appreciates the great beauty of the mural, but it is a vision, not an argument for God. He adds that he is coming to love Beditx and how he has reconciled his faith with the darkness of the world. For himself, however, Palinor cannot imagine that any mosaic piece is dark enough to represent the suffering of a tortured and dying child.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This chapter foreshadows Josefa's later willingness to break her vows to coach Amara to lie to Severo about knowing about God, when she was living with the wolves. The beach literally and figuratively separates Josefa from the convent, which represents her connection to God. On the beach, Josefa feels free to pursue the carnal enjoyment of swimming naked, even though she's aware that God can see her. The trip to the beach makes Josefa realize that she's found a fulfilling life taking care of Amara without God's involvement. Josefa's unique situation has allowed her to live amongst nuns while remaining disconnected from God.

Beditx is realizing that his attempts to convince Palinor are going to fail. Severo, however, is intent on saving Palinor and urges Beditx to press on. Beditx's final move is to show Palinor an amazing religious mural, which illustrates how dark and light can coexist and together be part of something beautiful. Palinor says he admires Beditx's ability to reconcile his faith with the darkness of the world, but in reality Beditx has been cloistered for years and no longer sees the hardships of the world. Palinor has, however, and the reality that Beditx is protected from has convinced Palinor that God does not exist. The mural is like Beditx's faith. It is a beautiful representation, but it does not reflect reality.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

A group of strangers arrives at Sant Clara, and they tell the nuns they want to see the wolf-child. Sor Agnete tells them there is no such thing, and the nuns wonder if Guillem and his men have broken their promise not to speak of Amara. The group of strangers returns daily and eventually grows into a bullying mob. The abbess relents and brings Josefa and Amara forward. The crowd is disappointed until Amara howls and drops to all fours. The intruders bolt at the sound of a distant drumbeat. Amara then laughs and says she has scared them away.

Amara can now dress herself, eat civilly, and speak in broken sentences. One morning Amara asks to go to the sea to fetch mussels, and Josefa is overjoyed that Amara has remembered something. Sor Agnete wonders how a child can sit contently for hours in silence and with no playthings, and remembers a similar case of a boy who was rescued from an avalanche, where he was lying under his father's crushed body. Josefa believes Amara is unhappy at Sant Clara, and Sor Agnete thinks the only thing that can fill Amara's great emptiness inside is the knowledge of God.

Josefa and Amara are outside cutting nettles, when a man approaches them. The man had arrived with the mob, but had always hung back and continued to hang around after the others left. Amara asks him how he got the huge scars on his face. He says they are from her.

Benedix tells Severo that he is glad for his support in his debating with Palinor. Severo suggests a new tactic. Instead of allowing Palinor to disprove Benedix's proofs, they will ask Palinor what he believes and allow Benedix to tear apart Palinor's assertions. As Severo rises to leave, he hopes that Benedix will not fail. Severo is not worried, however. He knows the proofs of God will not collapse.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Amara continues making progress, now seeming to remember things from the past and speak better. Sor Agnete's comparison of Amara's behavior with the boy who lay under his father's crushed body shows the effect of great trauma on a child, an interesting connection with Palinor's final thought from the previous chapter that nothing can reconcile God with a tortured and dying child. While Amara has survived, her savage upbringing and subsequent gang rape have subjected her to horrible atrocities. God is not clearly not present in, or protecting, her life.

Severo's suggestion that Benedix switch tactics and try to disprove Palinor's arguments will lead to the breakdown in Benedix's faith, although Severo does not know that yet. Severo's faith does not waver.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Palinor awakes to the sound of Severo leaving. Dolca is outside washing clothes, and Palinor is reminded of his wife. He wonders if his wife thinks he is dead, or if she has taken up with his cousin.

When Dolca comes into Palinor's chamber on an errand, he asks her to undress but tells her she can refuse. She says she is only scared, because she doesn't know what to do. Palinor tells her to come to him, and he covers her with oil and honey, pleasuring her and then making love to her. When they are finished, Palinor realizes that Joffre is in the room. Joffre says he and Dolca are sweethearts, not brother and sister, and Dolca is a virgin, because she seems afraid of sex.

Palinor shows Joffre how to pleasure Dolca, and then takes her again himself. Palinor then brings Joffre into the bed as well, and the two men have sex twice. Telling Dolca he is not leaving her, Palinor shows her how to pleasure him and Joffre simultaneously with her hands.

They leave the bed at nightfall. Palinor returns to his room after glimpsing Benedix, who is studying, through the window. Joffre is setting out a late supper, and Dolca is gathering up the sheets.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Palinor commits what we would be considered horrible sexual sin in the eyes of Grandinsula's religious people. He has sex with a boy and a girl, and then watches them have sex with each other. Dolca and Joffre don't protest, however, and they seem to enjoy the learning experience. In this case, "sin" is presented as something that can be enjoyable and uplifting rather than something destructive and hurtful. At the end of the chapter, life goes on as normal at Saracen's House despite the magnitude of the sexual sin that has just happened. Benedix is studying, oblivious as always to what goes on in the real world, and Dolca and Joffre go about their duties as Palinor's servants.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Severo returns to Ciudad late that night, and he learns that a visitor is waiting up for him. A man dressed in a monastic habit with a face the texture of raw dough greets Severo. It is Fra Damaso Murta, a special inquisitor whose power supersedes Severo's.

Palinor hesitates, when Beditx suggests they reverse their style of arguing. Palinor says he is not there to proselytize, especially on a theological island. With some reluctance, Palinor proceeds. Palinor says that attributing everything to God is not a valid explanation. Just saying God explains everything is useless, because it explains too much.

Beditx is moved to tears as he passionately replies to Palinor's questioning of the great mysteries of the Christian faith, such as why God allowed sin to enter the world and then punished people for it. We cannot know these answers, Beditx says, because we were not there at the creation of the world. Palinor tells Beditx he can no longer argue in this vein, and Beditx replies that Palinor should take off his shoes, because he is on holy ground.

Jaime tells Sor Agnete that he has come to see Amara, who he has never been able to get off his mind. Jaime tells Sor Agnete how he saved Amara from Galceran's blade and brought her to Severo. He has brought Amara a toy. He made two drums, one for Amara and one for the child his wife will bear in the spring. This is the drum Jaime beat to simulate coming soldiers, which scared the mob away from Sant Clara. Sor Agnete orders Jaime to leave, and he asks her to contact him if Amara ever needs a friend.

At Saracen's House, Palinor finds Joffre on his knees praying fervently before a crucifix. Joffre asks that if for Palinor, there is such a thing as sin. Palinor replies that there are things one should not do, but they do not include anything that Joffre and Palinor have done together. In Aclar, Palinor adds, each man would give a different answer to that question. Palinor would consider anything a sin that advanced oneself at the expense of another. Sin should be left to church anyway, because churchmen have the expertise, Palinor says.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Everything is about to change on the island with the arrival of Fra Murta, likely a representative of the Spanish Inquisition, which was known for the brutal way in which it treated people who would not convert to Catholicism. Severo has no power over Fra Murta, and in fact, as a Cardinal, is expected to help him.

Palinor reluctantly agrees to argue his atheism to Beditx. The debate becomes emotional almost immediately, and Beditx weeps in his defense of God and God's

mysteries. The scholar's reaction shows his deep emotional connection to his faith and his inability to respond with calm and reason, when it is questioned.

Joffre's concern that he has sinned is a result of his religious upbringing, not necessarily a dislike for his sexual experimentation with Palinor and Dolca. Palinor's response to Joffre's repentance is that churchmen are the real sinners, a statement that will prove true as the Fra Murta's purposes on the island unfold.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Severo does not like Fra Murta, but he must tolerate him, because a Cardinal does not have authority over an Inquisitor. Severo explains that he has not followed the usual procedures with the atheist, because they are performing a unique experiment that could shed light on whether knowledge of God is innate. Fra Murta understands, and he is eager to visit Sant Clara. Severo says they must first tell the nuns they are coming, and in the meantime Severo asks Rafal to have Fra Murta watched at all times.

Benedix finds Palinor in the blacksmith shop, where they are discussing Palinor's idea of a machine that could use water to drive the smith's hammer. Benedix has never thought about a smith's work, and he wonders if it is difficult.

