

Lilith Study Guide

Lilith by George MacDonald

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Plot Summary

Lilith by George MacDonald takes the educated narrator, Mr. Vane, on several trips into a parallel world that co-exists with one in time and place, meeting people, observing strange phenomena, and learning from Adam, the first-created human, that God desires all to be saved through death.

Mr. Vane, recently graduated from Oxford, specializing in the natural sciences and given to questions of metaphysics, discovers that his library is haunted by a centuries-old librarian. Vane follows this wispy figure through a mirror for a brief visit to a "region of the seven dimensions." Raven in bird form guides Vane and confounds him with riddles about being and understanding. During a second visit, Raven fails to show Vane how universes coexist in time and space and to get him to lie down among those sleeping in death awaiting resurrection day. Vane rebels, flees, and finds himself back in his own world.

Discovering that his father once enters that other-world, Vane returns, but learns that the father is condemned to do battle with fellow skeletons in a haunted wood. Raven refuses to help Vane, who sets out on an adventure, during which he feels the Moon as a protective force, several times meets animated skeletons and a woman who breaks up their assemblies, a band of "Little Ones" and evil Giants who occupy the same valley, and sets out to figure out how best to help his friends.

While he travels, Vane comes upon the fresh corpse of a woman whom he tries to revive. It is Lilith, the evil Princess of Bulika, enemy of the Little Ones. Raven appears to squawk "I told you so" and Vane tumbles back into his world. There, Raven reveals that he is Adam, the first-created human, and Lilith is his estranged first wife, who has followed them to this world in order to sneak up on Lola. Returning to the other-world, Vane again rebels against sleeping in order to rescue Lona and the Little Ones. In the invasion of Bulika, Lona dies at her mother's hand, and Lilith is taken to an inquisition to reunite her with God. A long battle over free will and determinism ensues before all sleep in Adam's house. Vane comes to understand the beauty of all creation and is about to face the Ancient of Days with Lona when they are parted and he returns to his house to await his restoration when he dies.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

Chapter 1 opens on a rainy August evening with Mr. Vane, an orphan and recent Oxford graduate, reading in the library. He sees a tall figure select a book and vanish. As this borrowing continues, Vane learns from his butler the legend of Sir Upward and a librarian, Mr. Raven, who becomes the household ghost. Chapter 2 jumps a week to find Vane following this figure to the garret, into a small chamber, and through an old-fashioned mirror into an open heath, where he faces a raven. In Chapter 3, the disoriented Vane asks the quizzical-looking bird to help him interpret his situation. Instead, he hears frustrating riddles about exit doors that get him only further inside, making himself at home, not being concerned that Vane has forgotten his name and arriving prematurely. Considering the chance that he has died, Vane walks in the direction where Raven disappeared and finds a pine wood. Reaching for something shiny, he receives a shock and wakes up, terrified, in the garret. He flees to the library, determined to sell this haunted house, but examines the stub of a book of poetry, sleeps soundly, and in the morning has no horror of the garret.

In Chapter 4, Raven appears as a bird, startling Vane, and in a heavy thunder storm comments on the weather on Uranus. Raven leads Vane to the garden and the worms that he tosses into the air fly away. Finding himself once again a "stranger in a strange land," Vane demands why he is not being treated as a free agent and hears that he is just beginning to become an individual. Calling this "the region of the seven dimensions," Raven points out that a nearby tree grows up Vane's chimney and a rosebush is a lady playing piano—because two objects can occupy the same place and time. As a librarian, Raven has read much but gained little. Now, as a sexton, he no longer reads but finds joy in nature. If Vane wants to go home, he must find his own way. Vane commits himself to an adventure, sure he will be taken care of.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Chapter 1, "The Library," establishes that young Mr. Vane, an orphan and recent Oxford graduate, has an interest in the metaphysical. Metaphysics in Greek means "beyond the physical." It examines how people understand time, space, and causality. Vane quickly finds himself caught in situations beyond the normal senses. The first manifestation is the disappearance and reappearance of books in the ancestral library through the actions of a tall shadowy, slender, stooping figure dressed in a coat with tails. Vane gets the family butler to tell the legend, suppressed by Vane's ancestors, of a librarian from hundreds of years ago, a Mr. Raven, who mysteriously disappears and occasionally reappears. Most intriguing to Vane is the stub of a book glued into a display of false books.



In Chapter 2, "The Mirror," Vane follows the shadowy librarian upstairs through winding passages that he has never seen to the garret and, ultimately, through an old-fashioned mirror into a strange new world. Note that Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* predates *Lilith* by three decades, establishing the motif. Chapter 3, "The Raven," introduces a quizzical-looking, talking bird, a raven, who strikes terror in him, talking about coming through a door out of the present "half-baked," childish, and self-satisfied" world into an unnamed one that Vane is destined to enter more fully, and in which he must become at home. For the first of many times, Vane begs the reader's indulgence in understanding an inexplicable "state of things." When the raven turns his back, Vane recognizes the ghostly librarian, whose name he knows no better than he does his own.

Raven says enigmatically that one must know that one is and then what oneself is—and clarifies that this does not happen. He adds that Vane has come to this region too soon, and then disappears. Vane accepts Raven's assertions about self, wonders if he has died and how he can make himself at home. Reaching out for a shiny object, Vane is mildly shocked and comes to inside the garret, the first of several such instantaneous transportations. He senses that the house now has a "brooding brain" and wants to flee, but in the morning awakens freed from horror. Before sleeping, Vane examines the stub of a book of poetry, thirsting to know what has been torn away, but cannot reconstruct it, leaving a further sense of mystery

Chapter 4, "Somewhere Or Nowhere?" brings Vane into the dangerous "region of the seven dimensions," again led by Raven, who claims to have visited the planet Uranus, where all animals are burrowers and quite different from those on earth. This motif will be revisited in a later visit to the mystery world. When Vane objects to not being treated as a free agent, Raven claims that once he chooses to be free, he will be free, and adds that Vane is just beginning to become an individual. Likewise, one can only make a fool of oneself. Such riddles become the bane of Vane's existence.

Metaphysics comes to the fore. Contrary to the precepts of physics, which Raven scorns as the teaching of "wiseacres," Raven assures Vane that he is still inside his house, that a nearby tree grows up his kitchen chimney, and that a rosebush is a lady beautifully playing piano. Two objects can indeed exist in the same place and time. He adds specific detail: the girl is playing Grieg's *Wedding March*, which has not only a discernible melody but also a characteristic fragrance. Vane hears only a ghost of a sound from the rose bush and smells only a slightly different rose fragrance—but he does perceive something. In what appears to be a non-sequitur, Raven adds that he has become a sexton, a minor clerical order in the Anglican Church, caring for parish property and digging graves, which soon becomes relevant, but initially is just another statement. Told that he must find his own way home, Vane decides to treat this as an adventure, something he has had few of in his life, and reassures himself that he will be well taken care of, since coming here is not his doing. Raven leads Vane to his wife.



Chapters 5-8

Chapters 5-8 Summary

In Chapter 5, Raven leads Vane into the forest and tells him that a hawthorn tree is in the ruins of a church from which prayers rise in the form of pigeons. He points out a "prayer-flower" that he knows by its expression but cannot teach Vane to recognize. Vane must open his own eyes. Seeing a shadow of prayer, Vane is filled with awe. They continue on, in Chapter 6, to the Sexton's Cottage. Winter arrives rapidly. Inside, a woman in white with eyes like God's own emerges from a coffin-like door. Raven resumes the form of an elderly librarian and talks about taking other forms. Bread and wine calm Vane and, trusting the Ravens, despite talk about their being unable to wake him, Vane follows them through the inner door.

In Chapter 7 Vane sees Mrs. Raven transformed briefly into a radiant beauty as they walk an infinity of couches, occupied by the sleeping—or the dead. Raven explains that the moon embalms his guests, and he as sexton waits to announce the resurrection. None of the sleepers are quite dead yet and many are in the process of coming alive and leaving. Vane cannot know the reasons until his day comes to wake. Vane must be brave and rest in the niche, but when the Ravens leave, he flees wildly and, opening a door, finds himself in his own library. In the morning, he finds old papers in his father's writing. Chapter 8 examines these papers, which describe a visit by the family librarian back to his great-grandfather's day who tells about Sir Upward teaching him many things before departing swiftly into the sky. Ever since, Raven uses the house as a conduit for visiting another world. Vane Sr. demands to go through the door and is led to the garret and a small chamber containing an old mirror. As Raven starts the chamber turning, he talks about mind and matter, senses and qualities, and dimensions beyond the three, which hold powers that humans have but do not suspect. Vane Sr. sees that their reflections disappear, replaced by a man walking swiftly across the heath, and rushes away in terror, without entering.

Chapters 5-8 Analysis

In Chapter 5, "The Old Church," Raven leads Vane deep into the forest to show him more examples of multiple objects occupying the same space and time. A gnarled hawthorn tree is also the ruins of a church, which Vane intends to demolish, from which prayers continue to ascend. Worship and prayer, Raven explains, are not the same, and he characterizes prayers as pigeons flying to the great Thinker, carrying his thoughts from little hearts. Living hearts can think and dream live things. By contrast, other prayers, like heavy objects, fall back on the offerers' heads. Raven points out a lovely "prayer-flower," unlike any other, recognizable by its expression. He advises Vane to open his eyes and see, while the universe works to show him that he is a fool—in order for him to grow wise. Again, Vane realizes that he he is seeing something—a shadow of prayer—and is for the first time filled with awe.



Chapter 6, "The Sexton's Cottage," takes Raven and Vane, after sundown, to Raven's home, owned by his wife. Winter has suddenly arrived because, Raven explains metaphysically, they have traveled unhindered by the law of gravitation. Vane observes that no church or graveyard is visible, but Raven's gaze suggests that the whole universe is his burial ground. Inside, an enchanting woman emerges from a coffin-like door, leaving Vane speechless. She confuses Vane with rules about sleeping and eating that he has never heard. Raven resumes human form and laughs at Vane's suppositions about him being a bird, drawn from observations that do not follow from the nature of ravens.

Raven explains that every human has within him- or herself other selves, animal, plant, and mineral, and that sometimes it is convenient to put them forward. One can tell a person's kind by what creature he or she most often puts forward. This sounds like the "shape-shifting" that is found in many cultures, often drug-induced. Raven drops this line when Vane asks for food and drink, as his wife has insisted he must. Bread and wine calm him and make him sleepy. Hearing that sleep is a necessity that is never earned but must be accepted, Vane asks how to accept their hospitality. The answer is chilling: In this house no one wakes can wake him, but he must sleep heartily, trusting the Raven. Somehow he does.

In Chapter 7, "The Cemetery," Vane sees the unusual cemetery that the Sexton tends. First, Mrs. Raven transforms into overpowering, radiant beauty, like Dante's Beatrice. Vane is led through an infinity of couches, occupied by the sleeping or the dead in a building that sometimes looks like the nave of a cathedral and sometimes like a barn. Vane wonders if these are Raven's books, alluded to earlier. Raven instead likens them to wine ripening. Vane examines the sleepers, seeing at most a shadow of pain or peace not yet perfected. Some are very beautiful, ranging from children (but not infants) to stately old ladies. Some of the recently dead show fading sorrow, but the long-dead know repose that cannot be described.

Finding three empty couches, Raven confesses himself unable to whether these bodies are alive or dead, as the world understands life and death. Raven views the place as a treasure vault and the sleepers his guests. In this world, the moon embalms them and the sexton waits to announce the resurrection, a common theme in the Christian New Testament. At this point, Vane believes that Raven must be "an insane parson" whom he must escape. However, he does not know where to go, considering that by Raven's reckoning, thousands of things could occupy this same vast space. Raven continues: none of the sleepers is quite dead yet and many are in the process of coming alive, not at all a Christian concept. He adds that Vane is not as alive as he supposes, and he cannot know the reasons until his day comes to wake. Raven tells Vane to be brave and to find rest in the niche, assuring him that he will not be harmed. When Vane objects and wants to sleep on the heath, Vane declares that the dead are also there, quoting Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Declaring that Vane carries the "odours of death" into this chamber, the Ravens leave. Vane flees wildly and, opening a door, finds himself in his own library, wondering what is reality. In the morning, he finds behind the door a large book wrongly shelved and a half-closed drawer containing old papers in his father's writing.



In reading Chapter 8, "My Father's Manuscript," one must keep in mind that Vane is reading his father's words, a fact that is poorly conveyed, except by the title. There is no stylistic difference in the text and it is not enclosed in quotation marks. Missing this, it appears to create a quandary, for it describes a prior meeting with Raven, about whom the writer has heard stories. It includes the full story of Sir Upward and, more surprisingly, a visit to the garret and its small chamber and steps through the mirror into the heath after talking about incomprehensible things, particularly dimensions beyond the three that hold powers that humans do not suspect. Why, after fleeing in terror as a youth, Vane would voluntarily retrace his steps as an adult is mysterious if not dubious. The opening paragraph of Chapter 8 clarifies that Vane's father has this encounter, shortly after his own father's death. No indication is yet given that this father endures a special condition in the other world, separated from those sleeping in the Cemetery. That story is slow in developing.



Chapters 9-12

Chapters 9-12 Summary

Chapter 9 finds Vane considers that his father might have followed Raven and himself returns to the heather via the mirror to apologize. Raven in bird form confirms that Vane Sr., Sir Upward, and Vane's great-grandfather are with him and that Vane has seen his father's arm without realizing. He adds that Vane's grandfather is in the Evil Wood, "fighting the dead." When Vane asks the nearest way home, Raven cannot say, because they use the same words with different meanings. Vane bristles at being fed riddles, and more so at being told that he is the only riddle. Raven reminds Vane that after declining their hospitality he had reached home safely, but now, come voluntarily, he must make do. Raven leaves Vane dazed, but unearths a firefly for him to follow it.

In Chapter 10 the firefly leads Vane through winter darkness, growing into a beautiful bird-butterfly, but then turning into a book when Vane holds it. The moon reveals distant hills towards which Vane heads, disturbed by the moon's unearthly stares. Vane faces several ferocious but beautiful beasts, which, he later learns, flee the moon's paralyzing power. Reaching the hills, Vane sees a beautiful woman veiled in mist, but with dead eyes and hiding a dark spot. When she falls and disintegrates into snakes and bats, Vane flees in terror to the hills. Dark objects pursue him, but the moon kills and scatters them, and Vane fancies that he sees on the moon's face a strange smile.

In Chapter 11 Vane crosses a desert to a forest of strange-looking trees. Doors and windows shut, leaving him in cold, ghostly darkness, and clumps of swaying foliage suggest fearful shapes. Vane sleeps until faint cries of a gathering multitude awaken him and, as the moon rises, a furious battle begins between skeletons and phantoms, with the disintegrating woman from that morning urging men to slay one another. Vane moves on to a dry stream bed and, next morning, finds himself "athirst for a human presence." In Chapter 12 he examines shrubs and trees along the river bed, while being watched to see if he will eat the fruit. When he eats a tiny apple, he is surrounded by laughing children and proclaimed the good giant whom they have been expecting. They watch as a "roguish fellow" hands him a huge green apple, which he throws away in disgust. Two large, hostile-looking men approach, offended at the rejection, attack, overpower, and drag him to their wretched village where anger and greed prevail. Vane plans his escape.

Chapters 9-12 Analysis

Chapter 9, "I Repent," opens with Vane consoled that his father had glimpsed Raven's mysterious world. Having heard no details about his father's death, Vane postulates that he may have followed Raven into the other world. Disgusted with himself for not trusting the Ravens—thus depriving himself of learning about things beyond normal perception—Vane goes to apologize. In the chapter title the author calls this "repentance," but it is



more on the order of remorse. Having never gone through the mirror on his own, Vane experiences frustrating difficulty, and when he reaches the heather he finds the expected pine forest gone. He is thus overjoyed to see Raven approach in bird form, but Raven is not at all accommodating: his wife is offended, Vane's brief presence among the sleepers had made them shiver, and Vane had failed to recognize his father's arm in the Cemetery, because he had not been ready to lie down. One cannot wake without sleeping. Recall that Vane had believed the hand to be that of a king.

Raven adds that Vane's grandfather is in the Evil Wood, "fighting the dead," another concept that Vane cannot understand but to which he is unconsciously drawn in the coming adventure. Sir Upward and Vane's great-grandfather are asleep with his father, and their fates will have to be determined later. At present, Raven dismisses Vane, declaring that he is unable to read his heart or face (only God understands foolishness) and cannot tell him the nearest way home, for each uses identical words with different meanings. People often want to know something other than what they need to know. Home, Raven declares, is always at hand but those who are not at home have to go home. If the house in which Raven has found Vane were truly his home, then Vane would not have left. No one is at home without having gone home.

Vane bristles at such riddles, but hears—more infuriatingly—that he is the only riddle. Raven reminds him that the last time he had summoned Vane and provided his way home when he had declines their hospitality. This time Vane comes on his own and must find his own way back. Already demoralized by feelings of failure, Vane is dazed as Raven walks away. A short way off, however, Raven unearths a firefly and tosses it into the air for Vane to follow. Vane interrupts his narrative to note the difficulty of expressing the inexpressible, particularly the emotions that arise as altering identities in a single thing awaken in him. His vanity is slowly weakening.

Chapter 10, "The Bad Burrow," continues the narrative, as Vane follows the firefly through the winter darkness. It grows to the size of a bird and is so beautiful that Vane stumbles repeatedly. It obeys his wishes, allowing him to hold it, but loses its spectacular color and turns into a book. Although books are some of his favorite things, he throws it away, miserable. To avoid freezing, Vane stands up and senses light. He is disappointed that it is not the firefly but "just," the unearthly moon, which shows him a destination. His first reaction to the moon's staring at him curiously is annoyance at its rudeness (vanity reasserting itself), but then he perceives pity at a creature wandering in its night. Vane understands: he is and cannot help it—one of Raven's earliest ontological teachings.

Vane describes leaving the heather for a powdery peat area, an earthquake, and approach of a wave from which bounds a snarling, tiger-like animal. It promptly plunges back into the ground. Recall that earlier Raven describes the animals on Uranus behaving in this fashion, at which Vane has scoffed. Vane finds this fascinating and assumes that the moon is affecting his brain. He refuses to yield to fear before that which merely "seems to be." Next appears a polar bear-like worm, which Vane hopes feeds only on the dead. It is too exhausted to burrow again. Vane informs the reader that he now knows that the moon paralyzes the hideous creatures that he encounters,



no two alike, some are a combination of beautiful color and loathsome shape, which enhance one another, but that night he had simply simply beguiled by "hurtless menaces." He adds that had he stayed until dawn he would have received no mercy.

Reaching the hills, Vane sees a beautiful woman veiled in mist blown by the wind as she walks up and down, proud and miserable at the same time. Her eyes are dead and she conceals a dark spot on her left side. Her pale gold hair hangs nearly to her feet. Suddenly she falls, writhes, and disintegrates into snakes and bats. In terror, Vane runs into the hills. Dark objects pursue him whenever the departing moon is not shining on them. The moon flashes angry light to kill an attacker and scatters the rest. Vane fancies he sees a strange smile on the moon's face. As he descends the far side of the ridge it grows warmer and Vane waits for the dawn. Vane is destined to see this woman again shortly in the Evil Wood.

Chapter 11, "The Evil Wood," finds Vane at dawn looking back over the now-lifeless region that he has crossed and forward at a seeming desert. A patch of green on the horizon becomes his destination and walking there takes a whole day. The desert is as silent as death. Vane enters the shadows of strange-looking trees, senses doors and windows shut, and finds himself in cold, ghostly darkness. Clumps of swaying foliage suggest other shapes: wolves, greyhounds, bare-skulled, worn-out horses, and a woman. As the moon rises, dim shapes gather around Vane and a furious battle breaks out between skeletons and phantoms. Vane emphasizes that they show no mercy, holler "lie-distorted truths" as they fight, and are urged on to greater slaughter by the dead-eyed woman with the dark spot whom he had seen disintegrate into snakes and bats. At sunrise, a voice summons all to bury the dead and the warriors drop and disappear. By day, the wood is free of natural sounds but the phantoms seem still to be about. As Vane sleeps in a dry stream bed, he hears "molten music" and in the morning sun the rocks seem to absorb night time's darkness. Perhaps the strangest, antisocial Vane finds himself "athirst for a human presence" as he continues traveling in this alien land. That there is no mention of Vane's grandfather is understandable, as he is anxious to leave the Evil Wood. It is as terrible as Raven had suggested.

Chapter 12, "Friends And Foes," provides a variation on Jonathan Swift's century and a half old motif of the giant among the tiny people in Gulliver's Travels. It opens with Vane examining unfamiliar vegetation along the river bed. Each grows progressively larger from shrubs to trees and wondering if the tiny fruit is edible. He does not know that he is being watched by hundreds of children. Eventually he eats an apple the size of a cherry and is reaching for another, when children of all ages burst out, laughing with delight that the good giant likes their apples. Vane stays silent, partly in order not to frighten them, but also to listen and understand—a sign that he is learning from his experiences. They watch again expectantly as Vane is offered a huge green apple, and cover him with kisses when he casts it away in disgust, crying that they have expected him as a kind of messianic figure.

