

# **The Manchurian Candidate Study Guide**

## **The Manchurian Candidate by Richard Condon**

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# Plot Summary

“The Manchurian Candidate” revolves around the life of Raymond Shaw, a veteran American sergeant who served in the Korean War. During the War, Shaw’s unit was ambushed by Soviet agents, and the men were taken to a secret Soviet psychological research facility. Raymond was chosen to be trained as a sleeper assassin, due to his socially withdrawn demeanor, intense hatred toward his family, and excellent marksmanship. Programmed to obey any orders he hears after seeing the queen of diamonds during a game of solitaire, Raymond brutally kills two of the men in his unit at the research facility while the rest of his men watch. The rest of the unit, however, is also brainwashed into believing that Raymond single-handedly saved them during an enemy attack. When the men return home and relay this fake story, Raymond is awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor.

Through other flashbacks, the reader learns of Shaw’s upbringing. His mother, Eleanor Shaw, who functions as his step-father, Johnny Iselin’s political handler during the action of the novel, divorced Raymond’s father to better position herself as a political wife. She also deviously broke Raymond up from his childhood love, Josie Jordan, telling the family he was deranged and homosexual, because she came from a political family from the other party and Eleanor could not allow Raymond to be influenced by philosophical Communists.

The action of this political thriller begins after the events at the research facility, when Raymond is on his way to Washington to receive his Medal of Honor. Back in the civilian world, Raymond takes a job as an assistant/janitor/do-it-all for a powerful political columnist in New York. His former captain from Korea, Ben Marco, moves in with him and begins to experience nightmares about what went on at the research facility in Korea. Raymond’s former handlers take him in for testing to ensure his control mechanisms are still in place, and decide to have him kill his boss as a test, landing Raymond with the columnist’s job.

Marco’s nightmares grow worse, forcing him into medical leave, and he confronts Raymond about his dreams after hearing that another member of their unit is having the exact same nightmare. Raymond and Marco decide there must be some truth to the dreams and set out to uncover the truth, and Marco’s girlfriend connects him to an FBI agent who decides to help them investigate. When Marco and Raymond meet the FBI agent, someone unknowingly tells Raymond to play solitaire and he follows the suggestion of a story he hears while under the influence of his training and jumps in the reservoir in Central Park.

Meanwhile, Johnny angles into a powerful political position by claiming there are Communists in the Department of Defense. After declaring he has a list of their names at a major press conference, he becomes a celebrity and the head of a new committee set to seek out spies and counter-intelligence agents. Eleanor goes to Europe on a diplomatic tour, bringing Raymond along to cover the political scene for his paper, but only incenses the continent against America. She insists various European officials are



Communists and the U.S. government withdraws their support of her, doing exactly as she intends, making it look as though people in the American government support Communists.

Raymond's childhood love, Josie, returns after the death of her Argentine husband and the two make amends, setting right the misinformation Eleanor used to break the two apart. During a party celebrating Josie's return, the two make love and decide to elope. After marrying in Puerto Rico and honeymooning on a cruise, they return and move in with Josie's family, but Eleanor finds him. They program Raymond to kill Senator Jordan, Josie's father, and any witnesses, and Raymond ends up shooting Josie when she walks in on him in the act. Johnny publicly uses the Senator's death as evidence of Community activity in the U.S. and to further promote his own power and goals.

Eleanor gives Raymond his final assignment: to kill the presidential nominee, wounding Johnny in the process, so it looks like the Communists tried to take him out. During the party convention, Eleanor and Johnny go through a lot of political angling to land him the vice presidential nomination, backstabbing several supposed allies in the process to ensure their success. Meanwhile, Marco, having learned how Raymond's programming works, gets Raymond to explain everything that has happened and reprograms Raymond with a deck full of queen of diamond cards. Marco then stalls the FBI forces tracking Raymond so he can complete the new mission. At the convention, Marco watches from the floor while the FBI struggle to reach Raymond, but he fires before they can make it. He shoots Johnny and his mother. Marco then goes to Raymond, allows him to remember that he has killed Josie, and Raymond kills himself in grief.



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

The novel opens with Raymond Shaw in a hotel room in San Francisco, telephoning the father of Eddie Mavole, a man he served with in the Korean War. He wants to visit Eddie's family on his way to receive a Medal of Honor in Washington to talk about him and how he died to help the family cope. Mr. Mavole works for the local newspaper, and when Raymond arrives to visit him, the paper has sent along another reporter to cover Raymond's visit. Raymond also used to work for a newspaper, and remembering how nervous he was during his first interview, he tries to make things easier for Mardell, the girl sent to write about him.