Benedix tells Palinor that he once thought nonbelievers did not want to follow the laws of good conduct, but Palinor has taught him otherwise. Palinor then agrees that claiming that there is no God is preposterous, but he firmly believes that he will never know whether God exists. There is just too much mystery in the universe for people to claim they know that God is real. Benedix replies that such a statement could cost Palinor his life.

Chapter 24 Analysis

This chapter shows the extent to which Palinor has affected Benedix, and the lack of affect Benedix has had on Palinor. Now that Benedix has spent time with Palinor, he realizes that a man can be good without knowing God. Palinor has been nothing but kind and respectful to the people he has encountered, and he has used his time at Saracen's House to study and to make practical improvements to the grounds and for its servants. Benedix appears never to have considered the nature of other people's work, as he wonders whether a blacksmith's job is difficult.

On the other hand, Benedix's proofs, arguments, and scholarly pursuits have not convinced Palinor, who holds to his statement of atheism even though he has been warned it could cost him his life.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Severo cannot stand Fra Murta's company, and the ride to Sant Clara is almost unbearable. Fra Murta tells story after story of flushing out heretics, seemingly relishing his role as Inquisitor. Severo states that the shedding of blood is never a good thing, and Fra Murta says the church is innocent of bloodshed, because it turns heretics over to the civil power to kill.

At Sant Clara, Severo suddenly is ashamed that he has brought this blight of a man to such a beautiful and peaceful place. The men approach Amara, who now looks like a pleasing young girl. Amara says she does not know Severo and she does not like Fra Murta.

Severo asks Amara who created her. She replies, "Wolves." Severo asks if she felt any unseen spirit around her, and she answers she felt cold. Fra Murta asks Amara what was above her in the mountains, and she says the sky, which she believes is empty. Nothing the sky helped or cared for her, Amara says, and she finds it crazy that they are suggesting something like a wolf would be in the sky.

Fra Murta demands that the nuns teach Amara more language, but Severo reminds Fra Murta that he does not have the authority to command the sisterhood, and the men leave. The men have finally gotten the answer to the great question Amara was supposed to answer, and the answer is clearly no.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Fra Murta, who is supposed to represent the height of religious power, is compared to a blight in this chapter. The Inquisitor's relish for flushing out heretics is difficult for Severo to stomach, as is the church's convenient way of avoiding murder by having civil authorities execute heretics. Even Amara takes an immediate dislike to Fra Murta. As the characters in this novel struggle to reconcile Palinor's lack of religion with his good character, Fra Murta presents a stark contrast. He is full of religious zeal, yet he has no qualms ordering torture and cruel execution for supposed heretics.

Amara confirms what her nature has already suggested, when she tells Fra Murta and Severo that she has never known God or a spiritual presence. Even though she has been transformed outwardly into a civilized teenager, inwardly she has not been changed or touched by God. Her answers to Severo's questions should set Palinor free, but Fra Murta believes she just didn't understand the questions.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Sor Agnete, the abbess, and Sor Eulalie are conferring about Amara. They believe that Severo has rejected Amara's answer, and now they believe they will be required to care for Amara for the long term. The longer that Amara is exposed to the nuns or to human society, the more likely the experiment will be corrupted, because Amara will certainly hear about God from someone. The nuns wonder how Amara ended up with the wolves, and they send for Jaime to help them investigate.

Fra Murta believes that the experiment with Amara eventually will be a great and powerful example to the condemnation of heresy. This will only be possible, however, if Amara changes her answer. Fra Murta believes that Amara did not understand the questions, and when she does, she will surely say yes. This could take a long time, however. In the meantime, Fra Murta wants to question the atheist.

Severo rides alongside Fra Murta with a heavy heart. He hopes that, like some Inquisitors, Fra Murta can be bought off, and he will leave them alone. Fra Murta seems passionate about his work, however, expounding on how an Inquisitor rescued him from pursuing evil thoughts, when he was a youth.

During the following weeks, Fra Murta travels by foot from parish to parish preaching that he has declared a time a grace where heretics can come forward, repent, and escape terrible punishment. People flock to hear him, as he has a "golden tongue" and whips the crowds into frenzies of remorse and hatred of heresy. Heretics are discovered here and there, and they come forward and are forgiven.

Chapter 26 Analysis

The insight this chapter provides into Fra Murta's past shows how the man came to be such an enthusiastic Inquisitor. Repentance from the evil thoughts of his youth led to narrow religious zealotry rather than empathy and compassion for others, and he was greatly influenced by an older Inquisitor. Fra Murta's passion for his work is evident, as he preaches fervent sermons of repentance all over the island. The people respond to his calls for repentance, as Fra Murta brings out crowds much larger than the local priests have been able to muster on Sundays. As long as people agree with Fra Murta, they are safe. Palinor's fate, however, will be different, as Fra Murta is now turning his attention to the atheist.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Jaime asks around about abandoned babies, and he learns that this is a common practice. Families tell Jaime they left their babies, because they couldn't feed it, or the baby had a physical deformity. Many leave babies at church doors in the mornings. Jaime's mother tells him that he should ask around about a slut who abandoned Amara, as the mother clearly was too ashamed to leave her baby at a church door. Jaime asks his mother to help Fransoya, his wife, take care of their son while he searches for Amara's mother. As Jaime leaves, Fra Murta arrives in Sant Jeronimo.

In Sant Clara, Amara often asks Josefa what she is thinking, and Josefa is pleased that Amara now can talk about things she doesn't see directly in front of her. Amara cannot help Sor Blanca take care of the sheep and goats, because the animals are terrified of her, even though Amara no longer looks wolf-like at all.

A large crowd has gathered around Fra Murta in Sant Jeronimo. Fra Murta drives fear into their hearts with his fervent preaching about the sins of heretics, which include bigamy, fornication, doubting faith, being friends with other heretics, mixing sacred and profane objects, and blasphemy. He calls the people to confess their sins within 30 days and to denounce anyone they know who might be a heretic. One priest tells a worried cobbler that they will tell Fra Murta a heretic at Alquiera is applying witchcraft to water and iron. This will capture Fra Murta's attention, and he will leave the people alone.

Jaime searches for Amara's mother high in the mountains above Sant Jeronimo. None of the people who live and work in the mountains have ever heard of a child abandoned to wolves, and Jaime wanders farther and farther away from Sant Jeronimo in his search. He finally finds a group of foreign pirates, and they welcome Jaime for dinner. He lies awake all night after hearing the story they tell him, and Jaime leaves early the next morning before the pirates awake.

Rafal reports to Severo that Fra Murta has not consorted with prostitutes or taken bribes. Fra Murta spends his time preaching, drawing crowds in a way that the local priests cannot. Severo says they will continue watching Fra Murta, as the loathsome man is bound to make a mistake. As Severo finishes working on the day's documents, Beditix walks in. Beditix says that he has not convinced Palinor. Instead, Palinor has convinced him.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Jaime's investigation uncovers a common but sometimes egregious practice of families abandoning babies that they cannot care for. The common people of the island seem to have accepted abandoning babies as a normal occurrence, as many families admit to it and offer a variety of explanations for why they did it. Some babies are left at church



doors to maximize their chances of being found, but others are abandoned high in the mountains.

In contrast, Fra Murta's zealous preaching against heresy and sin does not address this secret practice of child abandonment. Fra Murta rails against a number of sins, which the islanders rapidly repent of to make sure they are not heretics. Their outward religious confessions are not consistent with the way common island life is portrayed in this novel, with the example of baby abandoning in this chapter adding to a growing picture of people who sleep around, gossip, steal, and hurt each other. Religious teaching may have an outward affect, when people are afraid of real consequences such as execution or torture, but in daily life sin is normal and accepted.

Benedix's exposure to Palinor has had the opposite affect of what the Grandinsula leaders had planned. Benedix has found that his faith did not stand up to Palinor's real world arguments, and as a result Benedix, the island's greatest religious scholar, no longer believes in God.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Jaime tells the pirates' story to Sor Agnete. Between 12 and 14 years ago, the pirates remember a pregnant slut climbing to their mountain dwellings from the valley, which was not uncommon. The woman gave birth there, and a woman assisting her went for help. When the helper returned, she saw a wolf slinking away. The story fits Amara's, all except for one detail. The woman bore twins, and both were taken.

