

The Long Goodbye Study Guide

The Long Goodbye by Raymond Chandler

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Plot Summary

Phillip Marlowe, a private investigator, first sees Terry Lennox outside a club. Terry is very drunk and falls from his car. Marlowe picks him up and helps him get home. He similarly rescues Terry again when he's drunk on a street and attracting the attention of a cop. The two spend a few evenings together drinking gimlets until the day Terry arrives at Marlowe's apartment asking for a ride to the airport in Tijuana. Marlowe obliges and is soon questioned by the police for his involvement in helping Terry escape after killing his wife, Sylvia. Marlowe refuses to answer questions, which earns him several nights in jail until the police have word of Terry's suicide in Mexico and a signed confession. Marlowe thinks it's too convenient but can't prove anything.

He's approached by a book publisher named Spencer to help Roger Wade finish a book. Roger is drinking heavily and Spencer, at the urging of Roger's wife Eileen, believes Marlowe can find the cause and eliminate it. Eileen then says that Roger has been missing three days and Marlowe agrees to find him. He makes a series of discoveries soon after locating Roger - Eileen was previously married to Terry Lennox though he used the name Paul Marston on the marriage license and that Roger was sleeping with Sylvia at the time of her murder. He deals with a houseboy named Candy who wants to protect Roger and believes Marlowe represents a danger to Roger and with Eileen's seemingly uncaring attitude toward her husband. Roger is soon found dead in his study of an apparent self-inflicted bullet wound. In the end, Marlowe wins Candy's loyalty by determining that Eileen killed Roger and showing his own trust in Candy. Sylvia then commits suicide and leaves a confession that it was also she who killed Sylvia.

Marlowe continues to worry about Terry's death. He seems to think that it might have been murder and it's not until near the end of the story that he latches onto a seemingly slight inconsistency in the story. Terry wrote a letter to Marlowe and sent him a five thousand dollar bill. He writes that he's sending a waiter with the letter to the mailbox on the corner near his hotel. With a little research, Marlowe discovers that the Mexican town is little more than a village and that there are no mailboxes. He questions a friend of Terry's - one of two men saved when Terry risked his life to throw a missile that had landed in their foxhole. Soon, the friend, Randy Starr, sends a note introducing a Mexican man named Cisco Maioranos. Marlowe soon reveals that he knows the man's true identity is Terry Lennox.



Chapters 1 through 5

Chapters 1 through 5 Summary

Phillip Marlowe describes the first time he sees Terry Lennox outside a club called The Dancers. He is with a girl and Marlowe will later learn it's his ex-wife, Sylvia. Terry is very drunk. He falls out of his car and the girl, calling him a "lost dog" but saying he's "mostly housebroken," drives away and leaves him. Marlowe approaches him and helps him up though the parking attendant says he wouldn't help. Marlowe says that that attitude has apparently gotten the parking attendant a long way in life so far but the man doesn't catch Marlowe's sarcasm. Marlowe takes him home, sobers him up enough to get his address and takes him to his own apartment. He sees him again at Thanksgiving when Lennox is again drunk. This time, Marlowe intervenes just before a policeman arrests him.

Lennox leaves a suitcase at Marlowe's house, packs in a battered suitcase belonging to Marlowe and heads to Las Vegas where he tells Marlowe he has a job. Sylvia Lennox calls and says that she is worried about Terry. Marlowe isn't polite but does tell her Terry is on the way to Vegas.

Marlowe learns on the society pages that Terry and Sylvia have remarried and that Sylvia's father is a millionaire. Then one day, Terry shows up and invites Marlowe for a drink. Marlowe agrees and the two of them begin going out quite often. Marlowe notes that Terry can now hold his liquor and never gets drunk. He continues to ask questions, such as why Terry wants to hang out with a simply private investigator and why he wants to remain as Sylvia's "trained poodle." Terry answers that the correct question could be why Sylvia wants him around. Marlowe notes that had he asked the story of Terry's life, Terry might have told it, and it could possibly have saved two lives.

The two are in a bar and Terry tells Marlowe that his wife is scared, though he seems to be talking more in terms of fear for her position, her wealth and her status than for her life. He does say that her father is a "coldhearted son of a bitch" and that if she were involved in a scandal, he'd "break her in half and bury the two halves a thousand miles apart." Marlowe gets angry at the turn of the conversation, tells Terry that he talks too much about himself and leaves. A month later, Terry is ringing Marlowe's doorbell at five in the morning and greets Marlowe with a dark hat pulled over his eyes and a gun in his hand.

Terry doesn't point the gun at Marlowe and Marlowe invites him in. He makes a big deal of making his morning coffee and Terry starts to cry. Marlowe takes the gun that hasn't been recently fired. Terry starts to tell Marlowe everything but Marlowe stops him saying that he can't know about anything illegal because of his PI license. He then carefully questions Terry and then offers a "recap." He says that Terry discovered Sylvia in the guesthouse and that she'd recently been with another man, and that he'd decided to leave. Terry confirms that's what happened and asks Marlowe to take him to catch a



plane in Tijuana. Marlowe, confirming that he can't be held liable for knowing anything illegal, agrees. Terry has no luggage, and Marlowe throws some pajamas and other items into the expensive suitcase Terry left earlier. He hands it to Terry at the airport and Terry tries to refuse, but Marlowe insists. Marlowe then says, "I know you didn't kill her" and Terry says he's wrong. Marlowe doesn't stop him even then.

Chapters 1 through 5 Analysis

Marlowe, in typical fashion, says that he didn't know how much trouble Terry Lennox was going to be, but that trouble is his business. He says that he's not certain what it was that made him pay attention to Terry except that perhaps it was what the woman said - he looked like a lost dog. He does note that Terry is polite to a fault, even when falling down drunk, and that it seems practiced like he's made apologies many times. He says that at that time he didn't yet know that Terry was broke and had spent his last dollar on the evening at The Dancers with a woman who didn't even stick around to see he got home. Marlowe notes that Terry has a series of scars on his face and when he sees him the second time, he's so pale that the scars barely show. When they are talking later, Lennox says he has a job offer in Vegas and Marlowe says he'll put up the money because he has the feeling that the next time he sees Terry, there'll be serious trouble involved.

As they're talking once, Terry says that he would never take a hand out from a friend though he'd accept help from a stranger. He says it's because the friend doesn't have an option to say no while the stranger could simply walk on by. As Terry is able to pay his own way, drive expensive cars and seems to be on top of the world, Marlowe says that he liked Terry better as a down and out drunk. Then he admits that perhaps he simply likes it better when he's the person on top.

It's interesting to note that earlier Marlowe said he could usually learn a lot about a person if he merely listens. He says that he never asked Terry about his life but now Terry is saying something that could have been important and Marlowe doesn't want to hear it.

While it's not yet explained, Marlowe talks of an old Packard parked next to him at the airport. He also mentions that a tall woman saw him checking out the car, but he pays little attention at the time.



Chapters 6 through 10

Chapters 6 through 10 Summary

Marlowe arrives home to find two officers at his house, Green and Dayton. They tell him they found him because his phone number was written on a pad at Terry's house. They question him but he skirts their questions with questions of his own. He learns that Sylvia is dead, bludgeoned to death with a statuette of a monkey in the guesthouse. Marlowe tells the two that the law says he doesn't have to answer their questions. They call their captain who says to arrest Marlowe. Marlowe says the cops don't check his house, which means they didn't find the keys to Terry's car. The plan had been for Marlowe to move it to a storage place later but "hoodlums" stole it during the night, moved it to Mexico and forged new papers for it - meaning the police never located Terry's car as he made good his escape.

Marlowe is taken to the police station where he's hit by a solid punch thrown by Captain Gregorius. After withstanding the punch, Gregorius tells Green to question Marlowe and get the details of his whereabouts for the previous twenty-four hours. Then Gregorius gets a call from the Police Commissioner and he abruptly changes his tact, instructing Green to book Marlowe on suspicion of murder. There's no real indication of the talk with the Commissioner but Gregorius orders Green to remove the handcuffs and, into the phone, insists that no one has "laid a glove" on Marlowe, despite the fact that Green socked him before leaving Marlowe's home and the Captain hit him as well. The Captain spits in his face before Marlowe is taken from his office.

