

# **Living Dead in Dallas Study Guide**

## **Living Dead in Dallas by Charlaine Harris**

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## Plot Summary

Living Dead in Dallas by Charlaine Harris is the second in the Sookie Stackhouse series. In this novel, Sookie finds a dead body in the Merlotte's Bar parking lot, is attacked by a maenad, and is sent to Dallas to use her telepathy to help the Dallas vampires. As Bill's girlfriend, Sookie agreed to help the vampires whenever necessary to read human minds. Her very first job is one in which she is loaned out to the Dallas vampires to help find a missing brother of their nest there. Sookie is nearly raped and murdered in her attempts to help, but she saves the day in her unique, quirky style but nearly loses the vampire she loves in the aftermath. Living Dead in Dallas is laugh out loud funny in a grotesque, mythical way that will leave fans of Charlaine Harris begging for more.

Andy Bellefleur gets drunk in Merlotte's Bar, so Sookie calls his sister Portia to come get him, leaving Andy's car in the parking lot. The following day, when Sookie arrives for work, she finds the car's door partly open. When Sookie goes over to close it, she finds Lafayette, her co-worker, dead in the back seat. The police come and ask Sookie about the last time she saw Lafayette. The only thing Sookie can recall is Lafayette's excitement over a sex club he had recently been invited to attend.

That night, Sookie and Bill drive to Shreveport to speak to Bill's vampire boss, Eric. On the way, Sookie and Bill fight over Bill's tendency to treat Sookie like a kept woman. As they argue, the car breaks down. Bill goes to find help, leaving Sookie sulking in the woods. Sookie encounters a beautiful woman who tells her she wants to send a message to Eric. This message turns out to be a painful beating she gives Sookie across her back. Bill rushes Sookie to Eric's bar where the vampires and a supernatural doctor treat her wounds and remove the poison that would have killed her.

The following day, Sookie learns that she and Bill are to go to Dallas to help the Dallas vampires find a fellow vampire they suspect has been kidnapped. Sookie uses her telepathy to interview several human witnesses, learning that the missing vampire, Farrell, was with a blond vampire no one recognized the night of his disappearance. This leads the vampires to Godfrey, an ancient vampire who is known to desire his own death and who is associated with the anti-vampire group, Fellowship of the Sun. Sookie agrees to go with Hugo, the human lover of a female vampire, to the church where the Fellowship has its headquarters the following afternoon.

Sookie and Hugo go to the Fellowship's church where they meet Steve and Sarah Newlin, the Fellowship leaders. Sookie believes they have the Newlins tricked until they are led into a basement and placed in a holding cell. There Sookie learns Hugo is a traitor to the vampires, having given information to the Fellowship that helped them kidnap Farrell. The guard comes into the cell and moves Hugo to the cell where Farrell is being kept and then attempts to rape Sookie. Sookie manages to hold him off until Godfrey shows up, pulling the guard off her and killing him.



Sookie attempts to convince Godfrey that it is wrong for the Fellowships to force Farrell to commit suicide and to tie Sookie and Hugo to the two dying vampires. Godfrey listens to her argument and agrees to help her escape. Sookie almost makes it out of the church and is nearly caught by a family preparing to attend the lock-in prior to the dawn ceremony. A shapeshifter Sookie recognized earlier by the patterns of her thoughts helps Sookie escape. Sarah Newlin gives chase, causing an accident, but Sookie and the shapeshifter are rescued at the hospital and Sookie is returned to the hotel and Bill.

That night, Sookie and Bill attend a celebration party at the Dallas vampire mansion. During the party, the Fellowship surrounds the house and opens fire with shotguns. Most of the humans in attendance are killed and a few vampires are also killed. Sookie goes in search of Bill and finds him after he has feasted on one of the murderers. This goes against a promise Bill made to her, so Sookie leaves. Over the next few weeks, Sookie learns that Bill is seeing Portia Bellefleur. Later, Sookie realizes Portia has only been spending time with Bill in order to be invited to the sex club Lafayette attended before his death.

Sookie is invited to the sex club and decides to go in order to help clear Andy's name and find out who killed her friend. Sookie takes Eric with her and quickly discovers the culprits. Outside, Andy shows up drunk and tries to force the truth out of the killers at gunpoint. The maenad makes an appearance then and kills the guilty parties and leaves. Bill and Eric clean up the mess, making it appear like an accidental fire. Back at home, Bill and Sookie discuss the Bellefleur family. When Bill hears the name of Portia and Andy's grandmother, he realizes they are direct descendants of one of his four children.



# Chapters 1-2

## Chapters 1-2 Summary

Sookie is a cocktail waitress who can read human minds, and her boyfriend, Bill, is a vampire. Vampires have recently come out of hiding and are in the process of making their existence acceptable to humans through government legislation.

In chapter 1, Sookie is working at Merlotte's Bar when Andy Bellefleur, a lifelong acquaintance, comes in and gets very drunk. Sookie calls Andy's sister, Portia, and has her take Andy home. Sookie returns to work early the following day and finds Lafayette, the short order cook at Merlotte's and a friend of Sookie's, dead in the back seat of Andy's car. The police are called and everyone is questioned. Sookie recalls that the last time she saw Lafayette he was talking about a sex club there in Bon Temps that he had been invited to attend. Sookie and a few of her co-workers wonder if perhaps Lafayette's inability to keep a secret might have something to do with his death.