Severo implores Benedix to hold fast to his faith, but Benedix says that the reasoning that was the foundation of his belief in God has been kicked out from under him. Benedix begs Severo to pray for him, as he can no longer pray himself. Severo prays for Benedix all night, and in the morning sends him back to Galilea. Severo is sick about what has happened to his friend, and Severo blames himself for failing the first time he has faced something difficult during his service to the church. In a fit of anger, Severo sends for Fra Murta and gives him Palinor.

The abbess asks Amara if she had a companion like herself, when she lived with the wolves. Amara replies yes, there were two of them. The abbess asks what happened to the second child. Amara says she killed her, but she does not remember why.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Jaime recounts what he has learned from the pirates to the abbess. She is shocked, when Amara admits that she did have a twin, but that she killed her and doesn't remember why. The abbess, like Benedix, has lived a life cut off from the real world and doesn't encounter sins such as murder and bestiality. The murder was so uneventful to Amara, who grew up in world where killing was often frequent and necessary to eat, that she doesn't even remember why she murdered her sister.

Severo is distressed that Benedix has lost his faith as a result of his discussions with Palinor. Severo blames himself for putting Benedix in that situation, and Severo realizes that he has not handled the first crisis of his leadership career very well. In a fit of anger, Severo makes an irreversible mistake and agrees to hand over Palinor to Fra Murta.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Fra Murta arrives in Alquiera and finds Palinor resting in a hammock, where he had been reading St. Augustine's *Civitate Dei*. Fra Murta's minions force Palinor to his knees, and Fra Murta announces he has a warrant to arrest Palinor for heresy. The servants at Saracen's House, including Joffre, the blacksmith, and the butcher, stand in Palinor's defense and demand that Fra Murta's men not beat Palinor. Palinor puts on a fine shirt and rides with Fra Murta's men to Ciudad.

As the men ride into the city, a frightened and nervous Palinor sees a strange sight. It is almost nightfall, and people in dark garments line the road, all holding fiery torches. They cross themselves as the riders pass. The whole city is lit with torches, and people are endlessly singing, "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom." Fra Murta tells Palinor this is the song for the thief who repented at the last minute, and these people are praying for Palinor. They will go from church to church all night, praying that Palinor will escape the fire. Fra Murta clarifies they are referring to the fire in the next world.

Chapter 29 Analysis

The effect that Palinor's good character has on everyone he encounters is further evident in this chapter. As Fra Murta and his men brutality force Palinor to come with them, Palinor's loyal servants and friends at Saracen's House rise to his defense. These friends are not concerned with Palinor's religious beliefs, as their loyalty is driven by the kindness and helpfulness that Palinor has shown them. The religious connection the servants should share with the Inquisitor has no bearing at all in their decision about who to side with.

The fiery scene that Palinor encounters, as he enters Ciudad, represents Palinor's fear of dying by fire, and his fate in hell that religious leaders believe awaits unrepentant heretics. Fire is the one connection that Palinor shares with his religious adversaries and the only thing Palinor seems to be afraid of. One downfall of atheism is that there is no hope of an afterlife. For Palinor, who lives by what is literal, the unknown of death and the future scares him. Fra Murta plays on this fear, hoping to scare Palinor into a confession by lighting the dark city with hundreds of torches.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Pare Aldonza tries to comfort the abbess, who is distressed that the nuns have sheltered a murderess. He loves the nuns, but they are like children who still live in their parents' houses. The priest assures the abbess that Amara has been baptized, which means she has been forgiven for her sins. Pare Aldonza has a sudden revelation, and announces that even though can't teach Amara about religion, they can bless her. Amara must be brought to the chapel.

Palinor is confined to a cell with no windows. Joffre and Dolca, who have walked from Saracen's House, bring Palinor food, wine, a shirt, and *Civitate Dei*. Three days later Fra Murta appears and asks Palinor if he believes in God. Palinor says no, and Fra Murta has a blacksmith fit Palinor with a neck iron that is chained to the wall.

Fra Murta comes every other day and asks Palinor again if he believes in God. Every time Palinor replies no, a link is removed from the chain and the wall bracket is lowered, forcing Palinor to crouch. Sometimes the jailer will not allow Dolca and Joffre to see Palinor, and Fra Murta has the book removed. Joffre and Dolca use money they have saved to rent a room above a stable. They resolve to stay and tend their master, despite the danger of associating with a heretic. Joffre says Palinor has led them into sin, because a heretic does not fear hell. Dolca asks Joffre if he wanted to stop their sexual trysts, and he cannot say yes.

Palinor has given Joffre the daily task of going down to the shipyards. At night, Joffre and Dolca miss having a third body in their bed.

Sor Agnete finds Amara and Josefa in a meadow, pelting each other with flowers. She tells Amara that she has something to show her, and they walk to the chapel. There, Amara is drawn to a picture of Sant Jerome, which shows him praying with wild animals, including a wolf, gathered at his feet.

Sor Agnete calls Amara to come up the aisle, and Pare Aldonza gestures toward the cross. Amara's features suddenly twist, wolf-like, and she runs on all fours out the door uttering a long piercing whimper. Amara tells Josefa and Sor Agnete that she will not go back in the chapel, because it's a bad place. Pare Aldonza says he wants to pray for Amara, and Amara recognizes that prayers are kind but not what they are for.

Above the altar in the chapel hangs a great crucifix given to Sant Clara by a wealthy merchant. Christ is painted on a wooden cross, the wounds and the blood flowing from his nailed hands and feet outlined in great detail. Sor Agnete has prayed in front of this crucifix for twenty years, and for the first time she realizes what it must look like to Amara. For Sor Agnete, the depiction of Christ's sacrifice is a scene of love. For Amara, it must be an image of a man viciously tortured to death.



Chapter 30 Analysis

Amara's experience in the chapel affirms her utter lack of knowledge of God and gives Sor Agnete a new outlook on how non-Christians might see the world. Amara is drawn to a painting of St. Jerome showing the saint with a wolf, a painting similar to the one that Jaime viewed in St. Jeronimo. Amara's immediate reaction to the crucified Christ is what any non-religious person might think, that Christians worship and image of a tortured man. Like the Inquisitors who overlook the horror of their deeds and focus on the "good" of flushing out nonbelievers, Sor Agnete realizes that after 20 years of prayer before the crucifix she only sees the bloody Christ as an image of love.

The issue of the nature of sin comes up once again in Joffre and Dolca's brief exchange about their sexual experiences with Palinor. While Joffre still seems to feel guilty for sinning, he admits that he didn't want their evening trysts to stop and the pair still misses having Palinor in their bed.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Fra Murta tells Severo that Palinor's descriptions of Aclar sound horrible. In Aclar, people are free to choose their own religion, and sometimes one town will have several different types of churches. Palinor says that people in Aclar abide by the law for reasons of the world, and disorder usually only results from sports or the outcome of a game. Palinor is proud that in Aclar, people form their own consciences.

Fra Murta believes these descriptions are enough to torture or burn Palinor, but Severo reminds him Palinor is providing descriptions of Aclar, not statements of his beliefs. Fra Murta says Palinor has threatened him, saying that the revenge would be terrible if his countrymen ever discover what has happened to Palinor. Severo replies that is not much of an immediate threat.

Severo and the keeper of books examine the library's largest world map. It shows Jerusalem in the middle, surrounded by a halo. The world is a great disk with a river running around it. The men pour over the map, reading every name written on it, but they cannot find Aclar. Grandinsula also is not on the map, which the bookkeeper says is, because the island is small and nothing important has ever happened there.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Palinor's descriptions of Aclar sound very much like a modern-day, democratic Western nation. Fra Murta believes a country without religion sounds horrible, as religious leaders believe people's belief in God is the only thing that keeps them from sinning. Palinor counters by saying that people also will abide by laws, because they make sense, again providing an alternate explanation for something Grandinsula's leaders previously have attributed only to God.