Marlowe describes jail and says the felony cells are - in comparison to the drunk tank - not bad. If an inmate behaves, he can even have smokes. He says a man has plenty of time to think, if there's anything he can stand to think about. He's told his attorney is waiting for him and he enters a room to find a man who identifies himself as Sewell Endicott. He says that he's been hired to represent Marlowe and that the bills will be paid, but refuses to say who paid the retainer. Marlowe says that since the attorney is there, "they" must have caught Terry. Endicott says that Terry has not been captured and that it's not Terry who is paying the bill. Marlowe says that he figures he'll only be in jail for a few days. He says that if they catch Terry, they'll simply be glad to have him and will turn Marlowe out. If they don't catch Terry, they'll want the case to go away for fear of too much media attention. He says that he'll wait it out in jail, either way. He also tells Endicott to tell Terry not to worry - that he's not in jail because of Terry but on principle.

A man named Spranklin takes Marlowe to the DA's office where Marlowe meets Mr. Grenz. Grenz obviously drinks too much and snaps at the men when they enter without knocking. Marlowe correctly guesses that they interrupted a drink and Grenz helps himself to another shot. Marlowe smokes though Grenz tells him not to. When Marlowe reaches across the desk to put out his cigarette, Grenz thinks he's reaching for his bottle and snatches it away. He then tells Marlowe that he wants to know everything



Marlowe did for the past twenty-four hours. When Marlowe refuses, Grenz says that they have witnesses who saw Marlowe and Terry at the airport in Tijuana. Other witnesses saw Terry disguised as a Mexican board another plane at Mazatlan under the name Silvano Rodriguez. He then chartered a plane to Oatoclan. He goes on with the story but Marlowe doesn't believe it, and Grenz eventually says that Terry shot himself to death in a hotel room, leaving behind a full, signed confession. Grenz signed a release order for Marlowe.

Marlowe is released from jail and catches a ride home with a journalist, Lonnie Morgan. Morgan says that the newspaper publishers are competitive but all belong to the "same club" of wealthy people and that the lid had been effectively placed on the Lennox case. Morgan says it's "convenient" that Terry is dead and that he left a confession. Morgan hints that it's just too convenient. He says that Marlowe needs some time to mourn the death of Terry because he must have been a good friend - after all, Marlowe went to jail for Terry. He then says that just because he can't print it doesn't mean he doesn't know about it.

Chapters 6 through 10 Analysis

Marlowe insists that he does know Terry, that Terry knew his wife was cheating for years and that he couldn't have killed her. Marlowe suggests that they look to the man Sylvia was with that night in the guesthouse but the police insist that Terry is the killer. There's no indication as to why Marlowe doesn't tell them that he drove Terry to catch a plane unless it's that he expects that to indicate that he is an accomplice. It's much later that Marlowe will discover that Sylvia was shot before being bludgeoned.

When the Captain gives Marlowe a chance to talk, he says that he appreciates the Captain's tactics. He says that because of the punches when he had no choice but to take it, he finds it easier to simply refuse to answer questions than he might otherwise have done. He says that he would now refuse to tell the Captain the time, even if the Captain provided the clock. The sarcasm is typical of Marlowe.

Marlowe points out that Sylvia's father is a millionaire and that he owns newspapers. He says that he expects that combination to mean that there will be plenty of publicity on the case and wonders while talking with Endicott why he hasn't been contacted by reporters. Endicott says that those millions that can buy attention can also buy silence. He continues to refuse to say who hired him but insists that it's not Terry. Marlowe simply can't fathom why anyone else would be interested.

A man name Spranklin from the District Attorney's office meets Marlowe, telling him he's to go to the DA's office. He handcuffs Marlowe and tells him that he once had a prisoner escape and that's "they ate his ass" for that. He says he also once shot a prisoner and that "they ate his ass" for that too. Marlowe, in typical sarcastic fashion, says that Spranklin just seems to get it no matter what. Spranklin seems to consider that for a long moment then agrees. When Marlowe is being pushed to give an accounting of his time with Terry, it seems obvious to Marlowe that Grenz doesn't have everything he



says he has. As it turns out, he was correct and Granz was simply hoping to pin an accessory charge on Marlowe.

Marlowe spends the evening thinking, finds five hundred dollars Terry left in the coffee can and goes to bed listening for the "patient voice" that explains situations if Marlowe will only be still and listen. He says that in this case, there's no explanation necessary. He still says that he doesn't believe Terry could have killed his wife, simply because of the brutality of the crime.



Chapters 11 through 14

Chapters 11 through 14 Summary

A man who Marlowe identifies as a racketeer named Menendez appears in Marlowe's office the day he returned from work after being released from jail. Just as Mendez walks in, the phone rings. It's the attorney, Endicott, who tells Marlowe that he may not be totally off the hook with regard to the case of Terry Lennox. Endicott again offers his services and tells Marlowe that he's headed to Mexico. He hints that he's going to retrieve Terry's body but again doesn't say who has hired him to offer his services to Marlowe. When Marlowe talks to Menendez, the man is rude and pushy. He slaps Marlowe but Marlowe doesn't react at all until the end of the conversation when Marlowe punches Menendez in the stomach. He tells Menendez that he shouldn't say Marlowe is a "cheapie" unless he brings a gun. Menendez says he has someone to carry the gun for him and introduces him to Chick Agostino.

Menendez says that he's known Terry since his own war days. He says that he, Terry and a man named Randy Starr were in a foxhole when a missile landed next to them. It took a second to detonate and during that time, Terry grabbed it and rushed from the foxhole. He threw it but part of the shrapnel hit him in the side of the face. He was then picked up by the "krauts." Menendez says he and Randy had plenty of money from their black market endeavors after the war and that they spent a lot finding Terry. They were grateful but Terry refused almost all help. Menendez says he's "sore" that Terry came to Marlowe when he needed help rather than to Menendez or Randy Starr. Marlowe will later learn from the police that Terry Lennox had no war record.

For three days, Marlowe doesn't get a single job. Then Howard Spencer calls. Marlowe says he thought he was in dire need of money until he got home that evening and found the letter from Terry. The letter included a "picture of Madison." He later reveals that Madison's picture is on the five thousand dollar bill that was included in Terry's letter.

Terry's letter is fairly brief and says only that he's certain Marlowe has by now figured out that there's no way Terry could have bludgeoned his wife with the violence that's been described. He says that he's in a hotel, that he's being watched and that he's sending the letter to be mailed with the "mozo," a waiter of sorts. He says that he's written the confession and that it seems there's nothing left but the gun in his hand. Marlowe has trouble sleeping but has an appointment to meet Howard Spencer the following morning so doesn't drink himself to sleep as he wishes.

While waiting for Mr. Spencer, Marlowe sees a beautiful blonde and spends extensive time in the description. Spencer, a publisher, says that his current best writer is Roger Wade who has suddenly began acting strangely. He says that Roger pushed his wife down a flight of stairs and that the wife is scared of him. Marlowe points out that he can't watch the man all the time but Spencer says that Roger's wife believes there is something prompting his change of personality and that they want Marlowe to find out



what it is. Marlowe declines and the blond woman walks over, identifying herself as Eileen Wade, Roger's wife. Marlowe still declines, saying that he feels he could cause more harm than good if Roger actually needs a psychiatrist or medical help. He says that he'll go see Roger, but only if Roger wants him to. Eileen hands him a business card with her home address - an exclusive subdivision called Idle Valley. Marlowe notes that he belongs in Idle Valley as a pearl onion belongs on a banana split.

Eileen Wade comes to Marlowe's house and tells him that she wants to hire him, though for different reasons than Spencer outlined. She says that her husband has been missing for three days. He's gone off like that before and has typically returned after a few days, though he was sometimes sick. This time, she's worried because the intervals between the drinking escapades are becoming increasingly less. She provides a couple of pieces of paper including one that reads, "I do not like you Dr. V. But right now you are the man for me." Both notes were typed with no mistakes and Eileen says he was drinking heavily just before he disappeared. Marlowe agrees to look for Roger but refuses to take any money. He says he'll accept payment from Roger, when he's found.

Chapters 11 through 14 Analysis

In fact, Terry had gone to Randy Starr briefly when he went to Las Vegas. He was to work for Randy and said that he did until the time he remarried Sylvia. After Menendez leaves Marlowe's office, he sits down to think. It occurs to him that he's talked to Endicott that day, and then visited by Menendez, and that there might be a connection. On a hunch, he calls Randy Starr but doesn't reach him.

It's interesting to note that Menendez warns Marlowe against making any profit from his association with Terry. When Marlowe says that no one has offered money, Menendez doesn't believe him saying that no one would go to jail for three days without making something from it. He also says that it was "crusty" of Marlowe to call on the Police Commissioner but also doesn't believe Marlowe when he says that wasn't his doing either. It's much later that Menendez's true motivation is revealed. He's actually trying to warn Marlowe off the case because he doesn't anyone delving into Terry's death.