Mr. Mavole, Raymond and Mardell go out for coffee so the girl can get enough information to write up a piece about the war hero visiting the hometown of his fallen comrade on the way to accept his Medal of Honor, and Mr. Mavole reveals his wife had a heart-attack when she heard Eddie had died in the war. Raymond accompanies Mr. Mavole home to visit his wife and concocts a comforting story about Eddie's death, saying he was helping a younger comrade he had taken under his wing and the two were killed instantly and painlessly by a bomb.

After fulfilling his moral duty to the Mavoles, Raymond meets up with Mardell again in his hotel room, but their rendezvous is abruptly interrupted by a brisk knocking at his door by the FBI, who demand to escort him to the airport. Raymond guesses, and a quick call to Washington D.C. confirms, that his stepfather, Senator Johnny Iselin, sent the escort. Though his Medal of Honor ceremony isn't for another two days, his mother and stepfather want him back in Washington for a parade in his honor. His mother appeals to him to make an appearance with Johnny for the sake of his political career, and when Raymond refuses, she orders him harshly and he gives in. Before he leaves though, he finishes his business with the reporter.

In Chapter 2, the action shifts backward to the Korean War. In terse, direct narration, the author explains in great architectural detail how the Soviet army built a research facility at Tunghwa, just inside the Korean border. Several hundred miles south, Raymond's former comrades Al Melvin, Eddie Mavole and Bobby Lemeck are enjoying a short break from their reconnaissance duties at a Korean brothel, joking that it is the only place where they can escape Raymond. Though most men in the unit find Raymond rude, or at least disturbingly cold, he gets along well with Caption Ben Marco, the head of their unit. The two often talk for hours, as the literary-inclined Marco is fascinated by Raymond's life and family story, particularly his mother, who seems like a figure from a Greek tragedy.

On the evening of this flashback, Marco leads his men on an intelligence and reconnaissance patrol in the middle of the night. As the men approach an area filled with quicksand, Chunjin, their guide and interpreter, insists the patrol must walk in single



file to avoid sinking. Marco reluctantly agrees, but very shortly after the men set out, they are captured deftly by enemy forces and taken to the research facility. Using Pavlovian techniques, Yen Lo, the chief research scientist, works intensely on Raymond, resetting his physical impulses, reconstructing his personality. The scientists also brainwash the other men in Raymond's unit, making them think they have spent three days of leave enjoying themselves in a nearby port before their are attacked by the enemy. Marco is instructed to recommend Raymond for the Medal of Honor upon their return, but his conditioning does not seem to stick as well as some of the other men. When Yen Lo puts on a demonstration for his Soviet and Russian collaborators ordering Raymond to kill Eddie and Bobby in front of the rest of the unit, Marco feels sick and has trouble shutting out what he sees.

## Analysis

In the first two chapters, the reader sees entirely opposing sides of the protagonist, Raymond Shaw. In the first chapter, he is sympathetic, personable, and very interested in women, whereas in the flashback to the Korean War, the reader learns that he finds sexual relationships base, takes no interests in other people, and is generally rude and hard to get along with. The extreme juxtaposition of Raymond's character between the first and second scenes shows the depth of Raymond's personality reprogramming at the research facility.

The reader also gets several foreshadowing glimpses of the events to come, via Raymond's brief phone call with his mother, in which he shows his utter disdain for her, but ultimately follows what she tells him to do, and her political conniving and lack of scruples in boldfaced lying even to her own son. During the description of the demonstration of Raymond's programming at the research facility, the narrator focuses on Ben Marco, planting the seeds for his inability to forget the horrific events completely, and his nightmares that serve as the catalyst for the plot to uncover the truth about Raymond's programming.

## Vocabulary

osculatorium, masochistic, séance, infinitesimally, grotesque, debasing, nave, casque, sollarret, manifest, paraphernalia, autocratically, unequivocally, ascension, peremptory, idiosyncratic, bluster, implicit, boorish, attritive, prefabricated, zymurgists, jurisprudential



# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

Chapter 3 begins with one of the author's narrative discourses, this time on the history of the Medal of Honor, its significance and the fact that it is regarded so highly, the army even took the honor away from hundreds of men who were deemed not quite worthy enough in review. When Raymond's plane arrives in D.C., his mother and Johnny Iselin are waiting at the airport and the press excitedly snaps shots of the three of them together. Eleanor and Johnny accompany Raymond to meet the president, and when the press arranged the family members and the president for a photo, Eleanor held a banner over the president's head that read "Johnny Iselin's boy."

Chapter 4 cycles quickly through a series of flashbacks to Eleanor and Raymond's earlier lives to give background on the Iselin family. Eleanor left Raymond's father for Johnny when she was pregnant with a second child, widely believe to be Johnny's. The younger son, however, died during Johnny's campaign for governor--adding key sympathy votes to his cause. Raymond's father killed himself in grief over the whole affair, though only Raymond seemed to mourn his passing.