Severo's examination of the world map is symbolic of the Christian world's narrow thinking. This map centers around Jerusalem, the Christian capital, and the world is incorrectly represented as flat with a large river running around it. Grandinsula, like Aclar, was not important enough to make it onto the map.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

The abbess is ailing, and Pare Aldonza has absolved her from the duties of her office. She spends the days lying in a hammock in the garden, where she wonders whether she has ceased to pray or if she prays all of the time. Her vision is almost gone, but she can see blotches of color and people look fuzzy. The abbess senses that Pare Aldonza is anxious that her successor will replace him with a younger priest, but the abbess is no longer concerned with cares of this world.

Amara approaches the abbess, and the abbess jerks awake. Amara wants to know why she is kept at the convent, and she wants to leave. Amara tells the abbess that she longs to be far away where there is no speaking. The abbess seems to fall asleep, and Amara wanders away.

Severo awakes, sweating, in the middle of the night. He has dreamt of a Saracen chess player, an example like those in Galilea's moral theology books. A Christian knight passes through the Saracen Prince's country on his way to fulfill a promise he made to God. The Prince is impressed with the knight's devotion, and he vows to not detain him. However, the Prince loves chess and finds the knight to be a worthy opponent and requires him to stay and play the game. The knight catches the plague before he can leave, and he doesn't fulfill his vow. The moral of the story asks what part of the sin of the broken vow can be attributed to the Prince.

Severo sees the dream as an allegory for his dealing with Palinor, who he has detained, because he wanted to talk to him, not because of God's guiding. Severo feels sick with the role he has played in Palinor's fate.

Severo steps over masses of people sleeping outside the Inquisition prison, and the jailer lets him in, when Severo shows him his ordination ring. Severo slips in the nasty liquid on the floor, and he demands the jailer shine a light in the cell. The jailer says that is not allowed, but he holds the lantern up. Palinor is chained awkwardly to the floor, the straw beneath him soaked with excrement. Severo demands a blacksmith, who frees Palinor.

The jailer says he has not been allowed to serve Palinor for days, and Severo demands they bring clean water and dry cell. Severo tells Palinor he will be lost if he admits to Fra Murta that he ever believed in God, because he will be punished as a renegade. Instead, Palinor should tell Fra Murta that an angel visited him in prison and convinced him. Palinor says that has not happened, and he will not lie, because he wants to retain his integrity.



Chapter 32 Analysis

Severo's dream brings to light the role the Cardinal has played in Palinor's downfall. Severo easily could have let Palinor go, as the man clearly washed up on Grandinsula by accident, but Severo chose to detain Palinor, because he was interested in talking further with the atheist. What has happened to Palinor on Grandinsula is not a result of God's providence or God's hand, but of Severo's selfish desires. Severo is further sickened, when he goes to visit Palinor and see the squalor that the atheist is kept in. Severo demands better conditions for Palinor but, at this point, Severo's power is not enough to save the atheist for the Inquisitor.

Palinor refuses to lie, even though he is living in the worst of conditions and could easily save himself by telling Fra Murta that an angel visited him and he saw the light. Palinor displays integrity in his beliefs and strength of conviction far beyond what any of the Christian characters in this book have shown.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Severo and Fra Murta debate the merits of a false conscience. Severo says that men follow their consciences, and Palinor has not sinned by following his. Fra Murta replies that a man is only bound to follow his conscience, when it commands him to do what the Church teaches is right. Fra Murta says that they should seek to change a man in the grip of a false conscience, and an hour in the torture chamber should do the job.

Severo argues that Amara has settled the question of whether Palinor should have known about God. Fra Murta says they should ask Amara again, because she did not understand the question. Severo agrees, but Fra Murta must leave Palinor alone in the meantime.

The sisters of Sant Clara are gathered to decide two great matters. The ailing abbess is nearby, asleep in a chair. Taddeo has requested that Josefa be released, because Margalida has died, and he needs Josefa to care for her young stepsisters. Josefa begs to stay, and the nuns agree that she should. First, though, Josefa must take her final vows, but she hasn't worked as hard on contemplation as the other novices. The Sant Clara nuns have chosen the role of Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus. Work puts food on the table, other nuns argue, and they agree to administer the final vows that day.

The nuns also have news that Severo is returning to question Amara again. Josefa asks if she can make a confession before she takes her final vows, wondering if confession forgives great sins as well as little ones. Sor Agnete gives Josefa a look of understanding.

Josefa sits in her room, thinking with dismay about her future without Amara. She has become addicted to helping the helpless, but Josefa also knows that Amara longs to be free and that love involves letting go. She knows that Severo will not sense her treachery to her faith, and she decides to coach Amara on what to say to the Cardinal. Then Josefa will confess and take her final vows, wearing a white wedding veil.

Severo and Fra Murta arrive with a large party. Severo wants them all to see that Fra Murta is wrong. Amara enters wearing a modest white dress, and her hair is pulled back from her face with a ribbon. She seems frightened. Severo asks if she felt a presence in the mountains. She says she felt kindness, and a spirit moved the wolf to take care of her. The mountains, Amara says, had a maker, but she did not know his name. Severo asks if someone told her to say that, and she says no. The Cardinal weeps at Fra Murta's victory, but his companions take them for tears of joy.



Chapter 33 Analysis

The disconnect with God that Josefa first felt on the beach comes into play as the novice makes a huge decision to break her vows and tell Amara about God. Josefa knows what she is doing is wrong, but she also knows that if Amara gives the right answer she will be set free from the convent. All Josefa has to do is confess her sin after the fact, and then she will be cleansed to take her vows.

Josefa's actions portray Christian forgiveness almost as a coverall or free pass for sinning. An earlier scene has shown that Amara's baptism provided forgiveness for murder, and Josefa knows that she can receive forgiveness for treachery and continue with her convent vows as if nothing has happened.

Josefa likely will never encounter any consequences for her sin of coaching Amara. The effects of Amara's change of heart, however, will be far reaching unbeknownst to Josefa. Palino will pay for Josefa's actions with his life.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Fra Murta has removed Palinor from his cell, which he realizes is in a friary. Palinor is afraid. Palinor is taken to the torture room, and a scribe sits nearby poised to write.

Sor Agnete questions whether they should let Amara go, because the nuns don't know where she could go. Severo has said the wolf-child can be freed. The abbess whispers that they should contact Jaime.

Esperanca is dismayed to learn that Palinor did not go home after his rescue and instead was imprisoned. She is less welcome in the town's houses now that her future riches are not to be, and people are making remarks about heretics and the dangers of dealing with them. Esperanca questions how someone so kind and lordly could be one who eats babies and makes cattle sick. She says she'll never believe that Palinor is a heretic.

The torture audit is on Severo's desk. Palinor refuses to confess, so he is bound with cordeles and garrotes. After three turns, Palinor voids his bowels but still won't confess. Nine more turns, and Palinor says he believes in God and lied, when he denied it. He is taken to his cell.

Severo vomits, when he reads the transcript. Rafal asks why Severo didn't stop Fra Murta, and Severo says his duty was supposed to be to assist the torturer. Severo doesn't know why Amara changed her story, and he believes someone at Sant Clara broke her vow. Rafal suggests there's a slim chance that somewhere in her human contact before Sant Clara Amara heard about God. Severo sends Rafal away to investigate this slim chance.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Palinor's contact with Esperanca has resulted in loyalty similar to that displayed by the servants at Saracen's House. Even though Esperanca now is mistreated by her neighbors for her association with Palinor, she refuses to believe he is the heretic people say he is. Once again, Palinor's dignity, kindness, and respectful manners have won people to his side.

Palinor finally confesses to believing in God, but only after extreme torture. Severo continues to hold out hope that he will find a loophole that will free Palinor, this time sending Rafal to find someone who may have mentioned God to Amara and caused her to change her story. Severo is correct that Amara has learned about God from someone, but his attempts to find out the truth simply mask the real truth that Palinor is in this situation because of Severo. Severo's frantic scrambling to save his friend will be futile, as Palinor is now in the hands of the ruthless Inquisitor.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Jaime tells Sor Agnete that Amara could be an ice-keeper, tending to the house in the mountains where the ice is kept before it is delivered to the towns. Jaime will check on Amara every week or so to make sure she is alright. Jaime will return for Amara in a week.