Note that the tempter is a sweet, roguish fellow. He acts, however, as agent for a clownish, hostile-looking but unarmed fellow slightly taller than Vane. The children flee as this one approaches, enraged that Vane has rejected his apple. With an ally behind



Vane, he attacks and together they overpower and drag Vane to their wretched village in the woods. Vane summarizes conditions concisely: males and females can hardly be distinguished, they are driven by anger and greed, their food is disagreeable, and showing dislike for it causes them to take offense. Vane is beaten when he cannot swallow it. In the morning these unnamed people force him to scrape bark from every branch that does not bear fruit, kicking him for every mistake. Vane sneaks tiny fruits to sustain himself while he plans his escape.



Chapters 13-16

Chapters 13-16 Summary

In Chapter 13 the "Little Ones" care for Vane and cheer him. One morning a Lona, the biggest, presents a newborn that they have found in the woods and relates legends: all Little Ones are found thus and a few—greedy, lazy individuals like Blunty—by eating big apples grow into bad Giants who deny their heritage. Learning what he has lost in life, Vane wishes to be a happy Little One. This brings him in Chapter 14, to his quest. to become the "good giant" that they need. The Little Ones weep and commend him to the care of the Moon, telling him about two fearful characters: a hateful Giant-Girl Queen and an ugly Cat-Woman. They cannot go with Vane and still remain themselves. Vane worries about harming them by trying to improve them by the notions of his world. Being a philanthropist is dangerous.

The full moon leads Vane to a cottage, which promptly vanishes. In a ravine he sees a larger-than-life woman, who offers him safety. Some call her Cat-Woman, but she does not seem dangerous. Vane grows uncomfortable that she never allows him to see her face. She calls the Little Ones "careless little Lovers" who do not know their own names. When Vane wonders about his own true name, she declares that this is unimportant. She tells about a princess from his world who tyrannizes a city called Bulika, and refers him to the Bulika library to learn how the Little Ones, when they grow thirsty enough, will have water, and with water they will grow. Twice Vane has heard water and its voice has healed him both times. Entering her cottage, Cat-Woman wraps a white cloth around her head before welcoming Vane by name and introducing herself as Mara. She appoints him a comfortable bed upstairs, similar to the couches in the chamber of death. When animal noises awaken him, Vane sees the woman pet a panther and send it off toward the moon. Shuddering, he thinks about how uncertain everything is in this world. In the morning, Mara gives him directions to Bulika, to which she has already sent her messenger-panther, Astarte. She claims that a new messenger has sprung from Vane's head while he sleeps but claims that ownership requires will. No one spends two consecutive nights in her house. Turning back, he sees the doors vanished and a large gray cat leaps through a window and races away. From inside comes gentle sobbing.

Chapter 16 takes Vane through the desert to a forest that resembles a great silent, empty church. He laments his former life of self-willed loneliness. He comes to a great house overgrown with ivy and roses inside and out. In the great hall at midnight, richly costumed men and women begin old-fashioned dancing. For faces they have repulsive skulls with lidless eyes. He wonders if they are dreaming this and how they view themselves. A woman interrupts, scornfully proclaiming, "Dead things, I live!" As the dancing resumes, they stare at a shadow on the her cheek until she flees. A warm wind strips the skeletons of decaying flesh and clothes. Vane resumes his journey.



Chapters 13-16 Analysis

Chapter 13 introduces "The Little Ones" who quickly turn into Vane's "winsome" friends, lead by a teenager, Lona. From her, Vane learns their formative mythology: they have existed since time begins, they do not age or grow unless they eat the Giants' apples, which feed their laziness and greed and they become Giants, not only forgetting who they are, but denying that Little Ones exist. New Little Ones are found in the woods as newborns. Elements of the Genesis creation/fall motif are obvious. The Little Ones amuse Vane with childish stories, but frustrate him with their inability to explain in greater depth. Lona gets frustrated when Vane presses the question of where the babies come from before appearing in the forest. Note that Vane is increasingly seeing that living in his old world has robbed him of joy.

Chapter 14, "A Crisis," shows Vane accepting that must leave the Little Ones for a while to explore this marvelous world and learn how to be the "Good Giant" that they need to progress. He sees their condition as abnormal, although at one point he concedes that Lona's seeming ignorance, might reflect his own lack of insight. He also concedes that being a philanthropist is dangerous and one who would help others must first pull the beam from his own eye (see Mt. 7:3-5 and parallels). Vane accepts that they need a savior and that he is the one foreseen. He has no overtly religious mission, but thinks of teaching them mathematics and to record their dainty melodies. Note that Little Ones try to restrain him from leaving until the tyrant arrives and brutalizes him. They drive the brute away with apples and stones, sob as they have seen Vane do, and urge him both to flee and to return strong.

The Little Ones form a procession to walk Vane to the edge of the valley, continuing to care for him (they have never seen red liquid come out of a body), and commending him to the care of the Moon, who will guide him to the Giant-Girl who serves as Queen. This new myth declares that this Queen hates the Little Ones but cannot find them to destroy them. They also warn Vane about an ugly Cat-Woman in the desert who scratches victims. Lona believes that Vane will be safe from her. Vane proceeds with a heavy heart. He had once suggested that they leave with him, but they love their country too much. They would cease to be themselves if they went. Vane worries about harming them by trying to improve their conditions, enlarging their minds according to the notions of his world.

Vane first sees Cat-Woman while he is gazing at unknown constellations. She appears larger-than-life and speaks sweetly about protection from dangerous creatures. She does not fit the Little Ones' description, but Vane finds some discomfort in her declining to reveal her name or her face. She somehow knows that he has come from the "stupid Bags" (Giants) and "careless little Lovers" (Little Ones), who do not even know their own names. Raven has talked along these lines before and Cat-Woman says that it is common to most people. As Vane wonders what his own true name is, she reads his mind and says that the name he has written on his face unclearly is of no consequence.



Cat-Woman fills in details on the Giant Queen myth. She is a princess older than the world, who comes from Vane's world with a terrible history and takes over the once-pleasant city of Bulika. She is evil and "prevails much with the Prince of the Power of the Air," a phrase not at this point explained. She has turned rural people into miners and merchants, vainglorious and self-deceived. Cat-Woman refers him to the Bulika library to consult an ancient poem that no one currently can read, to learn about the Lovers (her term for "Little Ones") destiny, which is to learn their true name and enslave the Giants. Vane remarks on Cat-Woman's strange words and how words that mean more can mean less. She agrees, saying that the princess ought to hear the silence that the land is shouting at her. She is too clever to understand, however. Cat-Woman says that when the Lovers are thirsty enough, they will have water, and with water they will grow. It flows still beneath them. Twice Vane has heard water and its voice has healed him both times.

Cat-Woman's voice reminds Vane of Mrs. Raven's but elicits no fear. Her cottage also resembles the Sexton's Cottage. Cat-Woman shows herself clairvoyant, welcoming Vane by name, and introducing herself as Mara. She notes that some people take her for one of two biblical characters: Lot's wife, looking back at the ruins of Sodom and for this "disobedience" being turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19, referenced as a moral in Luke 17), or Rachel, weeping for her lost children (Jeremiah 31:15, referenced in Matthew 2:17-18). In fact, she is neither; she is herself—a self-awareness for which Vane is striving. She points Vane to a comfortable upstairs bed, which reminds him of the couches in the chamber of death, and he dreams of lying between the warrior (his unrecognized father) and the lady with the healing wound (still unidentified). When animal noises awaken him, Vane sees the woman in white petting a panther and sending it off toward the moon. Shuddering, he returns to bed, thinking how uncertain everything is in this world. Only later does Vane learn that several moons service this world but he never learns the laws of physics that govern their orbits.

Before sending Vane off to Bulika with safety instructions for spending the night in the forest, she reveals that she has sent ahead her panther-messenger, Astarte. Name is surprising: taken from the Middle Eastern Mother Goddess, consort of Baal, the Canaanite God of the Mountain and the Hebrew God Yahweh's chief rival. Astarte is depicted in the Hebrew Bible as a whore, physically and spiritually. Note that it follows closely on references to Lot's wife and Rachel. As the Astarte is. Mara dwell on none of this, rather talking about her messengers in general. All are of one species but none alike. They need no training, and a new one has sprung from Vane's head while he sleeps. Vane laughingly claims the creature, but Mara insists that ownership requires an act of will—again, the self-awareness for which Vane is striving. When Vane delights that Mara is a metaphysician, she offers no reply.

Preparing to leave, with bread for the next day (which Mara claims is unnecessary), Vane longs to see her face. She tells him that no one may spend two consecutive nights in her house and then predicts that soon he will have to spend many days and nights here—unwillingly. Vane stops himself from contradicting her on what his mood will be. Thinking to go back, Vane finds that the doors have vanished. Recall that when he first sees the cottage, both it and the moon, which seems to emanate from it, vanish. Vane



hears howling and through a window leaps a large gray cat, racing for the river bed. Inside he hears "the gentle sobbing of one who suffered but did not repent." That characterization is left enigmatic.

Chapter 16, "A Gruesome Dance," finds Vane despairing in his desert walk, not having foreseen how dismal it will be. He then realizes that foresight is not the same as understanding or all men would be prophets. Resting at dusk, for a third time he hears water and wonders what George Handel (composer of Water Music) would make of it. Imagining the music of the waterfall that must once have run here, Vane falls asleep. At dawn, he sees only sand, throws away the bread which has shrunk into stone (like the biblical manna, good for one day only), and walks in the direction that Mara has indicated. Toward noon he begins finding trees and eventually enters a forest like the one where the Little Ones find their babies. Seeing that everywhere is the same as nowhere, Vane considers that he is and has been simply dreaming life. If he sees a mirror, he will avoid it, lest he go back, for here he may learn to be something by doing something for the Little Ones, the awful witch he is to meet, the dead who are ripening to life. This is a major revelation for him.

Vane rests in the forest, where the large trees stand in almost geometric pattern and remind him of a great silent, empty church. Although nothing has been said about Vane's religious life, he does seem frequently to picture things in terms of church architecture. Occasionally, at a distance, things move across his vision and he enjoys bird song and gorgeous butterflies. Going deeper, he finds roses and longs to hear a voice. Wandering alone to him has become hell. He wants the opposite of everything he had desired in his old life: to be with people, to be unselfish, thinking, and welcoming. Formerly, he chooses dead books over living people, but now has not even the dead to comfort him.

Moving on, Vane comes upon a great house or castle overgrown outside and in with ivy and roses. It looks building-like but the structure vanishes on close inspection. Finding a doorway, Vane enters a great hall and rests, as though in Aladdin's cave, a reference to *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, where the magic genie grants Aladdin his wishes. The allusion is not further developed. Vane again records birds chirping like little prayers, but they quiet when an owl flies by. At midnight, richly dressed men and women begin to party and dance, not seeing Vane in his corner.

It is like a scene out of Shakespeare. By moonlight, Vane sees that the dancers' faces are skulls with lidless eyes in the sockets, making them repulsive and is filled with horror. This recalls the fierce battle in the Evil Wood, with the apparitions seeming unaware of him and being interrupted by a woman. Vane wonders if the dancers are dreaming this, how they perceive themselves and one another, what they have done to deserve this shame. He sees longing in their eyes, wonders if they differentiate beauty among skulls, and whether his form or theirs' is real. Vane heightens the horror by describing various frightful adornments—styled hair, earrings on shreds of outer ears, and jewels.



A woman interrupts, scornfully proclaiming, "Dead things, I live!" As the party resumes, the dancers stare at a "shadow" on the woman's cheek, causing her to flee. This marks the mystery woman's third appearance. A warm wind causes the dancers to disintegrate, much as the warriors had when their time had come. Vane makes a point of saying that he had not been afraid—and had not even needed to show courage to achieve that state—before resuming his journey. It seems not to be bravura. Vane is growing as a person.



Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary

In Chapter 17 Vane finds a carriage and the skeletons of horses, driver, and passengers. The passengers get out and commence fighting like an old married couple, befuddled by their whereabouts. Vane considers that because there are Little Ones and the sleepers in this world, it cannot be Hell. Raven, however, appears to clarify that the skeletons—but not Vane or the speaker—are in Hell. He tells of the couple's former glory and decline into mutual repugnance and predicts that they will yet love one another into being. The dancers whom Vane has seen are centuries ahead of this couple, coming close to developing faces again. Raven still cannot tell Vane who he is, because they perceive two very different persons. He reminds Vane of his earlier deception and predicts that evil will befall him, for good or not for good. Raven turns into a bird and flies off.

In Chapter 18, Vane walks on under a distressed-looking moon until he comes upon a naked, emaciated, fresh corpse. How she has gotten here in this state is a mystery, but Vane cannot abandon her. He squeezes a grape into her mouth to verify that she is dead before wrapping her up and lying beside her to share his body's heat, in case she is alive. It is an "awful duty." Seeing a large snake pass followed by herds of miniature animals, Vane tracks them to a flowing river in whose hot currents he bathes the woman, hoping to redeem her from death. Failing, he finds a small, warm cave for them and continues for seven days and nights trying to revive her with grape juice. Vane thinks of Adam, knowing nothing of himself or his need for another, watching for Eve to awaken. Vane learns what solitude is and humankind's need for other souls in order to develop individuality. Perfection requires persistence, universal growth, and educating others. Vane would have run to commune with the beasts had he not been loyal to this woman.

Chapter 19 opens with Vane suffering an insect bite. The woman neither moves nor decays but appears more lifelike. Hope and imagination play within Vane, who is bitten every third night. While feeding the woman a grape, he senses movement and prepares clothing. She grows plump far faster than grapes can account. One night, a voice tells Vane that she has caught a six-foot-long white leech biting him and thrown it in the river. In the morning, the woman, dressed and standing, asks indignantly how she has gotten here and what has happened to her clothes and jewels. She claims to have been in a trance and rebukes him both for forcing her to live and for shaming her by touching her. She knocks him out with a single punch. The story continues in Chapter 20 with Vane desperate for companionship, feeling guilty over wronging the woman, and wanting to set straight that he has been reverent in his care. When he catches up, he is ordered to stop, but begs to be her slave. When she suddenly hugs and kisses him, Vane feels a pain, sleeps dreamily, and awakens to find wounds on his cheek and neck. The woman treats him like a dog, forbidding him to enter her city gates, and punching him out when he continues following. The blow revives him. Vane sees her throw off her clothes and



fall out of sight. Several terrible long, white "things" streak towards the sleeping city. Vane tracks them.

Chapters 17-20 Analysis

Chapter 17, "A Grotesque Tragedy," deepens Vane's dealings with the dead in this mysterious other world. As he comes upon the skeletal remains of a seemingly affluent old married couple, their driver, and the horses. Like other animate dead, they walk unsteadily and talk with befuddlement at their situation. Vane observes them resenting one another but being unable to remember their names—seemingly a constant in this world. Life is just appearances; nothing is certain. The man quotes Shakespeare's Othello. The Bard appears to be a favorite of Vane, who is baffled by the domestic squabbling and violence (the woman shatters the man's good leg when he makes advances after promising he will not, while she repairs his disintegrating knee). A voice informs Vane that "all" and "ever" are words too big and that the skeletons—but not Vane or the speaker—are indeed in Hell. The voice is Raven's, who appears as a bird and transforms into the librarian and evaluates the couple's marriage and troubles for Vane. He declares, enigmatically as always, that their mutual repugnance will grow into love and that they will "love each other into being."

When Vane mentions the hall, Raven says that those dancers are centuries ahead of this couple and will soon those develop faces and truth will appear. The dancers are upheld by a hope that they cannot understand. Vane feels like a child, constantly wondering and surprised by nothing. Raven has no anxiety about Vane, knowing that his kind always returns. Raven adds that he cannot tell Vane who he is because they perceive two very different persons, a variant on earlier lectures about identity and semantics. Raven also reminds Vane of his earlier deception and declares that whether he recalls his name or not, evil will befall him, for good or not for good, respectively. The librarian sinks into the ground and a bird flies away, as Vane had expected.

In Chapter 18, "Dead Or Alive?" Vane continues walking, noting that the moon looks battered, dispirited, weary, and lonely. He comes upon a naked, emaciated, fresh corpse and considers that it might be one of the dancers, a Cinderella lost on her way home. Reference to the rags-to-riches fairy tale seems out of place and is never developed. Vane is puzzled how she has gotten here in this state, and resolves gallantly not to abandon her to predators, human or animal, but the ground is too hard to dig a grave. Before proceeding to burial at any rate, he needs to be sure that she is truly dead, so he squeezes a grape into her mouth and lies with her to share his body's heat, in case she is alive. He recalls "beautiful sleepers" on their couches and regrets leaving them to attend to this "awful duty."

Unusual animals are again involved, a large snake and various miniature breeds of animals. Vane thinks about the Little Ones but cannot abandon the woman, who seems a bit warmer. In daylight, he follows the animals' tracks to a river that flows with extraordinarily hot water, and thinks again of warming the woman's flesh to "redeem her from death." His bathing her is told in tender and modest detail. When nothing seems to



happen, Vane follows the river to its source in some rocky hills and finds a suitably warm cave for them. He spends seven days and nights (seven always being a mystical number) trying to revive her from what he believes is a trance while largely fasting himself. He dreams about a wounded angel who refuses to abandon him.

This image is not immediately pursued but replaced by biblical Adam knowing nothing of himself or of his need for another, while watching for Eve to awaken (the Genesis 2 version of creation, in which Eve is formed from Adam's rib to alleviate his loneliness). By his contemplations, Vane learns to love what he has earlier lost by cutting himself off from others and even forgets the Little Ones' plight, as he waits for this "wasted shred of womanhood" to revive. He learns the meaning of solitude and the need for other souls in order to live and develop individuality. These in turn form a unity—the millions belonging to the church. As Vane has thus far not referred to institutionalized Christianity in any way, the image is jarring. He continues by stating that perfection requires persistence and universal growth inherited from God the Father and sharing this by educating others. Vane run to commune with the beasts (which Adam had found to offer inadequate consolation) had he not felt intense loyalty towards this stranger.

Chapter 19, "The White Leech," continues in the cave and finds Vane experiencing but quickly recovering from some kind of a bite. The woman neither moves nor decays but appears more lifelike. Weeks later, the moon seems to make her eyes shine in the darkness, but the lids are shut. Hope and imagination play with Vane, who every three nights is bitten and loses considerable blood, weakening him. He never discovers the culprit and quits watching. He senses movement while feeding the woman her grapes and prepares clothing, doubting that she could grow plumper so fast on grapes alone. One night, a voice tells him that she has caught a six-foot white leech and thrown it in the river. Note that Vane often hears disembodied voices whose source only afterward is discovered.

In the morning he finds the woman dressed and standing, but combative rather than thankful for all he has done. She demands to know where Vane has found her and what he has done with her clothes and jewels. He grows indignant when she charges him with keeping her "enchanted" for her beauty, shows contempt for him presuming to be of the same kind, and through her eyes shows hatred for bringing her back to life. He says that he would have buried her at the first sign of decay. He tells of finding her skin and bone three months ago (but with beautiful hair) and having done for her what he would for any victim. When he explains bathing her in the hot river, she rebukes him for forcing her to live and shaming her, and promptly hits him in the forehead, knocking him out.

Chapter 20, "Gone!—But How?" finds Vane alone, desperate for companionship, and feeling guilty over wronging the woman, at least in her own eyes. He understands her resenting having to live if that had not been her choice, but not at thinking that her modesty has been broached. She needs to know that he has been reverent in his care and that "beauty must have a heart." Vane recovers his strength and catches up to her. When she asks sternly why he follows and orders him to stop, he claims chivalrously that he must see her safely home and grovels to be her slave. At nightfall she stops, forbids him to touch her, but suddenly hugs and kisses him. He feels a sting, sleeps



dreamily, and awakens to find wet wounds on his cheek and neck. The woman treats him like a dog, forbids him to enter her city gates, and when he continues following, knocks him out again with a single punch. He then sees her throw off her clothes and fall forward, disappearing. He does not connect her with a terrible long, white "thing" that slithers fast towards the sleeping city, but decides that similar creature that follows must be a monster. He wonders what has become of the lady as he tracks the animals.



Chapters 21-24

Chapters 21-24 Summary

As Chapter 21, "The Fugitive Mother," opens, the moon clouds over and a woman in white, clutching a child, runs parallel to Vane. Facing her pursuer, he is knocked down by a large white beast. Soon Vane sees a bleeding white creature, which he pities but ignores, to check on the woman. She tells of injuring one of the Princess of Bulika's two leopards to keep it from drinking her baby's blood. Prophecy claims that a child will be the Princess' death, so she does not marry and kills every baby of which she hears. Warning against going to Bulika, the woman flees anxiously.

In Chapter 22, "Bulika," Vane follows the stream-like blood trail to Bulika, which he finds filthy, unguarded, and abandoned. He is determined to see again the woman he has brought to life, to understand her influence over him, and to accept responsibility for any new evil she may commit thanks to his help. In the city Vane is rudely treated. He sees no children, and the young men remind him of the bad giants. He learns that poverty is considered an offense and the deformed and sick are taxed to serve the wealthy. Fleeing, he collects a loaf of bread, which a stupid man throws at him instead of a tone. Again Vane sleeps, awakens beneath a friendly, bright moon, and creeps back into the city. When a white thing flashes before him, he follows it and sees a white female leopard walking, radiantly, behind a two-dimensional, opaque Shadow. A cold wind makes Vane shudder.

Chapter 23, "A Woman Of Bulika," continues: ducking into an archway, Vane is joined by a frightened woman, whom he vows to protect from a spotted leopard. Knowing him to be a stranger, she too explains how the Princess, just returned overnight, is looking for her. She offers him shelter in exchange for safe transit home, and explains the city's economics and hatred of foreigners. Strangers are expelled before nightfall lest they defile the city's nobility, but she will make an exception for Vane. Reaching her door, however, the woman panics and locks him out.