Traveling further back in time, the flashbacks show Johnny and Eleanor's rise to political power. Eleanor explained her plan to elevate her husband to high political office to Raymond's father, but he was too fair and honest to go along with it, so she moved on to Johnny, who was always willing to do anything she said. Originally, Raymond's father's law partner, Johnny spurned Raymond's father by running for a judgeship he wanted, and the two split. He was a corrupt judge, granting people easy divorces if they paid him off, and gained a lot of press for presiding over Raymond's mother and father's divorce while Eleanor was having an affair with him.

In the middle of their political scheming, World War II broke out and Johnny had to go serve. He got himself wounded so he could be excused from active service and sent back to serve his people politically. When his senator died in Johnny's arms from a heart attack at a dinner party, the senator famously told Johnny to take his place and continue to fight the communists, which is how Johnny got into the Senate.

## Analysis

Chapter 3 continues to demonstrate the great lengths to which Eleanor Shaw will go to further her husband's political career illustrated by the ridiculous sign that she ostensibly holds over Raymond's head, which looks like it's over the president in all of the press photos. In Chapter 4, the reader learns that this political ascension is not only something Eleanor supports and helps with, but was originally her plan. When she first offered her dream of political achievement to Raymond's father and he denied him, her addiction to power was so great she had to find a more willing subject for her ambitions.



Notably, the author himself compares the last scene of Chapter 4, when the incumbent senator dies in Johnny Iselin's arms (after a dinner party thrown by Eleanor), to a scene from an ancient tragedy when an ambitious queen poisons her guests. Through this act, the reader learns Eleanor will truly stop at nothing, even murdering those in Johnny's path, to make him president.

## Vocabulary

gallantry, intrepidity, howitzers, platoon, jarring, raucous, dour, adulterous, bray, exhibitionist, politicking, ecstatic, symposium, passivity, blasphemy, abolition, canonization, humanize, blandishments, instill, cuckold, sordid, consummate





# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

In another flashback, the story returns to Raymond one summer shortly before he joins the Korean War. The Iselin's take a vacation house for the summer near a rival liberal senator, Senator Jordan, and Raymond accidentally meets the senator's daughter when he was bitten by a snake. Josie, the senator's daughter, always carried a snake-bite kit around with her because her father was paranoid about the snakes in the area, so she was able to save Raymond quickly.

Raymond is so struck by her that he asks her to marry him, but when the Senator realizes who Raymond is, he tries to get rid of the boy. Fortunately, Raymond explains how much he despises his mother and stepfather and he bonds with the Jordan family over their mutual enemies. Raymond and Josie meet every day, and begin to fall for one another, but Eleanor discovers their rendezvous. Furious with Raymond for keeping these meetings from her and for cavorting with the enemy, the Iselin's immediately pack up and leave their summer house. Before they hit the road, Eleanor stops by the Jordan house with a horrible fake letter from Raymond for Josie and lies to the Jordan's that confiding to them Raymond is homosexual. Mr. and Mrs. Jordan burn the letter without letting Josie read it and also hastily depart from their summer house.

Chapter 6 finally returns to the present action of the novel, as Raymond takes a job assisting a prominent political newspaper columnist, Holborn Gaines. Like Raymond, Gaines is not one for small talk, and the two get along well. One day early in his tenure, the newspaper promotion manager decides to throw a welcome dinner in honor of the war hero and Raymond punches him in the face and spits on him as he lays sprawled on Gaines' desk. Getting the point that Raymond won't stand to be used for publicity in such a way, the promotion manager beats Raymond back, expressing his own point that Raymond will attend this one dinner, and he does.

## Analysis

These two chapters explore the first few individuals Raymond was ever really able to connect with. Raised to despise himself, because of the scandal his mother had brought upon their family, and all those around him because of their natural scorn for him, Josie Jordan is the first person who ever treats him with kindness from the outset of their relationship and Raymond is smitten from the get go. As their interactions continue, Raymond's comfort with Josie allows him to open up to her in a way he never has to anyone else, and she begins to feel the same way. When Raymond's mother ends the relationship, the reader sees the seeds of a recurring pattern in the play. Each time Raymond opens up to, or becomes close to someone, Eleanor either forcibly separates the two or tries to have Raymond's confidant murdered. Brief Chapter 6 sets the stage for a repeat of the events in Chapter 5. As the reader sees how well Raymond gets



along with his boss, there is a sense that something must soon go wrong, most likely at Eleanor's direction.