It's not until much later that Marlowe will question the method of mailing the letter. He will later say that there was no mailbox on the street as Terry indicates in his letter. He'll also question the fact that Terry indicates that someone knocks at the door so he must finish the letter because it's bound to be the waiter come to get the letter.

When Spencer arrives, he asks Marlowe to tell him about himself. Marlowe gives some basic details and ends by saying that he has five thousand dollars in his pocket that he carries for a good luck charm. Spencer acknowledges that with that kind of cash on hand, he can't push Marlowe to take any job. Marlowe, despite being taken with Eileen Wade, says there's something wrong with Spencer's story. He says that his first clue was that Eileen is beautiful and Spencer didn't even glance in his direction. He then says that there's no way any man pushed a woman so beautiful down the stairs. He'll later learn that she fell and that her husband tried to catch her.



Chapters 15 through 20

Chapters 15 through 20 Summary

Marlowe says that even a great detective has to have a place to start and he goes to a friend, George Peters, who works for the Carne Agency, which is apparently a type of detective agency. Marlowe asks for the file on the "barred window boys" and it's later explained that these are places with "barred windows" such as sanitariums. Peters gives him a list of three doctors with names that begin with "V." After a brief discussion on the practices and problems of each, Marlowe decides that he "likes" Verringer who runs a type of retreat for artistic types. He's in Peters' file because of a woman who committed suicide there.

As Marlowe prepares to leave, Peters tells him that he'd come across some information about Terry Lennox and thought Marlowe would be interested. He says that an operative named Ashterfelt met a man matching Terry's description in "New York five or six years ago," and that the man - who was very drunk - claimed his name was Marston.

Marlowe goes to the ranch where he hopes to find Dr. Verringer and perhaps get a lead on Roger. A man, later identified as Earl, attempts to stop Marlowe's questions by saying that his temper isn't "reliable." Marlowe says, "What do you do when you get mad - dance a tango with a ground squirrel?" The man dons brass knuckles and they briefly scuffle before Dr. Verringer calls Earl off. He immediately sits on a step and begins to comb his hair. Dr. Verringer assures Marlowe that Roger isn't there and that he has closed the business. He says he has "sold out" and that the property is to be subdivided. According to Verringer, he has taken over the care of Earl because he was friends with Earl's parents. He says that he has given up the retreat because he was forced to choose between the business and Earl. Marlowe says that he believes Earl is manic-depressive and is simply on an upswing at the moment, but doesn't press the issue.

Marlowe next stops at Dr. Lester Vukanich's office, an ear, nose and throat doctor then at Dr. Amos Varley's residential home. He decides neither is likely holding Roger.

Eileen Wade telephones Marlowe that evening and he questions her about Verringer but she doesn't know the name. She has mentioned that Roger was once brought home by a man dressed up like a cowboy and Marlowe asks if she'd recognize him if she saw him again. She isn't certain. She says it sounds as if he's on the right track and he says he could be "wetter than a drowned kitten." He does, however, arm himself with a gun and a flashlight and head back to the Verringer property.

He first sees Earl then sees a man he believes to be Roger Wade lying almost lifeless on a bed in another cabin. Verringer comes in and demands five thousand dollars for Roger's keep over the past days. Roger says he's already paid six hundred and fifty and that he's not paying more. Verringer demands it and they are arguing when Earl enters



the cabin. Roger calls Earl a "psycho" and Earl runs at the bed, armed with brass knuckles and swinging. He hits Verringer, knocking him out and Marlowe runs in. Earl's personality changes completely and he pours water on the doctor, apologizing for hitting him. Verringer tells Marlowe that he'll help Roger dress and Marlowe steps from the cabin.

Verringer drives them to Marlowe's car and begs Roger for the five thousand, even promising to pay it back. He mentions a "connection in Cuba," but doesn't explain. After driving awhile in silence, Roger asks Marlowe why he should give him the money and Marlowe says there's no reason at all. Roger then asks why he feels like a bastard for refusing and Marlowe repeats, "No reason at all." At the house, Eileen runs to meet them and the houseboy, Candy, helps Roger to bed. Eileen invites Marlowe in but he refuses. He then pulls her to him and kisses her. She tells him he shouldn't have done that because up to that point he'd been very nice.

Chapters 15 through 20 Analysis

Peters says he knew about Marlowe's recent trouble, indicating the jail time. That seems to be the reason he shared the information about Terry Lennox. There's no additional reference at this point and Marlowe doesn't ask Peters anything else about it. Marlowe does say that if Terry had a military record - as he believes is the case - the name would be easy to verify. He says it wouldn't make sense for him to change his name.

Marlowe says that he hears music coming from inside the building at Verringer's place and the snapping of fingers. However, he doesn't press this issue either and leaves when the doctor insists. He does wait down the road and watches the private drive leading to Verringer's. In a short time, he hears a car approach and leave. When he drives by, the gate is padlocked. He'll soon be coming back to check out the property because at the end of the day, it's as close as he's come to having a lead.

Marlowe admits that the first lead looked promising but that the first promising leads often turn into nothing. He wonders whether to continue the search and figures that checking out the other two doctors will take most of the afternoon. He says that he expects to call Eileen Wade that evening to learn that Roger has returned on his own anyway. After some contemplation, he does decide to follow the remaining two leads and it seems that it's so that he can have the peace of mind of knowing that he did what he could.

When Marlowe sees Earl twirling a rope and practicing with his guns, he's certain he's in the right place based on the description of the man who dropped Roger off following an earlier absence. Marlowe is merely watching the action in Roger's cabin until Earl hits the doctor. It's interesting to note that when the doctor says he'll help Roger dress and prepare to leave, Marlowe allows it.



Roger asks Marlowe his name and makes the connection to the Sylvia Lennox case. He says he knew Sylvia. When Marlowe is talking to Eileen, he asks why she didn't say she knew Sylvia. She says she thought she had. Marlowe says that he believes Eileen already knew where Roger was and that she'd sent Marlowe to find her husband with the hope that Roger would agree to take the original case offered - watching over Roger and trying to discover what it was that had prompted the recent personality change.



Chapters 21 through 25

Chapters 21 through 25 Summary

Marlowe talks about the life of a private investigator. On the day after Roger's return, he says he knows the day will be crazy. The first man wants to pay fifty dollars for Marlowe to catch the woman next door trying to poison his dog. The next is a young woman who wants Marlowe to call her roommate and tell her that he's investigating the theft of money from the young woman's purse. The next is a Jewish man in his fifties who is searching for his wife. With a telegram and air mailed photos, the woman is quickly located and the husband goes to bring her home. Then he gets a call from Eileen who invites him for cocktails at their home so that Roger can adequately thank him. Marlowe says it's against his better judgment, but agrees.

Marlowe sees a pretty woman who, as it happens, is also drinking gimlets - Terry's drink of choice. She introduces herself as Linda Loring, Sylvia's sister. She says that her father was fond of Terry and would likely have helped him had he asked for it. Marlowe says he believes it's more likely that Linda's father would have told Terry that he's to disappear and that if he's ever found he's to "check out" in order to save the family name. Linda argues that it's ridiculous then abruptly asks about a man at the bar who is watching. Marlowe is surprised she's noticed but says it's Chick Agostino, hired gun for Menendez, and proposes the two of them jump him. Chick follows them out and tells Marlowe that he has Linda's license plate number. Just then, a big man - Marlowe says he's seven feet tall and four feet wide - pushes Chick out of the way and tells him not to hang around where he's eating. Chick says the man is Big Willie Magoon, a "vice squad bimbo." Chick says Magoon "thinks he's tough" and Marlowe sarcastically says that he believes Magoon is certain of the fact.

Marlowe goes to the cocktail party at the Wades and is ushered into a study to talk to Roger. Roger invites him for a drink and Marlowe says that they should join the party. He says that Roger is welcome to get drunk, but that he doesn't plan to help. Roger says that Marlowe's presence would be good for him and offers one thousand dollars per month for three months if Marlowe will live with him. Marlowe declines and Roger withdraws the offer. Eileen asks Marlowe to reconsider but he says that Roger needs a psychiatrist, not a detective. Eileen says that Marlowe can help because Roger believes he can, even if Marlowe doesn't do anything at all.

At the party, Roger is confronted by Linda Loring's husband, Dr. Edward Loring, who tells Roger to stay away from Linda. He goes so far as to slap Roger with a glove but Roger keeps his cool and doesn't retaliate except to invite Edward to leave. He stalks out but Linda refuses to leave with him. The party breaks up soon after and Marlowe talks with both Eileen and Roger. Then Candy begins clearing away the liquor and offers Marlowe a drink. Marlowe declines and Candy says he doesn't drink anything stronger than beer because one lush in the house is enough.