In chapter 2, the bar reopens, but everyone is still talking about Lafayette. Sookie learns that he died of a broken neck and most likely was killed somewhere else and dumped in Andy's car. Either way, however, it still makes Andy look guilty. Sookie leaves work soon after this discussion and goes home to prepare for a drive to Shreveport with Bill. They are going to see Bill's boss, Eric, about something important. On the drive, Bill tells Sookie that he recently bought a shopping center and she should feel free to buy anything she wants on his credit. Sookie becomes angry, feeling like a kept woman. The car breaks down, and Bill leaves as Sookie sulks in the woods. A short time later, Sookie meets up with a woman who has been walking in the woods with a razorback pig. The woman tells Sookie she wants to send a message to Eric. The woman then hits Sookie with something that leaves her back covered in welts and aching with more pain than Sookie has ever known. Bill returns and rushes Sookie to Shreveport where she is ministered to by a supernatural doctor and four vampires. They remove all her blood to remove a poison and replace it with fresh blood.

## Chapters 1-2 Analysis

These chapters introduce Sookie Stackhouse, the first person narrator and main character of the novel. Sookie is a cocktail waitress who can read minds. This causes Sookie a great deal of trouble and she has always thought of her ability as a curse until she met Bill, the vampire. Bill has taught Sookie how to use her gift and how to erect barriers when she does not want to listen to people's thoughts, making it easier for Sookie to function. Sookie cannot read a vampire or a supernatural creature's mind, which creates the perfect relationship for her with Bill. Sookie has always had trouble in relationships when she can read the other person's mind; therefore, Bill is the ideal boyfriend for her.



Lafayette's murder is of great importance to Sookie because he was a friend. However, it does not appear to be of importance to anyone else except perhaps for Andy Bellefleur, a cop, whose car is where the body was found. People will automatically accuse Andy of murder despite the fact he was very drunk the night before. This opens up a mystery that the reader is curious to see how it will end, especially with the involvement of a sex club, but the reader will be forced to wait till the end of the novel for Sookie to concentrate on this case. In the meantime, Sookie has been summoned by the vampire boss. Sookie has previously agreed to help the vampires with her telepathy should they need her, and she is about to receive her first case. On the way there, Sookie is attacked by an ancient creature, a maenad, adding another complex twist to this already-complicated plot.



# Chapters 3-4

## Chapters 3-4 Summary

In chapter 3, Sookie wakes in Eric's office. Sookie immediately takes a bath and is then taken back to Eric's office where the vampires tell her how they saved her life by removing her blood and then discuss the creature that did this to her. It is decided the creature was a maenad, a mythical creature left frustrated by the death of its god. Eric says the maenad wants a tribute paid, which he plans to do soon. They then talk business. Eric has loaned Sookie out to the Dallas vampires who need her help. Sookie says she will only go if Bill goes and they promise not to kill any humans involved. Eric agrees to her conditions. The following day, Sookie tells her boss she has to go out of town. When Sam learns of the attack by the maenad, he kisses Sookie. Sookie is shocked by her response. Sookie then makes Sam promise to stay away from the woods when he changes. Sam is a shapeshifter who changes on the full moon which is coming soon. Sam does not promise. That night, Portia Bellefleur comes to the bar and asks Sookie to use her gift to find out who killed Lafayette for Andy. Sookie promises, but not for Andy, but for Lafayette.

In chapter 4, Sookie arrives in Dallas and waits at the airport for Bill's coffin to be off loaded by Anubis Air, an airline that specializes in vampire travel. As she waits, a priest approaches Sookie. The man attempts to force Sookie into the terminal, but she manages to escape his clutches with Bill's help. Sookie and Bill then go to the Silent Shore Hotel, the only hotel in Dallas that caters to vampires. When they arrive, Sookie realizes the bellboy, Barry, is also telepathic. After they settle into their room, Sookie and Bill are driven to a mansion in a residential section of Dallas where Stan Davis and his nest of vampires live. Sookie is told that a vampire, Farrell, disappeared from a club owned by the vampires five nights ago, and they want her to interview human witness to learn where he might be. Sookie interviews a waitress, Bethany, and manages to get a clear mental picture of a blond vampire Farrell went into the bathroom with the night he disappeared. In Bethany's mind, Sookie also gets a mental picture of the priest she saw at the airport. As Sookie continues to interview other humans, including a bouncer whose memories have been wiped clean, Bill is able to find out, with a computer, that the blond vampire is Godfrey, an ancient vampire who has decided to commit suicide in a public ceremony through an anti-vampire group known as the Fellowship of the Sun.

## Chapters 3-4 Analysis

In chapter 3 a more detailed explanation about the woman who attacked Sookie is made. This creature is one of Greek mythology, a female being driven mad by the god Bacchus. This creature feeds off chaos and violence; modern maenads are attracted to bars. This causes Sookie concern and she finds herself warning her boss, Sam Merlotte, to stay away from the woods. It is at this point that the reader learns that Sam is a shapeshifter, a creature who can change into an animal. In Sam's case, he often



shifts into a domesticated dog. By introducing Sam as a shaftshifter, the narrator alerts the reader that there are other kinds of supernatural beings in this reality who are not inherently dangerous like maenads and vampires.

In these chapters, the reader also learns of a deal made between Sookie, Bill, and Eric in which Sookie will offer her services as a telepath in exchange for the other vampires leaving her alone. As part of this pact, which was apparently made in the previous book of the series, Sookie is being loaned to the vampires in Dallas to help them find a missing member of the nest there. To do this, Sookie interviews a young woman named Bethany. Bethany has good visual memories which makes it possible for Sookie to view the evening Farrell, the missing vampire, disappeared almost as though she were there. Trouble seems to have already touched Sookie, however, as it appears that the same people behind Farrell's disappearance tried to kidnap Sookie at the airport. This implies that whoever is behind the kidnapping of Farrell has a lot of manpower and is not hesitant to commit a crime in order to get what they want. This adds tension to the novel.





# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Bill, Sookie, and Stan discuss the possibility that the Fellowship of the Sun, an anti-vampire group that Godfrey has associated himself with, is behind the kidnapping of Farrell. It is suggested that perhaps this Fellowship plans to force Farrell to meet the Sun along with Godfrey. However, Stan does not understand how this group could have learned of Sookie's arrival at the airport and wonders if he has a spy among his group. Sookie suggests the room might be bugged and begins searching. Sookie finds a bugging device under the table. Bill brings a vampire and her human lover into the room to dispose of the bug without alerting whoever might be listening. It is then decided that Hugo, the human, and Sookie will go to the Fellowship church the following day to investigate. Then Stan has a new vampire brought into the room to interview, just to be sure he is not someone associated with the Fellowship. This vampire turns out to be Eric, visiting the house under an assumed name. Eric passes the test and is allowed to remain. Sookie and Bill are then taken back to their hotel. Eric visits them a few minutes later, arranging a meeting with the Bill the following night.

The next day, Sookie wakes late in the afternoon and prepares to go to the Fellowship with Hugo. Sookie orders some new clothes that she feels will fit the type of person who visits the Fellowship and puts on a wig. While Sookie waits for the car to arrive, she sees a news report announcing the murder of Bethany, the waitress. Sookie knows it was not the vampires because she was killed with a gun, so Sookie finds herself wondering if the Fellowship is behind her murder. As Sookie and Hugo drive to the Fellowship church, Sookie tries to read Hugo's mind but finds him difficult to read and filled with ambiguous emotions. They arrange a cover story as they arrive. Inside, they encounter Sarah Newlin, the wife of the founder. Sarah walks them through the building, exposing its large size, to the office of her husband, Steve. Steve and Sarah tell Sookie and Hugo about the lock-in and dawn ceremony they are hosting that night. Steve wants Sookie and Hugo to stay for the lock-in even though Sookie insists they must leave. Steve and Sarah lead Sookie and Hugo to a basement door that convinces Sookie they are in trouble.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Sookie and Bill help Stan figure out that he has a traitor in his midst, suggesting a time later in the novel when someone will discover the identity of this traitor. Sookie and Bill also discover that Eric has followed them to Dallas, placing himself in danger of being thought of as the traitor. However, Eric is able to convince the Dallas vampires that he is innocent. The following day, Sookie learns that the human waitress, Bethany, that she interviewed to learn what happened to Farrell is dead. Sookie knows that Bethany was not killed by vampires because her body was not drained of blood. This suggests that the Fellowship is behind her death, telling the reader that Sookie's plans to visit the

headquarters of the Fellowship might not be a good idea. This thought is underscored when Sookie and Hugo are not allowed to leave the building and are instead led into a basement against their will.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Sookie and Hugo are forced into the basement and told that Farrell is down there, about to wake in the early dusk. Sookie attempts to get away and breaks her cheekbone when the guard, Gabe, knocks her feet out from under her as she climbs the stairs. Hugo and Sookie are locked into a cell. Hugo tells Sookie that he has been informing on the vampires to the Fellowship because of his doubts about a case he won for Stan that allowed Stan the right to live where he chose. Gabe comes back and tells Sookie he intends to rape her. Gabe puts Hugo in the cell with Farrell, knowing that Farrell has not fed in five days and is eager despite the fact that he is chained with silver to keep his powers to a minimum. Gabe then attempts to attack Sookie, but she is able to hold him off long enough for another vampire to come to her rescue. This vampire is Godfrey, the ancient one who helped kidnap Farrell. Sookie talks to him, asking about his desire to die. Godfrey says he wants to die for the child murders he has committed over time. Sookie agrees that he should die for that, but that Farrell should not be forced to die against his will. Sookie also claims that she and Hugo, whom Godfrey has told her are to be tied to Farrell and Godfrey when they meet the dawn, have never done anything bad enough to require a death sentence.

Godfrey helps Sookie get out of the basement. Halfway to the exit, Sarah and another Fellowship member come out of Steve's office. Godfrey shoves Sookie into an empty office and distracts Sarah by asking about the ceremony in the morning. Sookie knows she needs help, so she uses her telepathy to contact the bellboy at the hotel and asks him to tell Bill where she is. At this point, Godfrey has gotten Sarah and her companion out of the hall, clearing the way for Sookie to escape through the old sanctuary. Halfway through the church, however, Sookie hears a family coming in behind her. Sookie tries to escape, but the woman notices her and insists on treating her wounds. Sookie refuses and is backed up by a shapeshifter named Luna who works at the Fellowship.

Sookie and Luna go out into the parking lot and Luna starts to leave Sookie to her own devices, but changes her mind when the alarm goes out. Luna and Sookie climb into Luna's car and make it to the street, but Sarah follows close behind. Sarah causes an accident. Luna and Sookie are able to escape, however, when a bystander keeps Sarah from kidnapping Sookie. Luna insists she and Sookie go to the hospital where Luna has friends who manage to sneak them out of the hospital without leaving evidence. Sookie arrives back at the hotel to find Eric waiting. Eric and Bill clean up Sookie's wounds and tell her how the vampires rescued both Farrell and Hugo from the Fellowship by arriving during the chaos of Sookie's escape.



## Chapter 6 Analysis

Sookie and Hugo are forced into a cell and Sookie learns that Hugo was the traitor in the Dallas vampire nest. Sookie begins trying to figure out how to get free, showing the reader that her personality is one in which she never gives up under tough circumstances. This includes when a man is attempting to rape her. Sookie once experienced a sexual assault and is determined to never experience such a thing again. Thankfully Sookie is saved by Godfrey. Godfrey is the vampire who helped to kidnap Farrell and who is intent on his own demise. Sookie takes this opportunity to try to save Farrell, which was her assignment when she came to Dallas; she also wants to save herself and Hugo. Sookie is successful in saving Farrell but is unable to convince Godfrey he should not kill himself. It turns out that Godfrey has killed many children since the beginning of his existence as a vampire and the guilt has begun to overwhelm him. Sookie agrees he should have the right to take his own life; he just should not do it in a ceremony promoting hate against all vampires.