## Vocabulary

putrefaction, exculpated, temperament, lackey, balsam, tiddly, mundane, defamation, slander, vitally, predestined, conviction, infatuated, filibuster, manifestation, degenerate, fulsomely, systematically, folklore



# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

Raymond's commanding officer from the army, Marco, calls Raymond at the paper to say he's in town and will be moving in with him. Marco turns Raymond's orderly, scheduled life complete on its head, leaving piles of clothing everywhere, filling the fridge with beer, sleeping all day, playing loud music, and filling the apartment with hordes of willing women. Within little more than a week, Raymond adjusted to his new status quo and began to enjoy it, allowing Marco to bring home extra women for him and opening his kitchen to the visiting females' culinary talents. His apartment becomes filled with the constant chatter of young women, until Marco began having debilitating nightmares that greatly disturbed his bedmates. In the nightmares, he sees the events of their conditioning and programming in Korea, but doesn't understand that he is seeing real events. Just as suddenly as he arrived, Marco was one day recalled to active duty and required to report to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

After Marco leaves, Raymond receives a telephone call at work asking him to play solitaire. Once he sees the queen of diamonds, he goes into a hypnotic state awaiting his instructions. The voice on the phone tells him to buy an accident insurance policy through the newspaper the next day and report to the Swardon Sanitorium for a check-up. The next day he set up the policy and then received a letter from one of the men in his unit in Korea, Al Melvin, claiming he was having the same sort of nightmares as Marco.

In Chapter 8, Johnny begins his political ascent at a Secretary of Defense press conference. Attending with some friends from prominent newspapers, Johnny poses as a member of the press and acts like he has a question for the secretary. When he is called on, instead of asking a question, he declares he is a senator and has a list of communists within the Department of Defense. He announces that the Department of Defense no longer has the people's confidence and it's now up to the Senate to investigate the matter and storms out.

Eleanor had previously arranged an appearance for Johnny on a conservative television program, but tactfully withdrew at the last minute so Johnny could work on his important investigation. This only further incited the network's excitement and they set up a contract for him to appear monthly on the show for a large sum. Johnny began to make many public appearances about his supposed list of communists, every time changing the number of "card-carrying" communists, a tactic of Eleanor's to keep suspicions high and the public confused and afraid. Though Eleanor's figures were based on actual government reports, she decided it was best for Johnny, who had a hard time keeping up, to pick just one number and stick to it.



## Analysis

During Raymond's time living with Marco, the author again shows, as he did in Chapter 1, how different Raymond has become after the war. However, just when Raymond has become happy with his new life filled with women, drinking, and frivolity, it is taken away from him by Marco's departure, demonstrating, as with Josie in Chapter 5, that Raymond is never able to hold onto anything that brings him joy. This constant loss of the few things in which he takes pleasure is a very important aspect of Raymond's character, fueling both his guarded nature with new people and his detached, fatalistic attitude about both life and his future.

Chapter 8, which is essentially setting the stage for Johnny's positioning as an important anti-communist political figure, shows an important aspect of the relationship between Eleanor and Johnny. Even though Eleanor chose Johnny as her subject because of his loose morals and desire to do whatever she says, he does not always play his part well. His drinking affects his focus, threatening Eleanor's plan and causing him to resist her control. Like Raymond's attempts to reject Eleanor, however, Johnny's protests are short-lived, further strengthening the idea that Eleanor seems to always, always get what she wants.

## Vocabulary

agonizing, reappraisal, doctrinaire, languorous, penalize, vestibule, agronomist, solemnized, recurrence, voluminous, infantry, inexorably, beneficiary, diffident, integration, goaded, evasion, lectern, reeled, espionage

# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

Just before Raymond's scheduled doctor's appointment, Zilkov, the North American KGB director, arrives to take him to the hospital. When Raymond gives him trouble, he asks him to play some solitaire. The KGB settles Raymond into the sanitarium and performs an exhaustive test of his programming. News breaks that Raymond has been in a bad car accident and Gaines comes to the hospital to visit him, leaving a nice bottle of Scotch behind. Zilkov demands Raymond perform a test assignment to check his programming, but his American operator disagrees. After a heated argument, they agree he should kill Gaines to gain his position at the newspaper. Raymond finally awakens consciously to find his mother sobbing by his bedside. He's bewildered she might care so much about him and assumes something happened to Johnny.

Raymond awkwardly completes his trial assassination, stumbling into Gaines' apartment and chatting with his target before finally completing the task. When he returns to the hospital, he has to put on all the casts from his fake car accident until he is discharged. A man from the newspaper comes to offer Raymond Gaines job and a raise, and Marco comes by to check on Raymond, though he looks even worse than his friend in the hospital bed. He confides to Raymond that he can't sleep anymore because his nightmares have gotten so bad, and Raymond describes the letter he got from Al Melvin.

Chapter 10 opens with Johnny's continuing to consolidate his political power as the chairman of the Committee on Federal Operations and the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. While his power grows in the Senate, however, he becomes hated in other circles, and the American Associate of Scientists goes so far as to call him out on sabotaging the morale of American scientists. Iselinism comes to stand for everything that other nations find backward about America. Meanwhile, Chunjin shows up at Raymond's office saying Senator Iselin sent him to be Raymond's assistant.