A week after the cocktail party, Roger calls Marlowe. He's very drunk and says that his "anchor is slipping." Marlowe asks to talk to Eileen, hears bumping for a moment and the phone goes dead. He rushes there, finds Roger passed out on the lawn and carries him inside, noting that the distance was about like a "round trip to Siam." Dr. Loring comes at Eileen's call, says Roger is fine and refuses to help get Roger upstairs to his bedroom. Candy the houseboy returns and helps.

Chapters 21 through 25 Analysis

Describing the routine of people coming and going in his office, Marlowe says that some private detectives wind up broke or dead and most say they're going to find another line of work. However, he says the thing that keeps him in the business is that next person who walks in the door with a story to tell. Meanwhile, Marlowe takes out Terry's letter and reads it again. Then he heads to a bar they'd frequented called Victor's and to have a drink for the both of them.

The coincidences are stacking up. Marlowe asks Linda Loring where she lives and she says in Idle Valley. He asks if she knows Roger Wade and she affirms this. The fact that he happened to run into Sylvia's sister in the bar seems quite coincidental as well. When Linda accuses him of having too much to drink, he points out that she's in a bar frequented by her deceased brother-in-law and drinking the quite rare drink that he preferred. He doesn't make any direct accusation but seems to insinuate that there might have been something between the two of them.

Marlowe questions Eileen about Roger. She'd said it was possible he was no longer in love with her. Marlowe asks if she's in love with Roger and she says she is, though not with the same love as a young girl in love. She says the man she loved when she was young was in the war and that she sometimes has trouble realizing that he's gone because his body was never found. She says his initials are the same as Marlowe's - P.M. Roger asks Marlowe if Eileen has gotten around to telling him about her great love who died in Norway and says he sometimes wonders if it's even true. He seems to be warning Marlowe, saying that he wouldn't want Marlowe to go missing as well. Marlowe notes after leaving that there seems to be something seriously wrong in the Wade household and that it seems to be something more serious than an overabundance of alcohol consumption.

When Marlowe gets the call, he says he rushes to the Wade home full of dread of what might be happening. He finds Eileen calmly smoking a cigarette and his first words are that he thought she didn't smoke. She says it's only on occasion. He then says that she's done worrying about Roger and that he's passed out at the edge of the yard. She then faints herself and Marlowe puts her on the couch. She's awake when he brings Roger inside.



Chapters 26 through 30

Chapters 26 through 30 Summary

Candy and Marlowe get Roger upstairs and into bed. Marlowe washes the wound on the back of his head then his face. He wakes, tells Marlowe that he has something written on the typewriter he doesn't want Eileen to read, asks for some sleeping pills and goes back to sleep. Marlowe notes that the pills are prescribed for Eileen by Dr. Loring. The last thing Roger says before dropping off to sleep is a question to Marlowe. "Ever kill a man, Marlowe?" Marlowe says yes and Roger says it's a nasty feeling.

Marlowe goes downstairs to get the papers Roger asked him to destroy but he also wants to know how Roger cut his head. He looks around and finally finds blood on a wastepaper basket, figures Roger fell while on the phone with Marlowe. He can figure how Roger got hurt but is concerned about Eileen's reaction. He says that a woman who loves her husband and is worried wouldn't have been standing in the doorway smoking a cigarette and a woman who had had enough and no longer cared wouldn't have fainted. He sits down to read the rambling words on the pages in Roger's typewriter. Just as he finishes, he hears a gunshot.

Marlowe finds himself in the middle of a series of problems. He arrives in Roger's bedroom to find Eileen and Roger wrestling over a gun that Eileen recovers. Roger swears he thought Candy was trying to kill him but Marlowe quickly pieces it together. Roger fired a wild shot into the ceiling, Eileen came running and took the gun from Roger thinking he was committing suicide. Roger only wanted sympathy. Roger confirmed it all. After Eileen is gone, Roger says he's not the first husband to commit adultery. Marlowe suggests it's Linda Loring but Roger denies it. Marlowe says that maybe it's the sister - Sylvia. Roger doesn't deny that. He asks Marlowe if that's his purpose for being in the Wade home and Marlowe points out that Roger himself invited Marlowe.

As Marlowe leaves Roger's room, Eileen is waiting in her own. She says to Marlowe that she always knew he'd return and that she'd saved herself for him. She's naked under her robe and begs Marlowe to put her to bed. He does and admits that it's difficult to turn down the invitation of the naked woman writhing about on the bed. Candy rattles the doorknob and Marlowe rushes out of the room, noting that the spell was broken as soon as he was in the hall. He drinks a lot himself and passes out in the study.

Candy is nasty the next morning and tries to make Marlowe pay two hundred dollars for his silence about the fact that Marlowe was in Eileen's bedroom the night before. Marlowe refuses, has some coffee and Candy tells him that he's not wanted. He's about to leave when Eileen comes down the stairs. Marlowe tells her that Roger needs a doctor but she says that the night's activities were "mild" and that Roger will be working by that afternoon. Marlowe says that she doesn't really want to save Roger but wants to appear as though she is trying.



Chapters 26 through 30 Analysis

Marlowe and Candy have a brief scuffle when Candy points out Eileen's bedroom and tells Marlowe that she might open if he knocks softly. He then handles a knife with ease, showing off his skill. Marlowe only watches, then grabs Candy's arm, twisting it and telling him that he can crack the elbow so that Candy never throws a knife again. When he turns the man loose, Candy says that's a "good trick" and that he'll remember. Marlowe says he'll stay with Roger and Candy warns him to take "very good" care of the man, indicating his liking for Roger. When Roger wakes and makes the comment about killing a man, Marlowe doesn't question him and he offers no real explanation.

Roger's writing hints at a few things but doesn't make anything perfectly clear. He writes that he's given Candy too much money too soon and that he should perhaps kill him; that he's killed before; that he's having paranoid delusions from the alcohol; that no one tells him he shouldn't drink or even makes the liquor less convenient; that he considers he's done some vile things.

Marlowe tells Roger that no one likes him and Eileen berates him for saying such things to Roger when he's obviously sick. Marlowe says Roger is bringing the sickness on himself and Eileen soon leaves the room. He then tells Roger that he was trying to shock Eileen and he told Roger about the faint. Roger says that Eileen never faints. Marlowe then asks what Candy has on Roger and Roger refuses to say anything.

In the light of day, Eileen says she had a strange dream in which someone who has been dead for ten years was in the house. Marlowe refers to her actions of the night before and says he got drunk because he was lonely. She says he needn't have been. Roger then says he's not certain he'll ever be back but that she should let him know how Roger gets along.



Chapters 31 through 38

Chapters 31 through 38 Summary

Marlowe receives a call from Linda Loring who asks him to meet with her father. He does and Harlan Potter tells him that he can and will have Marlowe's private investigator's license revoked if Marlowe drags up any new suspects in the murder of Sylvia.

Marlowe gets a call from Roy Ashterfelt, the man who had met Terry Lennox going under the name Paul Marston. He confirms that it was Lennox and insists that he wasn't mistaken about the identity. He also says Marston was wearing a British military insignia. Marlowe learns from the police that Terry Lennox had no military record and no record "of any kind under any name."

Roger invites Marlowe for lunch at his house and writes him a thousand dollar check, presumably for his services on the night Roger was drunk. Marlowe gives Roger the typed pages from that night and Roger says that the man who died for him was Terry Lennox, but only because being identified as a possible suspect in Sylvia's murder would have ruined him in several ways. He doesn't elaborate but turns to the whiskey bottle, tearing the note to shreds and dropping them in the trash. After a few drinks, he sees the check and says that Marlowe must be expensive since a thousand dollars and his wife weren't payment enough, indicating that Candy had told Roger of Marlowe's exit from Eileen's room that night. As Roger gets drunker, Marlowe asks if he knows Paul Marston. He notes that Roger has to fight for control, but does manage to win that battle.

When Eileen returns, she checks on Roger then makes tea. Marlowe himself also checks on Roger and finds him shot to death on the couch. He waits several minutes before telling Eileen and she rushes in, holding Roger's bloody head against her. Marlowe calls for the police, drops the typed pages down the garbage disposal and an officer arrives in six minutes. He says Bernie Ohls, who Marlowe knows from the D.A.'s office, is head of homicide and will arrive soon. Eileen says that she believes Marlowe shot Roger and goes upstairs to change.