Sookie is able to escape the Fellowship church thanks not only to Godfrey, but also a shapeshifter named Luna who works at the center. It turns out Luna is there undercover for the shapeshifters in an attempt to gather information should the Fellowship ever learn about shapeshifters and begins targeting them as well. This adds to Sookie's knowledge of shapeshifters and also allows the reader to discover that shapeshifters each have something unique they change into, not just werewolves. Finally, Sookie returns to the hotel, injured but safe, and learns that Farrell and Hugo have also been rescued by Stan and his friends. This concludes Sookie's job in Dallas, but it makes both Sookie and the reader curious what will happen when Stan learns Hugo is the traitor.



# Chapters 7-8

## Chapters 7-8 Summary

In chapter 7, Sookie wakes before dawn and takes a taxi to the Fellowship church to witness Godfrey's quiet suicide. Sookie cries for him, something that surprises but honors the old vampire. That night, Sookie and Bill go to the Dallas vampire mansion to attend a celebration party for Farrell. When they arrive, Bill and Sookie speak with Stan about the case. Sookie insists on knowing what will happen to Hugo. Stan takes her to a room where Hugo and his lover, Isabel, are chained to opposite walls, naked, and forced to stare at one another. Hugo is obsessed with Isabel in a sexual manner and Isabel is desperate to feed off Hugo's blood. They will remain chained for months and then Hugo will be released twenty-four hours before Isabel. This is a punishment everyone agrees is appropriate for their crimes against the vampires.

Sookie and Bill return to the party. Sookie talks with another human female before relaxing on the couch with Eric. Suddenly Sookie becomes aware of many human minds outside the house. Sookie yells for everyone to get down. In chapter 8, Sookie finds herself pinned beneath Eric as the Fellowship members fire on the house. Most of the humans are killed and several vampires are killed by flying debris. When it is over, Eric talks Sookie into sucking a bullet out of his shoulder before his skin heals over it. Sookie then goes in search of Bill. Sookie finds Bill outside the house, having just killed and fed from one of the Fellowship members. This goes against a promise Bill made Sookie, so she leaves the house, leaves Dallas, and returns home alone.

## Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Sookie attends Godfrey's suicide, providing him support for his decision. While Sookie does not agree that a vampire should be murdered to prove a point, she is fully behind one making the choice to end his existence. This touches on the theme of acceptance and shows another side of Sookie's beliefs.

Sookie insists that Stan show her Hugo that night at a party for Farrell. Sookie wants to be sure that Hugo will not be murdered for his crimes against the vampires. Rather than being murdered, Hugo is being tortured by being near the naked body of his vampire lover and unable to touch her. Due to his addiction to the vampire female, this is a suitable punishment in the eyes of everyone who learns of this punishment.

Sookie and Bill return to the party and are nearly killed when the Fellowship attacks. Eric saves Sookie, but in return he encourages her to suck out a bullet in his shoulder. This causes Sookie to swallow some of Eric's blood, connecting them for the remainder of her life. Sookie then goes searching for Bill and discovers he has murdered one of the Fellowship members out of revenge. This goes against a promise Bill made Sookie, so she leaves, determined not to forgive him for this breach of trust.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Several weeks pass and Sookie refuses to call Bill. Bill refuses to contact Sookie as well. Then Sookie learns that Bill has been seen around town with Portia. Sookie does not believe it until she sees them together herself. Sookie is deeply jealous and angry. A few days later, Sookie goes to a local high school football game and sits with some old friends, including Tara, her fiancée Eggs, and their friend JB. JB is very handsome, but dumb, therefore not a viable lover for Sookie. However, when Sookie sees Bill there with Portia, she has no trouble making it appear as though JB is her date. Sookie even drives JB home. When Sookie arrives at her own home, Bill is waiting. They make up and Bill tells Sookie that Portia has been using him to convince the sex club members that she is kinky enough to invite to one of their meetings in her attempts to prove Andy did not kill Lafayette. A few days later, Sookie herself is invited to a sex club meeting by the local undertaker. Sookie decides to go and asks Eric to go with her since Bill is out of town.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Sookie and Bill are angry at one another and spend a few weeks apart. Sookie's anger is increased when she learns that he has been seen around town with Portia. However, when Sookie sees Bill at a football game and thinks of her desire for him, Bill shows up at her house and satisfies her desire in the same manner in which she thought of it. This suggests to the reader that vampires can somehow read human minds, similar to the way Sookie can read human minds. Sookie also learns that Portia was spending time with him under false pretenses, with the hopes of getting invited to the sex club that Lafayette spoke about before he died. This shows the reader how determined Portia is to find proof her brother is innocent, especially when the reader takes into account how much Portia dislikes vampires. Ironically, Sookie is invited to the sex club the following day, setting up a situation in which Sookie might be able to find out who really killed Lafayette.



# Chapters 10-11

## Chapters 10-11 Summary

In chapter 10, Sookie dresses sexily for the sex club meeting while Eric waits. Eric is dressed like a gay man, helping Sookie to get the other members of the club to think about Lafayette so she can read their minds and discover the identity of the killers. Sookie and Eric arrive at the club and are surprised to discover that besides the undertaker, Tara and Eggs are there along with another couple. Eggs seems particularly excited to see Eric. Sookie and Eric stay in the room long enough to figure out that the undertaker and the other couple killed Lafayette. Sookie has Eric take her outside and they lie on the hood of his car to keep the others from being suspicious while Sookie tries to figure out what to do next. Bill arrives, surprising Sookie, but before she can explain the situation, Andy bursts out of the woods. Andy has a gun and he holds everyone at gunpoint, insisting the guilty party confess. Sam arrives in his dog form. Close behind Sam is the maenad, with whom Sam has been having an affair. The maenad is not happy with the tribute made to her by Eric and is looking for a better hunt. The maenad feeds off of Andy's drunkenness and his anger. When the others come out of the house, the maenad figures out which ones are guilty and then proceeds to kill them. When it is over, only Tara and Eggs are the only members of the sex club still alive. The maenad leaves.