In Chapter 24, "The White Leopardess," the windy street makes sleep and Vane sees not only the Shadow's leopard but other evil creatures roaming. The woman of the desert opens the door and leads him inside. As Vane tries to sleep, he hears a child's stifled moans and a mother's shriek, snatches from an escaping white leopard an infant, and as a reward is put out on the street with the leopard, by whom he expects to be killed. Instead, it is submissive and loving, making Vane wonder how he will ever find love if he constantly flees. The body of a woman falls from a neighboring window and the Shadow and the leopard pass together. When Vane approaches, it snarls and bites. Tired of wasting time, Vane heads to the palace-fortress, rests briefly and, is awakened by the leopard's lick. It warms him with its body. Awakening, Vane fancies that he smells his own garden, but is still in the hated city. Residual warmth suggests that the leopard is not a dream. He resolves to find and confront the Princess.



Chapters 21-24 Analysis

As Chapter 21, "The Fugitive Mother," introduces under a cloudy moon a new character, a terrified woman in white, clutching a child, chased by a large white beast. Vane is surprised to see an gentle, bleeding white creature limp past from the woman's direction and learn that she has injured one of the Princess of Bulika's two leopard to prevent its drinking her baby's blood and rending her to pieces. The mother relates an old prophecy, whereby a child will be the Princess' death, so she does not marry and kills every baby of which she hears. There are conflicting legends connected to contraception and warding off leopards. The woman warns Vane not to go to Bulika, where foreigners are hated, and leaves him anxiously.

Vane, of course, does not take her advice and in Chapter 22, "Bulika," follows the blood trail to the city's environs. He marvels at the quantity of blood and, tasting, it discovers it is some other red liquid. He dares not drink and offers no hypotheses of what it might be, other than likening it to the hot river in the desert. Vane approaches Bulika through strange vegetable gardens and refuse heaps, finds the gate curiously ajar and unguarded, and the street inside silent. He waits for people to stir. Vane feels responsible for any evil that the woman he has saved might cause, and assumes that she is the dreaded Princess. He needs to understand her influence and must defend the Little Ones, whom she is said to hate. Inside Bulika Vane is rudely treated. He observes that there are no children and the young men remind him of the bad giants. He learns that these people consider poverty an offense and tax the deformed and sick to serve the wealthy. Fleeing, he collects a loaf of bread, which a man throws at him instead of a tone. Vane laughs at this indication of the population's stupidity. Later that night, on a second incursion, Vane sees a white thing flash by and sees it follow what appears to be a two-dimensional, opaque Shadow. It is a radiant leopard. A new mystery character has been added. A cold wind blows, always an omen in this story.

Chapter 23, "A Woman Of Bulika," continues: Vane ducks into an archway to escape the wind and is joined by yet another frightened woman. When a spotted leopard flashes by, Vane gallantly promises to protect her. From this she knows that he is a stranger, for everyone in the city recognizes the Princess' leopard. The woman reiterates the sad fate of mothers in town and claims that, having just returned overnight, the Princess and leopard are looking for her in particular. She offers him shelter in exchange for safe transit home and answers many questions about the city's economy, social structure, and above all xenophobia: strangers are expelled before nightfall lest they defile the city's nobility. She will make a risky exception for Vane. Reaching her door, the woman panics, however, and locks him out on the front steps.

In Chapter 24, "The White Leopardess," Vane sees the Shadow's leopard above him, but it scrambles away, and later sees two evil creatures roaming. He is determined, however, to keep watch to save the woman's baby. The door opens not by the owner but by the woman from the desert, who leads Vane inside. Vane thwarts a leopard attack and is thrown out on the steps. Indignant and afraid, Vane prepares to fight but finds the leopard is submissive and loving, making him wonder how he will ever find



love if he constantly flees. When Vane next sees the leopard, walking with the Shadow, he approaches three times is repulsed by the animal, who look at him as if asking why he would force her to bite him. They next meet outside the palace-fortress, when the leopard wakes him with its tongue and warming him with its body. Vane awakens thinking that he smells his own garden, feeling residual warmth that suggests that the leopard is not a dream, and determined to find and confront the Princess. There are plenty of mysteries to be resolved.



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary

In Chapter 25, Vane penetrates, unchallenged, the palace's large hall, where he sees a caged spotted leopard, demands to see the Princess, and is hugged by a pacing white leopard. In a dark room the Princess claims to have known that Vane would find her. He wonders how she could have changed so, how obvious beauty and suspected evil could coexist. He bathes and eats, both times fearing drugs or enchantment, before hearing the Princess' views on their differing natures, old age, and perfection, and how Vane alone of all the men who have sought to love has passed the test by having no ulterior motives. She tells of going to evict "savage dwarf-people," falling under an evil spell at the hot stream, and dragging herself into the woods. She recalls nothing further until she sees rescues Vane from the "horrible wound." She will repay him with her power, beauty, and love. Vane notices a suspicious glove on her left hand but is "tempted to love a lie." She leads Vane to bed, afraid of the white leopard that he knows has roared for him.

As Chapter 26, "A Battle Royal," opens, Vane concludes that the Little Ones are in danger, thanks to him. Awakening from wine-induced sleep, he feels like he is floating, paralyzed, and crushed by a heavy weight. When it goes away, he sees the Princess, satisfied and wiping red from her mouth. Vane knows that he must stay near her or be devoured. In the black hall he finds a silent assembly, including skeleton shapes that he recognizes. In the vestibule, he sees a silent struggle in the cage, the leopard leaving and reappearing and then joining the Shadow outside. Vane follows them to last night's stairs, has the crushed body of the woman who had taken him in fall at his feet, sees the spotted leopard bound out with a baby in her mouth but be seized at the throat by the smaller white leopard. The spotted leopard turns into the Princess, who after a few steps turns back into a leopard and gallops away, while the white leopard steals the baby from Vane and also vanishes.

In Chapter 27, "The Silent Fountain," Vane follows the spotted leopard to the palace, where he finds the Princess, free of wounds, lying about being attacked by the Cat-Woman. In the black hall Vane recognizes the woman who appears among the dancers and the warriors in the Evil Wood. When Raven in human form approaches her, she shakes and vanishes and the Princess falls and lies still. Vane resolves not to restore her again and realizes that he has been inside her brain. Recovering, the Princess leads Vane into the court to the central tree at whose top grows a blossom that can heal her scratches. She asks Vane sweetly to climb and, knowing better, he does. At the top he is drenched and nearly drowned. A voice croaks, "I told you so!"

In Chapter 28, "I Am Silenced," Raven looks down on Vane in a fountain in his own garden, reminds him of his advice to do nothing for anyone whom Vane distrusts, and tells him to change clothes. In the Library, Raven talks about the difficulty of knowing that one has learned nothing and done less. He admits that Vane desires to be of use,



helping the precious Little Ones, but goes about it wrongly—thanks to not accepting his and his wife's invitation. The wise know when not to go away and fools may learn to go back at once. Raven agrees that the Little Ones are far ahead of him, but reproaches him for giving them the example of a coward and operating under the preposterous human idea that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Had Vane given the Little Ones water, they would have put the Giants in their place. Vane has speculated rather than helped.

Chapters 25-28 Analysis

In Chapter 25, "The Princess," Vane penetrates the palace unchallenged and demands that the Princess receive "the one who knows the white leech." The servants dread delivering that cryptic message to the violent Princess until they see the pacing white leopard hug Vane. Vane finds the Princess matured and angry and wonders how obvious beauty and suspected evil can coexist. He is rightly suspicious of her hospitality, for wondrous wine knock him out. He describes the taste by alluding to Hybla and Hymettus, areas in Greece and Sicily famed in antiquity for their honey. Before he passes out, the Princess talks philosophically about their differing natures: as an earthling, Vane finds old age a horror, while she desires it, because only by age does one near perfection. She claims to have lived thousands of earth years without reaching ripeness and adds that the "everlasting" cannot be measured. Raven has in the past (and will again in the future) talk about the pace of learning. He has not yet dealt with the phenomenon of such old age, for many of his "clients" are quite young.

The Princess turns to the question of why she has treated Vane with such cruelty and ingratitude. Many men have sought to enslave her through love, but none has succeeded. Vane has passed by finding her with no ulterior reason. Recall he had begged her to accept him as her slave. The Princess next declares that Vane will need fully-perfected love to understand the circumstances in which he originally finds her, but offers preliminary information. Setting out alone to visit part of her dominions occupied by "savage dwarf-people," she comes to the hot stream where, unbeknownst to her, an evil woman has cast a spell. The Princess proudly notes that the woman is less powerful than she, but somehow the spell works and, feeling invaded by cold that she is sure will pass, she drags herself into the woods. From then until she rescues Vane from the "horrible wound," everything is a blank. She intends to repay Vane with power, beauty, and love. The chapter ends abruptly by raising questions: Vane notices that she wears a large glove on her left hand but refrains from asking about it, and when she is frightened by a loud roar, he knows that the white leopard has roared for him. Why would her owner take fright and gesture "mystically?"

As Chapter 26, "A Battle Royal," opens, Vane before passing out concludes that the Little Ones are in danger, thanks to him. He feels as though he is floating and suffers sharp pains and paralysis. He sees the Princess, looking satisfied as she wipes a streak of red from her mouth, but still makes no connection with the bites or long white snake-like creatures that he has seen shortly after she vanishes. This is annoyingly obtuse. He also believes that he must stay near the Princess or be devoured by her leopards,



although one has become his virtual pet. He observes that only with his eyes open is he physically safe, but fails to remark on the symbolism of his quest as an opening of eyes or to realize how very frequently he falls asleep and awakens at a crucial moment.

Vane gropes his way to the black hall to find a silent assembly shrouded in blackness and catches vague glimpses of skeleton shapes that he recognizes. They are moving as "free shadow-wills" in a kaleidoscope of dance-like movement. As in the Evil Wood and the dance hall, no one notices him. Returning to the vestibule, Vane sees in rapid succession—and describes rather unclearly—a silent struggle between a human and a beast in the leopard's cage, the normally caged leopard leaving and reappearing in her cage, motionless, as when Vane first sees her, and, outside, a leopard joining the Shadow for a walk into the city.

Vane, of course, follows them to the stairs where he had lain the night before. He hears a cry and the crushed body of the woman who had taken him in falls to the street. The night before another body had fallen across the street, but he had mentioned it only in passing, taking no action, just before he had been admitted to the house. Vane prepares to rescue a baby from the spotted leopard's jaws, but the smaller white leopard seizes it by the throat, leaving Vane only to pick up the baby and watch the savage but silent fight. With a wail the spotted leopard turns into the Princess, bearing on her throat the bite marks of her opponent, manages a few human steps, turns back into a leopard, and gallops away. The white leopard steals the baby from Vane and also races away.

In describing the Princess' various transformations, Vane alludes to Hecate's gait. Given his frequent allusions to Shakespeare, Vane may have in mind the leader of the three witches in *Macbeth*, who in turn is drawn from one of the most mysterious of the ancient Greek gods. It is apt that the Princess so succinctly and subtly be associated with the ghost world and the souls of the dead. They are partying in her palace at the moment. Hecate is a powerful goddess and generally benevolent, which also fits the Princess, who works to keep her dominions prosperous and free of evil outside influences, and is associated with moonlight and black magic. While Hecate wanders about with dogs, the Princess has her leopards. There have been no mention of crossroads, which are where the Greeks had sacrificed dogs to Hecate.

In Chapter 27, "The Silent Fountain," Vane follows the spotted leopard back to the palace, arriving to find the Princess, free of bite wounds but complaining of being scratched while evicting the evil Cat-Woman. Knowing this is a lie that adheres to the legend of Cat-Woman, Vane nevertheless feels pity and reproaches himself for not helping her in the fight. Once again in the black hall, Vane recognizes the woman who has twice appeared when animated skeletons are involved—fighting or dancing—and then is surprised to see her vanish when Raven in human form approaches her. Raven's reappearance is quite unexpected.

Seeing the Princess also swoon, Vane wisely resolves not to restore her again, but when she asks him to climb a tree to fetch a cure for her scratches, he clammers up. Before asking sweetly, the Princess mentions that she could herself turn into a dove to



fetch it but sees in the leaves a snake deadly only to doves. She also insists that he wear strips of her embroidered garment as shoes, still being barefoot from his earlier bath. As he climbs, he feels very cold and unsteady, although for a change the wind characteristic of Bulika is absent. At the top he is mysteriously drenched and has the sensation of being tossed and drowning. A voice croaks, "I told you so!" in his ear. Clearly, Raven has not come merely for a cameo appearance.

Chapter 28, "I Am Silenced," puts Vane and Raven back in the garden of the Vane estate. The stormy seas of the treetop are replaced by a stone basin built by Vane's father. Raven reminds Vane about advising him not to do anything for anyone whom Vane distrusts. Vane counters that he cannot remember everything that he is told. They adjourn to the Library for serious talk. Raven lectures about needing to learn what things mean by what use one makes of them, and how most people need a lifetime to know that they have learned nothing—and done even less. Raven seems more willing to give Vane credit than in earlier encounters. He admits that Vane at least desires to be of use. Raven then explains how he has gone about helping the precious Little Ones in precisely the wrong manner and demands that he fess up to it: had Vane accepted the invitation to sleep among the dead, he would have known the right way. Instead, Vane has gone a long distance, gotten nowhere, and has failed to find his life's work. His only achievement is to know what danger the Little Ones are in. Raven is a tough pedagogue, particularly considering he speaks chiefly in riddles.

Declaring that the wise know when not to go away and fools may learn to go back at once (a variant on his lecture about always being home), Raven counters Vane's objection that he could not teach the Little Ones anything because they are more advanced than he. This seems a new outlook, although Vane has admired their openness. Raven asks why Vane had not helped them remove psychological hindrances to growing and, more immediately, why he had not dug them a well after 1) assuming that they are in need of water and 2) having several times hearing underground water. As Vane clutches for excuses, Raven calls him a coward. When Vane claims to have feared destroying the Little One's innocence, Raven asks what had suggested this fear and declares that the idea "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" is a pet falsehood of the three-dimensional world. Humans falsely assume that knowledge is a great thing and brings greatness. Raven claims that, had Vane given the Little Ones water, they themselves would have put the Giants in their place. Vane has speculated rather than helping. As the title says, Vane is silenced by his scathing analysis of his quest. Except that it would short-circuit the story, one wonders why Raven could not have helped Vane see these practical matters in advance.



Chapters 29-32

Chapters 29-32 Summary

In Chapter 29 Raven reads from the mutilated book verses about a believing man, a withering queen, and two worlds strangely one yet wide apart. A huge, white cat interrupts. Raven addresses it as Lilith and recount their married life, which ends when she abandons him and their one child and becomes the Queen of Hell. God sends him a good, wife, Eve. Vane understands that Raven is Adam. The cat first turns into a spotted leopard and then into the Princess. When Raven/Adam orders her to kneel or be destroyed, she dwindles into a gray cat, whom he locks in the closet. Raven/Adam in Chapter 30, proposes to stand guard while Vane returns to Eve's cottage to spend the night. No longer daring to cross the stream to reach the Little Ones, Lilith is using Vane's house as a bypass through the world of three dimensions. When Vane pleads to go instead to the Little Ones, Raven/Adam lectures him about how not understanding is the first step to growing capable of understanding. As the leopard breaks the heavy door, they rush to the garret, but she lunges through the mirror ahead of them. The white leopard moves to intercept the spotted one.

As Chapter 31 opens, Vane sees no reason for sleep—particularly with the dead—but follows Raven/Adam in silence and despair. As the moon rises, Raven summons a magnificent horse, with which Vane instantly bonds. When Vane wants to follow the leopard, Raven/Adam says that running from the dead is Vane's most foolish act, and breaking his word now is a crime. Raven/Adam gives in, however, predicting another failure and flies away. Vane goes unchallenged by monsters, across the hills, and into the river channels, riding like a king, rejoicing, until the moon drops, wolves howl, and fear fills Vane's heart. When darkness comes, the horse falls dead. Chapter 32 continues: Vane is saved from the wolves by a pack of cats, who behave as pets when he runs in the right direction, but otherwise attack him. At Orchard Valley, the Giants again enslave Vane, but the Little Ones drive them off. Reaching their forest, the Little Ones show how they have adapted to life in the trees, safe from the Giants

Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Chapter 29, "The Persian Cat," opens with Vane agreeing that he failed be the Little One's wise neighbor and absorbing Raven's final analysis: the Little Ones would be better off enslaved and beaten, and will be worse off, now that Vane has formed a relationship with the Princess. When Vane claims to hate her, Rave declares that if he has not told her that, then he has been unfaithful to her as well. One wonders why Vane opens his mouth around Raven.

The demagoguery finished, the novel makes a major turn. Raven observes that they have been followed indoors by a Persian cat and brings from the closet the mutilated book that has so often been glimpsed in the novel. It is restored, the missing half having



been protruding into Raven's other-world library. Raven reads long passages from a poem that recap what Vane has been experiencing and point to what he will experience in the near future. He skips about rather than reading straight through. At intervals, he is interrupted by cat wails that initially bother only Vane but eventually get Raven's attention as well. As he listens, Vane shows no indication of recognizing the personae of Lona or the Princess/Lilith. Use of the rather clumsy poetic form suggests that heightening the aura of mystery is the author's primary intent. When a huge, white cat lunges for the chimney, Raven casually blocks her with the book and continues reciting from memory about two worlds separate yet one and the undefiled queen having scraped "misery's endless moan." The cat goes into agony and lies still. Raven draws unspecified symbols on the floor, shelves the book, and addresses the cat solemnly as Lilith.

Raven's first-person version of the Hebrew legend of Lilith convinces Vane that Raven is the first-created human found in Genesis 1-2. Because it so enriches the character, it should be noted that over centuries Jewish folklore (based on earlier Mesopotamian legends) seeks to reconcile the two Creation stories by positing that the female created like Adam from dust (Gen. 1) is Lilith, his original partner. When Adam demands that she be on the bottom during intercourse, Lilith leaves the Garden of Eden, and God forms submissive Eve from one of Adam's ribs (as in Gen. 2).

Lilith in this novel conforms to many details of Jewish folklore and departs in others. She is most like the Hebrew character in menacing newborn children, and in enjoying eternal life, having fled Eden before Adam sins, is condemned to mortality, and is driven out. The novel's Adam claims that Lilith is sexually promiscuous like the legendary figure, but as Princess she insists that she has refused to lie with anyone who seeks to control her, until Vane comes along. In the novel there is no mention of her being hunted by three angels on God's behalf and she turns into a leopard rather than into a winged dragon. Lilith does take on the form of a snake as in legend. Finally, she is at home in the desert.

Raven/Adam claims that Lilith leaves when he refuses to worship her, flees to an army of aliens, and enslaves the Shadow, who makes her Queen of Hell, the vilest of God's creatures, consuming and killing, but unable to destroy. This appears to be quite self-serving. Furthermore, she fears and hates her only child and wants to kill it. When Raven/Adam mentions God sending him another—good—wife, the Persian cat screeches and grows into a spotted leopard. Unfazed, Raven/Adam talks about beautiful Eve and the hated daughter who cannot be touched, and of how even Lilith will be saved through bearing children (a reference to the post-Fall "curse" in Gen. 3). Lilith has caused Adam despair, bearing miserable races, while Eve repents and is beautiful. The world groans as a "nursery of our Father's children." Vane reflects on Raven/Adam as both the Old and New man and proclaims Eve not only the Mother of All, but also the "Lady of the New Jerusalem." Had George MacDonald wished introduce a measure of Christianity into the novel, this would have been the place. Glimpses of the New Jerusalem from the Book of Revelation appear at the end of the novel, de-Christianized and purged of apocalypse and judgment. Instead, through Raven/Adam MacDonald depicts God as desiring to restore everyone ("universalism"), allowing death adequately



to purge all souls. Even Lilith can be saved—and the painful process of purging is detailed going forward.

The Leopard's spots flicker and she transmutes into the Princess/Lilith, looking like a goddess and, in perfect character with legends, declaring herself beautiful and immortal. Inverting a reference to Exodus 3, Raven declares that a bush that burns is consumed and asks about the one spot that remains on Lilith's right hand. He declares that it will not leave until it eats into her heart and drains her of beauty. That hand becomes the focus of attention in Princess/Lilith's repentance, a process that makes her shudder when Raven/Adam first tenderly brings it up. Her face darkens, she howls without hope and turns back into the spotted leopard. Raven/Adam tells her that the Universe is good and, though evil may battle for ages, it cannot win. Lilith must repent and become again an Angel of God. Free will and determinism lie at the crux of the coming battle. Lilith rises in human form and refuses, threatening to drink his child's blood. Raven/Adam grows enormous and with a terrible voice, orders her to kneel or be destroyed. She dwindles into a gray cat, whom Raven/Adam locks in the closet before resuming the form of a tearful and worn-out librarian.

Raven/Adam in Chapter 30, "Adam Explains," warns that they must be on guard in every way, for Lilith is using this house as a conduit for getting back into the other world to kill the child that threatens her immortality. Jarringly, he adds that this is the task of every generation: to bring an end to the preceding. Lilith has pursued the child since birth, a child who now leads a colony of children. Eve had wished to mother the child, but had been (for untold reasons) unfit to train her, so she had gone into the wilderness to play with angels. Finding a baby in the woods, the child feels maternal and adopts many, watching and serving them. She forgets her origins and Adam and Eve lose track of her. Lona's identity is thus prettily settled.