## Analysis

Chapter 9 offers another chilling look at how deeply Soviet intelligence has permeated the U.S. and Raymond's psyche. The decision by Zilkov and Raymond's operator to send him to take out his boss fulfills the foreshadowing laid out by Chapters 5 and 6 and continues the theme that everything Raymond enjoys is taken away from him because of politics. The reader also sees, for the first prolonged scene, how Raymond acts when he is completing his assignments. The fact that he can carry on conversation and does not ostensibly appear different than his normal self is a chilling fact that hit home with readers in the 60s, whose greatest fear was that people they knew were under the influencing of brainwashing and there was no way their friends or family could tell the difference. The end of this chapter also lays the groundwork for Marco's investigation of



his nightmares and Raymond's programming as he and Raymond begin to piece the puzzle together and believe there is some truth to the visions Marco is seeing.

Like Chapter 8 before, Chapter 10 again largely relays exposition about Johnny's political rise. This alternation of action-filled scenes from Raymond's life with more heavily political scenes is a technique the reader sees in several different levels of magnitude throughout the book, such as the shorter political narration in Chapter 3 about the Medal of Honor and later in the book about the party convention. Juxtaposing a more fact-filled scene with action and important plot movement is a suspense-building device which the author uses expertly throughout the novel to relieve and heighten tension around important events.

## Vocabulary

jurisdiction, attache, functionary, narcotics, spontaneity, verisimilitude, traction, travail, reflexive, emphatically, caricature, malevolence, sanitarium, paroxysm, dramatize, millinery, purged, photostatted, admonition



# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

Marco goes on indefinite sick leave because his condition has so worsened that he is no longer able to work. He undergoes several rounds of psychiatric treatment to no avail, and decides he needs to see Raymond. On the train to New York, he meets an enticing young woman named Rosie and the two form an immediate connection. Rosie and Marco share their ethnic backgrounds and life stories, but Marco gets emotionally overwhelmed and leaves Rosie when he begins to cry uncontrollably. Rosie gives him her address and tells him to come meet her later.

When Marco arrives at Raymond's apartment, Chunjin opens the door and Marco recognizes him from his nightmares and attacks him. Chunjin fights back, and the two, both highly trained in judo, pound on one another until the police arrive and pull them apart. Chunjin refuses to press charges and Marco is released to the armed forces liaison until Rosie comes to pick him up and the two head back to her apartment.

In Chapter 12, Marco, finally rested and recovered from his fight, calls Raymond at work. The two arrange to have dinner at Raymond's apartment. Marco explains he has been in and out of the hospital for psychiatric treatment and that he's talked to Al Melvin and they are having the exact same nightmares. Raymond decides the only way to figure out what really happened is to open an investigation into the matter, so Marco will have to court martial himself. Marco drinks himself to sleep at Raymond's and Rosie calls Raymond's office in the morning to check if he slept well. She's delighted he made it through the night without nightmares.

## Analysis

These two chapters focus heavily on Marco and advance the plot to uncover Raymond's programming. Here, the author plants the seed for Marco's involvement with Rosie. A curious character, Rosie comes to Marco out of the blue and takes to him instantly, for no apparent reason, but become the only thing in the world to provide him with relief from his nightmares and allow him to begin to recover his life after the mad state in which he has been living. Rosie's phone call to Raymond's office is the only interaction the two ever have in the entire novel, and it thus is extremely important for its brevity and the small information exchanged. Despite what Rosie knows of Raymond and Marco's strong desire for the two to meet and get along, their entire exchange focuses on Marco's well-being, establishing that is all Rosie is interested in, and raising further questions about her role and value in the novel.

## Vocabulary

fatigue, tic, fealties, malady, horticulturalist, garish, urbane, insatiable, keened, conjectured, fleetingly, hypereroticism, draymen, salvo, miniscule, caparisoned, monotreme, pedantic, djinn, lyssophobia





# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

Raymond's mother invites him to lunch and proceeds to outline a list of reasons why he should accompany her on her ambassadorial trip around Europe. Raymond quickly accepts, more for the opportunities for his column than to appease his mother, and she offers him a political favor in return. When Raymond asks her to promote his friend Marco, she asks if there's anything she should know about the man and is horrified to hear that he plans to bring about a court martial to investigate Raymond's Medal of Honor. Even with this information, she promises Raymond she'll get his friend's promotion.

In Chapter 14, Marco meets with General Nils Jorgenson about his court martial and his promotion. Clearly under intense internal pain from what he has to say, the general explicitly states that he is only doing as he has been ordered, and offers Marco the promotion in exchange for dropping the court martial. To impress upon Marco his lack of choice in the matter, the general explains Senator Iselin will essentially end the army as they know it if Marco does not comply, in addition to throwing Marco in solitary confinement. After Marco signs the agreement, the general shoots himself.