Ohls questions Dr. Loring when he arrives at Eileen's call. Ohls asks about the number and variety of pills he's prescribed for Eileen and tells Loring that Eileen must be clear-headed to answer his question. He talks to Marlowe but allows him to leave the scene, saying that he believes Marlowe would have been able to kill Roger in a less-conspicuous way, had he had the inclination. Later that evening, Marlowe is called to the police station where he is to give his statement.

When he arrives, he sees Candy and the Mexican's eyes are filled with hate. He gives his account of the incident, beginning with the first encounter with Eileen Wade through Howard Spencer but admits that he leaves out a few details - and that it's his own



business what he chooses to omit. Captain Hernandez, who is questioning Marlowe, suggests that he was in the bedroom with Eileen Wade on the night of Roger's faked suicide attempt for a couple of hours. When Candy is questioned, he says he was in the living room and that he saw Eileen take off her clothes but Marlowe says there's no way he could have seen into Eileen's room from the living room, proving Candy lied on that point and that he could be lying on the time element. The police accept Marlowe's statement and release him, telling Candy that if he perjured himself during an inquest he'd go to jail.

Chapters 31 through 38 Analysis

Marlowe says that he believes Potter wants privacy at any cost. He says that the man doesn't care if his daughter's murderer is still free as long as the family isn't dragged through any publicity.

Marlowe denies that knowing Terry went by the name Paul Marston means anything to him but it's not difficult to figure out that Eileen's former lover was Paul Marston, a British military man.

Marlowe waits for Eileen to come home and during that time, he walks to the lake to watch a noisy ski boat. It's apparently during this time that there's a gunshot that Marlowe doesn't hear.

It's interesting that Marlowe takes time to pull the pieces of the typed pages from the trashcan where Roger threw them but doesn't rush out to call the police. In fact, he doesn't immediately tell Eileen and when he does, he questions her about the fact that she says she forgot her front door key that day, that she doesn't seem to really love her husband and asks what she did with the gun the night after Roger's faked suicide attempt.

It's typical Marlowe sarcasm when Sheriff Peterson meets with Marlowe for the first time. Peterson is often photographed with suspects but declines to be photographed with Marlowe. He leaves and Marlowe pretends to whine at the slight. He says it's probably because Peterson is afraid someone will look at the suspect in this case rather than the sheriff.



Chapters 39 through 45

Chapters 39 through 45 Summary

Bernie Ohls comes to Marlowe's office and the two of them speculate on what might have happened to Roger Wade. Ohls says he knows there's something not right about the situation but can't decide what. He suggests that Eileen entered the house, saw Roger passed out, waited for the speedboat, shot him, went outside and rang the doorbell to summon Marlowe. They both realize that the timing is too coincidental to make that a positive theory.

He then gets a call from Howard Spencer who asks for details. He asks if Marlowe knows where Eileen is and he says Spencer should just call her up. Spencer says he doubts Eileen will be accepting a call and Marlowe says she answered the coroner's questions during the inquest "without batting an eye."

As soon as Marlowe hangs up with Spencer, he calls Sewell Endicott who isn't in, then calls Menendez. He tells Menendez that he knows Terry Lennox - or Paul Marston, as the case may be - didn't have a military record. Mendez says it was a commando unit off the coast of Norway in 1942 and then asks Marlowe to drop it. Marlowe calls George Peters at the Carne Agency and asks him to find any records, including military service, for Terry Lennox or Paul Marston. George agrees for three hundred bucks and starts the process.

Marlowe tells Spencer that he wants the two of them to go see Eileen Wade. He says that there's a cop who is a "bulldog" and that this cop believes there's something wrong with the suicide. Spencer says that if Roger didn't kill himself, the two people who might be suspects are Eileen and Marlowe. Marlowe says that he isn't worried about himself.

Based on the design of the insignia Eileen wears in memory of her lost love, Marlowe knows she's lying about it and the origin. He says the insignia didn't exist until 1947, meaning no one could have given it to her in 1940 as she claimed. She then says that she made up the entire story and bought the insignia second hand. He then produces a marriage license between Paul Edward Marston and Eileen Victoria Sampsell. He says she's correct in saying Paul Marston never existed because he'd made up the name since the army would have had to approve the marriage.

Eileen confirms it and begins to tell the story. She says that she was spying on them the night Roger became an "unsatisfactory lover" and that Sylvia, naked, ran after him screaming at him and tried to hit him with a statuette. He beat her to death and put her back in her bed. When he returned home, Eileen was waiting. She helped him clean up, threw his clothes and the bloody towels in the reservoir and the two of them never mentioned it. Marlowe begins to punch holes in her story, asking questions that prove she was never near the reservoir, saying that Sylvia was shot before she was



bludgeoned to death and that she died in her bed, not outside. As Eileen leaves the room, Marlowe tells Spencer that Eileen killed both Sylvia and Roger.

Candy hears the entire conversation and pulls out his knife. Marlowe tells him not to harm Eileen because it would accomplish nothing except landing him in jail. He points out that Candy has some money and should simply leave. He takes Candy's knife but gives it back to him, saying he trusts him to do the right thing. Spencer first wants to call the police, and then tells Marlowe that he trusts him to do the right thing as well - whatever that is. The next morning, Candy calls Marlowe and tells him Eileen is dead, that she'd taken many pills and that Dr. Loring was on the way. Marlowe warns him to tell the truth about everything, including the fact that Marlowe and Spencer were in the house the previous evening. Marlowe is soon summoned to the police station by Ohls.

With Dr. Loring saying he prescribed Demerol for Eileen for sudden asthma attacks, a decision that there's no need to release the confession left by Eileen and the coroner saying it appeared to be a purposeful overdose, the case is to be ruled suicide and everyone but Marlowe is dismissed. Marlowe is asked what it is that makes him question the findings. He says he hasn't read the suicide note but suspects it's not a "love letter." He's then offered an opportunity to read a copy. The note is brief and says only that she regrets that she didn't find Sylvia and Terry together so that she could kill them together. Marlowe calls the newspaperman Lonnie Morgan and offers him the confession. He notes that Lonnie is "about as excited as a mortician at a cheap funeral." He does call his managing editor who asks Marlowe's terms. He says only that he wants it printed as a copy of the letter, not as text in a story. Lonnie tells him that he's crazy, because he could get the same treatment as Bill Willie Magoon since the man behind that is a neighbor of Harlan Potter. Marlowe stands by his conditions and Lonnie leaves with the letter.

Chapters 39 through 45 Analysis

Through the entire conversation between Marlowe and Ohls, the two are jabbing at each other and Ohls ends by saying that he can tell when someone is holding out on him. He tells Marlowe that he has been lucky on two occasions, referring obviously to the Terry Lennox situation and then to the fact that he was with Roger when he died. He doesn't, however, press any longer for details.

Menendez also tells Marlowe that Big Willie Magoon - the man who shoved Chick around - has been beat up though the significance of that is not yet explained.

When Marlowe says that he can prove Terry Lennox and Paul Marston were the same man, Eileen says that she already knew it. She then says that Roger was sleeping with Sylvia and that she could forgive him because he was a drunk and didn't know better. She says she couldn't forgive Terry - whom she calls Paul - for sleeping with the whore.

Spencer is quiet through most of the conversation and seems to be on Eileen's side until she tells that she knew Roger had committed murder. He then begins to question



her. He says that it seems that Eileen might have hoped Marlowe would discover the truth and encourage Roger to commit suicide out of guilt. He then says that the police suspect Eileen and might now have a motive. He also mentions that she was still legally married to Terry Lennox at the time of her marriage to Roger, meaning that union might not be legal.

The police tell Marlowe that when there's an "open and shut" case such as the murder of Sylvia Lennox, the flight of Terry Lennox and his full confession, there's neither the man power nor the time to do further investigation. Hernandez then tells Marlowe that there are five copies of Eileen's confession in a folder on his desk and he and Ohls leave the room. Marlowe discovers that there are six and takes one. Hernandez makes a point of counting them upon his return.



Chapters 46 through 52

Chapters 46 through 52 Summary

Bernie Ohls drops by Marlowe's apartment and berates Marlowe for not giving him information in time for him to have stopped Eileen's death or Roger's murder. He then says there are people mad at Marlowe and that he should consider leaving town. Marlowe says his only concern was to clear Terry's name, that he'd wanted Eileen to take a long look at herself and that what she did about it was her own business.

District Attorney Springer makes a statement saying that if the document printed by the Journal is authentic, and if Eileen Wade did write it, she was obviously distressed by her husband's recent suicide and didn't know what she was doing or saying. He says nothing can be gained by "stirring the ashes of the dead." The Journal responded with an editorial saying Springer knows the document is authentic and that the only thing to be gained is justice. Marlowe gets a call from Linda saying she's going to Paris for a divorce and suggests that Marlowe spend some of his money on a trip as well.