Raven/Adam announces that he will remain behind, guarding the Lilith in the closet, while Vane hurries to Eve's cottage. Vane, of course, rebels, wanting to go to the Little Ones, but Raven/Adam insists that he obey Eve. Note that Vane still requires answers before obeying and Raven/Adam curtly repeats the old lesson: he cannot understand all phenomena but must use things that he sees and not be surprised by them. In fact, no one understands anything, and not understanding is the first step to being capable of understanding some day. Raven/Adam's goal is not to help Vane to understand but to believe.

Adam/Raven gets no time to say why it is so urgent that Vane spend the night in his hostelry, for the leopard breaks out of the closet and, of course, bounds upstairs and through the mirror ahead of them. Vane still feels sorry for Lilith's wound but Raven/Adam sees it as black and white (dualistic) issue: either the wound eats into her heart and annihilates her, or she chooses to be good and slays evil. For the first time, Raven/Adam admits that Lilith controls much magic, an aspect of the Hebrew legends that has been played down. Vane is in a panic but is told to trust that Mara will do her part and to keep his promise: to sleep at the house and be ready for action. There is a reference to "kicking against the goad," a phrase twice used in the Christian Book of



Acts to described St. Paul's conversion. Cattle who kick at annoying prods (goats) from herders get injured more often and eventually see that it is foolish to bother.

Chapter 31, "The Sexton's Old Horse," shows Vane less bright than cattle. He sees no reason for sleep—particularly with the dead—at a crucial time like this. Beautiful fireflies and butterflies and a rising moon create the mood for a magnificent horse to arrive to carry Vane in the morning. The two instantly bond, Vane noting in an aside that he is in general a horse-lover, spending money on nothing but horses and never selling one, but he scolds himself for coveting this one. Raven allows him to ride it to the cottage, but Vane more than ever wants to follow the leopard and serve the Little Ones. On foot, he has no opportunity. Raven/Adam indignantly warns of "mischief" if he yields to temptation. When Vane admits past mistakes, Raven/Adam calls him foolish, and declares that he has been dead so long that he refuses to die. He warns Vane that breaking his word is a crime. Vane seeks to justify himself, begging to fulfill his duty rather than shirking, even if he must perish. Raven/Adam gives in, angrily, predicting another failure but hoping for humility, and flies away. The horse is reluctant to follow the leopard, but gradually speeds up until Vane feels like he is flying, riding like a king, rejoicing. Suddenly, the moon drops, wolves begin to howl, the horse falls dead, and Vane weeps. This is the most dramatic lunar effect to date.

Chapter 32, "The Lovers And The Bags," continues the story: a pack of cats saves Vane from the wolves, only to pounce on him and force him to run to his destination. They alternate between pet-like and ferocious. They stop to sleep in Giant territory, and Vane is again taken prisoner and mistreated. When the Little Ones arrive next day, they ride miniature horses, elephants, and bears, laughing loudly, and falling upon the Giants violently. The Little Ones are now speaking, and MacDonald attempts rather unsuccessfully to put precious baby-talk in their mouths. Vane is told that the Little Ones are now "fly-creatures" rather than "run-creatures." Once they begin to nest like birds, they become birds.



Chapters 33-36

Chapters 33-36 Summary

By Chapter 33, Vane is sure that Lona is Adam and Lilith's daughter. She tells him about all that has happened since he leaves: persecution by the Giants, learning to nest like birds, and allying with the animals to expel the Giants, trained by the woman and baby whom Vane meets on his way to Bulika. Two huge leopards the night before last, Whitey driving off Spotty and staying nearby. When the Giants next appear, the children stone them and the elephants trample them, and they are never seen again. In Chapter 34 the woman of Bulika pushes for an attack on the city. Vane is sure that Lona will ascend the throne but carefully conceals her mother's identity. In his pep talk, he explains that the Little Ones originate in Bulika and reuniting with their mothers is worth fighting for.

In Chapter 35 the army crosses the plain and enter the city fearfully, Vane realizing that he has brought them here through obstinacy. They reach the heart of the city before being detected and continue unopposed. The white leopard bounds up and helps rescue a boy who goes in search of his mother. When another boy is killed, Lona declares that there are no mothers worth delivering and they rejoin the army. In Chapter 36 she wants to leave, but Vane worries about disheartening and further endangering the Little Ones. Realizing that the prophecy is about to be fulfilled, the Princess waits in the black hall before a mirror, too preoccupied to notice the Shadow. In the morning a dozen boys enter with Vane and Lona. Lona runs to the Princess, who shivers at being called Mother, and dashes Lona to the marble floor. Carrying Lona's body out, Vane feels lost but is sure that she will find him. The army carries the Princess, bound hand and foot.

Chapters 33-36 Analysis

Chapter 33, "Lona's Narrative," opens with the Little Ones (suddenly called "Lovers" without indication of why the switch is made from their usual self-designation to the Princess' derisive version) taking to their nests and Vane sure that Lona is the daughter of Adam and Lilith. As Lona summarizes how the Little Ones have taken to the treetops in self defense. Vane realizes that he had been in love with Lona before departing and is now astonished at her practical wisdom, observing that this might be a function of his own inability to be childlike.

A key to the Little Ones' strategy is allying with the animals, whom they have always treated as brothers and sisters—horses, elephants, bears, and butterflies (after these "repent" of being caterpillars). The woman whom Vane meets on his way to Bulika proves crucial. Seeing her carrying a baby, the Little Ones attack her as a kidnapper, but she hands over the baby and becomes to them another good Giant, like Vane. Wanting to eliminate the Princess in order to return from exile, she proposes to besiege the city and begins training the Little Ones, who are brave but unfit for warfare. She



makes rock-throwing a skill-building game and they spend their mornings collecting stones for self-defense from the treetops during the day. Lona waits proudly for them to show their ability.

Lona recalls a recent fight between two huge leopards. Seeing both bloodied, the children innocently climb down to pet and comfort them. The white leopard attacks, but they climb to safety, and the fight resumes. "Whitey" drives "Spotty" off and stays near Lona's tree. Vane claims to know both animals and says that Whitey is protecting children against hateful Spotty. He supposes that Whitey remains nearby. As often happens in the novel, sleep intervenes. It ends when the Giants attack en masse, but are quickly defeated by the children's hail of stones and a final trampling by the miniature elephants. By morning the Giants have fled to the other end of the Orchard Valley, and are seen no more. One major threat has been removed and the Little Ones are reluctant to start a new campaign.

In Chapter 34, "Preparation," as the woman of Bulika pushes for a siege, Vane continues to withhold the secret about Lona's mother in a most determined way, which seems to run counter to his vision of her ascending the throne and taking him as consort and minister. Vane yields to her commands, however, putting off finding water, happy at least to have tried to do as Raven/Adam recommends. The woman of Bulika argues that the Princess' magic cannot prevail against so many children and their animal allies and insists that none be left behind, in order to make a maximum impression on the mothers in the city. Vane tries in vain to convince Lona at least to ride without babies in her own arms. Vane's pre-battle pep talk stresses that they are fighting to be reunited with their mothers. When he reminds them of their training and the risk of injury and death, all declare their readiness. Lona declares her readiness to find her mother, even if her mother kills her. Without knowing who her mother is, this prophetic utterance seems odd.

Chapter 35, "The Little Ones in Bulika," sees the army setting out across the grassy plain, planning to be inside the gates before dawn after several days. Pages are given over to planning and provisioning, and Vane worries about the high level of joyous noise. When they finally see the city, the Little Ones are said to know fear for the first time in their lives (overlooking their frequent reactions to the Giants previously) but continue trusting Lona and Vane. Without further explanation, Vane as present-time narrator sees that brings them through "untrusting, unfaithful obstinacy." The last chapter shows him spending life waiting for death to reunite him with Lona, so the confession may be simply an admission that he causes the tragedy he is about to narrate.

Lona rides at Vane's side, childlike, watchful, and unafraid. Bulika is empty at dawn, as during Vane's previous visit, and they reach the heart of the city undetected. Seeing children, the women emerge first but slink fearfully from them until a five-year-old sees a woman he figures is his mother. He hugs her but is pulled off by some man, and the Little Ones attack. Lona is said to be troubled by how ugly the women are. This fits the larger theme of the ugliness of evil, but seems off-key in this context. What had she been expecting? There is a sudden shift: two boys have wandered off searching for their



mothers and the woman whom they have befriended has disappeared with her baby. Just then the white leopard bounds up, terrifying the Little Ones, but little Odu shows that she is tame. Lona and Vane go looking for the lost boys. The leopard rescues one and drags out the murderer of the second. Lona is comforted by the knowledge that the victim would have grown into a bad Giant, so death is a blessing. She then concludes that there are no mothers worth delivering in this horrible city. To keep the plot moving forward, Vane worries about what the Princess is plotting as they lie down to sleep.

Chapter 36, "Mother And Daughter," finds Lona wanting to leave Bulika but Vane fearing that this would dishearten and the Little Ones and put them in greater danger from the Princess. Vane sees it necessary for mother and daughter to meet in order for Lona's loveliness to capture Lilith's heart. He explains his plan to Lona without revealing the relationship. His obsession with secrecy seems increasingly counterproductive. Vane declares that he is ready to cut off Lilith's closed hand if necessary, suggesting the eventual outcome.

Meanwhile, the Princess has been watching, realizing that the prophecy is about to be fulfilled. A mood of desperation is painted in the black hall, where she is too preoccupied to see the Shadow that has attended her walks when she takes the form of the spotted leopard. The Princess perceives in her mirror that her beauty, like courage and will, have left her. Sunrise reveals a spot on her side and she sees the Shadow glide away. The narrative slips to Lona's perspective. Seeing a glorious woman dramatically highlighted in darkness, Lona runs to her and addresses her as "mother." The Princess shivers, hearing the word, picks Lona up, and dashes her to the marble floor. The Princess gives Vane her sweetest smile but he cannot attack her while holding his dying Lona. Carrying Lona's body out, Vane feels lost, forgetting the Little Ones, the Princess, the jeering faces, and the white leopard that follows. The army carries the Princess, bound hand and foot, as they leave Bulika. One wonders why Lona takes the woman in the palace as her mother if the truth has been kept from her. Note that Lona finds her mother still beautiful.

Chapter 37, "The Shadow," stars one of the Little Ones, Odu. It begins with them mourning Lona and trying unsuccessfully to revive her. The intensity is greater than when Vane earlier works to revive the then-mysterious woman. Odu declares that he has seen the Princess before, fighting against the white leopard; he knows her by her hate-filled eyes. Wickedness has made her ugly. Several children talk about a Shadow that has frightened them. It has no thickness, is pure blackness, and grows as it appears until it vanishes—just before fall on and into them. Odu recalls feeling unlike himself, wanting to tear up his dear friend, and being tempted to kill himself to escape the blackness. The Shadow, however, reads his thoughts and laughs horribly. The inability of evil to end its own miserable existence becomes a major theme going forward, and the shadow remains a constant but impotent reference in the story. Looking back, Odu knows that he should not have run away. When Vane asks what becomes of the Shadow, no one knows. As the moon rises, the white leopard circles the sleeping camp and three times—a magic number—passes protectively between the Princess and the Little Ones. Vane sleeps beside Lona.



In Chapter 38, "To The House Of Bitterness," Vane wishes that he had obeyed Raven/Adam, who will have to deal with Lilith's repentance and decide whether to accept Lona's body. They stop at the Ivy-House to tie up loose ends, as it were. The children are welcomed by the dancing ghosts to join in and make friends with the couple whom Vane earlier had found quarreling. Common deprivation has brought them together and new life has begun. The old couples wishes that they had known that the forest holds such nice people. A skeleton-princess again enters, frightening the children, but the Princess remains where Vane has left her. He seems disappointed that Lilith does not fit this role. Lilith's sucking Vane's blood is also revisited. She has refused to eat and he fears that she will die of hunger before reaching judgment, so Vane lets her bite his arm. How he escapes he does not know.

Vane continues on to the House of Bitterness with a reduced guard, consisting of the sweetest, merriest Little Ones. Familiar scenery is revisited, uneventfully. However, one night while the moon is eclipsed, a wind blows up, and Lilith, with hands tied, attacks Vane with her teeth, temporarily paralyzing him. When the moon clears, Lilith's face is gaunt and smeared with blood. She demands to know where they are going, moans that Adam will kill her, and demands her daughter. Denied this, she falls down like a log and remains thus until brought to judgment.

As they near the House of Bitterness, a Little One warns that here lives the dreaded, faceless Cat-Woman. Vane admonishes him not to believe Giants' lies about good Lady Mara; whom, when they will see her goodness, they will learn to love—as they have the animals. Vane explains that a friend is one who gives what another needs—and says darkly that the Princess may need a terrible scratching. He adds that if one laughs in Fear's face, Fear flees. Mara greets them, rejoicing that after thousands of years she will have her revenge on Lilith. Mara first carries Lona into the house, then Lilith, untied. Mara tells the Little Ones that no one may be with the Princess during her ordeals, for she loves no one, even God. The great Shadow will be near but can offer her no comfort. When Odu begs Mara not to make the Princess bleed, Mara reveals to him alone her face and he is filled with inexplicable bliss. This is not immediately developed.

In Chapter 39, "That Night," Vane reports that the children are plagued by nightmares alternating with terrible awakenings. The house is filled with silent wind, rising waters that reach the garret, the air is full of scratching cats and, far away, the howl of the great-grandmother cat fills the desert. Vane feels things that he cannot see or understand. Also sensing cloudy forms, the white leopard cowers in a corner, while the Princess never moves. Tension is thus high when a silvery creature crawls into the fireplace and Vane, though claiming as he often does, to be unafraid, senses that judgment is upon him (rather, it would seem, than on Lilith).

At midnight, Mara unveils herself: beautiful, "heart-and-soul sad," but not unhappy. She calmly touches Lilith's head and breaths on her, inviting her to turn away from wickedness. This is a common part of the ritual of baptism in many Christian denominations. On the third invitation, Lilith refuses, insisting that she must be herself. They enter upon the ageless debate over free will and determinism. MacDonald through narrator Vane goes out of his way not to name God, using placeholders like "Another"



and "that Power." It seems less the piety of the Orthodox Jew, who will not utter the Name, than a vagueness about who this Being is.

At any rate, the argument opens. Mara insists that Lilith is currently not herself, but must be restored and must make amends. Mara suggests that the Shadow is controlling Lilith's true Self, and then shifts abruptly to accusing her of killing her daughter. Lilith brags of killing thousands and having the right to kill her own daughter, but Mara insists that they both belong to "Another" who has made her and can compel her to see what she has done to herself. Lilith defies "that Power" to take away her freedom and charges that Mara, as that Power's slave, may torture her but cannot force her do anything against her will. Mara insists that Light will remove her from the Shadow and redeem her, but Lilith declares that she hates the Light and sends Mara away. Rejecting the title "slave," Mara says that only creatures that rebel against their Creator are slaves. The proof is their inability to cease to exist. When Lilith remains defiant, Mara says that she must free her from slavery to all of the slaves that she has made. Mara is sorry that Lilith must suffer. Failing to sense the atmosphere of the Medieval Inquisition is impossible.

Mara needs not personally apply instruments of torture to Lilith, for roaring flames possess the house and the worm-like thing seen earlier emerges, white-hot, the essence of fire, and slithers beneath Lilith's robe. Soon, Lilith's dry skin begins to flow away. Vane wants to kill the serpent, but Mara, the "Mother of Sorrow," intervenes. There is no serpent, only a black spot where it enters Lilith's "secret chamber" (heart). Mara comments that Lilith's writhing shows that she is seeing herself. Vane vividly describes the reaction to torture, meant to show Lilith who she is. They wait for her to know the "Light of Life."

When Mara again invites Lilith to change her way, Lilith displays bravado, rejoicing that "Another" has made her so horrible and caused such misery. She claims that Mara is mocking her by telling her to "remake" herself. She demands to be killed. Mara tells her gently that had the Creator not made her, Lilith would not be able to hate him. In fact, Lilith has made herself into what she now is, but the Creator can remake her—not change her, but restore her. When Lilith refuses, a wind blows through the house, water ripples, and it grows cold. Something silent and unseen lifts Lilith to the bench and the tortures resume. Eventually, Lilith tells her tale about Adam and various vices. Mara tells Vane that Lilith is shedding bitter tears of self-loathing, a first step towards tears of repentance and a return to her father's forgiving arms. A reference is made to Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. "Prodigal" means extravagant, wasteful, but thanks to the moral of the story is used to mean lost-and-returned. That is the sense here.

When Lilith maintains that she has taken only what she has a right to, Vane senses a "horrible Nothingness, a Negation positive" seizing Mara, who for an instant is "Death Absolute." In its face, Lilith recoils and begs to live. At that point, perfect calm comes over Lilith and she stares at her reflection in the mirror: restored, resplendent beauty, as God intends. She faints. In the morning, Lilith submits to Mara as conqueror and asks to go into the wilderness and bewail herself. She also asks Mara to unclench the paw-like



hand that she cannot control, but Mara says that is Lilith's own task. She must also keep from undoing what has been done. Submission is a weak form of adherence, falling short of faith.

Claiming to know Lilith better than Lilith knows herself (a risky but common assertion by would-be spiritual advisers), Mara tells her she is an unteachable fool. Lilith understandably turns defiant but overdoes it by reclaiming the titles of Queen of Hell and Mistress of the Worlds. Vane sees this as proof that Lilith has seen only glimpses of "life in death," and he feels the light darken within himself, leaving him conscious only of having been alive. He and Mara feel Lilith's misery, being in outer darkness alone, and moralize that only God is able properly to hate and understand evil (notably in that order). Mara hides her face while mourning Lilith's inability to unmake herself, thus ending up "dead life." Mara sees that God could not have created Lilith clenched "existent Nothing" as her inheritance.

God's responsibility to allowing evil is called theodicy. Before it can be debated, Lilith suddenly reverses herself, submits, and asks for help opening her hand. Mara agrees to take Lilith to Raven/Adam, whom Lilith has most wronged, in order for her to receive forgiveness. Lilith wants release into true death, but Mara says that Lilith's fate is to "die out of death into Life," the premier riddle in the novel. Lilith weeps as Mara hugs and kisses her and is soothed by the delicious coming of spring. The simile is used of Lilith's heart having been a desert, which now drinks of the reviving, gentle rain.



Chapter 37-40

Chapter 37-40 Summary

In Chapter 37 the Little Ones sob over Lona and look impossibly haggard. Odu declares that he has seen the Princess before, fighting the white leopard, and several mention a frightening Shadow that has no thickness, grows as it appears, vanishes—and then suddenly is upon and inside them. Odu testifies about wanting to tear up his friend Sozo, contemplating suicide to escape from the blackness, and feeling better only outside the gate. He knows that he should not have run away. Vane holds dead Lona and proclaims his love, but receives no response, and sleeps beside her as the moon rises, as the white leopard circles camp and passes between Lilith and the Little Ones.

In Chapter 38 Vane carries Lona's body to her father or, if he will not accept her, into the desert. Vane wishes that he had obeyed Raven/Adam. They stop at the Ivy-House to see the dancing company. The children are welcomed to join in. Just before dawn the skeleton-princess enters, frightening the children, but oddly Lilith remains where Vane has left her. Later they see two skeletons, now walking at ease together. The army reaches the nest village and Vane takes only a dozen Little Ones on into the desert. One night, when the moon is eclipsed, Lilith, hands tied, attacks Vane with her teeth. He struggles free. She demands to know where they are going, moans that Adam will kill her, and demands her daughter. Denied this, she falls down like a log. Mara first carries Lona into the house, then Lilith, whom she unties, and readies to repent through torture. The great Shadow will be near but can offer her no comfort. When Odu begs Mara not to make Lilith bleed, Mara reveals to him her face and he is filled with bliss. She feeds the Little Ones and tucks them into bed.

As Chapter 39 opens, the Little Ones are plagued by nightmares, the house fills with silent wind, waters rise to the garret, and invisible scratching cats respond to the distant howl of the great-grandmother cat in the desert. Downstairs Vane and the white leopard feel disturbed, while Lilith never moves. At midnight, Mara unveils herself: beautiful, "heart-and-soul sad," but not unhappy, as she invites Lilith to turn away from wickedness. Lilith insists, dismisses the idea of restoration or that the Shadow is hiding her true Lilith brags of killing thousands and having the right to kill her daughter, but Mara insists that both belong to "Another," who can compel her to see what she has done to herself. Lilith calls Mara that Power's slave, but Mara insists that only creatures who rebel against their Creator are slaves—for they cannot on their own cease to exist. When Lilith remains defiant, Mara is sorry that she must suffer.

Roaring flames possess the house, the worm-like thing emerges, white-hot, slithers beneath Lilith's robe. Soon, and burrows into Lilith's heart. Lilith's writhing shows that she is far away, learning who she is. When Mara again invites Lilith to change her way, Lilith claims that Mara is mocking her in telling her to remake herself and wants to be killed. Mara comments gently that the Creator restore but not change her. Lilith refuses, and the tortures resume. As Lilith tells her version of Adam's tale, Mara tells



Vane that Lilith's bitter tears of self-loathing are a step towards tears of repentance, but Lilith still maintains that she has acted within her rights. Vane senses Mara becoming for an instant "Death Absolute," and when Lilith recoils and begs to live, she sees herself in the mirror: restored to beauty and faints.