In three days, Rafal rounds up as many people as he can who have come into contact with Amara, including Galceran and Juan's younger brother. Severo asks them if they could have mentioned God to Amara, and Galceran almost laughs as he replies that Amara wasn't exactly friendly, and they don't talk much about God in general. Then the men admit they may have cursed at Amara using God's name. In fact, Galceran is almost sure of it. Severo can tell Fra Murta the experiment is void and they will have to do battle on fresh ground, but a document on Severo's desk shows it is too late.

A transcript states that Palinor refused to repeat his confession once he was returned to his prison cell. Palinor says the captains of Aclar will seek revenge if they hear of what has happened, and then he tells the Inquisitor, "God rot you in hell." The Inquisitor knows he has Palinor now.

Chapter 35 Analysis

Ironically, a curse using God's name give Severo hope while a similar curse causes Palinor's final downfall. Severo rejoices that Galceran's men cursed God at Amara, believing it was unfortunate that she learned about God that way, but that curse will save his friend. Palinor, meanwhile, is so exasperated by his treatment and by being forced to "confess" under torture that he shouts out a curse in God's name at Fra Murta. The Inquisitor knows that he can use the curse to argue that Palinor believes in God and in hell. Palinor now can be prosecuted as one who knows God but chooses to disbelieve. Fra Murta has got his confession, but not by showing kindness and Christian love. Palinor's confession came in a burst of anger after supreme mistreatment and torture.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Severo tries to explain to Palinor how a curse affected the experiment with Amara, but then he realizes that Palinor never knew about Amara. Palinor doesn't want to be saved now, but he is afraid of dying in fire. Palinor wants to make sure his promise of gold and rubies to the fishermen is fulfilled, and Severo says it will be done. Palinor asks Severo to say a prayer for him, and then Palinor declares that he should have swum the other way. Outside, Severo sees Joffre and Dolca staring at him with pure hatred. Severo gives the pair his heavy purse, but it doesn't ease Severo's tormented conscience.

Rafal tells Severo that he can no longer serve him, because he no longer believes in God. Severo orders his men to take Rafal to the port, throw him on a ship, and pay his passage. Rafal will be killed if he returns to Grandinsula. Severo calls to a clerk, who will take Rafal's place as his chaplain.

At Galilea, Benedix retreats to deeper and darker cells until his confessor orders him to return to his usual cell and keep writing about angels. Benedix still believes in angels, but now he believes they might have bad purposes as well as good, or no purposes at all. Benedix's peers know he is in the dark night of the soul, but he cannot be cheered. His faith has not been sufficient to reach the dark place he has fallen. He tries to pray, but God cannot hear him. Palinor's fate, and his inability to save him, haunts Benedix.

Benedix looks out over the valley, which used to be infused with God's presence. Now it just looks like a world of brutal and meaningless chaos. Benedix does not know where to find comfort. Liturgy and Scripture no longer suffice.

Benedix once had sought the knowledge of angels. He wanted to know everything about the world as it was created in the mind of God, to know the morning and evening knowledge of angels. Now his soul has been so darkened that everything looks like the dark onrush of night.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Palinor's experience on Grandinsula has claimed another convert, this time Rafal. Severo reacts now, as he should have with Palinor, sending Rafal away immediately so that he will not be killed. Severo has learned a lesson about leadership, but it comes too late to save Palinor.

In Galilea, Benedix cannot reconcile faith in God with what has happened to Palinor. After years of religious study, Benedix realizes his beliefs cannot stand up to what he has seen in the real world. He thought God infused the whole world, and Benedix longed to know about every inch of God's work and creation. Benedix cannot make

what he seen with Palinor fit in his ideas of faith. Like Palinor, Beditx now does not believe the world is run by good angels and a good God.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Severo keeps vigil, praying before an altar. He thinks about Bible verses stating that one should not tempt God, and Severo realizes he has used Amara to entrap God. Severo wishes that he could stop believing in God, live in a world with no meaning, and stop trying to correct the suffering and injustice in the world. God's presence, however, stays heavily with Severo through the night.

Palinor is also awake, not wanting to waste his final hours of consciousness. He wonders what means Severo will take to kill him before the fire. He now wishes he hadn't sent Joffre to the docks to attempt to send a message to Aclar, as Palinor thought it would ease his wife's mind to know what had happened to him. It had all been in vain.

Palinor recalls a passage from St. Augustine, the only reading material he has had available. The saint talked about the next world, where suffering would be infused with moral meaning and converted into joy. Palinor wishes he could believe that, and he tries to pray but finds the universe silent. He wonders why the most passionate religious people also are the most murderous and cruel.

Josefa embraces Amara, who is leaving the convent. Sor Blanca is reading to the abbess from the Book of Revelation. The abbess suddenly sits up and calls for Jesus to come, as it has been dark here for too long.

A huge pyre is built for Palinor outside of Ciudad. People come from all over to witness the burning, as it has been a long time since someone has been burned alive. Dolca has spent all of the money from Severo on a little brick of sticky substance that emits a lethal fume when ignited. She climbs, wailing, upon the pyre and puts the substance below his heels.

Chapter 37 Analysis

In the final hours before Palinor's death, he makes an earnest attempt to reach out to God but finds no response. After all he has suffered, the final question Palinor ponders is how the most religious can be the cruelest. This same question has led to Benedix and Rafal losing their faiths. Palinor is paying for living a life of integrity and kindness, while those who are judgmental, selfish and murderous have triumphed. In the end, Palinor is given a slight reprieve by his loyal servant, who has spent all of her money to give Palinor a more palatable death.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

After spending a day in Saint Jeronimo, where life seems to be bustling along as normal, Jaime takes Amara to the snow house. He shows her how to keep the ice covered, and he leaves the next morning. Amara hardly speaks the entire time.

As soon as Jaime is out of sight, Amara begins climbing the mountain into their uppermost peaks. She begins to follow a wolf spoor, and is still climbing, when evening comes. As she looks out over the island from her high perch, she sees a large number of specks on the ocean. It appears that a great armada is headed toward Grandinsula.

Amara has lost track of the wolf spoor, and it's too late to return to the hut. Only one summit remains, and Amara keeps climbing.

Chapter 38 Analysis

As Jaime shows Amara around Saint Jeronimo, the wolf-girl blends in with the other people. There is no outward sign that she once ran wild with the wolves. That tendency remains, however, as Amara leaves the ice hut the second Jaime is out of sight, climbing higher and higher and farther away from the human populations the nuns worked so hard to make her like. Any questions of Amara's true nature seem answered, as she quickly abandons a life in human civilization for her old life in the wild.

For a moment, the fates of Amara and Palinor connect as she glimpses the armada from Aclar barreling down on Grandinsula. She has no idea, however, that a man has died and an island is about to be attacked in part, because she told Severo she knew about God. In the end, only Amara escapes from the fray and confusion of sin, consequences, religion, and belief, as she chooses to go high in the mountains, as far way from it as she can get.



Characters

Severo

Severo is the Prince and Cardinal of Grandinsula, both the religious and secular leader of the island. He was the second of two sons, and the least favored by his father. Severo's father intended him to be a priest, but Severo becomes the island's ruler after his older brother Gaspar dies in a rock climbing accident. Severo is not a typical ruler, as he prefers simple quarters and simple dress to the finery allowed his office.

Severo divides his time between the daily business of the island and serving as the island's religious leader. He faces the first difficult tests of his career, when two strangers, the atheist Palinor and Amara the wolf-girl, arrive in Ciudad. Severo makes the unlikely decision to use Amara as an experiment to show whether the knowledge of God is inborn, partially in hopes of proving a point that will save Palinor's life. While religious law calls for avowed atheists to be burned, Severo takes a liking to Palinor and enjoys their debates of articles of faith. Instead of letting Palinor go, Severo calls in Beditx, the island's lead religious scholar, to convince Palinor to believe in God. He hopes to save the atheist from certain death.

Through his interactions with Palinor, Severo realizes how much he enjoys intellectual challenge and the exhilaration of learning about new ideas and foreign places. Severo finds great joy and peace in freely conversing with Palinor at Saracen's House, and Severo goes to great lengths to protect Palinor from Fra Murta, an Inquisitor.

In the end, Severo delivers Palinor to Fra Murta in a fit of anger, later despondent that he so easily handed his friend over to the pyre. While Beditx and Rafal eventually lose their faith, Severo continues to believe steadfastly in God. He does not punish his friends for their change of heart, but saves them by sending Beditx back to Galilea and Rafal to sail away from Grandinsula.