When Marlowe arrives home later that night, Menendez and two Mexicans are waiting for him and soon tells Marlowe that he's the one who beat up Magoon because Magoon thought he could push Menendez around. Ohls arrives and sends Menendez away with the other two Mexicans, who Ohls says are police. Ohls says they gave Marlowe the copy of Eileen's letter planning for Menendez to come gunning for Marlowe so that they could take him out. He says it's because Menendez beat up Magoon who was a cop. By the time Ohls leaves, he and Marlowe have apparently come to a mutual respect of sorts and part by shaking hands. He then invites Linda Loring for a drink and she accepts. He next holds a rather cryptic conversation with Randy Starr and says he still wants to know who it was that entered Terry Lennox's hotel room just as he sealed the letter to Marlowe. He tells Starr that someone will find out if Starr doesn't.

When Linda shows up, she has an overnight bag. She and Marlowe spar about whether she's staying with him or has her bag so that she can go to a hotel - she's said she's leaving her husband. He opens champagne that he says he's been saving for ten years just for the time he meets her. She argues, saying that she's not going to bed with him and he goes to the kitchen to get the champagne. When he returns, both she and the bag are gone from the living room and he looks outside. She calls him an idiot, apologizes for being difficult and they share the champagne as they begin to kiss.

Marlowe goes to Endicott's office and questions him closely about Terry's death. Endicott says that Terry was being held on ice at a cabinetmaker's shop because there is no embalming option. Marlowe questions Endicott about the mailbox that Terry's letter indicated was on the street below his hotel room but Endicott simply looks puzzled - or perhaps, as Marlowe notes - he's trying to remember what the street looked like. A month later, Marlowe reaches home to discover an effeminate Mexican at his office. He says that Randy Starr sent him and that he's the waiter who took Terry's letter to the



mail. He then tells the story of how it happened - that a cop was outside the hotel, that he went into Terry's room and hid the letter on a coffee tray, carried it past the cop and was halfway down the stairs when he heard the shot. Marlowe calls him a liar and says he knows so because the waiter was actually inside the room before the shot - writing the letter. The Mexican man smiles and asks, "Is it too early for a gimlet?"

Chapters 46 through 52 Analysis

Marlowe notes that Ohls leaves the house saying only that it's a quiet neighborhood and that there are too many shrubs near the house, hinting that he would make an easy target. He says Ohls leaves without saying good-bye, as all cops do. He says that's because they hope to see you again in a line up. It's interesting to note that Ohls was with Hernandez when they gave Marlowe the opportunity to take the letter and that they knew what he would do with it. Now Ohls tells Marlowe that he's in trouble with the "hard boys" for doing just that.

Marlowe manages to hit Menendez and Ohls appears. He reveals that the other two Mexicans are cops - or at least had "stars" - and sends Menendez off with them. Marlowe asks of Ohls is certain they're cops or if he's just sent Menendez to his death. Ohls says that they've already gotten to Randy Starr, who is a police commissioner in Nevada, and that he's sent the officers at his own expense. Starr later says that he doesn't use Cadillacs - the car Menendez was taken away in - but that he's certain he'll see Menendez alive if he's headed to Vegas.

It's typically Marlowe that when Linda says he doesn't have to go to bed with her he asks how much money she has. She laughingly says she doesn't know but that it's probably about eight million dollars. He says he's decided to go to bed with her and she playfully calls him a mercenary. After they make love, she asks him to marry her but he says that she doesn't love him and they both know it. She cries on his shoulder and they have some more champagne. He does note the next morning that there's a lump in his stomach.

Marlowe goes into detail about the plot to fake Terry's death, including that Menendez was in the hotel at the time pretending to be an American hunter. He also notes that Terry was hit on the back of the head and put on ice, probably so the attorney would believe he was dead. Terry says there are a few incorrect details but that most of it is right. He then tells Marlowe that he had been in the commandos and that his time with the Nazis had "done something" to him. He points to his chest, says he's empty there but hadn't wanted anyone to get hurt. He says that he called on Randy Starr and Menendez and that they'd arranged it all. Their one concession was allowing Terry to write to Marlowe. Marlowe keeps the five hundred Terry left in the coffee can, gives the five thousand dollar bill back and says that he already said good-bye back when it meant something. Terry leaves and Marlowe never sees him again.



Characters

Phillip Marlowe

Marlowe is a private investigator who sees Terry Lennox outside the club called the Dancers and steps in to help when Terry falls completely out of his car. Marlowe is drawn into helping Terry and it's Marlowe who comes to Terry's aid when he says that he has to catch a plane in Tijuana. Marlowe is a man of principles. When Terry leaves five hundred dollars in Marlowe's coffee can, Marlowe notes that he wishes he hadn't. When Terry sends Marlowe five thousand dollars, Marlowe doesn't spend it. When Roger Wade writes Marlowe a thousand dollar check, he doesn't take it, nor does he take money from Eileen Wade for going to look for Roger. An even better example of Marlowe's principles is that when Eileen Wade tries to seduce him, he admits that it's difficult to resist. He says he was "saved" by an interruption from the houseboy.

Marlowe is not at all afraid of a fight and is not intimidated, even when he probably should be. When the Wade's houseboy, Candy, pulls a knife, Marlowe watches him display his skills, then grabs Candy's arm and says he could crack the elbow so that Candy could never throw another knife. When Menendez has Marlowe at gunpoint in Marlowe's own living room, Marlowe reacts by punching Menendez - this action though there were two men who might have killed Marlowe on the spot.

Marlowe is filled with sarcasm and quick with a wisecrack. He makes statements such as "time crawls like a sick cockroach" and that his potential clients include "the squirrels who can't find their nuts."

Terry Lennox

Terry is the man also known as Paul Marston and Cisco Maioanos. Marlowe meets Terry the first outside the club when Lennox is so drunk that he can't sit in the car seat. The next time they meet, Lennox is drunk on a street and Marlowe saves him from being arrested. Terry is married as a young man to Eileen Wade but Eileen thinks he died in the war. Terry actually saved the lives of two comrades and they helped him when it appeared he'd be accused in the murder of his current wife, the wealthy Sylvia Lennox. Terry calls on Marlowe to help him reach an airport in Tijuana when he is apparently running from the law after killing Sylvia. Marlowe never believes Terry did it. Marlowe continues to try to clear Terry's name though his friends have already arranged to fake his suicide and actually want Marlowe to leave the case alone. Terry plays an important role in the book and continues to be an important character though for all practical purposes he dies very early in the story line.



Sylvia Lennox

Sylvia is Terry's ex-wife who marries him again after a period of time. Sylvia is actually a loose woman and sleeps with any number of men. She's killed early in the story and it's because Terry believes he'll be blamed for her death that he runs away. As the facts come out, Sylvia was actually shot in the head before being bludgeoned in an attempt to cover the bullet wound. The fact that she was brutally bludgeoned makes Marlowe believe that Terry is innocent - Marlowe believes Terry is simply incapable of that type of brutality. When Eileen Wade tries to blame Sylvia's death on her husband, Roger, she says that she saw the entire murder and that Roger bludgeoned Sylvia, making Marlowe know that Eileen was also lying. It's eventually revealed that Sylvia's killer is Eileen.

Candy

Candy is the Wade's houseboy and a Chileno. He tells Marlowe his full name is Juan Garcia de Soto yo Soto-mayor. Candy doesn't like Marlowe from the beginning and Marlowe much later discovers that it's mainly because Candy wants to protect Roger. When Candy suggests that Marlowe could knock on Eileen's door and be allowed entrance, Marlowe pulls Candy's arm behind his back and tells him not to speak ill of his employers. Candy, who has just shown Marlowe his proficiency with a switchblade, says the hold is a "neat trick" and that he'll remember it. Candy is in the room when Eileen tells Marlowe and Spencer that Roger killed Sylvia. Candy then hears Marlowe say that he believes Eileen killed both Sylvia and Roger. Candy then approaches Marlowe and has his knife in his hand. Marlowe tells Candy not to harm Eileen because it will change nothing and Candy will go to jail. Candy hands over the knife but Marlowe gives it back as he leaves, telling Candy that he trusts him. Candy calls Marlowe when Eileen commits suicide, and Marlowe tells him that he should tell the police the entire truth.