In the morning, Lilith submits and asks to go into the wilderness to bewail herself. She also asks Mara to unclench her uncontrollable hand but that is Lilith's task. This turns Lilith defiant again and returns to outer darkness, causing Mara to mourning Lilith's ending as "dead life." Suddenly, however, Lilith again submits and asks for help opening her hand so she can gain release into true death, but Mara says that Lilith's fate is to "die out of death into Life," having her father's forgiveness. The women hug and kiss her. Outside, Spring flows and Lilith's dry heart drinks it in as she weeps.

Chapter 40 takes the band to Adam's house, after Mara explains to the Little Ones Lilith's tears and the rain, and Lilith's need for help in freeing from her hand something that is not hers. They cross the channels easily, but a "hellish nest" of phantom monsters tries to seize Lilith. The moon seems ready to drop in hopelessness. It disappears while the leopard is fighting a horrible snake monster and falls like "shapeless jelly." Mara mourns the leopard's loss but knows that it will soon "rise with the righteous." Reaching Adam's house, Mara asks Eve to help Lilith be restored to the inheritance of God's children, but Lilith insists that she does not know God and wants to leave. When Adam asks her to be dead like himself, to lay down her burdens and shame, Lilith follows him into the cottage, while Eve carries Lona's body in behind them.

Entering the cold death chamber, Lilith is terrified of the great Shadow, but Adam assures her that it can hurt no one here. Lilith will sleep peacefully with her daughter. Lilith begs Eve to have Adam kill her; she would do it herself if she could open her hand. Since only it can kill her until she opens her hand, Lilith asks to go to the Shadow. Eve claims that the Shadow's head is still under her heel. Profound sleep fills the place. Vane sees his father more profoundly peaceful and the woman beside him looking younger. The Little Ones scatter to find the couches on which their mothers sleep, helping to warm their bodies. When Luva's mother refuses her, Eve lifts her into her own couch. Three other boys adopt Vane's father and his companion. Lona lies between them.

Adam has prepared a place beside Lona for Lilith, who shudders at the cold. Adam says from experience that she will find comfort. He has slept long and is awake, both dead and alive. Lilith will dream unknown dreams. She and the Shadow will be the last to awaken, on the "morning of the universe." Mara tells Lilith that she will not sleep until she opens her hand. Adam warns of danger but uses the sword given to him by an angel at the gate to amputate the hand. Lilith moans and falls asleep. The Little Ones around Lilith wake up and laugh at how beautiful she has become. The body of the white leopard is found and laid across Lilith's feet.



Chapter 37-40 Analysis

In Chapter 40, "The Chamber of Death," Mara explains to the Little Ones both Lilith's tears and the rain, which they have never before seen, adds that before they can take Lilith home, they must take her to the biggest room in the world, filled with lovely dreams, and that Lilith needs help opening her hand because it is shut on something that does not belong to her. Mara's alternate donning and removing of her veil seems unmotivated and confusing. Vane puzzlingly expresses surprise that Mara and the white leopard accompany them on the journey.

The band crosses the channels easily, but a "hellish nest" of monsters tries to seize Lilith while ignoring the children, who are blind to the danger. The leopard tries to defend the party, but finds that the monsters are phantoms and is slain when the moon disappears in hopelessness. Mara mourns the good animal's loss but piously reminds herself that it will soon "rise with the righteous." All of creation, and not just humanity, are involved in the universalism that fills the novel. They continue on to Adam's house and receive a merry welcome. Lilith refuses to let Adam carry her inside. She is ashamed but defiant and he is severe in his welcome to her.

The spousal reunion is tense. Lilith does not respond to Adam's claim to have waited a long time for her. Mara knowingly announces to radiant Eve that her children are no longer in danger. Eve is cautious when Mara asks her to open to Lilith the "mirror of the Law of Liberty" and to open her hand, in order that God may restore her to the inheritance of his children. Lilith again waffles, insisting that she does not know God and wanting to leave. She has cried out to Death in her agony, to escape God and Adam. Adam with typical enigma insists that Life dwells in Death and that both are Lilith's friends. He wants her to be dead like himself and to lay down her burdens and shame. Defiantly but feebly, Lilith walks into the cottage and refuses from Eve the food that would help her die.

Adam leads Lilith through the door of death into the coldness and assures her that the great Shadow can hurt no one here. Eve lovingly assures Lilith that she has hurt no child and that her daughter, Lona, is enjoying a lovely sleep. Lilith begs Eve to have Adam kill her, claiming that she would kill herself if she could open her hand. She insists that only the Shadow can kill her until she opens her hand. She longs for the Shadow, unable to understand all that she has been told. In a reference to Genesis 3, Eve claims that the Shadow's head remains under her heel.

Profound sleep fills the place. Vane notes that his father looks more profoundly peaceful than earlier and his woman companion appears younger. The Little Ones talk quietly about this curious, cold place, and while longing for their nests, happily scatter to find the couches on which their mothers sleep; those who do not find mothers or are rejected by them adopt others. Lona lies down between Vane's father and his companion, and Adam assigns the place beside her for Lilith. He says from experience that she will find comfort in the cold. He assures Lona that no sleeper can be disturbed



here and promises unknown dreams. The Shadow's hour to sleep has also come and he and Lilith will be the last to awaken, on the "morning of the universe."

Mara tells Lilith that she cannot sleep until she opens her hand and tries to help. When this fails, Adam produces the sword that an angel gives him after leaving the gate of Eden (Genesis 3), and at Lilith's request amputates the hand. As it falls into her lap, she moans and falls asleep, and the wound requires no dressing because a lovely new hand begins growing. The telling of this vivid image of regeneration is told at a rare staccato pace. The Little Ones sleeping around Lilith wake up, laughing at how beautiful Lilith has become. Having long feared the Princess, they want to sleep with her and kiss her when she awakens. Returning to the cottage, Vane is sorry that he has not been offered a place to sleep. The body of the white leopard is located and laid across Lilith's feet.



Chapters 41-44

Chapters 41-44 Summary

In Chapter 41 Vane confesses his unworthiness to sleep in the chamber, given his earlier cowardice and self-confidence, but asks to lie beside Lona. First, he must go into the desert, guided by the sound of underground water, and bury Lilith's hand. He sets out immediately into the cold night. At the river bed near Mara's cottage, Vane is approached by figures wanting the hand: one that looks like Lilith, some armed men, and one who claims to be Mara, sent by Adam. The Shadow next bars Vane's way, but Vane pushes through the Shadow into the spring air of dawn. Mara's cottage stands open and bread and water await, but Vane enters the desert and at the spot where waters is loudest, digs a hole, completes the burial, and falls asleep.

Chapter 42 finds Vane awakening in a swelling river and the grave turned to quicksand. He returns to Mara's cottage, longing to see her before he goes to sleep. He meets an old man who claims to have been turned away from the Chamber of Death. Vane advises him to go to the cottage, eat and drink, and wait for the advice of the wise Lady of Sorrow. Vane walks on to the abode of the monsters, who are silent, and on to the Chamber of Death, guided by Eve's candle in the window. He feels cut off from the living dead and without helpers. When Lona comes to the coffin door in a sleepwalk, Vane carries her back to her couch and lies down, happy as a bridegroom.

Adam asks why Vane has not waited, explaining that Lona has never left her couch except in a dream. Vane must eat before sleeping. Eve sings a sweet, soaring—and somehow familiar—song about coming home. Adam tells Vane after he has apologized for all he has done, that they have always known that he would return. Every creature must lie down to receive liberty rather than slavery. True time begins with this sleep. Vane's father and mother (the woman with the healing hand) will awaken at their time, before Vane's time. Vane will not know his mother at first for she is growing ever younger. Vane feels the cold but does not suffer. He forgets everything.

In Chapter 43 Vane welcomes the cold, for it helps him grow less conscious of himself and more conscious of bliss that comes from existing—with no need for prayer. He exists because a Will dwells inside his will. Dreams crowd in and last for centuries or millennia in seven dimensions and ten senses. He dreams in cycles, waiting for redemption. Suddenly, without upsetting his bliss, Vane sees everything that he has done wrong in life and humbly makes amends. Love possesses Vane and becomes his life. Vane is plunged into solid blackness, but his heart is at peace, imagining a new creation.

Vane sits up and sees that the dead are gone. Staggering out, he finds the monsters' den a still lake and the desert alive with streams and pools. He takes pride in having helped free this water. Adam, large and grand in a white robe, tells Vane that he is still in the chamber dreaming a false dream. When he is fully dead, only truth will fill



his dreams. Adam joins Vane's hand to Lona's, who is asleep, dreaming that Vane is awake. Adam talks about loving the truth and seeing things of which Vane cannot even dream. First, Vane faces three heavy trials. Before Vane can ask how this can be, he is left alone in dreams. Vane uses boyhood tricks to discontinue a bad dream and finds himself in his own garret, despairing at being cut off from Lona. He wants to flee back to holy sleep and accept Adam's rule, but cannot on his own get the mirror to open and spends days and nights waiting for Raven to arrive. He wonders if Lona is anything but a dream and vows to ask God to help him find her as soon as he dies.

Chapter 44 picks up during the fourth night, when Vane seems to sleep and awakens in the Chamber of Death. He leaps for joy seeing Lona, grown up and radiant, waiting. Adam, Eve, and Mara join them. Eve tells Vane that he is barely awake and the heavenly joy has only begun. Adam embraces both and pats the leopard's head. Having died, they must live with all their might and grow stronger. Pure life has no weakness. Adam warns that the Shadow is hovering, looking for one of his own, but once a person dies, he or she is beyond the Shadow's power. While in his dreary house, Vane has missed his parents' rising and must find them. Lona kisses Lilith's body, helping her toward heaven.

At sunrise Adam and Eve become the angels of the resurrection and Mara becomes Mary Magdalene. The great Shadow departs, wretched because he has no substance. A golden cock crows for the first time in millions of years and will continue until the dawn of the day eternal. The Little Ones cry for the golden cock to crow again. When Odu pets the sleeping leopard, trying to wake it, Mara says that it is waiting for Lilith to finish forgetting and awaken.

Chapters 41-44 Analysis

In Chapter 41, "I Am Sent," Vane confesses his unworthiness to sleep in the chamber, given his earlier cowardice and self-reliance, but asks to lie beside Lona. Adam and Eve first send him on a Grail-like mission: to go into the desert, guided by the sound of underground water, and bury Lilith's hand. Nothing is to touch the hand before burial, nor is Vane to lay it down. Vane sets out immediately into the cold, dark night, but the ground is mysteriously luminous to show him the way. Near Mara's cottage, Vane is confronted by a series of figures wanting the hand. He is most tempted by the one who claims to be Mara, but sees the counterfeit in her eyes. The Shadow also tries to bar Vane's way, but he passes through a repulsive haze and breathes in fresh spring air. Vane finds the spot where waters is loudest, and digs a hole. Water oozes between the fingers as he completes the burial and falls asleep. As will soon be seen, Vane gains self-worth from completing this mission.

Chapter 42, "I Sleep The Sleep," finds Vane awakening in a swelling river that ultimately floods the Orchard Valley, drowns the monsters, and turns Evil Wood into an island. Near Mara's cottage Vane encounters an old man bemoaning having been turned away from the Chamber of Death. Knowing that only those who do not long to live are turned away, Vane tells him to go inside and await the advice of the wise Lady of Sorrow. The



man grows angry at Vane's riddles—a notable reversal of roles and sign of Vane's growing understanding.

It is again cold and bitter out when Vane reaches the Chamber of Death, feeling cut off from everyone. Lona appears to greet him, making Vane rejoice, but Adam assures him that she has been dream-walking. As at Vane's first visit, he is told that he must eat before sleeping. until he has eaten. When he apologizes for all he has done, Vane is told that Adam and Eve have known that he will return. Adam reiterates that every creature must lie down, for they are made for liberty, not slavery. True time begins with this sleep and concepts like early and late—even years—no longer apply. Vane learns that his father and mother (the woman with the wounded hand) will awaken before Vane's time comes and Vane will not recognize her immediately for she is growing ever younger and will seek her own father and brother before her husband and son. Adam says this as just another fact, with no explanation of how post-death life is organized. Vane feels the cold but does not suffer and then forgets everything.

Chapter 43, "The Dreams That Came," observes Vain growing blessed and comforted as sorrow is swallowed up in approaching life. The colder it gets, the more he welcomes it, for it downplays his self-consciousness. He says pointedly that the process requires no prayer. Vane exists because a Will dwells in his will. Vane experiences various dreams, including being Adam waiting for God to give him the breath of life. He dreams for centuries or millennia in seven dimensions and ten senses. He dreams in cycles, waiting for redemption. Suddenly, without troubling his bliss, Vane sees everything wrong that he has done in life and humbly makes suitable amends with everyone. Love possesses Vane and becomes his life. Then, as suddenly, he is plunged into solid blackness where only ghosts of light flicker. Still, his heart is at peace as he imagines a new creation. The language describing these visions is particularly powerful.

Vane sits up, looks around the death chamber, sees that the dead are gone, and fears that he has only been dreaming. He again feels friendless. He staggers out into an empty cottage and runs to look at the places he has been. The monster's den is a clear, still lake and the desert flows with streams. Realizing that he has helped free this water, Vane sees that his life has not been a failure. Fortified, he is about to search for his dead, but Adam, dressed in a grand white robe, lets him down: he is still in the chamber dreaming a false dream. When he is fully dead, however, only truth will fill his dreams. Adam joins Vane's hand to Lona's, who is asleep dreaming that Vane is awake. Adam observes that some people accept life as a "phantasm" and applauds Vane's love of truth. Soon Vane's doubt will end and he will see things of which now he cannot even dream. Adam quotes St. Paul's "seeing in a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13) and claims that this gives Vane a right to doubt; when he sees Truth face-to-face, however, and tries to obey, he will live with Truth forever.

Adam alerts Vane to three more trials ahead, during which Vane must recall what he has thus far seen. Truth is hidden and revealed in "Seeming." Before Vane can ask how this can be, Adam is gone and Vane resumes dreaming about wandering, wearying, and resuming his trip. When he wants to discontinue a dream, he looks for somewhere tall from which to fall, a trick that always works when he is a child. Instead, Vane finds



himself in the garret of his home and despairs at being cut off from Lona. Vane wants to flee this dream to return to holy sleep and to confess to Adam and accept his rule. Vane describes his frustration in waiting on Raven to appear as bird or librarian. The mirror refuses to open. Everything is dreary and silent. Vane laments losing Lona and wonders if she is anything but a dream. He vows to ask God to help him find her, as soon as he dies.

Chapter 44, "The Waking," picks up during the fourth night, when Vane seems to sleep and awakens in the Chamber of Death. He leaps for joy, finding Lona waiting, her eyes radiant and her body, filled with the light of resurrection, no longer that of a child. Vane holds her and knows that he lives. Adam, Eve, and Mara join them, smiling. Eve tells him that he is barely awake and assures him that the heavenly joy has only begun. Having died, they must live with all their might and grow stronger. Pure life has no weakness. Those who refuse to die die constantly. In an odd aside, Vane recognizes Mara as the "voice crying in the wilderness" before John the Baptist and the shepherd whose wolves hunt the wandering sheep. The first reference is to Matthew 3, quoting Isaiah 40, for Christians a major messianic text. The second is curious, having the shepherd using wolves to manage his sheep rather than as predators against whom he must defend. Jesus regularly talks about the "Good Shepherd." Vane believes that Mara will be glad when her work ends.

Adam warns that the Shadow is hovering, looking for one of his own, but once a person dies, he or she is beyond the Shadow's power. Vane is sad that his father and mother's couches are empty, but Adam says they have kissed him before leaving and are waiting for him. Vane had been in his dreary three-dimension house at the time. Being out-of-place and/or ill-prepared is a frequent theme in the Christian gospels. Vane faces another quest: to find his parents. When Lona kisses Lilith's body, Adam tells her that this will draw Lilith toward heaven—a Christian concept not yet mentioned in this cosmology. Adam then talks about the sun in poetic and mythological terms, proclaiming its light a "crescendo of harmonies." They offer their morning thanksgiving to heaven. Adam and Eve transform into the angels of the resurrection and Mara becomes Mary Magdalene, the first witness in Matthew 27 to Jesus' resurrection. This sudden concentration of Christian themes seems odd but enriches the impression of newness and fullness of life.

The great Shadow departs, wretched because he has no substance, and a golden cock crows for the first time in millions of years. It is destined to continue until the dawn of the "day eternal." It proclaims defiance at death and the dark and it sings of hope. In the kind of parallelism that marks Hebrew poetry, emphasizing the previous statement,, a black bat flies away and the Little Ones cry for the golden cock to crow again. The Little Ones embrace Lona and Odu pets the sleeping leopard, trying to wake it. Mara tells them that the leopard is waiting for Lilith to awaken once she has finished the process of forgetting. Odu must let them sleep, for they are happy. Odu wipes his tears as though he were used to weeping. Back in the cottage, Eve makes clear that they should depart, without farewell. This caesura is jolting.



Chapters 45-47

Chapters 45-47 Summary

In Chapter 45 Vane contemplates his new-found oneness with all of creation, noticing every detail. His consciousness keeps expanding and Life becomes "a cosmic holiday." Bliss sweeps aside "life-in-death," and everything inspires thanksgiving. The monsters' hollow holds placid water. The rising sun reminds Vane of God's care for his children and the need to be vigilant. The desert has become grassy plains and forests. In Chapter 46 the company heads to a massive solitary mountain, above which swirl clouds, split by lightning that reveals radiance. A rainbow spans it and a great angel waits to greet them. Vane and Lona climb toward the throne of the Ancient of Days, but a warm hand pushes Vane through a little door into his own library. In Chapter 47 Vane contemplates all that he has learned and wonders if he is still in the chamber of death, not yet ripe to wake up, or has awakened too soon. He longs for Lona. He never returns to the mirror but sometimes hears loved ones whispering wordlessly. Dim memories come to him in daylight, but he never dreams. He knows without doubt that he will wake into that other life.

Chapters 45-47 Analysis

Chapter 45, "The Journey Home," is throughout a study in rapture. Vane and Lona are "two joy-fires," walking to his Father's home. Vane delights in new-found oneness with all of creation. He notices every detail, inwardly illumined like Moses' burning bush in the desert (referring again to Exodus 3). Vane finds no words adequate to describe this experience, any more than the confusing things he sees early in the novel. He ascribes seeing anew to the fact that "Another" exists, and jumps from description to description: microcosm and macrocosm are "atoned"—literally put "at one." Consciousness expands as new doors open (recall that doors early in the novel frustrate and frighten Vane). Life becomes "a cosmic holiday." Life and truth are one. Bliss sweeps aside "life-in-death." Everything inspires thanksgiving.

Reaching the hollow where the monsters had lived, they see beneath the placid water heaps of immobile, ghoulish flesh. Vane mentions "Maelstrom," the Scandinavian term for a powerful whirlpool, first used in English literature by Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne. It is the clearest reference to secular literature aside from Shakespeare in the novel. Vane next returns to describing the rising sun as God's ship sent aloft every day as a coal on the Father's "never-ending sacrifice to his children." It sends out bow-waves of crimson and gold and reminds Vane of God's care for his children and the need to be vigilant when God comes in person, whether it be in a day or in 10,000 years. This "glorious resurrection-morning" is a more perfect summer day than anyone who has not died can conceive. Vane walks a new earth beneath a new heaven—the same as before, but with their essences revealed. These intertwined Christian references culminate in the next chapter.



Chapter 46, "The City," opens with Little Ones announcing that they see from the tallest tree a massive solitary mountain with its top knocked off. If it is a city, it is unlike Bulika. Like Mount Sinai, the city is covered with dark, writhing clouds like whirlpools, split by silent lightning. The Little Ones first perceive in the flashes visions: a beautiful man, angelic faces, and the human radiance of lost mothers. A fourth flash produces every kind of creatures in glorious colors, recalling some of Vane's earliest experiences in the other-world. Vane recognizes his beloved childhood white pony. As in the story of the Flood, a great rainbow appears. They trace the river to its source at the mountain peak. It flows through the main street and exits by the gate and stairs. This is a carefully detailed lift from Revelation 22, omitting only the Tree of Life. The Little Ones without hesitation run into the city, taking heaven by surprise. A great angel in flashing armor leads a company of greeters. The stones are alive; nothing is dead or "mere." Vane and Lona climb with difficulty to the throne of the "Ancient of Days." Before they arrive, a warm hand pushes Vane through a little door, depositing him in his own library, where a large book is just closing.

In Chapter 47, "The 'Endless Ending,'" Vane contemplates all he has learned. He has not found Lona, but Mara is with him, still teaching. Vane wonders if he is still in the chamber of death, not yet ripe to wake up, or if he has awakened too soon. If he has dreamed the waking, the true waking will be better yet. In moments of doubt, Vane asks if God could create things as lovely as he has dreamed. Hope, however, suggests images from music and nature whereby Vane can see that God is the ultimate source. Humans dream and desire in vain until good makes it come true.

Vane never returns to the mirror. Sometimes his books seem to flicker as though another world is trying to break through, as sometimes happens with parts of nature. Sometimes he hears loved ones whispering wordlessly. He cannot tell if these originate in his brain or come from outside, but he lets them come and go. Strange dim memories sometimes come to Vane in daylight, but he never dreams. He knows, without doubt, that he will wake into that other life. Asleep and awake, he waits. He ends with a quotation from Novalis, a German Romantic poet obsessed with themes of death and mysticism not unlike Vane's own: "Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one."