Palinor

Palinor is an engineer, architect, and the King of Aclar, a county more like a modern-day Western nation than a fifteen-century country. Aclar has no national religion, and people are free to choose a religion and switch religions if they like. Palinor is very proud of the freedom of ideas in his country, and he tells Grandinsula's leaders that religious freedom has not led to widespread immorality or crime.

Palinor is swept overboard while sailing with his fleet. He swims to the strictly religious island of Grandinsula, where two fishermen rescue and revive him. Palinor is a beautiful, intelligent, middle-aged man who has a wife and son in Aclar. He promises the fisherman gold and rubies in return saving him. The fishermen take Palinor to the local precinct, who throws Palinor in jail, because he claims to have no religion.



Palinor is treated as a criminal in Grandinsula, because he declares that he does not believe in God. His appeals lead him to Severo, the island's ruler, who likes Palinor and wants to convince him of God's existence before allowing him to be burned at the stake, as is the rule for heretics. Palinor is held in jail before Severo sends him to Saracen's House, where Benedix, the island's famous religious scholar, will attempt to convert Palinor. At Saracen's House, Palinor lives in comfort and uses his engineering skills to build an amazing fountain and build a machine that will perform some of the blacksmith's manual labor. Palinor also has a nightly mynage a tois with his servants, Joffre and Dolca, who are young and sexually inexperienced.

In the end, it is Benedix who is convinced that there is no God. Palinor is turned over to Fra Murta, an inquisitor, who tortures Palinor and eventually has him publicly burned. Joffre and Dolca remain faithful to Palinor, serving as best they can while he is jailed in Ciudad awaiting his sentence. Palinor remains steadfast to his conviction throughout his ordeal in Grandinsula, only seeming fearful when his fate becomes uncertain. Palinor tells Fra Murta that if his countrymen get word of what has happened to him, Grandinsula will pay for it. In the final scene, a great armada approaches the island.

Benedix

Benedix is the leading religious scholar of Grandinsula who lives a cloistered life in Galilea. Benedix is especially interested in angels, and he spends most of his day reading about angels and working on his treatise about them. He longs for the knowledge of angels, who are able to see everything in the world, much like God. Benedix has had little experience in the real world, and his faith is based largely on study, reasoning, and his contemplation of how God and angels infuse every part of the world.

Benedix's friend Severo calls him from Galilea to convince the atheist Palinor that God exists. Although armed with the best religious proofs, Palinor easily rebuts all of Benedix's arguments and remained unswayed in his belief that God doesn't exist. After weeks of living with Palinor at Saracen's House, Benedix makes one final, passionate argument for God, which Palinor again refutes.

When Benedix is unable to convert Palinor, who is sent to prison and undergoes horrendous torture, Benedix loses his own faith. Severo sends him back to Galilea to resume his study of angels, but Benedix can no longer find his fate. He spends his days contemplating the same valley where he once saw God's presence, but now he sees only darkness. His experiences with Palinor force Benedix to face the real world and the cruelty of the Inquisition. Benedix ultimately cannot reconcile his faith with the darkness he has seen.

Amara

Amara is born to a slut who had retreated high into the mountains for her shameful birth. The mother delivers twins, and a wolf steals the girls away before Amara's mother or a



woman assisting her can save them. Amara murders her sister, when they are children, and she is raised by a wolf. She has a bushy head of hair and long nails and travels on all fours. She spends her childhood with no human contact.

A group of *nevados* helps local shepherds capture Amara, when she is a young teenager. Amara has been stealing lambs from the shepherds, and they track her to a cave. She is vicious and wild, and Juan, a *nevado*, cages her and makes money exhibiting her in the local towns. Jaime, a kindhearted shepherd, pleads with Severo to save Amara, because she is a child and not baptized.

Severo pays to have Amara rescued, and he sends her to the Sant Clara convent, where Amara will be the subject of an experiment to prove whether knowledge of God is inborn. After months of care from Josefa and the nuns, Amara begins to wear a shift, walk upright, eat foods other than raw meat, and talk. Severo gives the nuns strict orders not to mention God around Amara. When Severo then questions Amara about God, she has no idea what he is talking about, proving that knowledge of God is learned, not inborn. Fra Murta, the inquisitor, is not persuaded, however, and they return later for a second round of questioning. This time Josefa has coached Amara, and she responds that she did know of a spiritual presence, when she lived with the wolves.

At the end of Severo's experiment, Amara is freed from the convent, where she has been noticeably unhappy. Jaime gets her a job tending the icehouse high in the mountains, and as soon as he leaves her there, Amara begins to climb the mountain, reverting to howling and walking on all fours. As the light fades on her climb, she sees a large armada approaching Grandinsula.

Josefa

Josefa, daughter of Taddeo and stepdaughter of Margalida, finds life unbearable in Taddeo's home. Margalida forces her to work like a slave under the worst conditions, and Josefa is desperate to leave. When Josefa is 14, Taddeo declares her too homely to easily marry off, and offers her the choice entering the convent in Sant Clara.

Josefa easily decides to go to Sant Clara. Taddeo escorts her to the nunnery, and Josefa does not even rise to embrace her father, when he leaves. At Sant Clara, Josefa is given the charge to care for the recently arrived wolf-girl, because Josefa is the only novice who has not taken her vows and is still allowed to handle raw meat. Severo administers an altered set of vows to Josefa, and she spends months winning Amara's trust and teaching her to speak and behave like a girl rather than a wolf. When Taddeo sends for Josefa to return home, because Margalida has died, and he needs someone to care for his young sons, Josefa refuses.

Josefa makes the most of her situation at Sant Clara, attuning herself with Amara's needs and wants. Josefa loses touch with God, as part of her duty is to never mention God in front of Amara. Josefa finally betrays her vows and coaches Amara to tell Severo she actually did know about God, which earns Amara her freedom from the convent.



Jaime

Jaime is a gentle man, who becomes one of Amara's only true friends. When the shepherds and *nevados* corner Amara in her cave, Jaime saves her from Galceran's blow, when he is the first to realize that she is a child, not a wolf. He later pleads with Severo to save Amara from Juan and to baptize her, which Severo does.

Jaime returns to life in St. Jerome, and he marries and has a son. He gets word that Amara lives at Sant Clara, and he visits her there before setting out on a quest to discover Amara's heritage. He learns from a group of gypsies that she was a twin and born of a slut. Jaime also gets Amara a job tending the icehouse in the mountains, where he escorts her, when she is freed from the convent.

Fra Murta

Fra Murta is an Inquisitor, who comes to Grandinsula to deal with Palinor. Fra Murta dealt with evil thoughts as a boy, but he is forever grateful for an Inquisitor who showed him the right path. Now, Fra Murta is a zealous inquisitor so intent on his mission that he refuses to take bribes in return for sparing souls as many of his counterparts do.

Fra Murta spends several weeks preaching fiery sermons around Grandinsula before focusing on Palinor. After torture and cruel imprisonment, Palinor finally blurts out a curse at Fra Murta using God's name. As a result, Fra Murta has Palinor burned alive on a pyre.

Joffre and Dolca

Rafal buys Joffre and Dolca, an orphaned brother and sister who say they do not want to be separated, to serve Palinor at Saracen's House. Palinor asks Dolca, who is a virgin, to take her clothes off one night, and he has sex with her. Joffre finds them together, and Palinor figures out the two are sweethearts, not siblings. Palinor then instructs the two in all manners of sex, and they begin a nightly mynage a tois.

Joffre and Dolca become extremely loyal to Palinor, and they walk to Ciudad after his capture to take care of him while he is jailed. Joffre goes daily to the port to ask about sailors from Aclar who he could give a message from Palinor. Dolca spends all of the pair's money to buy a substance that will kill Palinor instantly so that he will not suffer in the pyre's flames.

Galceran

Galceran is a leader of the *nevados* who almost kills Amara, when the group traps her in her cave. Jaime deflects the surely fatal blow, and Galceran spares her life. Galceran



later trades Amara to Juan in exchange for a bottle for each man and food for them to share.

When Severo questions Galceran months later about his interactions with Amara, Galceran says the men surely cursed at Amara using God's name.