Roger Wade

Roger is a famous writer of historical romance novels who was having an affair with Sylvia Lennox around the time of her death. Roger is drinking heavily, and it's never made completely clear whether he believes that he himself killed Sylvia or if he knows his wife, Eileen, committed the murder. Roger drinks heavily and at one point calls on Marlowe for help when he's deep into the bottle. Marlowe finds him passed out on the lawn and puts him to bed where he rambles freely, seeming to implicate himself in Sylvia's murder. He has the loyalty of the houseboy, Candy, though he says he pays Candy too much and seems to imply that Candy is blackmailing him. As it turns out, Roger meant that he has simply paid Candy a higher-than-normal wage. Roger drinks himself into a stupor on a day when Marlowe is having lunch at his house and passes out on the couch. A short time later, Marlowe returns inside and finds Roger dead of a bullet wound. It appears to be suicide but later turns out to be murder at the hand of his wife, Eileen.



Eileen Wade

Eileen is the wife of Roger Wade, a beautiful woman who looks over Marlowe while Spencer is seeking his services to watch Eileen's husband, Roger. When Marlowe refuses the job of watching over Roger while he finishes writing his novel, Eileen goes to Marlowe's office and tells him that her husband is actually missing and that she is worried. As it turns out, she simply wanted Marlowe involved in the case because of his connection with Eileen's first husband, Terry Lennox. Eileen fabricates several stories, including her long lost love - Paul Marston. Paul was the name used by Terry to get a marriage license since he was in the military and would have needed military permission to marry. Eileen's actions seem faked to Marlowe, including an occasion when Eileen fainted. Eileen eventually tells Marlowe that she knows what was driving her husband to drinking - that he'd murdered Sylvia Lennox. Marlowe says that he doesn't believe her story and that Eileen murdered both Sylvia and Roger Wade.

Howard Spencer

Howard is the publisher who calls on Marlowe to watch over his star writer, Roger Wade. It's Spencer who goes with Marlowe to talk to Eileen with the information Marlowe has uncovered about Eileen's marriage to Terry Lennox under the name Paul Marston. Howard starts questioning Eileen himself and wants to call the police. He eventually tells Marlowe that he trusts him to do the right thing - whatever that is.

Menendez

Menendez is the racketeer who tells Marlowe about Terry's scars. Menendez tells Marlowe to leave the case involving Terry alone. As it turns out, Menendez is in Mexico with Terry when he supposedly commits suicide and Menendez's purpose was to protect the information that Terry wasn't really dead.

Lonnie Morgan

Morgan is the reporter who picks up Marlowe at the police department to give him a ride home. Marlowe calls on Morgan when he has Eileen's suicide note saying that he knows Lonnie is the only reporter in town who'll print it because of the influence of Harlan Potter.

Dr. Verringer

Dr. Verringer is the man who runs the retreat for artistic people and where Marlowe hopes to find Roger Wade. He's actually running a drunk tank illegally, and Roger calls on him often when he's drunk and needing to be dried out.



Objects/Places

The Dancers

The Dancers is the club where Lennox is when Marlowe first sees him.

Cell Number Three

Cell Number Three is where Marlowe is kept when he is arrested for suspicion of murder after helping Terry reach his plane. Marlowe describes it as much better than the drunk tank though he doesn't say how he knows about the conditions in the drunk tank.

Idle Valley Road

Idle Valley Road is where the Wades, the Loring and the Lennoxes live. Marlowe notes that it's an exclusive subdivision and that he belongs in Idle Valley like a pearl onion on a banana split.

The Carne Agency

The Carne Agency is where George Peters works, it's an detective agency and has some information that Marlowe hopes will help him along in his search for Roger Wade.

Sepulveda Canyon

Sepulveda Canyon is where Verringer's retreat facility is located and where Marlowe finds Roger Wade.

Victors

Victors is a bar where Terry and Marlowe go occasionally during their early days together and where Marlowe meets Sylvia Lennox's sister, Linda Loring.

Artists Rifles

Artists Rifles is a territorial regiment, according to Eileen Wade. She wears the insignia in memory of a man she says she loved who was in that regiment in 1940. Marlowe disagrees with her story, saying that the badge was not designed until 1947.



Cahuenga Building

Cahuenga Building is where Marlowe has a sixth floor office for his private detective agency

Paris

Paris is where Linda Loring plans to go for a quiet divorce. She suggests that Marlowe go as well to avoid trouble she's certain is about to occur.

Otatoclan

Otatoclan is the Mexican city where Terry Lennox reportedly died.



Themes

The Quest for Justice

Marlowe first sees Terry Lennox in a car outside a club. Terry is so drunk that he can't stay in the car seat. When he falls out, his girlfriend drives off and leaves him there. Marlowe helps him up, takes him home and sobers him up sufficiently to find out Terry's address before ensuring that he gets home safely. When Terry is again drunk on the street and seems on the verge of being arrested, Marlowe saves him from that fate.

With only these two instances as background, the two men spend a few more evenings together in bars and Marlowe seems to be constantly seeking justice for Terry after that. When Terry comes to Marlowe after Sylvia's death, Marlowe says that he's certain that Terry couldn't have killed Sylvia simply because of the brutality of the act. He says Terry couldn't have been that violent. With Terry's death and with no real reason to continue the case, Marlowe still worries the case with the intention of clearing Terry's name. Even when a known racketeer and an influential man warn Marlowe off the case, he continues. Though Terry has given Marlowe five thousand, five hundred dollars, the real point is that Marlowe's seen a wrong. At one point, he tells a cop that if he hears a call for help, he answers. In the case of Terry Lennox, Marlowe gets beaten up for his trouble and eventually learns that Terry isn't dead. However, he doesn't want to renew even the casual friendship with Terry. He only wanted justice for someone accused of a crime he didn't commit.

Self-Reliance

Marlowe is a study in self-reliance. At one point, Linda Loring proposes marriage and he points out that he's been self-sufficient for so long that he's spoiled to it. He doesn't have a wife and the point is made that Marlowe had the opportunity to remain in the small town where he was raised and to live the life of a typical small town husband and father. He preferred the big city and made the move.

All through the book, Marlowe is willing to take on any fight and seemingly against any odds. Confronted by a known racketeer, Menendez, Marlowe allows himself to be backhanded without making a move. Nevertheless, when he's in the position to defend himself just a few minutes later, he punches Menendez in the stomach.

Marlowe is also warned off the case again and again but refuses to give up. It seems that he simply believes that he can win in any situation. He faces down the racketeers, the cops and the rich, important people equally, often with a wise crack. He is also certain of himself when it comes to figuring out a case and shows his self-reliance in his ability to decide his next move and then to follow it to its conclusion.



Self-Preservation

There are several characters who are willing to do whatever it takes in order to survive or in order to retain a certain aspect of their lives. One of those is Terry Lennox who finds himself faced with the likelihood of being charged with the murder of his wife, Sylvia. When that happens, he calls on three old friends in order to make his escape. Marlowe takes him to catch a plane and two others go so far as to help Terry fake his own death. Eileen Wade is another who goes to great lengths to save herself. She goes so far as to make her husband, Roger, believe that he killed Sylvia Lennox and then kills Roger as well.

Harlan Potter is an example of self-preservation of a different kind. Potter wants his privacy and wants his family to have a private life. With that in mind, he's willing to make a phone call to a police commissioner warning them to leave Marlowe alone just so that Marlowe's arrest won't create a scandal for his family. While he knows that his daughter's murderer is free, he still doesn't want an active investigation. He'd prefer that the killer escape without punishment than for his family to be put in the limelight. He seems willing to preserve his privacy at any cost.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in first person from the limited view of the hero, Private Investigator Phillip Marlowe. Marlowe is described by critics as the "quintessential detective" of the time period. His comments are full of sarcasm and wit. Having the insight of Marlowe makes the book flow well though there are few of Marlowe's thoughts revealed before it's the proper time for the "punch line." For example, when he wants to go to Eileen Wade's house with Howard Spencer, he says only that he wants a witness for what he's going to tell her. He doesn't give Spencer any clue as to what that something is. The interesting thing is that the reader is also left in the dark until the two arrive at the Wade home and the conversation takes place. Marlowe's thoughts on the subject - including any thinking he does on the way - are not revealed. There are times when the reader is offered a hint that something important is about to occur, but Marlowe's thoughts and his personal knowledge are not inserted until the event takes place. The process works and means that the reader is allowed to guess, just as is appropriate for novels such as this.

Setting

The book is set in Southern California and though there are few details on which to hang a date it seems likely that the story occurs around the time of the writing - the early 1950s. There are ample descriptions of buildings and places and Marlowe talks of the fact that the telephone is a fairly new fangled gadget that still intimidates some people. His own office is a bit on the shabby side and he often opens the windows in an effort to do away with the stale air, both at his home and his office. He also talks of turning on a fan but says it does little but stir the stifling hot air.