In chapter 11, Eric and Bill begin piling the bodies back into the house and light it on fire to make it look like an accident. Eric wipes Tara's memory of the incident and sends her home. Portia arrives, concerned that the death of the murderers will not clear her brother. However, Bill and Eric assure her there is enough evidence in the trunk of their cars to prove Andy's innocence. Finally, Eric returns to Shreveport and Bill takes Sookie home. Sookie falls into an exhausted sleep and Bill wakes her the following night. When Bill goes out to get the paper, he finds a cake on the porch. The cake is from Portia and Andy's grandmother. When Sookie mentions the woman's whole name, Bill becomes visibly upset. Bill has Sookie go to his house and get his family Bible. In the Bible, Bill shows Sookie the names of his wife and four children. Bill has realized that, due to the fact that Portia's grandmother has the same name as Bill's wife, that she is his great-great-granddaughter. Bill asks what he can do to help the Bellefleurs, and Sookie suggests they need money to continue to keep up the large family home where they live. This seems to soothe Bill's anxiety.

## Chapters 10-11 Analysis

Sookie takes Eric with her to the sex club, not only showing that she has come to a place where she feels she can trust Eric but also putting herself in a position where she will have to fight off his advances. Sookie learns what she wants to know about Lafayette's murder, but before she can do anything about it, Andy shows up. This shows the reader that this sex club that is supposed to be so secret really is not as secret as

everyone thought. The murder of Lafayette and the maenad have been ignored for the bulk of the novel; therefore, it is not surprising that they should return in the plot at the same time. The maenad feeds off of Andy's anger, fear, and drunkenness. The maenad then finds more fear in the sex club members, especially those who committed the murder. The maenad kills these people, exacting a kind of justice against the murderers.

The murder of Lafayette is solved and everything appears to be returning to normal, except for the grudging gratefulness of the Bellefleur family. When Sookie tells Bill Portia's grandmother's name in a joking, sarcastic way, he recognizes the name. Bill realizes that Portia, her brother, and grandmother are direct descendants of one of Bill's children. This makes them his grandchildren several times removed. Now Bill will want to care for these people in order to soothe some sort of obligation he feels toward them. This suggests to the reader a portion of the plot for the next Sookie Stackhouse novel.





# Characters

## Sookie Stackhouse

Sookie Stackhouse is a cocktail waitress who was born and raised in Bon Temps, Louisiana. Sookie was raised by her grandmother after the tragic death of her parents. Sookie has a brother with whom she has never been close. Sookie's grandmother has passed away, leaving her the family home. Sookie works at a bar in Bon Temps called Merlotte's. Merlotte's owner is a small, compact man with whom Sookie has a conflicting relationship. Sookie likes Sam, but is aware of his sexual attraction to her, but Sookie has a boyfriend. Sookie was raised in a family that believed in organized religion; therefore, some of Sookie's moral beliefs are grounded in the ideas preached by these organizations causing her to be a good friend and a trusted lover.

Sookie's neighbor, Bill, is a vampire. Sookie and Bill have been lovers for several months, and Sookie finds this relationship to be quite enjoyable. Sookie has the ability to read human minds; therefore, relationships have always been difficult for Sookie. Since she cannot read a vampire mind, Sookie finds that her relationship with Bill is more of a type that would be considered normal if she could not read minds at all. Due to her relationship with Bill, Sookie has agreed to occasionally use her abilities to help the vampires in times of need. Sookie has made them promise in return, however, that no humans found guilty through evidence she provides will be killed.

## Bill Compton

Bill Compton was once a farmer who lived before the time of the Civil War. Bill fought in the Civil War alongside his father, but he is the one who survived the war. Bill had a wife and four children during his lifetime but died soon after the birth of his youngest child. Quickly after his death, Bill was transformed into a vampire. Now Bill lives in Bon Temps in a home he inherited from a cousin, the last living relative he was aware he had. Bill and Sookie met a few months before this novel begins when Bill moved into the house next door. Bill is part of a movement of vampires attempting to make peace with humans and go public. As part of this desire for peace, Bill attempts to keep his feedings down to synthetic blood and anything Sookie is willing to share with him during their times of passion.

The community of vampires is complex and their rituals and traditions are also complex. Sookie still does not understand it all but knows she is safe as long as Bill is there to protect her. As part of his association with local vampires, Bill is an investigator. As such, Bill has promised that Sookie will on occasion read the minds of humans who have knowledge or evidence in vampire cases. Sookie does not like this but is reassured by the fact that the leader, Eric, has promised that no humans will be killed as a direct result of evidence Sookie has uncovered for them.



## Eric Northman

Eric Northman is the name Eric, leader of the northern Louisiana vampires, uses in his business dealings with humans. Eric was a Viking when he was alive and still resembles those large, blond people. Eric is Bill's boss and therefore is Sookie's boss when she uses her telepathy to help the vampires. Eric is very attracted to Sookie but respects Bill's claim on her and will not take her without Bill's permission. However, Eric has made it clear to Sookie that he would like her to become his human, and he could take her from Bill if she came to him willingly.

Eric is someone that Sookie dislikes at the beginning of the novel. Eric is not subtle and does not try to curb his interest in Sookie, even when Bill is around. However, as the novel continues and Eric begins to prove himself a decent guy, first by going to Dallas to watch over Sookie and then helping her track down Lafayette's killer, Sookie and the reader both begin to believe Eric is somewhat of a nice guy. Despite this, it is clear Sookie is happy with Bill and will not go willingly to Eric anytime soon. It is equally clear Eric is not the type to give up.