## Analysis

Two intense, powerful chapters increase the pace of the novel. Marking the end of the exposition and character introductions, Chapter 13 sets off the chain of events that will ultimately lead to Eleanor's death. By using the information about Marco's impending court martial as she does, she sets Marco up to seek revenge against Johnny, and ultimately herself. The fact that a military man so known and respected by Marco was forced to make him this deal and ultimately end his own life and career because of it, only makes the matter all the more personal for Marco. This wake up call--the general's death--coupled with his increased well-being in Rosie's presence, sets Marco on his almost blood-thirsty path to uncover the truth at all costs.

## Vocabulary

carpetbag, oration, reeks, haughtiness, attenuated, weltered, electrocardiogram, cesspool, forbearance, alarmist, contemptuous, falsification, collusion, conferment, psychoneurotic, florid, court-martial, appropriation, euphoric, cholericly, travesty



# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

Marco asks Rosie to marry him, and she agrees happily, though they decide they should wait until the mystery of his nightmares is figured out. Marco is distraught over the death of the general, and when he vows to get revenge on Iselin, Rosie realizes there may be a way she can help. Her ex, Lou Amjac, is in the FBI, and she believes she can persuade him to take on the case. Unfortunately, her idea of persuasion involves a significant amount of flirting, which makes the two men even more uneasy with each other. Amjac sees the merit and huge potential of the case, however, and agrees to open an investigation. Under the FBI's recommendation, Marco is reinstated with active duty and brings his own army intelligence men into the fold. They arrange an impressive task force called Operation Enigma, including top psychological researchers, and set out to interview anyone and everyone with any knowledge of the case or the individuals involved.

Meanwhile in Chapter 16, Eleanor and Raymond tour Europe beginning with a Department of State arranged stay with Eleanor's estranged brother, the Ambassador to France. After she denounces him as a communist, he is forced to resign. Raymond, attempting to ignore the actions of her mother and her press-mongering husband at home, wrote up intimate and highly-appraised views of European politics for his column. The public called for Raymond to write of his own views of Iselinism, and his brutal derogation of Senator Iselin and his mother furthered fueled European outrage against the pair.

## Analysis

In Chapter 15, the reader sees Marco's continued improvement and dedication to his new mission. Rosie, an undeveloped character whose main role in the novel is to support Marco, again moves things along by connecting Marco to her ex, who just happens to be an FBI agent. Rosie's ability to provide Marco with exactly what he needs exactly when he needs it is almost suspiciously uncanny, and though the text doesn't allude to it, the reader must wonder if she was somehow planted on his train to New York to meet him and connect him to the FBI, as the ease of events surrounding her seems to stretch the realms of possibility and literary integrity.

While Chapter 16 again seems to be largely political exposition, arranged in alternation with the more action-filled chapters related to the investigation of Raymond's programming, the very end of the chapter alludes to a fact that will figure importantly later in the novel. Though it is not discussed at all during Eleanor and Raymond's travels, two important political figures happened to be killed while Raymond was in the same city with them. The reader does not see Raymond's operator give him these assignments, or Raymond completing them, but the author offers up these little tidbits



as foreshadowing for how these assassinations after Marco's investigation in later chapters.

## Vocabulary

immutable, devaluing, sentimentality, emasculate, arbitrage, vigorish, religieuse, irrevocably, shamus, plebeian, hysteroid, mnemonicist, concretion, valor, vociferous, infamous, attendant, redolent, melodramatic, ineptness, villany



# Chapters 17-18

## Summary

Raymond meets Marco and his new FBI colleagues at Hungarian Charlie's, a saloon in New York. Raymond is incredibly skeptical of the FBI men, but trusts Raymond's news of their investigation, even though he finds it impossible to believe he has killed so many people. Marco impresses upon him the importance of their investigation, and that their weekly reports go to the President, joint chiefs of staff and even the Prime Minister of Britain. Raymond allows the task force to examine him, but they are not able to figure out his triggers. They get a few glimpses of his suggestive state, but just enough to convince them they are dealing with something far beyond their ability to crack or reprogram. Even though he goes along with their investigation for Marco's sake, Raymond feels healthy and fine and doesn't believe their enemies really control his mind.

In Chapter 18, Raymond invites Marco over for Christmas Eve dinner and the two exchange presents. Raymond, well-aware of Marco's deep love of books, has bought him a leather-bound, three-volume set of *A Military History of the Western World*. Marco, meanwhile, well-acquainted with Raymond's gourmet tendencies, has purchased a gift certificate to an incredibly high-end New York delicatessen. The two men, both on the verge of joyful tears, sing Christmas carols, watch the snow, and drink wine as Raymond confides in Marco that Josie's Argentine husband has died. Marco tells him he has to go for it, and convinces Raymond to write her an impassioned condolence letter.