There is description as well of the subdivision known as Idle Valley. It's an exclusive place complete with its own lake. Marlowe notes that even the air is better in Idle Valley due to an ocean breeze that eliminates the excessive fog of the city area. There are references to and descriptions of other areas, including doctor's offices and a nursing home. Marlowe visits a former retreat where a "doctor" named Verringer creates a setting for artists. This is where Roger Wade goes periodically to dry out. It's described as resembling a dude ranch and Verringer is eventually ousted in order for the property to be subdivided - a statement of the population growth of the area and the time.

Language and Meaning

The book was copyrighted in 1953, and there are some things within the book that date it. One thing to note involves the cost of things, mentioned throughout. When Marlowe is in jail, he talks of the cold, impersonal treatment of the inmates. He describes a line up with an officer's voice giving orders and asking questions such as name and occupation. When they come to Marlowe, they note that he's a private detective and Marlowe says



that what they say is true, but there are other things to note - that he has an expensive porcelain crown, for instance. He notes that the crown cost eighty-seven dollars. That cost greatly dates the book for anyone who knows the current cost of dental work, especially because Marlowe refers to it as an expensive piece of dental work.

Sarcasm is an important part of Marlowe's personality and as he finishes his imaginary rant about the cost of his dental work he adds - as if such information would matter to the jailer - "I'm just telling you Captain. It's the little things that count." There are plenty of one-liners, such as Marlowe saying that he belongs in Idle Valley as a pearl onion belongs on a banana split. These make the book a typical work of Chandler and a typical "detective novel" of the period.

Structure

The book is divided into fifty-two chapters of varying length, though few are more than ten pages. The chapters roughly address a single event with only a few exceptions. In some cases, the event is divided into several chapters and it seems the object of the author was to keep the chapters short in length. There are some chapters that are only two or three pages, and few chapters that are subdivided to cover more than a single brief episode.

The book is easy to read and flows in chronological order of Marlowe's life and only from Marlowe's point of view. That's important because it sometimes throws the reader off the trail of what's about to occur. For instance, Marlowe sees a woman at the airport when he leaves Terry to catch the plane but the reader doesn't learn until later that she's the wife of a judge and that they reported seeing Terry. The reader learns of the report of Terry's death but it's much later before the true facts are revealed. That happens when Terry shows up in Marlowe's office.



Quotes

"There's always something to do if you don't have to work or consider the cost. It's no real fun but the rich don't know that. They never had any. They never want anything very hard except maybe somebody else's wife and that's a pretty pale desire compared with the way a plumber's wife wants new curtains for the living room."

- Terry Lennox, Chapter 3, Page 21

"The homicide skipper that year was a Captain Gregorius, a type of copper that is getting rarer but by no means extinct, the kind that solves crimes with the bright light, the soft sap, the kick to the kidneys, the knee to the groin, the fist to the solar plexus, the night stick to the base of the spine. Six months later, he was indicted for perjury before a grand jury, booted without a trial, and later stamped to death by a big stallion on his ranch in Wyoming. Right now I was his raw meat."

- Marlowe, Chapter 7, Page 44

"If Terry Lennox had killed his wife, that was fine. There was no need to try him and bring out all the unpleasant details. If he hadn't killed her, that was fine too. A dead man is the best fall guy in the world. He never talks back."

- Marlowe on considering Terry's guilt, Chapter 10, Page 71

"If you went to a bank and asked for one, they wouldn't have it. They'd have to get it for you from the Federal Reserve. It might take several days. There are only about a thousand of them in circulation in the whole U.S.A. Mine had a nice glow around it. It created a little private sunshine all its own."

Chapter 12, Page 85

"At three a.m. I was walking the floor and listening to Khachaturyan working in a tractor factory. He called it a violin concerto. I called it a loose fan belt and to hell with it."

Chapter 12, Page 86

"An hour crawled by like a sick cockroach. I was a grain of sand on the desert of oblivion. I was a two-gun cowpoke fresh out of bullets. Three shots, three misses. I hate it when they come in threes."

Chapter 19, Page 137

"I knew it was going to be one of those crazy days. Everyone has them. Days when nobody rolls in but the loose wheels, the dingoes who park their brains with their gum, the squirrels who can't find their nuts, the mechanics who always have a gear wheel left



over."

- The morning after finding Roger Wade, Chapter 21, Page 153

"Just visions of what might be happening in the Wade residence and not very pleasant visions. She was alone in the house with a drunken maniac, she was lying at the bottom of the stairs with her neck broken, she was behind a locked door and somebody was howling outside and trying to break it in, she was running down a moonlit road barefoot and a big buck Negro with a meat cleaver was chasing her."

Chapter 25, Page 189

"She had hardly spoken to me since we got into the car in front of my building. She looked tired and nervous. Maybe this idiotic hunk of architecture depressed her. It would have depressed a laughing jackass and made it coo like a mourning dove."

- Upon reaching the Loring home, Chapter 32, Page 228

"He explained civilization to me. I mean how it looks to him. He's going to let it go on for a little while longer. But it better be careful and not interfere with his private life. If it does, he's apt to make a phone call to God and cancel the order."

- Following his visit with Harlan Potter, Chapter 32, Page 236

"There was an acrid smell on the air and there was too heavy a silence. It was not more than sixteen feet from the door to the couch and I didn't need more than half of that to know a dead man lay on that couch."

- In Roger Wade's study, Chapter 36, Page 254

"As a matter of fact, he never questioned anybody. He wouldn't have known how. He just sat at his desk looking sternly at the suspect, showing his profile to the camera. The flash bulbs would go off, the camera men would thank the Sheriff deferentially, the suspect would be removed not having opened his mouth, and the Sheriff would go home to his ranch in the San Fernando Valley. There he could always be reached. If you couldn't reach him in person, you could talk to one of his horses."

Chapter 38, Page 268

"There ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks."

- Bernie Ohls referring to Harlan Potter, Chapter 39, Page 277

"Now supposed she didn't forget her keys, that she goes into the house, looks across and sees you down at the water, looks into the study and sees Wade asleep, knows where the gun is, gets it, waits for the right moment, plugs him, drops the gun where it was found, goes back outside the house, wait's a little while fore the speedboat to go



away, and then rings the doorbell and waits for you to open it."

- Bernie Ohls, speculating on what might have happened to Roger Wade, Chapter 39, Page 279

"From what I've seen of the local crowd in the rich suburbs I think Roger made a tragic mistake in coming out here to live. A writer needs stimulation - and not the kind they bottle. There's nothing here but one great big suntanned hangover. I'm referring to the upper crust people of course."

- Howard Spencer, Chapter 42, Page 296

"I rolled over on the bed, fumbled for slippers and realized that I hadn't been asleep for more than a couple of hours. I felt like a half-digested meal eaten in a greasy-spoon joint. My eyes were stuck together and my mouth was full of sand."

Chapter 43, Page 317

"The hard boys will take care of you, buster. I won't have to bother. You think you're not important enough to bother them. As a P.I. named Marlowe, check. You're not. As a guy who was told where to get off and blew a raspberry in their faces publicly in a newspaper, that's different. That hurts their pride."

- Ohls, Chapter 46, Page 338

"You bought a lot of me, Terry. For a smile and a nod and a wave of the hand and a few quiet drinks in a quiet bar here and there. It was nice while it lasted. So long, amigo. I won't say goodbye. I said it to you when it meant something. I said it when it was sad and lonely and final."

- Marlowe upon his final parting with Terry after learning Terry wasn't dead, Chapter 52, Page 378

Topics for Discussion

Describe Phillip Marlowe. What about him makes him a good detective? What about him makes him a good character for a novel such as this?

How does Marlowe meet Terry Lennox? Eileen Wade? Roger Wade? Linda Loring? How many of those meetings were pure coincidence? How were the others arranged?

Describe three of Marlowe's wisecracks and discuss why they fit with his character. Who are other characters in the story who offer up wisecracks?

Who is Candy? What is Candy's role in Roger Wade's life? How does his attitude toward Marlowe change over the course of their meetings?

Describe the "death" of Terry Lennox. What was it that made Marlowe question the circumstances?

How were Eileen Wade and Terry Lennox connected years earlier? How did they reconnect? What made Eileen willing to forgive her husband for sleeping with Sylvia? Why was she not willing to forgive Terry Lennox for sleeping with Sylvia, considering that he was her husband?

What role does Verringer play in Roger Wade's life? What is it that has driven Roger to the heavy drinking?

Why did Menendez warn Marlowe to forget the Terry Lennox case? Why does Harlan Potter warn Marlowe of the same thing? Compare their purposes.