## Sam Merlotte

Sam Merlotte is the owner of Merlotte's Bar where Sookie works as a waitress. Sam is a small, strong man that most people seem to like and trust. Only Sookie and her friends know Sam is a shapeshifter, a supernatural creature who turns into a domesticated dog whenever the moon is full. Sam is attracted to Sookie, and they share a kiss at one point in the novel. However, Sam finds himself becoming involved with the maenad as it continues to roam the woods, a favorite changing spot for Sam.

## Andy Bellefleur

Andy Bellefleur is a cop in Bon Temps who becomes very drunk one night after dealing with a difficult case. Sookie and Andy are not friends because of a long history of enmity between the two families. The Bellefleurs have been in Bon Temps almost as long as the Stackhouses but are richer and therefore take credit for more than their share of the town's development. Sookie is not cruel to this family and politely asks for Andy's sister to come get him the night he becomes drunk. The next morning Sookie finds Lafayette, the short order cook at Merlotte's, dead in Andy's car. Toward the end of the novel, Sookie takes it upon herself to learn the identity of the real killer of Lafayette in order to clear Andy's name.

## Portia Bellefleur

Portia Bellefleur is Andy's sister. Portia is also a local attorney in Bon Temps. Portia wants to help clear her brother's name and goes to Sookie for help. When Sookie fails to find anything to help Portia, Portia takes advantage of a temporary split between Bill



and Sookie to use Bill to get the information she needs. This causes great jealousy on Sookie's part that ultimately brings her back together with Bill. Sookie takes Portia's place in the scheme to find the real killers and is responsible for those killers meeting a type of justice.

## Stan Davis

Stan Davis is the leader of the vampires in Dallas. Stan dresses like a nerd, wearing glasses even though vampires have perfect vision, in order to soften his appearance to humans. Stan is a tough leader who can communicate with his fellow vampires through some sort of telepathy that Sookie cannot hear. Stan enlists Sookie's help, through Eric, when one of his brothers, or fellow vampires, goes missing. Sookie is able to find the vampire and set the stage for Stan and his friends to rescue him. Later, Sookie learns that Stan is punishing the human and vampire responsible in part for the kidnapping by forcing them to look at one another naked, craving either sex or blood from one another, for months before letting them go. Sookie feels this is a suitable punishment for both.

## Godfrey

Godfrey is a vampire who is much older than Bill or any of the other vampires Sookie has met thus far. Godfrey has aligned himself with the Fellowship of the Sun because he is wracked with guilt for the multiple murders of children he has committed throughout his existence in order to feed. Godfrey is tired and would like to end his existence. The Fellowship has agreed to help him die in exchange for him doing it in a public forum in order to promote their message that vampires should all be eradicated. Godfrey agrees until he saves Sookie from one of the Fellowship members and realizes that the ceremony the Fellowship has planned is no better than the terrible acts he has committed throughout his existence. Godfrey argues about the ceremony with the Fellowship leaders, distracting them so Sookie can escape. Later, Godfrey exposes himself to the dawn with only Sookie as a witness.

## Barry the Bellboy

Barry the Bellboy is a telepath like Sookie. Sookie has never met another telepath so she is excited when she meets Barry. Sookie does not know how to approach him, however, so she does not. Later, when Sookie is locked in the Fellowship church and needs Bill, she reaches out with her mind and speaks to Barry. Barry is shocked by this, but he willingly helps Sookie by delivering her message.

## Steve and Sarah Newlin

Steve and Sarah Newlin are the leaders of the Fellowship of the Sun. On first meeting, Steve and Sarah seem upbeat, friendly people, similar to many highly religious people. Steve and Sarah know the Bible well and use passages from the Bible to spread their



hatred of the vampires. Steve and Sarah believe vampires are an abomination against God and should all be exterminated. To promote their message, the Newlins have decided to force a vampire to be exposed to the sunlight on the same day that Godfrey commits suicide in the same way. To do this, the Newlins have Godfrey and a couple of their followers kidnap Ferrell, a Dallas vampire. When Sookie and Hugo, another human friend of the vampires, go to the Fellowship church, the Newlins kidnap them with the intention of tying them to Godfrey and Ferrell, forcing them to burn for their support of the vampires.



# Objects/Places

## Earrings

After Bill and Sookie fight in Dallas over the fact that he killed a human who opened fire on the Dallas vampire nest, Bill repeatedly attempts to give Sookie a pair of earrings. Sookie eventually accepts them when they make up.

## Bill's Bible

When Bill hears the name of Portia and Andy's grandmother, he shows Sookie his family bible which proves that Portia and Andy are his great-great-great-grandchildren.

## LifeFlow

LifeFlow is the most common commercial name for the synthetic blood that allows vampires to live without attacking humans.

## Shopping Center

Bill buys a shopping center and gives Sookie permission to buy anything she would like on credit there. This causes a fight between Sookie and Bill because it wounds Sookie's pride.

## Andy Bellefleur's Car

Lafayette's murdered body is found inside Andy Bellefleur's car.

## Fellowship of the Sun

The Fellowship of the Sun is an organization of humans who believe vampires are an abomination and should be destroyed. It is this organization that wants to force Ferrell to commit suicide by standing in the sun.

## Mansion in Dallas

The Dallas vampires live in a mansion on a small city lot in the middle of the Dallas. This house is targeted by Fellowship members and fired on, killing multiple humans and a few vampires.



## **Fangtasia**

Fangtasia is the name of the bar owned in part by Eric in Shreveport, Louisiana. This is where Sookie and Bill are headed when Sookie is attacked by the maenad.

## **Merlotte's Bar**

Sookie is a barmaid at Merlotte's Bar in the small community of Bon Temps, Louisiana.

## **Silent Shore Hotel**

The Silent Shore Hotel is a hotel in Dallas that caters to vampires. This hotel has high levels of security during the day, no windows, and provides humans from which vampires feed.

## **Anibus Air**

Anubis Air is an airline that caters to vampires, transporting vampires safely during the day in their coffins.

## **Bon Temps**

Bon Temps is the small community in northern Louisiana where Sookie was raised and continues to live.