Rafal

Rafal is Severo's chaplain, and he accompanies Severo on most of his dealings with Palinor. Rafal watches as the imprisonment and torture of Palinor unfolds, and like Beditx, Rafal finally declares he can no longer believe in God. Severo quickly has Rafal sent away on a ship so that he will not be killed for heresy.

Sor Agnete

Sor Agnete is a sister at Sant Clara who helps with the care of Amara. She senses that Josefa plans to break her vows and coach Amara on how to answer Severo's questions.

The Abbess

The aging abbess of Sant Clara has poor vision but continues to oversee the convent during most of Amara's stay. She dies near the end after several weeks of losing touch with reality and living in a hazy blur.

Guillem

Guillem is the leader of a group of hunters who spend the night at Sant Clara. They contribute to Amara running away, and Guillem and his men find her being gang raped by a group of shepherds. Guillem returns Amara to Sant Clara, offering to kill her rather than have the child live with what has happened to her.

Esteban

Esteban keeps Guillem's hounds. Amara squirms free, when Esteban tries to capture her from the pack of hounds, and Amara runs away into the forest.

Nevados

The nevados are a group of men who earn their money by packing and cutting snow into cubes. They store the cubes in the mountains and later sell them in the towns. The *nevados* help the shepherds capture Amara.



Juan

Juan sees a money-making opportunity in Amara, and trades a bottle of wine for each man and a basket of olives for the wolf-girl. He tries exhibiting her in the towns, but he eventually sells her to one of the Severo's men.

Lazaro and Miguel

Lazaro and Miguel are the lazy fishermen who see Palinor swimming to shore and rescue him in their boat. They take care of Palinor, but they don't know what to do, when he requests passage on a ship to go home. They take him to the local prefect, starting a chain of events and a tangle with the island's authorities that will lead to Palinor's death.

Esperanca

Esperanca is Lazaro's mother, and she takes care of Palinor while he is in the local prison. She knows Palinor has promised his son gold and rubies for saving him from the ocean, and she hopes he will reward her as well. Later, Esperanca can't believe that someone as regal and respectful as Palinor would be considered a heretic.

Taddeo

Taddeo is Josefa's father, who has remarried a much younger woman after his wife died. He is torn between his new wife and his daughter, ultimately choosing his wife and sending Josefa to Sant Clara convent. He later tries to get Josefa to come home, when his new wife dies, but Josefa wants to stay at the convent.

Margalida

Margalida is Taddeo's second wife, who he married after his first wife dies. Margalida is only a few year's older than Taddeo's daughter Josefa, yet Margalida lords over her stepdaughter and forces her to work in the hottest sun. Margalida is instrumental in Taddeo deciding to send Josefa to Sant Clara.

Gaspar

Gaspar was Severo's older brother who was supposed to rule Grandinsula as an adult. Gaspar was the favored son, but he died in a rock climbing accident at age 14. Severo, who planned to be a priest, later assumes the ruling position meant for his brother.



Pare Aldonza

Pare Aldonza is the chaplain who serves Sant Clara abbey. He ministers to the ailing abbess and comforts her, when she is dismayed at learning that Amara has murdered and that shepherds have sex with sheep. He sees the nuns as children who never left their parents' houses, as he knows they don't know much about what goes on in the world outside the convent. Pare Aldonza tries to bless Amara in his chapel, but she runs out, when she sees the large crucifix there.



Objects/Places

Grandinsula

Grandinsula is the island where the novel is set. It is somewhat like Mallorca, a Spanish island, but it is not Mallorca. Grandinsula is a Christian island, where all people are expected to believe in God.

Sant Clara

Sant Clara is the remote convent where Amara is taken to be taught to talk and act like a human.

Aclar

Aclar is Palinor's home country, an island where people are free to choose their own religion and speak their minds.

Cuidad

Cuidad is the capital of Grandinsula.

Saracen's House

Saracen's house is Severo's childhood home where Beditx and Palinor stay while they debate the existence of God. Palinor builds a great fountain here and helps the blacksmith mechanize some of his work.

Galilea

Galilea is a monastery known for its great library. It also is the home of Beditx, its most well known scholar, who spends hours there researching and writing about angels and teaching young monks.

St. Jeronimo

St. Jeronimo is where Jaime is from and where a priest refuses to baptize Amara.



The Mountains Above St. Jerome

The *nevados* make and store blocks of ice in the mountains, which they sell in the towns in the summer. The shepherds find Amara high in these mountains, and Amara is returned to the mountains, when she is released from the convent.

The Crucifix at the Sant Clara Abbey

This crucifix was given to the abbey by a wealthy merchant, and it is an elaborate and bloody depiction of the crucified Christ. The crucifix frightens Amara, when she enters the chapel for the first time.

Palinor's Final Jail Cell

Palinor receives his worst mistreatment at this jail cell, which he later learns is in a friary.

The Stable

Joffre and Dolca rent a room at this stable in Ciudad, where they stay while caring for Palinor while he is in prison.

The Seashore by Sant Clara

The seashore provides an escape for Josefa and Amara from the confines of the convent. Here, they frolick in the sea, and on one visit Josefa realizes that she is no longer connected to God.

Jaime's Drums

Jaime makes two toy drums, one for Amara and one for his son. He beats on the drum to simulate the sound of soldiers, scaring away a mob that has gathered outside Sant Clara. He later gives the drum to Amara.

St. Augustine's Civitate Dei

Palinor is reading this book, when Fra Murta drags him from Saracen's House, and it is his only reading material in jail. A phrase from the book prompts Palinor to attempt to pray the night before his execution, but Palinor believes the universe is silent.



Rubies and Gold

Palinor promises Miguel and Lazaro rubies and gold for saving his life, but he has to ask Severo to deliver the reward, because Palinor is executed.

Palinor's Fountain

Palinor uses his engineering skills to build a great fountain in front of Saracen's House. Severo marvels at the fountain, and the men later take a refreshing frolic in its waters.

The Armada

The armada, presumably responding to Joffre's attempt to send messages to Aclar about what had happened to Palinor, approaches Grandinsula at the end of the novel. Palinor had threatened repeatedly that if his countrymen ever learned of his fate, they would retaliate.



Themes

Godly Purposes vs. Coincidences

Knowledge of Angels begins with a series of coincidences that some of the island's religious leaders originally believe must be part of God's larger purposes. Palinor insists that he washed up on Grandinsula, because he swam in that direction, but Severo and Beditx tell him that God brought him there for a reason. Severo also later interprets the discovery of Amara, a child who has endured terrible hardships and a gang rape, as a way for them to learn whether knowledge of God is innate. In reality, Amara was raised by wolves, because her mother, a slut, gave birth high in the mountains and a wolf stole her twin babies.

This steadfast belief in God's divine purposes begins to unravel as Palinor and Amara's fates become intertwined and increasingly tragic. Severo realizes that he detained Palinor on the island, because he wanted to talk to him about his atheism, not because he led by God to do so. As a result, Palinor is imprisoned, tortured, and finally executed by an Inquisitor. Amara learns to talk and tells Severo that she has never known of God. With Josefa's intervention, however, certainly more of a human intervention than a godly one, Amara changes her story and ruins Severo's experiment. In the end, Amara returns to the mountains and flees the humans who have tried to domesticate her. Severo and Beditx both see in the end that the fate of Palinor was the result of men's doing, not God's, and Beditx even forsakes his faith as a result. The role of godly purposes had once seemed so clear to Beditx and Severo, but the events of the novel blur the distinction between God's hand in the world and man's.

Moral Superiority

The characters of *Knowledge of Angels* continually raise questions of whether knowledge of God makes people morally superior to those who don't believe in God. The island runs on the assumption that people need religion to keep them from sinning and to motivate them to follow the law, but the book repeatedly gives examples of island residents who sin. Shepherds gang rape Amara and have sex with sheep. Juan traps Amara in a cage and charges people to see her. Many admit to abandoning unwanted babies. Galceran states that he and his *nevados* rarely talk about God and frequently curse. Josefa betrays her convent vows and teaches Amara about God. The tenets of Christianity allow forgiveness for those who repent with few consequences other than a little penance. The consequences of sins on others, however is great, and often the sinner does not have to deal with it. Josefa's coaching of Amara, for example, contributes to Fra Murta justifying executing Palinor. At the convent, Josefa simply made a confession and took her nun's vows wearing a white wedding veil, likely forever oblivious that she contributed to a man's death.