Meanwhile, the winter and spring pass eventfully for the Iselin's as Eleanor and Johnny conspire with retired General Francis Bollinger to create a new committee of patriots called Ten Million Americans Mobilized for Tomorrow to put together a petition for Senator Iselin's presidency. Marco and his men continue their investigation and learn Raymond is on the short list for two murders that occurred in Europe during his tour with his mother.

In May, news breaks the Josie is returning from Argentina and Eleanor is throwing a costume ball in her honor. Raymond is furious to learn about the party from his newspaper instead of his mother, but immediately decides he must finally write to Josie. The novel includes a partial text of his letter, which professes his deep and undying love for her and smudges from the tears he shed putting down the words.

## Analysis

Chapter 17 is both a turning point and stalling point in Marco's investigation. Raymond wants to help Marco but simply cannot believe he is really doing all the things Marco thinks he is. The fact that he goes along with the investigation at all, despite his deep belief that he is not what they think, is a testament to how much his affection for Marco



has grown. From choosing Marco as the man in his unit who he hates most during his demonstration at the Soviet research facility to undergoing extensive psychological testing just to support his friend, the reader sees not only how the relationship between the two men has changed, but how Raymond's capacity for affection has evolved after his programming.

Chapter 18 covers a long stretch of time and again provides the slower juxtaposition to the revelatory Chapter 17. The most significant section of this chapter is Raymond and Marco's bonding on Christmas Eve. The fact the Raymond reached out to Marco, inviting him over for the holiday and getting him such a fitting and thoughtful present shows how close he has grown to Marco; he's come to regard Marco as his only family. It is in the midst of this display of deep bonding, when it seems Raymond is finally able to hold onto something important to him, that the reader learns another loved person who he thought was lost will also return to his life: Josie. Just as the appearance of Rosie in Marco's life allowed him to begin to move forward from his experiences in the way, Josie's return from Argentina allows Raymond to begin to experience deep emotions, first when he discusses her with Marco and then when he cries over his letter expressing his feelings to her.

## Vocabulary

unsanitary, rhetorical, divulged, elated, cretinous, indelibly, undeigning, trove, catalepsy, circuitous, morbid, agronomist, mobilize, obscenities, vituperation



# Chapters 19-20

## Summary

Back at Hungarian Charlie's, Marco comes to meet Raymond and finds him playing solitaire. Charlie, in his usual booming voice, was telling a story to one of the customers and accidentally said Raymond's trigger line: 'why don't you play a little solitaire?' Raymond basically ignores Marco, who is trying to ask him to be the best man at his wedding to Rosie, and runs out of the restaurant after Charlie says "why don't you take a cab to Central Park and jump in the lake?" When Marco gets outside, Raymond has already caught a cab, and he sits, confused, at Charlie's until the FBI tail calls him to say Raymond just took a rowboat out into the middle of the lake at the park and jumped in the water.

When Marco and the agents question Raymond, he claims he didn't jump in the lake, even though his wet clothes are clear evidence to the contrary. He doesn't even remember Marco arriving at Charlie's. Marco and his team interview everyone who was present at Charlie's when the incident took place and finally work out the solitaire trigger. They order a shipment of card force decks made up only of the queen of diamonds.

Meanwhile, Chunjin reports Raymond's jump in the lake to the Soviets and Raymond's operator meets with the Soviet chief of security for the region. Zilkov thinks the incident was a deliberate display by the Americans to show they'd broken Raymond, but Raymond's operator insists everything is fine. To calm the Soviet, Raymond's operator decides to perform a test assignment to check Raymond's programming: ordering him to kill Marco, his only friend. Getting out of the cab, Raymond's operator--drugged up on a tranquilizer--slams their hand in the door.

In Chapter 20, Raymond returns home from his jump in the lake, his thoughts filled with Josie. Chunjin announces he has rented a car and a chauffeur outfit to take Raymond to Long Island in a style befitted his personage. Raymond arrives and dresses in an over-the-top gaucho outfit, and greets his parents, dressed as dairy farmers. Eleanor feigns concern that Raymond looks either like he's going to faint or his head will explode with excitement over seeing Josie and takes him to the library for to give him his assignment to kill Marco. Raymond asks what happened to Eleanor's bandaged hand, and after briefly mentioning she got it caught in the door of a cab, she tells him to play some solitaire.

## Analysis

Chapter 19 provides exactly the break that Marco and Amjac have waited for all winter and spring. For readers, however, it reveals an even more important aspect of Raymond's programming: it can be activated by anyone. This is a key moment of



foreshadowing, as Zilkov and Raymond's handler debate whether this development means Raymond needs to be taken out of play. Even though the task force did not intentionally crack Raymond and send him to jump in the lake, they now know they can reprogram him and exactly how to do it. It is this knowledge that allows Marco to change Raymond's final mission at the end of the book.