Characters

Mr. Vane

The novel's protagonist and narrator, Mr. Vane (given name never mentioned), is orphaned in early childhood, grows up in unnamed boarding schools, and has recently finished Oxford University as the novel opens. He has specialized in the physical sciences and prefers the pioneers of science—Ptolemy, Dante, Francis and Roger Bacon, and Robert Boyle—to men more his contemporaries, e.g., Charles Darwin or James Clerk Maxwell. Vane is most interested in coordinating science with the metaphysical. Vane shows familiarity with the writings of Shakespeare and sufficient familiarity with the Judeo-Christian scriptures to be able to quote or paraphrase the most famous parts. He evidences no formal religion.

Having completed his education, Vane returns to take possession of the family house which, like his family line, dates back centuries. He spends most of his time in the great room of the library, which is dominated by a portrait of his great grandfather, Sir Upward. The collection has spread into adjacent rooms and fills every cubbyhole. As an only child, Vane had no call to explore in play the upper floors before being removed.

Observing books disappear and reappear in the library, accompanied by the movement of a ghostly form, Vane learns the legend of a long-ago family librarian, said to have disappeared mysteriously and ever after to have haunted the house. One day, Vane follows the Ghost of Mr. Raven through the unknown upper regions of the house into the garret and follows him through an antique mirror into another world. Perplexed, he attaches himself to a raven (bird type) who frustratingly talks in riddles. Raven sends Vane back home rather shockingly from his first visit, and Vane nearly sells his haunted house. His horror passes, and when Raven next appears in bird form, Vane readily follows him but resents being treated confused by metaphysical riddles. Told that he must sleep with the dead in Raven's vast enclosed cemetery, Vane flees and undergoes a series of adventures involving cruel Giants, delightful Little Ones, and a variety of fearsome beasts. He rescues a young woman who at first appears to be dead and turns out to be the feared Princess of Bulika—and also Raven's first wife Lilith, because Raven turns out to be Adam, the first-created human.

Vane returns to this other-world, yearning to resolve matters with the Little Ones, particularly Lona, whom he loves, and finds that they have learned to protect themselves.. Thus for a second time he willfully disobeys Vane/Adam. Helping to lead a siege of Bulika, Vane loses Lona, who is killed by her mother, Lilith. He sadly takes the body and Lilith to Adam. While Lona sleeps, Vane carries out a final task, which results in the desert being filled with water and the various monsters destroyed. He feels no longer a loser. Finally, Vane lies down at Lona's side, learns many things about himself and the universe, and wakes up again in his earthly home. He spends the rest of his life wondering if it has all been a dream and waiting to die and ask God to reunite him with Lona.



Mr. Raven / Adam

A complex character, Mr. Raven first appears to the narrator, Mr. Vane, as a shadowy, slender stooping old man in a shabby long, dark dress coat, shiny from wear, the Ghost of Raven appears removing select volumes from the Vanes library and replacing them later. Vane learns the local legend, that Raven serves as the family librarian back in the days of of "Sir Upward," and villagers consider Raven "the devil himself," encouraging the reading of unwholesome titles. Raven and Sir Upward both suddenly disappear, but Raven goes on revisiting the world for hundreds of years.

When Vane follows the shadowy figure to the garret of his home and follows him through a mirror into another world, Raven first appears to him in bird form. Vane later jokes about "Homo to Corvus" transformations, *Corvus corax* being the designation for a species whose black plumage resembles Raven's formal dress when in human form. As a bird, he speaks human words with a distinctive raven croak. Raven delivers riddles about knowing oneself and finding oneself at home in order to be able to come and go at will and declares Vane's world "half-baked, childish, and self-satisfied." Although enamored of metaphysics, Vane finds Raven frustrating. Raven talks have visiting the planet Uranus, and his cousin in Paradise—the bird who fails to return to Noah. Currently Raven in human form serves as sexton at a certain cemetery. There, Vane first observes Raven's keen, friendly blue eyes that have often wept, his pale face with thin lips and a quivering smile that shows humor, love, and pity.

Late in the novel, Raven reveals himself as Adam, the first-created human and describes how his first wife, Lilith, abandons him in the Garden of Eden, and becomes the Queen of Hell. God then forms from one of Adam's ribs his current, submissive wife, Eve. Together they tend the great contained space in which all creatures must sleep in death in order to inherit true and everlasting life. When Lilith kills her and Adam's only child, Lona, Adam gives Lilith the choice of repenting and cuts off her offending hand with the sword that originally drives him and Eve from Eden. He lays them together to await their day of rising. After Vane returns to this world, he waits for Raven/Adam to fetch him again to be with Lona, his love, but he never comes.

Lady Mara / Cat-Woman

Another complex character, "Cat-Woman" is first introduced as a figure of legendary awe among inhabitants of the strange other world that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane visits. The Little Ones call her this when they rescue Vane from Giants, adding that she is ugly and scratches. She is the Queen of the Bad Giants who will kill the Little Ones if she ever finds them. In the desert, Vane meets Cat-Woman face-to-face—although she carefully keeps him from ever seeing her face. She claims to have protected Vane while he slept from dangerous creatures and offers to take him to safety. When he mentions the Little Ones' stories, she declares that when they (whom she calls "Lovers") are thirsty enough, they will have water, and with water they will grow. It flows still beneath them. Twice Vane has heard water and its voice has healed him both times.



Cat-Woman's voice resembles that of the woman in the Chamber of Death but causes Vane no fear.

Arriving at her cottage Cat-Woman greets Vane by name and says that her name is Mara. Some take her for Lot's wife, others for Rachel, but she is neither. She points him to a comfortable upstairs bed. When animal noises awaken him, he sees Mara petting a panther and sending it off toward the moon. In the morning, Mara sends Vane on his way, remarking that no one may spend more than one night in her home. She also claims that a new messenger has sprung from Vane's head overnight while he sleeps but claims that ownership requires will. Vane delights that Mara is a metaphysician.

Late in the novel, Mara returns in the role of Inquisitor, when Vane and the Little Ones bring to her cottage Lilith, late the Princess of Bulika, and in fact Adam's first wife in the Garden of Eden. Mara takes upon herself the dread task of getting Lilith to repent of her evil ways and return to God. She regrets having to use torture. Vane later dreams of Mara serving as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" and Mary Magdalene. He believes that she will be glad when her various roles are finished. Vane also uses Mara as an object lesson in prejudice, warning the Little Ones not to believe the Giants' rumors about a savage Cat-Woman. They must call her Lady Mara and accept her kindness if they are to continue on their quest with Vane. Mara first reveals her beautiful face to little Odu, who begs Mara not to make Lilith bleed during torture. When Mara unwraps her face, Odu is filled with bliss. Mara afterward alternates between veiled and unveiled appearance.

The Princess of Bulika / Dead Woman / Lilith

Yet another complex character, the Princess of Bulika is introduced by Mara a princess from narrator Mr. Vane's world who is tyrannizes Bulika, a city near Mara's cottage in the strange world that Vane visits. Mara refers Vane to the Bulika library to learn how the Little Ones, when they grow thirsty enough, will have water, and with water they will grow.

Continuing his travels, Vane comes upon a naked, emaciated, but fresh corpse, which he cannot abandon. He takes on the "awful duty" of determining if she is truly dead before burying her. He sees signs of movement whenever he squeezes grapes into her mouth. He bathes her body in a hot, flowing river, hoping to redeem her from death, and spends seven days and nights in a warm cave watching for signs of life. Vane notices that he is bitten on the throat every third night and that the woman is growing plumper. After claiming to have rescued Vane from a six-foot-long white leech, the woman shows indignation rather than gratitude and stalks away. Vane follows, begging to be her slave. She transforms into a terrible, long, white "thing" and streaks towards Bulika. Vane follows her, hears her views on old age and perfection, and how Vane alone of all the men who have sought to love has passed the test by having no ulterior motives. She will repay him with her power, beauty, and love. Vane notices a suspicious glove on her left hand but is "tempted to love a lie."



The Princess' true identity as Lilith, the first wife of the first-created human, Adam, comes out in Vane's three-dimensional world. After her living-death, Lilith cannot get at the Little Ones directly, to kill her only daughter, Lona, who threatens her immortality. She must sneak in through the Vane's mirror. Adam—previously Mr. Raven—tells how Lilith becomes the Queen of Hell and invites her to repent. This makes her furious. She first takes the form of a Persian cat, and then a spotted leopard to jump through the mirror and race to Bulika. There, she awaits her doom.

Lilith kills Lona but is taken bound to Mara's cottage, where she undergoes a fearful Inquisition. Lilith insists on being free, while Mara insists that she is enslaved to evil and must return to the God who created her and wants to free her. Lilith waffles repeatedly, but is sufficiently responsive to be taken before fearful Adam, who wants her to be saved. Lilith asks Adam to amputate her frozen hand so she can begin the process of forgetting that allows restorative sleep. When Vane buries the severed hand in the desert, the subsurface waters of this world begin to flow.

Lona

The leader of the so called "Little Ones," inhabitants of an area outside the Evil Wood in the other-world that narrator Mr. Vane visits, Lona is a tall, grave girl, aged 14 when they meet, and destined, Vane believes, to be pretty as an adult. She can provide only scanty, anecdotal background on the Little Ones and the Giants. Later in the novel it is revealed that Lona is the only daughter of Adam, the first-created human, and Lilith, his first wife. Lilith leaves the Garden of Eden to become the Queen of Hell and, as Princess of Bulika in the alternate world, watches ceaselessly for a chance to kill Lona.

Vane returns to the other-world knowing this background and finds Lona beautiful, thoughtful, and gloriously mature. He realizes that he is in love with her before he leaves and is comforted seeing her again. Together, they lead a siege of Bulika to liberate it from its evil princess. Vane withholds from Lona the truth of her parentage, but Lona recognizes the Princess as her mother. Lilith throws Lona down, killing her. Vane and the Little Ones mourn Lona and transport her to her father's Chamber of Death to await the resurrection. Several times Lona dreams Vane into her reality. Returned to the three-dimensional world just as he and Lona are to see the Ancient of Days face-to-face, Vane longs to be reunited some day with his beloved, who is left behind.

Blunty

A child inhabiting an area outside the Evil Wood in the strange other-world that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane visits, Blunty is an example of a "Little One" becoming greedy and eating the Giants' enormous apples. This turns him big, bad, and ugly. The other Little Ones have tried to prevent it and convince Vane that it is no use.



The Butler

A faithful Vanes family servant all of his life, the unnamed Butler at first claims to know nothing of books disappearing and reappearing in the Library, but then relates what he has heard early on in his service but has never see—and has been scrupulous about not discussing: a ghost. He had hoped that the ghost had come to an end and been forgotten.

The Fugitive Mother

An unnamed woman whom protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane meets in Bulika, she tells about the reigning Princess' fear of being killed by a child and use of leopards to drink children's blood. She also talks of intense xenophobia and a class structure where poverty is taxed to benefit the rich. Although the penalties for harboring outsiders are harsh, the woman agrees to take in Vane, but later abandons him on her front steps. Later in the novel they meet again, among the "Little Ones" who find her and her baby and adopt both, assuming that the mother is a good giant like Vane. She trains the Little Ones to throw rocks as weapons and tries to organize a siege of Bulika so she can return to her husband.

The Little Ones / Lovers and the Giants / Bags

Inhabitants of Orchard Valley, an area outside the Evil Wood, in the strange other-world that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane visits, the Giants are a race of approximately Vane's height, but hateful and vindictive, who kill the "Little Ones" without conscience. One Little One suggests that the Giants are not much alive, and their disgusting food supports the idea. Two of the Giants subdue Vane and take him captive in their vile village, where males and females can scarcely be distinguished. While Vane is enslaved, the Little Ones feed and entertain him. He never gets to know the Giants, who are unfriendly but "too stupid to invent cruelties" beyond kicking—and Vane stops that by catching a Giant's foot and throwing him down.

By contrast, The Little Ones are gleeful and "winsome," proclaiming Vane a friendly giant and suggesting that his coming has been foretold. Vane finds that the Little Ones know little but are very wise and capable of learning anything. They flock to him as he sleeps on the bare ground, forming a warm "nest of children," whom he comes to love. Their leader, 14-year-old Lona, tells how whenever they hear—whence they do not know—about babies being left in the woods, they find and raise them. The Little Ones have lived in the woods from the time of creation, do not count themselves, do not know their ages, and fear growing into terrible Giants.

Vane learns from Mara, whom the Little Ones wrongly fear as the ugly, scratching "Cat-Woman" and Queen of the Bad Giants, that the Little Ones (whom she calls "Lovers") will, when thirsty enough, have water, and with water will grow without transforming into Giants (also known, with no explanation, as "Bags"). Twice Vane has heard water and



its voice has healed him both times. Later in the novel, Raven/Adam castigates Vane for not drilling for water to liberate them. Vane finds, in a later visit, that they have taken to living in the tree tops to avoid the Giants, ally with the animals, learn to defend themselves by throwing rocks, and eventually exile the Giants from their valley. They train for battle and invade Bulika, where Lona dies. The mourning Little Ones follow her to the Chamber of Death, where they happily lie down with their mothers or surrogates whom they choose.

Luva and Tumbledown

"Little Ones" in the other-world that narrator Mr. Vane visits, Luva and Tumbledown try to feed grapes to the ferocious Princess/Lilith, simply because they are good-natured. They serve as an object lesson in not prejudging and categorizing others.

Odu and Sozo

"Little Ones" in the other-world that narrator Mr. Vane visits, Odu emerges as a secondary leader after Lona. After the invasion of Bulika, Odu describes the effects of being covered and penetrated by "The Shadow": he feels unlike himself, wants to tear up his friend Sozo, feels that he must kill himself to get out of the black, but is thwarted by the taunting Shadow. Odu afterward knows that he should not have run away. At the House of Bitterness, Odu begs Mara not to make the captured Princess of Bulika (Lilith) bleed while being tortured. Mara reveals to Odu alone her face and he is filled with bliss. Odu gets upset and weeps when Lilith is not yet ready to wake up.

The Old Married Couple

Animated skeletons whom protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane comes upon in the remains of a decrepit carriage along with the skeletons of its horses and their driver, the unnamed old couple emerge unsteadily and commence fighting about each other's behavior. She remembers only a little happiness during their first week of marriage. He believes that they are divorced but is puzzled why they are together in the carriage. They agree only that each is a fool to have married the other and wonder what sort of an "other world" they are in. The woman reattaches the man's lower leg, but imperfectly, and walks away, ignoring his pleas for further help. He swears as his knee again gives way and demands that she tie it properly. She gives in, after he swears not to touch her, and snaps the bones in his good leg when he breaks his promise. Raven tells Vane that they were once a handsome couple at court. The male had grown tired of her beauty and spent her money, but now as skeletons they can rely only one on another. Their mutual repugnance will grow into love and they will love each other into being. When Vane visits again, he finds that this is so, and the couple enjoys making friends with the "Little Ones" who accompany him.



Mrs. Raven / Eve

A woman first met emerging from a coffin-like door in the Sexton's Cottage in the strange other-world that narrator Mr. Vane visits, Mrs. Raven is all-white with large, dark, luminous eyes that flash with stars—eyes that come directly for God's own, perfect and continually creative. Vane is speechless as she greets him. She is angry, however, that he wants to go home to his own world before discovering what he needs to in her world. She insists that he learn that the day begins with sleep. Late in the novel it is revealed that Mrs. Raven is Eve, the Mother of All created by God from Adam's rib in the Garden of Eden. She has repented for her sins and been forgiven.

The Shadow

A nebulous being that narrator Mr. Vane sees several times in the city of Bulika in the strange other-world that he visits, the Shadow is two-dimensional, opaque, absorbing its own shadow, and invariably accompanied by an enormous white female leopard that when away from him is friendly towards Vane, but snarls and bites in her master's company. When the "Little Ones" invade Bulika, the Shadow falls upon them, causing Odu to hate his best friend and contemplate suicide in order to escape. The Shadow, however, prevents him. Later, the Princess/Lilith alternately yearns for the Shadow to come and claim her and fears that it will do so. Adam, the first-created human and Lilith's original husband in the Garden of Eden, assures her that the Shadow is powerless to touch those in the Chamber of Death and will one day lie down to be transformed back to good, and with Lona will be the last to rise.

Sir Upward Vane

A distant ancestor of narrator Mr. Vane, Sir Upward is a great reader who takes to reading unwholesome titles, encouraged by his librarian, Mr. Raven. Sir Upward and Vane both suddenly and mysteriously disappear centuries before the novel. Raven becomes a ghost, traveling between worlds while Sir Upward rests in Raven's other-world House of the Dead, awaiting resurrection.

Sir Ralph Vane

The narrator's grandfather, Sir Ralph denies that the Vane house has a ghost, for he has never seen it and believes only what he sees. Sir Ralph threatens to fire anyone who mentions it. One footman is dismissed. When Mr. Vane the narrator visits the other-world, he learns that Sir Ralph is not in the House of the Dead but fighting nightly in the Evil Wood.



Objects/Places

The Bad Borrow

A section of land that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane crosses searching for his way home from the strange other-world, the Bad Borrow is filled with fearsome but beautiful creatures that, whenever they emerge, are frightened back underground by the moon. Vane does not understand at the time that had he remained until daylight, he would have been horribly killed. This burrowing behavior also occurs on the planet Uranus, Vane is told by Mr. Raven, who claims to have visited.

Bulika

A city set in grassy lands in the other-world that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane visits, Bulika is inhabited by simple farmers and shepherds until they offer hospitality to an evil princess older than the world, who comes from Vane's three-dimensional world with a "terrible history." She teaches the people to mine gems for sale and to give up working the land. She dries up the Land of Waters, leaving the valley to the Little Ones (whom she calls "Lovers") dry. The princess holds the people in constant terror, trying to prevent them from multiplying. The people have grown vain and do not realize that they are self-deceived.

The Palace of Bulika seems of Indian origin by its architecture, with lofty towers at the corners and a huge central dome. It is entered by a low arch into a large, elliptical hall. Vane visits twice, first following the Princess' trail, not knowing her rank when he rescues her from death, and again at the head of an invading army of Little Ones and animals. The men of Bulika fear both and the ugly women do not seem to recognize their own children, whom they have been leaving in the woods to prevent their murder by the Princess. The Little Ones' leader, Lona, Vane's beloved, is killed by her mother, the Princess, and is borne sorrowfully away.

The Desert

The arid, lifeless, soundless region beyond the hills where narrator Mr. Vane first meets the woman with a spot and the clump of trees where he begins his misadventures, the desert serves to measure the state of this strange other-world. Late in the novel, Vane is sent on a sacred mission to bury Lilith's severed hand, and from it water begins to flow, utterly transforming the region into grasslands and forests. Vane finds satisfaction in having helped.



The Evil Wood

First mentioned as the place where narrator Mr. Vane's grandfather is "fighting the dead"—as opposed to sleeping tranquilly in Raven's cemetery like Vane's other ancestors, the Evil Wood presents itself one night during his travels through the strange other-world. Skeletons and ghosts in full armor fight one another mercilessly, urged on by a woman with a spot that causes her shame. This is the first of Vane's many experiences with animated skeletons.

The Garret and Mirror

The uppermost part of protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane's ancestral home, which he inherits after finishing Oxford University, the garret is reached by mysterious corridors and stairways that Vane never explores as a boy before being sent to boarding schools. In the center of the garret is a structure that houses an old-fashioned mirror upon which perches an unsettling statue of an eagle. The mirror is a door to another world as Vane discovers, like his father before him.

The House of Bitterness

A cottage, much like the Sexton's but with more solid foundations and thicker walls, the House of Bitterness is owned by the so-called Cat-Woman, whose real name is Mara. She finds narrator Mr. Vane in the desert, protects him from predators, and invites him home to safety for a single night; no one may spend more than one consecutive night in her home. He sleeps upstairs in a bed that makes him think of Mr. Raven's death-couches, which he has fled. In the morning, Vane sets out on his misadventures but returns to the House of Bitterness during his next visit to the strange other-world. He bears the body of his beloved Lona, who has been slain by her mother Lilith. In the House of Bitterness, Mara supervises terrible tortures meant to convince Lilith to return to her original Self in communion with God.

The Ivy-House

The Ivy House is a place upon which narrator Mr. Vane stumbles upon during his wanderings. Having crossed the desert to a forest that resembles a great silent, empty church, and lamenting his former life of self-willed loneliness, Vane finds a great house overgrown with ivy and roses inside and out. In the great hall at midnight, richly costumed men and women begin old-fashioned dancing. For faces they have repulsive skulls with lidless eyes. He wonders if they are dreaming this and how they view themselves. A woman interrupts, scornfully proclaiming, "Dead things, I live!" As the dancing resumes, they stare at a shadow on the her cheek until she flees. A warm wind strips the skeletons of decaying flesh and clothes. Vane resumes his journey, meeting nearby in the forest the animated skeletons of a crotchety old married couple in their carriage.



The Library

The focus of narrator Mr. Vane's attention in his ancestral home, the Library dates from before the invention of printing. Over time, it has absorbed most of the ground floor of the mansion. All of the walls are covered floor-to-ceiling with books, except where family portraits hang. One small section near the rarer books has an ornamental "book-backs only" display, where a particular volume attracts Vane's attention. Only the binding half is there; most of the pages have been smoothly removed and no sense can be made of the fragments. Vane notices that books mysteriously disappear, learns the legend of Mr. Vane, the family librarian long ago, and follows his ghost one day to the garret, where his adventures in another world begin. Briefly returned to the world of three dimensions, Vane listens to Raven, who transforms between human and bird form, read poetry from the special volume, and then learns that Raven is actually Adam, the first-created human. A Persian cat that Raven/Adam traps in a closet is actually Lilith, Adam's first wife, who is intent on killing their only child in that other-world. At the end of the novel, separated from his beloved Lona, Vane shows no interest in his Library, which occasionally shimmers with eerie light.