Palinor throws the idea of Christian moral superiority into question. Of all the characters in the novel, this atheist shows the most integrity and the least selfishness. He refuses to lie about not believing in God to save his life. Almost everyone who encounters Palinor, even two servants who he has sex with repeatedly, display the utmost loyalty to him. Esperanca refuses to believe that Palinor could be a lawless heretic. Palinor argues that on Aclar, most people, even those without a religion, follow the law, because it makes sense. Compared to the religious people of Grandinsula, Palinor is by far more law abiding and respectful of his fellow people.

Religious Cruelty

On the night before his death, Palinor questions why the people who are most passionate about religion are the cruelest. This question is illustrated also, when Amara encounters the image of the crucified Christ in the abbey chapel and runs from the image of a bloody and tortured man. Christians, on the other hand, view the crucifix only as an act of love. In a religion that supposedly is based on love, some of its staunchest practitioners find ways to justify the most murderous behavior.

At the center of this question is Fra Murta, the Inquisitor whose religious authority trumps even Severo's. As the highest-ranking religious official, it should follow that he shows the greatest love. Instead, however, Fra Murta spends his time scaring the island's residents into repentance from any possible heretical behavior, and he orders torture to extract a confession of belief in God out of Palinor. Palinor is put to one of the cruelest deaths possible, being burned alive. In contrast, the atheist Palinor is known for his kind and respectful treatment of others, even though he has no religion. The novel not only provides commentary on the nature of the medieval Inquisition, but raises questions of whether there is a place for religious cruelty in any society. In the case of Grandinsula, Fra Murta's actions lead only to lost faith, anger, and a horrific, needless death.

Style

Point of View

Knowledge of Angels is told in standard third person narration, sometimes switching scenes several times within a chapter. The author's prologue, however, gives an added perspective to the narration, likening the narrator's view to that of angels, who hover above the world and see everything. Unlike the characters in the novel, who are limited by their narrow view of the world, the reader is able to see the good and bad and must watch helplessly as the tragic events unfold. If the characters in the novel had access to this knowledge of angels, they might have seen beyond their religious beliefs and had mercy on the people who were hurt by their actions.

Setting

The story takes place in the mid-1400s on an imaginary Spanish island similar to Mallorca. While the author is careful to remind readers that this is a work of fiction, the characters and event easily could have taken place in the climate of the Spanish Inquisition, a time of religious fervor where Catholics eagerly sought out non-believers and cruelly executed them. The religious intolerance of Grandinsula, a Christian nation where the same man holds the title of Prince and Cardinal, made the island ripe for the arrival of an Inquisitor.

Language and Meaning

Knowledge of Angels is sometimes billed as a young adult novel, but the prose and content are entirely suitable for adults. Walsh writes in straightforward, somewhat formal prose that is appropriate of the novel's medieval setting. She takes long passages to describe in detail the island's topography and its people, giving the reader a strong sense of what this fifteenth-century island is like. She avoids flowering and overblown writing, providing sometimes-understated descriptions of events and conversations that allow the reader to fill in meaning. Walsh simply relates the events of the novel, rarely pausing to offer commentary or explanation about what is happening. She does offer some insight into what characters are thinking and feeling.

As a result, the novel causes the reader to think about his or her own responses to questions of religion, faith, tolerance, and morality. The novel does not judge characters, even though some make horrible mistakes and commit cruel deeds. The overall effect is that a story set more than 500 years ago raises questions in readers' minds that are extremely relevant today.

Structure

Knowledge of Angels is divided into 38 short chapters, some of which jump between several scenes. The longer chapters are devoted to lengthy conversations between Benedix and Palinor, as the two debate religious proofs. Most chapters, however, deal with single scenes or a series of single scenes with short dialog and descriptions. The final chapters are relatively short, with the final chapter devoted entirely to Amara's return to the mountains.



Quotes

"'I had no plan for any dealings here of any kind,' said Palinor, 'because I had no intention of coming here at all. My arrival was an accident.'

'You fell in.'

'And then I swam ashore.'" Chapter 4, pg. 35

"'You are seeing accident in terms of human purposes,' said Beditx. 'But we mean that there are no accidents in the mind of God. Before all ages and until the end of time he purposes all things. Nothing befalls outside his providence, and all that is, is as he wills it. What seems chance to us serves him. You fell into the sea and are delivered into our charge for a reason, friend. The most likely reason is that we should enlighten your darkness and convince you that there exists your God and your Redeemer.'

'I should have swum the other way,' said Palinor." Chapter 8, pg. 69

"'You speak of evening knowledge - knowledge of things as they are and have been in the visible world. I speak of morning knowledge - knowledge of things as they were created, things as they are meant to be. The knowledge of angels is of both these kinds at once, but in mankind there is a difference. Inborn knowledge of God is morning knowledge.'" Chapter 8, pg. 72

"'The sufferings of the child must have a meaning in the providence of God. It seems to us possible that God's purpose in her is to offer us a proof of what otherwise cannot be known. If so, it is God's work I ask of you.'" Severo to the abbess, Chapter 10, pg. 84

"'When he rode away at daybreak, into the dark shade of the mountains cast by the morning sun, the ugly and passionate face of the new novice stayed in his mind for the first several miles. Where had she come from, he wondered, so a propos? But then, after all, he did not believe in accidents.'" Chapter 10, pg. 87

"'No glass is dark enough,' said Palinor, 'to stand for the suffering of a tortured and dying child.' He spoke softly. Severo, over the chink of his bridle and the ring of his horse's hooves, did not hear him. Rafal, holding a horse for him, perhaps did." Chapter 20, pg. 162

"'My skills are not of this kind,' Beditx told him. 'We have always known the truth, Severo, we two, like everyone around us. We have used argument to defend it, to throw up strong walls around our treasure house. That is a fine bulwark against most kinds of attack, but it does not serve against one who does not attack but merely says that all our gold is dust.'" Chapter 21, pg. 169

"As they left he heard the soft voice of one of the nuns behind them, comforting the child. 'It is all right, Amara. You answered well. You did well, child, we are proud of you . . .' It was true, he thought. The poor creature had done well. To the immense



question they had put to her, she had given a clear answer. The answer was no."
Chapter 25, pg. 193

"Sor Agnete had prayed in front of this crucifix many times a day every day of her life for twenty years; but now she realized for the first time, sinking in dismay, that if you did not know it was an image of love, if you did not know it portended God's infinite compassion, his mercy for mankind, if you did not know of the resurrection and the life, what you would see enshrined at the heart of Sant Clara, above the altar, in the holy sanctuary, would be an image of a man viciously tortured and horribly done to death."
Chapter 30, pg. 225

"She spoke slowly, tonelessly, with her eyes shut. 'I had a friend,' she said, 'not seen. I was despised and rejected of men, but when I would have died, the spirit moved the wolf and made her foster me. The mountains where I lived had a maker. I had a protector, though I not know a name for him.'" Chapter 33, pg. 246

"His faith turned out to be less efficient, less sufficient, than that of the stupidest peasant woman. It was not enough without the help of reason. It did not reach down to the point to which he had fallen." Chapter 36, pg. 260

"Amara looked at the approaching host for a moment only. It was already too late to return to the snow-keepers hut before darkness, and the wolf spoor had petered out some way below. Only the last of the summits still rose above her, but she continued to climb, father into the unbroken solitude of inviolate snow." Chapter 38, pg. 268



Topics for Discussion

How could Palinor's experience on Grandinsula be justified as a series of godly purposes?

What affects does Amara's time with the nuns and other people have on the wolf-girl?

Did Josefa do the right thing by breaking her vows and telling Amara about God? Why or why not?

Why does Palinor's attempt to reach out to God the night before he dies fail?

How do Palinor's sexual exploration with Joffre and Dolca affect the pair and their faith?

What does Beditx learn are the downfalls of acquiring the knowledge of angels?

What is the role of coincidence in this novel?

How is Severo's faith different from Beditx's and Rafal's?

What does the approach of the armada at the end of the novel say about the role of God and faith on Grandinsula?