## **Shreveport**

Shreveport is a large city in northern Louisiana where Eric and his vampire companions live.



# Themes

## Vampires and Supernatural Creatures

This novel exists in an alternate reality in which vampires have come out of hiding and are asking for the government to accept them as a new class of citizens. In this reality, people have believed for many years that vampires are only a piece of fiction, creatures created in someone's imagination. However, some of these vampires have come forward, tired of living in secrecy, and have asked to be recognized. This causes a great deal of concern among humans, especially when most humans are under the impression that vampires need to kill humans in order to survive. Vampires work hard to discourage this opinion of their kind while the truth remains hidden. In order to help vampires exist alongside humans a synthetic blood has been created in order to help the vampire live without the need to feed off humans. While this synthetic blood helps, most vampires still require human blood from time to time. In fact, in this new reality, many vampires equate taking blood from a human with sex.

Along with vampires, Sookie Stackhouse is beginning to discover that other types of supernatural creatures exist. Among these are the shapeshifters, creatures who once a month change into some kind of animal, ranging in form from dogs to bats to werewolves. Among these creatures is Sam Merlotte, Sookie's boss at Merlotte's Bar. Sookie also has a run-in with a maenad, a mythical creature from Greek mythology who feeds off of the chaos and violence that tends to evolve in modern bars. The creature Sookie meets beats her in order to get the message to Eric that she wants to be shown tribute. Unfortunately, Eric's tribute does not satisfy. However, the maenad takes satisfaction from the murders of three people who killed one of Sookie's co-workers.

## Prejudice

In the reality in which Sookie Stackhouse lives, vampires exist. As a result of revealing their existence, a movement has begun of humans who use the Bible to justify the murders of vampires. This group, the Fellowship of the Sun, believe vampires are an abomination against God and should be destroyed universally. This group is similar to the Ku Klux Klan of the forties, fifties, and sixties, a hate group who targeted blacks. Like the KKK, the Fellowship uses hate tactics to scare, intimidate, and murder vampires. This group kidnaps one of the Dallas vampires and plans to force him to commit suicide by taking him outside at dawn. This vampire does not wish to die, but the Fellowship feels he should because his kind has murdered humans for many generations. No one bothers to ask this specific vampire if he ever killed a human.

Sookie infiltrates this group only to discover they know who she is and plan to kill her for associating with vampires. It does not matter to the Fellowship if Sookie ever killed a human or if she ever supported a vampire killing a human. In fact, the fellowship does nothing to discover that Sookie has gone out of her way to ensure that the vampires she



associates with do not harm humans. Sookie is helped by another vampire who has associated with the Fellowship in an attempt to atone for the sins he has committed throughout his long existence. Sookie returns to watch this vampire kill himself by greeting the dawn, something she feels she owes to him. However, it is not the public ceremony the Fellowship had planned, only a simple, single death without ceremony. Afterward, the Fellowship has not stopped their mission to kill vampires. The Fellowship show up at the Dallas mansion where the Dallas vampires are having a party and fire upon it. Many humans are killed and a few vampires are killed when debris stakes them or the bullets tear off their heads. It is hatred and misunderstanding that fuels this attack and what makes prejudice a theme of the novel.

## Acceptance

Although not all humans in this novel are associated with the hate group, the Fellowship of the Sun, many of the humans who have only recently learned about the existence of vampires do not understand them and therefore are fearful of them. Many humans shun the vampires, not only because they do not know what to expect from them but because they are afraid of anything different from themselves. Portia and Andy Bellefleur are a part of this group. Portia is frightened of Bill Compton, Sookie's vampire lover, because she is frightened of what he might do to her when they are alone. However, when Portia's brother, Andy, is accused of murder, Portia is willing to use Bill in order to prove her brother innocent. Although Portia has not gotten over her fear of Bill, a reader could argue that this shows some acceptance of vampires on Portia's part.

Sookie has accepted vampires. Perhaps it is easier for Sookie to accept vampires because she herself has a special gift in which she can read human minds. Sookie has never understood or accepted her talent as a gift, but Bill has helped her to accept it and to use it in order to benefit herself and others. Sookie has had trouble having relationships because of this gift; therefore, another reason for her acceptance of vampires is the fact that she cannot read vampire minds. This helps Sookie feel normal. Sookie is openminded, willing to accept people and creatures different from herself as long as they treat her with the same consideration as she treats them. This is why acceptance is an important element to this novel.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the first person. The novel is told completely through the first person narration of the main character, Sookie Stackhouse. Sookie is a barmaid in the south who happens to have the ability to read human minds. Sookie lives in a reality in which vampires exist and have chosen to go public with their existence. Other supernatural beings also exist in this reality, but most of them choose to remain secret. Only Sookie and a handful of her vampire friends know of their existence. The novel is written as a chronicle of the events in Sookie's life that include her vampire and supernatural friends, as well as those humans she interacts with on a daily basis.

The point of view of this novel works because it presents the plot from a single viewpoint, keeping the plot simple and easy for the reader to understand. The first person point of view can often be restricting, but in this novel it is handled with such care that it does nothing to detract from the overall plot of the novel. In fact, Sookie's point of view is often humorous and entertaining, sharing with the reader Sookie's unique humor and sense of reality.

## Setting

The novel is set primarily in Bon Temps, Louisiana. This location is in northern Louisiana, not far from Shreveport and the Texas border. This setting provides a strong southern background but does not include the Cajun flavor that often infiltrates novels set in New Orleans. This novel also includes the setting of Dallas, Texas. While this setting introduces some history to the novel that most American readers will recognize, such as the book depository from which Oswald shot JFK, the author does not go into a strong description of the setting except to introduce the size of the metropolis as compared to tiny Bon Temps.