The Moon

The Moon in the strange other-world that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane several times visits has a controlling effect on its strange creatures, often in conjunction with howling winds and profound cold. Its face shows emotions that reflect and affect current events. When risen (always full-face, it appears), the Moon repels monsters, forcing them to burrow underground rather than attack prey; it incites skeletons and phantoms in the Evil Wood to battle one another ferociously and others in the Ivy House to dance merrily. Once Vane sees Mara petting a panther and sending it off toward the moon; shuddering he contemplates how uncertain everything is in this other-world. Once, when the Moon is eclipsed, Lilith with hands tied attacks Vane with her teeth, temporarily paralyzing him. When the moon clears, Lilith's face is gaunt and smeared with blood. Only later does Vane learn that several moons service this world but he never learns the laws of physics that govern their orbits.

Orchard Valley

Home to the Little Ones and the Giants, Orchard Valley is home for a while to narrator Mr. Vane during his misadventures in a strange, other-world. The Little Ones claim to have been placed there at creation and that those of them who are greedy transform into ugly, stupid, violent Giants. Mara, whom the Little Ones wrongly fear as the ugly, scratching "Cat-Woman" and Queen of the Bad Giants, tells Vane that how the Princess of Bulika steals all water in Orchard Valley—although somehow trees survive. Mara tells Vane that when thirsty enough the Little Ones will have water and, having water, will grow without transforming into Giants. Twice Vane hears underground water but never thinks to drill for it. Vane finds, in a later visit, the Little Ones take to living in the tree tops to avoid the Giants, ally with the animals, learn to defend themselves by throwing



rocks, and eventually exile the Giants from their valley. Most return after the invasion of Bulika, where Lona dies, but a handful accompany Vane and her body to the Chamber of Death.

The Sexton's Cottage / Chamber of Death

Not the above-ground cemetery (or "burial ground") that protagonist and narrator Mr. Vane expects to be tended by a church sexton, Mr. Raven's cemetery is more like a vast cathedral nave or barn holding uncountable couches on which bodies repose awaiting a return to life. Vane flees the place rather than lie down and his failure to obey leads to misadventures. Raven later finds Vane in his own three-dimensional world, explains to him that he is Adam, the first-created human, Eve is his faithful wife, and the evil Princess of Bulika.

Themes

Religion

Religion is so absent from the opening of George MacDonald's novel *Lilith* that its gradual introduction is surprising, but it grows central as the human/bird Mr. Raven reveals that he is, in fact, the first-created human being Adam and the chief antagonist, the Princess of Bulika, is Lilith, his estranged and rebellious first wife, Lilith, discussed in Jewish and pre-Jewish Middle Eastern legend. The protagonist, Mr. Vane, is a recent Oxford graduate specializing in natural history and interested in metaphysics. Meaning in Greek "beyond the physical," this examines how people understand time, space, and causality. Vane quickly finds himself caught in situations beyond the normal senses when he is translated into "the region of the seven dimensions." His guide claims in that world to be a sexton, a minor religious office responsible for the physical upkeep of parish properties and particularly for burying the dead. He shows Vane that prayers rise like little birds to the Creator, carrying his thoughts from creatures to himself. Some prayers fall back like stones on the heads of worshipers.

When Adam reveals himself, biblical allusions become frequent. Lilith bridges the divergent creation stories in Genesis 1-2. There is no Temptation and Fall involving the Tree of Life, but there is an expulsion from Paradise by an angel armed with a special sword, which is subsequently entrusted to Adam. Adam and Eve repent for something unspecified and are forgiven by God. At the novel's conclusion, the imagery of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 23 is reproduced faithfully, omitting only the Tree of Life. New Testament parables and events are brought in, including the Day of Resurrection including angels and Mary Magdalene, but any mention of Jesus Christ is scrupulously avoided, lest Christian particularism have to be dealt with. God, whose name is rarely used in favor of terms like "Another," waits patiently for the dead to realize in dreams the goodness of creation and existence, to painlessly recognize their own faults and make restitution, and, each in his or her own time to rise again to true, limitless life. There is a general last day of Resurrection that all anticipate.

Lilith's is a particular case, for her rebellion and insistence on absolute freedom to be what she is requires painful purging, involving physical tortures that suggest the Inquisition. The age-old debate about free will and determinism is engaged, but in the end Lilith sleeps, forgets, and accepts all that is needed to be the last to rise again to life. The message is one of Universalism—in the end all will be saved. Most of Western Christian theology rejects the idea that Vane in the end sees as precious beyond words.

Obedience

Lilith by George MacDonald deals throughout with Obedience. The narrator, Mr. Raven, although a devoted metaphysicist, rebels against the idea of blind obedience in the face of the non-understandable. His tutor, Mr. Raven, works to convince him that realizing



that one does not understand is the first step to eventually understanding and that belief is more important than understanding, but he proves a poor teacher, constantly confusing and provoking Vane with riddles and ad hominem attacks on his willfulness. When Vane makes a mess of things and Vane re-appears to say "I told you so!" Vane does not even remember being warned about anything—and then excuses himself as being unable to remember every little, confusing thing that he hears. Twice Vane refuses a seemingly useless order: to lie down in the Chamber of Death with myriads of other sleepers in order to prepare for action. He is an activist, and his activism twice ends in disaster.

A second aspect of Obedience is skirted in the story of Adam, Lilith, and Eve. Rave and his wife, custodians of the Chamber of Death, are revealed to be the first created humans. Drawing on Jewish and earlier Mesopotamian legends, Lilith is created at the same time as Adam and, thus, with equal rights. When Adam refuses to obey and worship her, she leaves the Garden of Eden to become the immortal Queen of Hell. The question of Adam and/or Eve's disobedience in Paradise is side-stepped, Adam only claiming to have repented for something unspecified and being forgiven by God. The symbol of the Tree of Life (and the unmentioned Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) which the first couple is specifically ordered not to touch in Genesis 3, is never mentioned in the novel. In seeking to reclaim Lilith, God and his human instrument, Mara, seek not to change Lilith but to restore her to her original, untainted Self. There is no sense of a system of rules to be obeyed or beliefs to be accepted. The goodness of creation and painless acceptance of one's own mistakes are sufficient to bring about atonement—literally at-one-ment.

Time and Space

George MacDonald's novel *Lilith* explicitly denies that multiple universes cannot co-exist in Time and Space. The philosophical guide, Mr. Raven, calls the idea foolish (along with other human truisms). The astonished narrator, Mr. Van, a recent Oxford graduate with concentrations in the physical sciences and an interest in metaphysics, cannot believe his own senses when taken through a mirror from the world of three dimensions into a "region of the seven dimensions." For hundreds of years, Raven, who can take on the form of a human or a bird, has used the Vane house as a portal between universes. He claims that a tree in the other-world grows up Vane's chimney in his own world and a rosebush is a lady playing Grieg's Wedding March on a piano. He adds that it has not only the familiar melody but also emits a characteristic fragrance. Vane hears only a ghost of a sound from the piano and smells only a slightly different rose fragrance—but he does perceive something. Much of the early part of the novel finds Vane asking to go home, but Raven tells him that he must find his own way through ever-increasing, inward-leading seeming exits. Several times, however, Raven deigns to give Vane a helping hand and he topples into his own house.

Vane grows so frustrated that he imagines that hundreds of parallel universes might co-exist in Time and Space, creating pure chaos. Raven tells him not to try to understand that which is beyond him but to concentrate on utilizing the phenomena that present



themselves. Wherever Vane might be, recognizing that he does not understand is the first step to eventually understanding. Many people spend their entire lifetime trying to reach that level. Believing blindly is superior to understanding.

Paradoxically, when the novel moves to existence beyond Time and Space—in the realms of living-death in which creatures dream to achieve whatever it is they need to restore their original Self—Vane finds clarity. Adam and Eve, the first created humans, have been sleeping for thousands of years while simultaneously administering the Chamber of Death in which creatures prepare of true life. Having lost all track of Adam's only child with estranged first wife Lilith—who leaves Paradise to become the Queen of Hell before Eve's creation—Adam has been waiting for Lilith to repent and the daughter, Lona, to come to him. The mystery of Time and Space is not erased but is subsumed into the joy of the restored creation. Vane, however, filled with joy, falls back into his three-dimensional world and loses contact with the other. Raven/Adam does not revisit, Vane does not use the mirror again (why he does not explain), and he waits, waking and sleeping, for death to reunite him with Lona.



Style

Point of View

Lilith by George MacDonald is told through a Mr. Vane, a recent graduate of Oxford University, specializing in the physical sciences, with preference for the pioneers of science—Ptolemy, Dante, Francis and Roger Bacon, and Robert Boyle—over scientists more his contemporaries, e.g., Charles Darwin or James Clerk Maxwell. Vane is most interested in coordinating science with the metaphysical. Vane shows familiarity with the writings of Shakespeare and sufficient familiarity with the Judeo-Christian scriptures to be able to quote or paraphrase the most famous parts, but evidences no formal religion. His social life appears to have been stunted by being orphaned in early childhood and growing up in unnamed boarding schools. He prefers books to people and his only passion is for horses, which he buys but never sells.

Vane finds himself thrown into a strange other-world co-existing in time and place with the normal three-dimensional world of humankind. His host and guide, Mr. Vane, is a long-dead ghost who uses Vane's house to move back and forth between worlds. Raven frustrates Vane by talking in riddles about the impossibility of understanding phenomena, the need simply to use what is perceived, and the necessity of dying in order to live. Raven switches back and forth between human and bird appearance and produces inexplicable phenomena. Much of the book finds Vane wrestling with enigmas and his own willfulness eventually coming to believe in the reality of the other-world and admit his own mistakes. In the end, he is frustratingly translated back to his own home and spends his time hoping to get back to where he belongs and where his life has made a difference.

A portion of the story is told to Vane by Raven after he reveals his true identity: Adam, the first-created human being. He relates an adaptation of the ancient Hebrew stories of Lilith being his first wife but quarreling with him and abandoning the Garden of Eden before Eve's creation and their expulsion from Paradise. Around this is built Vane's quest to liberate the Little People, who are led by Lona, Adam and Lilith's only child, with whom Vane falls in love, but whom Lilith slays. Lilith is brought to a dreadful inquisition in which the eternal question of free will and determination are debated at length. Here Vane serves only as a still-confused witness. Dreams within dreams further confuse the course of the narration.

Setting

Lilith by George MacDonald is set in two parallel universes that coincide in time and space. In the three-dimensional world into which narrator Mr. Vane has been born and educated in the sciences, the action occurs in his upper-class ancestral home. The Library, dating back to before the invention of printing, occupies most of the first floor. Upstairs, through corridors and stairways that Vane has never explored, lies a garret in



whose center is a small structure that in turn houses an antique mirror, which Vane learns by experience is the gateway to another world.

Vane's guide into and through this other-world is Mr. Raven, appearing sometimes as a black-plumaged, squawking bird and sometimes as an ancient librarian wearing formal clothes that resemble the plumage. Raven talks of thunder storms and strange burrowing creatures on the planet Uranus, which he has visited, and of relatives in Paradise. Calling the other-world, "the region of the seven dimensions," Raven points out that a nearby tree grows up Vane's chimney and a rosebush is a lady playing piano—because two objects can occupy the same place and time. He consistently insists that if Vane wants to go home to his world, he must find his own way, but several times gives a helping hand. Vane commits himself to an adventure in the other world, sure he will be taken care of. Vane finds in Mara, mislabeled "Cat-Women," and the "Little Ones" (or "Lovers") in the Orchard Valley, protectors and friends. Their mortal enemies, the Giants, also live there, until the Little Ones learn to repel them. During his exile from the Little Ones, Vane meet and cares for a seemingly-dead woman who turns out to be the feared Princess of Bulika. After testing Vane, she offers to give him love and power, but is merely latching onto an inhabitant of the three-dimensional world in order to find a back door into the Orchard Valley to hunt down her daughter, Lona.

A portion of the story as told to Vane by Raven takes place in the Garden of Eden, for Raven is actually Adam, the first-created human being and his estranged first wife, Lilith, is the Princess. Around this is built Vane's quest to liberate the Little People, led by Lona, with whom Vane falls in love, but whom Lilith slays in the carefully-described Palace of Bulika. Lilith is brought to a dreadful inquisition before all of the characters lie down to sleep in Raven/Adam's Chamber of Death, a vast cathedral and/or barn arranged with couches for the dead of all ages. Each at his or her appointed time rises to immortal life. The story ends with Vane unwillingly removed from his couch and returned to his house, which no longer holds any interest for him. He longs to return to Lona and the world in which he has a purpose.

Language and Meaning

Lilith by George MacDonald is told through a Mr. Vane, a recent graduate of Oxford University, specializing in the physical sciences, with interest in metaphysics, and knowledge of Shakespeare and the Bible. He manifests no formal religion. As a result of living in boarding schools his whole life, Vane is more interested in books than people. All of these factors come to play in the fantastic story that he tells, which like Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which predates *Lilith* by three decades, examines a strange world parallel and coexistent in time and space with the three-dimensional world to which humans are accustomed.

As a physical scientist, Vane is meticulous in his observations of unfamiliar plants and animals, noting similarities with earthly species and spectacular oddities that suggest the combined species of classical myth. There is no clinical coldness, however, for Vane is also quite a language stylist, utilizing rich figures of speech and occasionally alluding



to literature, most notably Shakespeare and the most popular proof texts in the Bible. Vane admits to constantly searching for strange analogies between physical and metaphysical facts and dreams and an "impulse to turn hypothesis into theory." Following Mr. Raven through the mirror puts Vane to the test. Repeatedly he apologizes to the reader that he cannot do justice to what he is seeing, hearing, and feeling. This heightens after Vane lies down in the Chamber of Death and dreams about the realities that Raven has been trying to convey. As Raven had hoped, Vane believes more than understands. Every detail of creation becomes significant and Life suffuses even the rocks. Vane is troubled to be torn out of this world and dropped back into his own. Several times in the text Vane indicates that he has researched various matters before writing his account (e.g., the orbits of the other-world moon). He writes awaiting a return to an existence in which he finds himself useful and connected.

Structure

Lilith by George MacDonald consists of a Preface, quoting from Thoreau's "Walking," and forty-seven numbered and titled chapters. There is no larger structure to the novel, and the action generally proceeds in chronological order. Opening chapters, 1) "The Library" and 2) "The Mirror," find the narrator, Mr. Vane, in the ancestral home he has just inherited. He investigates ghostly activity and finds himself drawn through an antique mirror into another world that co-exists in time and space with the "normal one." There, he is lectured about metaphysical matters by a talking Raven, who doubles as the librarian/ghost. Vane resists Raven's call for him to sleep in the Chamber of Death. (Chapters 3 "The Raven," 4) "Somewhere Or Nowhere?" 5) "The Old Church," 6) "The Sexton's Cottage," and 7) "The Cemetery."

Vane finds himself dumped back into the "normal world," finds suggestions that his father might have entered the other-world (Chapter 8) "My Father's Manuscript") and goes searching. Still smarting from being disobeyed, Raven leaves him on his own, and Vane sets out on a great adventure, meeting many kinds of people, seeing odd phenomena, and getting involved with a Princess who appears dead when he meets her. When she talks him into fetching something for her high in a tree, Vane tumbles back into his world—and his own garden fountain. This covers most of the book: Chapters 9) "I Repent," 10) "The Bad Burrow," 11) "The Evil Wood," 12) "Friends And Foes," 13) "The Little Ones," 14) "A Crisis," 15) "A Strange Hostess," 16) "A Gruesome Dance," 17) "A Grotesque Tragedy," 18) "Dead Or Live?," 19) "The White Leech," 20) "Gone!—But How?" 21) "The Fugitive Mother," 22) "Bulika," 23) "A Woman Of Bulika," 24) "The White Leopardess," 25) "The Princess," and 26) "A Battle Royal."

Vane's sojourn in the real world is brief but significant, in that Raven reveals himself as Adam, the first-created human, and his estranged first wife Lilith as the Princess who wishes to kill her only daughter, Lona, whom Vane has come to love. No sooner is the story told than Lilith, in the form of a Persian cat and then a leopard, escapes and makes it first through the mirror. This is told in Chapters 27) "The Silent Fountain," 28) "I Am Silenced," 29) "The Persian Cat," and "Adam Explains."



Back in the other-world, Adam insists on completing his quest his way. He is reunited with Lona and the Little Ones, but loses Lona when Lilith kills her. He carries Lona back to the Chamber of Death and Lilith to inquisition and eventual acceptance of God's will to redeem her. When Vane and Lona awaken with spiritual senses perfectly alive, they head home and are on the verge of seeing the "Ancient of Days" face-to-face when Vane is gently swept through a door into his own world, while Lona remains behind. He spends his time waiting to be reunited after death. This is told in Chapters 31) "The Sexton's Old Horse," 32) "The Lovers And The Bags," 33) "Lona's Narrative," 34) "Preparation," 35) "The Little Ones in Bulika," 36) "Mother And Daughter," 37) "The Shadow," 38) "To The House Of Bitterness," 39) "That Night," 40) "The House Of Death," 41) "I Am Sent," 42) "I Sleep the Sleep," 43) "The Dreams That Came," 44) "The Waking," 45) "The Journey Home," 46) "The City," and the melancholy ending, Chapter 47 "The 'Endless Ending.'"



Quotes

"I had just finished my studies at Oxford, and was taking a brief holiday from work before assuming definitely the management of the estate. My father died when I was yet a child; my mother followed him within a year; and I was nearly as much alone in the world as a man might find himself.

"I had made little acquaintance with the history of my ancestors. Almost the only thing I knew concerning them was, that a notable number of them had been given to study. I had myself so far inherited the tendency as to devote a good deal of my time, though, I confess, after a somewhat desultory fashion, to the physical sciences. It was chiefly the wonder they woke that drew me. I was constantly seeing, and on the outlook to see, strange analogies, not only between the facts of different sciences of the same order, or between physical and metaphysical facts, but between physical hypotheses and suggestions glimmering out of the metaphysical dreams into which I was in the habit of falling. I was at the same time much given to a premature indulgence of the impulse to turn hypothesis into theory. Of my mental peculiarities there is no occasion to say more." Chapter 1 The Library, pg. 5.

"The small chamber was full of light, but such as dwells in places deserted: it had a dull, disconsolate look, as if it found itself of no use, and regretted having come. A few rather dim sunrays, marking their track through the cloud of motes that had just been stirred up, fell upon a tall mirror with a dusty face, old-fashioned and rather narrow—in appearance an ordinary glass. It had an ebony frame, on the top of which stood a black eagle, with outstretched wings, in his beak a golden chain, from whose end hung a black ball.

"I had been looking at rather than into the mirror, when suddenly I became aware that it reflected neither the chamber nor my own person. I have an impression of having seen the wall melt away, but what followed is enough to account for any uncertainty:—could I have mistaken for a mirror the glass that protected a wonderful picture?

"I saw before me a wild country, broken and heathy. Desolate hills of no great height, but somehow of strange appearance, occupied the middle distance; along the horizon stretched the tops of a far-off mountain range; nearest me lay a tract of moorland, flat and melancholy.

"Being short-sighted, I stepped closer to examine the texture of a stone in the immediate foreground, and in the act espied, hopping toward me with solemnity, a large and ancient raven, whose purply black was here and there softened with gray. He seemed looking for worms as he came. Nowise astonished at the appearance of a live creature in a picture, I took another step forward to see him better, stumbled over something—doubtless the frame of the mirror— and stood nose to beak with the bird: I was in the open air, on a houseless heath!" Chapter 2 The Mirror, pg. 11

"Here I interrupt my narrative to remark that it involves a constant struggle to say what cannot be said with even an approach to precision, the things recorded being, in their nature and in that of the creatures concerned in them, so inexpressibly different from any possible events of this economy, that I can present them only by giving, in the forms and language of life in this world, the modes in which they affected me—not the things



themselves, but the feelings they woke in me. Even this much, however, I do with a continuous and abiding sense of failure, finding it impossible to present more than one phase of a multitudinously complicated significance, or one concentric sphere of a graduated embodiment. A single thing would sometimes seem to be and mean many things, with an uncertain identity at the heart of them, which kept constantly altering their look. I am indeed often driven to set down what I know to be but a clumsy and doubtful representation of the mere feeling aimed at, none of the communicating media of this world being fit to convey it, in its peculiar strangeness, with even an approach to clearness or certainty. Even to one who knew the region better than myself, I should have no assurance of transmitting the reality of my experience in it. While without a doubt, for instance, that I was actually regarding a scene of activity, I might be, at the same moment, in my consciousness aware that I was perusing a metaphysical argument." Chapter 9, I Repent, pgs. 46-47.

"About midnight I came wide awake, roused by a revelry, whose noises were yet not loud. Neither were they distant; they were close to me, but attenuate. My eyes were so dazzled, however, that for a while I could see nothing; at last they came to themselves. "I was lying on my withered leaves in the corner of a splendid hall. Before me was a crowd of gorgeously dressed men and gracefully robed women, none of whom seemed to see me. In dance after dance they vaguely embodied the story of life, its meetings, its passions, its partings. A student of Shakespeare, I had learned something of every dance alluded to in his plays, and hence partially understood several of those I now saw—the minuet, the pavin, the hey, the coranto, the lavolta. The dancers were attired in fashion as ancient as their dances.