The setting of the novel is interesting in the fact that it creates an alternate reality that is ultimately familiar to readers who know the southern states of the United States. The novel moves away from settings, such as New Orleans, that are familiar to vampire novel aficionados, and moves into a more modern, small town setting. This setting adds not only a uniqueness to the setting, but it also adds something that is more sympathetic to the vampire and less ominous. There is a lightness to the setting that makes the reader feel safe in the presence of the vampire characters that populate the novel. In this way, the setting not only compliments the plot, but adds a new dimension to an old story.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. The novel is written in modern English, an English that is filled with simple grammar and modern slang. The language does not include many words that are unfamiliar to the reader, very few foreign phrases, and few mythical words like those a reader might expect to find in a novel populated by supernatural creatures. The author does a great job of telling a mythical story with very little attention to the tired phrases that are often used by other writers to describe the ancient vampires.

The language of this novel is appropriate to the plot because it is the type of language one would expect a modern girl to use. The novel is written by Sookie Stackhouse, a twenty-something bar maid with little education who lives in a reality populated by mythical creatures. Sookie's language fits her level of education, only occasionally surprising a reader with a big word or piece of Greek myth. In this way, the language works well with the plot and is friendly to readers of all ages and education levels.

## Structure

The novel is divided into eleven chapters. Some of these chapters, especially those at the beginning of the novel, are quite long. However, other chapters tend to be fairly short, some only a few pages long. The novel is told in a combination of exposition and dialogue, with some internal dialogue. The novel follows a linear time line, beginning with the situation that left a cop's private car parked in a lot where a body could be placed inside and ending with the satisfactory conclusion of this same plot.

The novel contains two major plots and several sub plots. The first major plot is the murder of Lafayette, a short order cook at the bar where Sookie Stackhouse works. This man's murder does not excite the enthusiasm of the local police because of his history of homosexual behaviors, leaving Sookie determined to learn who killed her friend. The other major plot line takes Sookie to Dallas where she is assigned to use her gifts to learn the location of a vampire who has gone missing from the Dallas nest. Among the subplots of this novel are Sookie's love affair with Bill Compton, a local vampire, and the attempts of Portia Bellefleur to clear her brother's name in Lafayette's murder. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion, or standoff, by the end of the novel.



## Quotes

"I let down my mental guard and read Andy's mind. I was sorry." Chapter 1, pg. 2

"They could hear Terry hollering on the nightmare nights. I never, never read Terry's mind." Chapter 2, pg. 19

"I'd been assuming the road meant help—but of course, it didn't." Chapter 2, pg. 33

"I opened my eyes with great reluctance." Chapter 3, pg. 42

"It was as hot as the six shades of hell in Dallas, especially on the pavement at the airport." Chapter 4, pg. 66

"There were lots of humans who hadn't liked discovering they shared the planet with vampires." Chapter 5, pg. 106

"Hugo really couldn't imagine that anything irreparable could happen to him, because he was a middle-class white American with a college education, as were all the people on the stairs with us." Chapter 6, pgs. 139-140

"Every vampire obeyed. So when the Fellowship opened fire, it was the humans that died." Chapter 7, pg. 210

"Then I realized that if he were hit with bullets, he would most likely survive. But I wouldn't." Chapter 8, pg. 211

"Sometimes, I just wanted to see humans for a while." Chapter 9, pg. 217

"It was pure madness, it was mindless madness. From the maenad poured the berserker rage, the lust of pillage, the hubris of pride." Chapter 10, pg. 270

"Bill smiled a little, a smile that I'd never seen on his face before. He looked quite human." Chapter 11, pg. 288



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss Sookie Stackhouse. Who is Sookie? What is her job? What is her special gift? Why do the vampires expect Sookie to use this gift to aid them? Why does Sookie not like her gift? How does Bill teach her to use her mental barriers to protect herself from learning too much from those around her? How does Sookie later use her gift to get help when she is kidnapped by the Fellowship?

Discuss Bill Compton. Who is Bill? Where is he from? What is unusual about his date of death? How did Sookie and Bill meet? What is strange about their relationship? How does Bill upset Sookie during their trip to Dallas? Is Sookie's outrage justified considering Bill's unusual circumstances? How could Bill have handled the situation differently? How could Sookie have reacted differently? Explain.

Discuss Eric. Who is Eric? Where is Eric from? What is Eric's interest in Sookie? Is this interest romantic or otherwise? Why does Sookie turn to Eric for help toward the end of the novel? Was this a good choice? How could this have caused trouble for Sookie and/or Eric? Does Eric have a good, honest character? If so, why does Sookie have trouble accepting his friendship?

Discuss the Bellefleurs. Who is Portia? What does she do for a living? Why is Portia frightened of Bill? Why does Portia begin spending time with Bill? What does this say about Portia's overall personality? Who is Andy? What does he do for a living? Why is he getting drunk in Merlotte's as the novel begins? What does this say about Andy's personality? Why is Andy later accused of murder? Is he guilty?

Discuss Godfrey. Who is Godfrey? Why has he become aligned with the Fellowship? What does he want from the Fellowship? What does this say about Godfrey's personality? Why does Godfrey put himself in danger by saving Sookie from rape? Does Godfrey want to help Sookie? Why? What eventually happens to Godfrey? Why does this happen? What does this say about Godfrey and Sookie?

Discuss the Fellowship of the Sun. What is their purpose? For what reasons do they do what they do? Are their methods good? Why does no one attempt to help or stop them? Compare and contrast the Fellowship with other groups of their type, including the KKK and anti-abortionists. Is it right to commit murder in order to prove a point? Why or why not.

Discuss vampires. Compare and contrast this novel with other vampire novels of its type. How is this novel different from traditional vampire stories? How is it similar? Why do you think the author chose to incorporate these differences? Discuss Sookie as compared to other famous human characters in popular vampire novels. How is Sookie different? What benefit is achieved with these difference? Discuss the similarities. Why do you think the author incorporated these similarities?