"A moon had risen while I slept, and was shining through the countless-windowed roof; but her light was crossed by so many shadows that at first I could distinguish almost nothing of the faces of the multitude; I could not fail, however, to perceive that there was something odd about them: I sat up to see them better.—Heavens! could I call them faces? They were skull fronts!—hard, gleaming bone, bare jaws, truncated noses, lipless teeth which could no more take part in any smile! Of these, some flashed set and white and murderous; others were clouded with decay, broken and gapped, coloured of the earth in which they seemed so long to have lain! Fearfuller yet, the eye-sockets were not empty; in each was a lidless living eye! In those wrecks of faces, glowed or flashed or sparkled eyes of every colour, shape, and expression. The beautiful, proud eye, dark and lustrous, condescending to whatever it rested upon, was the more terrible; the lovely, languishing eye, the more repulsive; while the dim, sad eyes, less at variance with their setting, were sad exceedingly, and drew the heart in spite of the horror out of which they gazed." Chapter 16 A Gruesome Dance, pgs. 85-86.

"Something on the ground, under a spreading tree, caught my eye with its whiteness, and I turned toward it. Vague as it was in the shadow of the foliage, it suggested, as I drew nearer, a human body. "Another skeleton!" I said to myself, kneeling and laying my hand upon it. A body it was, however, and no skeleton, though as nearly one as body could well be. It lay on its side, and was very cold— not cold like a stone, but cold like that which was once alive, and is alive no more. The closer I looked at it, the oftener I touched it, the less it seemed possible it should be other than dead. For one bewildered moment, I fancied it one of the wild dancers, a ghostly Cinderella, perhaps, that had lost



her way home, and perished in the strange night of an out-of-door world! It was quite naked, and so worn that, even in the shadow, I could, peering close, have counted without touching them, every rib in its side. All its bones, indeed, were as visible as if tight-covered with only a thin elastic leather. Its beautiful yet terrible teeth, unseemly disclosed by the retracted lips, gleamed ghastly through the dark. Its hair was longer than itself, thick and very fine to the touch, and black as night.

"It was the body of a tall, probably graceful woman.—How had she come there? Not of herself, and already in such wasted condition, surely! Her strength must have failed her; she had fallen, and lain there until she died of hunger! But how, even so, could she be thus emaciated? And how came she to be naked? Where were the savages to strip and leave her? or what wild beasts would have taken her garments? That her body should have been left was not wonderful!

"I rose to my feet, stood, and considered. I must not, could not let her lie exposed and forsaken! Natural reverence forbade it. Even the garment of a woman claims respect; her body it were impossible to leave uncovered! Irreverent eyes might look on it! Brutal claws might toss it about! Years would pass ere the friendly rains washed it into the soil! —But the ground was hard, almost solid with interlacing roots, and I had but my bare hands!"

"At first it seemed plain that she had not long been dead: there was not a sign of decay about her! But then what had the slow wasting of life left of her to decay?

"Could she be still alive? Might she not? What if she were! Things went very strangely in this strange world! Even then there would be little chance of bringing her back, but I must know she was dead before I buried her!" Chapter 18 Dead Or live? pgs. 96-97.

"It was night when I woke. The moon looked down on me in friendly fashion, seeming to claim with me old acquaintance. She was very bright, and the same moon, I thought, that saw me through the terrors of my first night in that strange world. A cold wind blew from the gate, bringing with it an evil odour; but it did not chill me, for the sun had plenished me with warmth. I crept again into the city. There I found the few that were still in the open air crouched in corners to escape the shivering blast.

"I was walking slowly through the long narrow street, when, just before me, a huge white thing bounded across it, with a single flash in the moonlight, and disappeared. I turned down the next opening, eager to get sight of it again.

"It was a narrow lane, almost too narrow to pass through, but it led me into a wider street. The moment I entered the latter, I saw on the opposite side, in the shadow, the creature I had followed, itself following like a dog what I took for a man. Over his shoulder, every other moment, he glanced at the animal behind him, but neither spoke to it, nor attempted to drive it away. At a place where he had to cross a patch of moonlight, I saw that he cast no shadow, and was himself but a flat superficial shadow, of two dimensions. He was, nevertheless, an opaque shadow, for he not merely darkened any object on the other side of him, but rendered it, in fact, invisible. In the shadow he was blacker than the shadow; in the moonlight he looked like one who had drawn his shadow up about him, for not a suspicion of it moved beside or under him; while the gleaming animal, which followed so close at his heels as to seem the white shadow of his blackness, and which I now saw to be a leopardess, drew her own gliding shadow black over the ground by her side. When they passed together from the shadow into the moonlight, the Shadow deepened in blackness, the animal flashed into



radiance. I was at the moment walking abreast of them on the opposite side, my bare feet sounding on the flat stones: the leopardess never turned head or twitched ear; the shadow seemed once to look at me, for I lost his profile, and saw for a second only a sharp upright line. That instant the wind found me and blew through me: I shuddered from head to foot, and my heart went from wall to wall of my bosom, like a pebble in a child's rattle." Chapter 22 Bulika, pg. 96-97.

"The moon, half-way up the sky, was shining round and clear; the bodiless shadow I had seen the night before, was walking through the trees toward the gate; and after him went the leopardess, swinging her tail. I followed, a little way off, as silently as they, and neither of them once looked round. Through the open gate we went down to the city, lying quiet as the moonshine upon it. The face of the moon was very still, and its stillness looked like that of expectation. '

"The Shadow took his way straight to the stair at the top of which I had lain the night before. Without a pause he went up, and the leopardess followed. I quickened my pace, but, a moment after, heard a cry of horror. Then came the fall of something soft and heavy between me and the stair, and at my feet lay a body, frightfully blackened and crushed, but still recognisable as that of the woman who had led me home and shut me out. As I stood petrified, the spotted leopardess came bounding down the stair with a baby in her mouth. I darted to seize her ere she could turn at the foot; but that instant, from behind me, the white leopardess, like a great bar of glowing silver, shot through the moonlight, and had her by the neck. She dropped the child; I caught it up, and stood to watch the battle between them. '

"What a sight it was—now the one, now the other uppermost, both too intent for any noise beyond a low growl, a whimpered cry, or a snarl of hate—followed by a quicker scrambling of claws, as each, worrying and pushing and dragging, struggled for foothold on the pavement! The spotted leopardess was larger than the white, and I was anxious for my friend; but I soon saw that, though neither stronger nor more active, the white leopardess had the greater endurance. Not once did she lose her hold on the neck of the other. From the spotted throat at length issued a howl of agony, changing, by swift-crowded gradations, into the long-drawn CRESCENDO of a woman's uttermost wail. The white one relaxed her jaws; the spotted one drew herself away, and rose on her hind legs. Erect in the moonlight stood the princess, a confused rush of shadows careering over her whiteness—the spots of the leopard crowding, hurrying, fleeing to the refuge of her eyes, where merging they vanished. The last few, outsped and belated, mingled with the cloud of her streamy hair, leaving her radiant as the moon when a legion of little vapours has flown, wind-hunted, off her silvery disc—save that, adown the white column of her throat, a thread of blood still trickled from every wound of her adversary's terrible teeth. She turned away, took a few steps with the gait of a Hecate, fell, covered afresh with her spots, and fled at a long, stretching gallop. '

"The white leopardess turned also, sprang upon me, pulled my arms asunder, caught the baby as it fell, and flew with it along the street toward the gate." Chapter 26 A Battle Royal, pg. 110.

" 'Lilith, when you came here on the way to your evil will, you little thought into whose hands you were delivering yourself!— Mr. Vane, when God created me,—not out of Nothing, as say the unwise, but out of His own endless glory—He brought me an



angelic splendour to be my wife: there she lies! For her first thought was POWER; she counted it slavery to be one with me, and bear children for Him who gave her being. One child, indeed, she bore; then, puffed with the fancy that she had created her, would have me fall down and worship her! Finding, however, that I would but love and honour, never obey and worship her, she poured out her blood to escape me, fled to the army of the aliens, and soon had so ensnared the heart of the great Shadow, that he became her slave, wrought her will, and made her queen of Hell. How it is with her now, she best knows, but I know also. The one child of her body she fears and hates, and would kill, asserting a right, which is a lie, over what God sent through her into His new world. Of creating, she knows no more than the crystal that takes its allotted shape, or the worm that makes two worms when it is cloven asunder. vilest of God's creatures, she lives by the blood and lives and souls of men. She consumes and slays, but is powerless to destroy as to create.'

"The animal lay motionless, its beryl eyes fixed flaming on the man: his eyes on hers held them fixed that they could not move from his.

" 'Then God gave me another wife—not an angel but a woman—who is to this as light is to darkness.'

"The cat gave a horrible screech, and began to grow bigger. She went on growing and growing. At last the spotted leopardess uttered a roar that made the house tremble. I sprang to my feet. I do not think Mr. Raven started even with his eyelids.

" 'It is but her jealousy that speaks,' he said, 'jealousy self-kindled, foiled and fruitless; for here I am, her master now whom she, would not have for her husband! while my beautiful Eve yet lives, hoping immortally! Her hated daughter lives also, but beyond her evil ken, one day to be what she counts her destruction—for even Lilith shall be saved by her childbearing. Meanwhile she exults that my human wife plunged herself and me in despair, and has borne me a countless race of miseries; but my Eve repented, and is now beautiful as never was woman or angel, while her groaning, travailing world is the nursery of our Father's children. I too have repented, and am blessed.—Thou, Lilith, hast not yet repented; but thou must.—Tell me, is the great Shadow beautiful? Knowest thou how long thou wilt thyself remain beautiful?—Answer me, if thou knowest.'

"Then at last I understood that Mr. Raven was indeed Adam, the old and the new man; and that his wife, ministering in the house of the dead, was Eve, the mother of us all, the lady of the New Jerusalem.

"The leopardess reared; the flickering and fleeing of her spots began; the princess at length stood radiant in her perfect shape.

" 'I AM beautiful—and immortal!' she said—and she looked the goddess she would be."

Chapter 29 The Persian Cat, pgs. X119-120.

"The princess yet leaned back in her chair in the shaft of sunlight, when from the stones of the court came to her ears the noise of the horses' hoofs. She started, listened, and shook: never had such sound been heard in her palace! She pressed her hand to her side, and gasped. The trampling came nearer and nearer; it entered the hall itself; moving figures that were not shadows approached her through the darkness!

"For us, we saw a splendour, a glorious woman centering the dark. Lona sprang from her horse, and bounded to her. I sprang from mine, and followed Lona.

" 'Mother! mother!' she cried, and her clear, lovely voice echoed in the dome.

"The princess shivered; her face grew almost black with hate, her eyebrows met on her



forehead. She rose to her feet, and stood.

"Mother! Mother!" cried Lona again, as she leaped on the dais, and flung her arms around the princess.

"An instant more and I should have reached them!—in that instant I saw Lona lifted high, and dashed on the marble floor. Oh, the horrible sound of her fall! At my feet she fell, and lay still. The princess sat down with the smile of a demoness.

"I dropped on my knees beside Lona, raised her from the stones, and pressed her to my bosom. With indignant hate I glanced at the princess; she answered me with her sweetest smile. I would have sprung upon her, taken her by the throat, and strangled her, but love of the child was stronger than hate of the mother, and I clasped closer my precious burden. Her arms hung helpless; her blood trickled over my hands, and fell on the floor with soft, slow little splashes.

"The horses scented it—mine first, then the small ones. Mine reared, shivering and wild-eyed, went about, and thundered blindly down the dark hall, with the little horses after him. Lona's stood gazing down at his mistress, and trembling all over. The boys flung themselves from their horses' backs, and they, not seeing the black wall before them, dashed themselves, with mine, to pieces against it. The elephants came on to the foot of the dais, and stopped, wildly trumpeting; the Little Ones sprang upon it, and stood horrified; the princess lay back in her seat, her face that of a corpse, her eyes alone alive, wickedly flaming. She was again withered and wasted to what I found in the wood, and her side was as if a great branding hand had been laid upon it. But Lona saw nothing, and I saw but Lona.

"Mother! mother!" she sighed, and her breathing ceased." Chapter 36 Mother And Daughter, pgs. 149-150.

"So long as I feel myself what it pleases me to think myself, I care not. I am content to be to myself what I would be. What I choose to seem to myself makes me what I am. My own thought makes me me; my own thought of myself is me. Another shall not make me!"

"But another has made you, and can compel you to see what you have made yourself. You will not be able much longer to look to yourself anything but what he sees you! You will not much longer have satisfaction in the thought of yourself. At this moment you are aware of the coming change!"

"No one ever made me. I defy that Power to unmake me from a free woman! You are his slave, and I defy you! You may be able to torture me—I do not know, but you shall not compel me to anything against my will!"

"Such a compulsion would be without value. But there is a light that goes deeper than the will, a light that lights up the darkness behind it: that light can change your will, can make it truly yours and not another's—not the Shadow's. Into the created can pour itself the creating will, and so redeem it!"

"That light shall not enter me: I hate it!—Begone, slave!"

"I am no slave, for I love that light, and will with the deeper will which created mine. There is no slave but the creature that wills against its creator. Who is a slave but her who cries, 'I am free,' yet cannot cease to exist!"

"You speak foolishness from a cowering heart! You imagine me given over to you: I defy you! I hold myself against you! What I choose to be, you cannot change. I will not be what you think me—what you say I am!"



"I am sorry: you must suffer!"

" 'But be free!"

" 'She alone is free who would make free; she loves not freedom who would enslave: she is herself a slave. Every life, every will, every heart that came within your ken, you have sought to subdue: you are the slave of every slave you have made—such a slave that you do not know it!—See your own self!" Chapter 39 That Night, pg. 162.

"We were almost over, when, between us and the border of the basin, arose a long neck, on the top of which, like the blossom of some Stygian lily, sat what seemed the head of a corpse, its mouth half open, and full of canine teeth. I went on; it retreated, then drew aside. The lady stepped on the firm land, but the leopardess between us, roused once more, turned, and flew at the throat of the terror. I remained where I was to see the elephants, with the princess and the children, safe on the bank. Then I turned to look after the leopardess. That moment the moon went down, For an instant I saw the leopardess and the snake-monster convolved in a cloud of dust; then darkness hid them. Trembling with fright, my horse wheeled, and in three bounds overtook the elephants.

"As we came up with them, a shapeless jelly dropped on the princess. A white dove dropped immediately on the jelly, stabbing it with its beak. It made a squelching, sucking sound, and fell off. Then I heard the voice of a woman talking with Mara, and I knew the voice.

" 'I fear she is dead!' said Mara.

" 'I will send and find her,' answered the mother. 'But why, Mara, shouldst thou at all fear for her or for any one? Death cannot hurt her who dies doing the work given her to do.'

" 'I shall miss her sorely; she is good and wise. Yet I would not have her live beyond her hour!"

" 'She has gone down with the wicked; she will rise with the righteous. We shall see her again ere very long.' Chapter 40 The House of Death, pg. 172.

"How convey the delight of that frozen, yet conscious sleep! I had no more to stand up! had only to lie stretched out and still! How cold I was, words cannot tell; yet I grew colder and colder—and welcomed the cold yet more and more. I grew continuously less conscious of myself, continuously more conscious of bliss, unimaginable yet felt. I had neither made it nor prayed for it: it was mine in virtue of existence! and existence was mine in virtue of a Will that dwelt in mine.

"Then the dreams began to arrive—and came crowding.—I lay naked on a snowy peak. The white mist heaved below me like a billowy sea. The cold moon was in the air with me, and above the moon and me the colder sky, in which the moon and I dwelt. I was Adam, waiting for God to breathe into my nostrils the breath of life.—I was not Adam, but a child in the bosom of a mother white with a radiant whiteness. I was a youth on a white horse, leaping from cloud to cloud of a blue heaven, hasting calmly to some blessed goal. For centuries I dreamed—or was it chiliads? or only one long night?—But why ask? for time had nothing to do with me; I was in the land of thought—farther in, higher up than the seven dimensions, the ten senses: I think I was where I am—in the heart of God.—I dreamed away dim cycles in the centre of a melting glacier, the spectral moon drawing nearer and nearer, the wind and the welter of a torrent growing in my ears. I lay and heard them: the wind and the water and the moon sang a peaceful



waiting for a redemption drawing nigh. I dreamed cycles, I say, but, for aught I knew or can tell, they were the solemn, æonian march of a second, pregnant with eternity. "Then, of a sudden, but not once troubling my conscious bliss, all the wrongs I had ever done, from far beyond my earthly memory down to the present moment, were with me. Fully in every wrong lived the conscious I, confessing, abjuring, lamenting the dead, making atonement with each person I had injured, hurt, or offended. Every human soul to which I had caused a troubled thought, was now grown unspeakably dear to me, and I humbled myself before it, agonising to cast from between us the clinging offence. I wept at the feet of the mother whose commands I had slighted; with bitter shame I confessed to my father that I had told him two lies, and long forgotten them: now for long had remembered them, and kept them in memory to crush at last at his feet. I was the eager slave of all whom I had thus or anyhow wronged. Countless services I devised to render them! For this one I would build such a house as had never grown from the ground! for that one I would train such horses as had never yet been seen in any world! For a third I would make such a garden as had never bloomed, haunted with still pools, and alive with running waters! I would write songs to make their hearts swell, and tales to make them glow! I would turn the forces of the world into such channels of invention as to make them laugh with the joy of wonder! Love possessed me! Love was my life! Love was to me, as to him that made me, all in all!" Chapter 43 The Dreams That Came, pgs. 185-186.

"It had ceased to be dark; we walked in a dim twilight, breathing through the dimness the breath of the spring. A wondrous change had passed upon the world—or was it not rather that a change more marvelous had taken place in us? Without light enough in the sky or the air to reveal anything, every heather-bush, every small shrub, every blade of grass was perfectly visible—either by light that went out from it, as fire from the bush Moses saw in the desert, or by light that went out of our eyes. Nothing cast a shadow; all things interchanged a little light. Every growing thing showed me, by its shape and colour, its indwelling idea—the informing thought, that is, which was its being, and sent it out. My bare feet seemed to love every plant they trod upon. The world and my being, its life and mine, were one. The microcosm and macrocosm were at length atoned, at length in harmony! I lived in everything; everything entered and lived in me. To be aware of a thing, was to know its life at once and mine, to know whence we came, and where we were at home—was to know that we are all what we are, because Another is what he is! Sense after sense, hitherto asleep, awoke in me—sense after sense indescribable, because no correspondent words, no likenesses or imaginations exist, wherewithal to describe them. Full indeed—yet ever expanding, ever making room to receive—was the conscious being where things kept entering by so many open doors! When a little breeze brushing a bush of heather set its purple bells a ringing, I was myself in the joy of the bells, myself in the joy of the breeze to which responded their sweet TIN-TINNING, myself in the joy of the sense, and of the soul that received all the joys together. To everything glad I lent the hall of my being wherein to revel. I was a peaceful ocean upon which the ground-swell of a living joy was continually lifting new waves; yet was the joy ever the same joy, the eternal joy, with tens of thousands of changing forms. Life was a cosmic holiday." Chapter 45, "The Journey Home," pgs. 195-196.



"We stood for a moment at the gate whence issued roaring the radiant river. I know not whence came the stones that fashioned it, but among them I saw the prototypes of all the gems I had loved on earth—far more beautiful than they, for these were living stones —such in which I saw, not the intent alone, but the intender too; not the idea alone, but the imbodier present, the operant outsider: nothing in this kingdom was dead; nothing was mere; nothing only a thing.

"We went up through the city and passed out. There was no wall on the upper side, but a huge pile of broken rocks, upsloping like the moraine of an eternal glacier; and through the openings between the rocks, the river came billowing out. On their top I could dimly discern what seemed three or four great steps of a stair, disappearing in a cloud white as snow; and above the steps I saw, but with my mind's eye only, as it were a grand old chair, the throne of the Ancient of Days. Over and under and between those steps issued, plenteously, unceasingly new-born, the river of the water of life.

"The great angel could guide us no farther: those rocks we must ascend alone!

"My heart beating with hope and desire, I held faster the hand of my Lona, and we began to climb; but soon we let each other go, to use hands as well as feet in the toilsome ascent of the huge stones. At length we drew near the cloud, which hung down the steps like the borders of a garment, passed through the fringe, and entered the deep folds. A hand, warm and strong, laid hold of mine, and drew me to a little door with a golden lock. The door opened; the hand let mine go, and pushed me gently through. I turned quickly, and saw the board of a large book in the act of closing behind me. I stood alone in my library." Chapter 46 The City, pg. 201.



Topics for Discussion

How does Raven refute the saying "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing?" Why does he call this foolishness?

Mr. Vane is a metaphysician. Why, when faced first-hand with metaphysical situations does he balk and rebel?

How would you rate Raven as a teacher? Could a change in methodology or attitude better serve Mr. Vane as a pupil? How does Raven succeed and fail in helping Vane believe?

Describe the various Judeo-Christian aliases ascribed to Mara. Why does she in particular draw such attention and why might she be glad to end this role?

How do the two leopards fit into the novel? If Princess Lilith is the spotted leopard, who is the white one—or is it simply a leopard?

How do the apparent moods of the alien moon influence events in the novel?

Why is white the predominant color in the novel? Do you find it symbolical or coincidental? How is black used as an opposite?