Brief Chapter 20 seems entirely slow exposition until the author drops a huge bomb when Eleanor reveals how she hurt her hand. Eleanor is Raymond's Soviet operator, the one who met with Zilkov at the hospital after his jump in the lake. This revelation casts an entirely new light on the already strained relationship between Eleanor and Raymond, begging the reader to wonder if the fact that he typically acquiesces to her demands may also have something to do with his programming.

## Vocabulary

incomprehensible, loquacious, publicians, peremptorily, aberration, conviction, momentous, capacious, incriminate, durance, solicitude, shiftiness, quarries, disputatious, happenstance, contemptuous, counterespionage



# Chapters 21-22

## Summary

In a short tender scene, Marco tells Rosie they finally have Raymond's programming figured out and it will all be over soon. The two begin their wedding preparations in earnest.

In Chapter 22, Raymond begins to play cards, but Johnny interrupts. Eleanor takes the cards away to prevent any further mis-programming, but then Josie slips in the library through the back door--dressed as the queen of diamonds! After a quick reconciliation and professions of undying affection, the two begin to make love on the couch. Meanwhile, Senator Jordan has gone in the front door to distract the Iselin's while Josie and Raymond reconnect, and Eleanor takes him into a private den to ask whether he will block Johnny's run for vice president. Convinced that the vice presidential nomination is just a feint for a greater goal, Senator Jordan vows to block the move with all of his money and influence.

## Analysis

Even more than the previous breakthrough in Raymond's programming, his encounter with Josie shows it may be possible to break the Soviet's hold over him, entirely. Josie herself has considerable power over Raymond, but combining her effect on him with the queen of diamonds trigger allows Raymond, even in his un-hypnotized state, to snap out of the control his mother exerts over his personality and love someone completely.

## Vocabulary

grotesque, noncommittally, masquerade, inlay, huskily, equidistant, guardedly, repudiate, amiably, ambergris, narcoleptic, zebrine, langrel





# Chapters 23-24

## Summary

Josie leaves a letter for her father explaining they have eloped to get married immediately, and Raymond writes to his editor at the Daily Press to say that he's is taking his first vacation. The couple travels under fake names to Puerto Rico, where they marry and set out on a Caribbean cruise for their honeymoon. Eleanor genuinely panics when she realizes Raymond has left, as does Chunjin, who immediately notifies the Soviet authorities. The FBI, however, tracks the couple down and places two agents on their ship to keep them under surveillance and protect them.

Upon their return to New York, Senator Jordan insists on throwing a celebration dinner for the couple, and photographers from several newspapers capture the event. The next day, the headlines compare the couple closely with Romeo and Juliet, as the news of their marriage breaks right along with a particularly vicious attack on Senator Iselin from Senator Jordan. Eleanor lures her son back to Washington by offering him an exclusive scoop on an unusual policy development, but wastes no time giving him another assignment: to kill Senator Jordan and make sure no one knows it was he. She arranges engagements for him all over Washington so no one suspects him of being in New York.

In Chapter 24, Marco's unit discovers Raymond is in Washington, and tries to find him to reprogram him. They completely miss him because they don't cover the Iselin house, since Raymond vowed never to speak to Johnny again after his recent slander of Senator Jordan.

Chunjin drives Raymond to New York in the middle of the night and wakes him when they reach the Jordan house. Raymond dully tells Chunjin he is incredibly sad, but his handler gently consoles him with the fact that it will all be over soon and he can forget. Senator Jordan, awake and on the prowl for a mid-night snack, greets Raymond when he enters their apartment. The two chat comfortably until the Senator invites Raymond up to his bedroom for some whisky and spots the gun, forcing Raymond to complete his programming and shoot him. Josie comes running and he automatically, cleanly, shoots her as well before stumbling out of the apartment, stricken with grief, back to the truck. Taking pity on him, Chunjin hits him in the back of the head with the gun so he passes out.

## Analysis

Chapter 23 offers a tragic juxtaposition within one chapter, instead between an action-filled chapter and an expositive one, as the author used previously. He is picking up the pace, making way for the plot's conclusion, as Marco suspected. Raymond's joyous elopement with Josie is immediately squashed by his mother, who decides he must kill



his father-in-law, an action that will ruin his marriage to Josie, the happiest thing he has ever had in his life. For the first time, however, Eleanor actually expresses a touch of sadness over this fact, and the reader must wonder if she does often regret what she is doing to Raymond and others she uses or who get in her way, and perhaps her constant doping is her way of coping with the pain she inflicts.

Chapter 24 explores two new and somewhat disturbing plot developments--aside from the horrific murder itself. Marco, who avoided confronting Raymond and reprogramming him during his honeymoon, misses a second opportunity to catch Raymond, and thus, inadvertently, is responsible for Josie and Senator Jordan's deaths. Knowing he had the ability to stop these events and didn't, begins to wear heavily on Marco, as the reader sees in the following scene.

Secondly, even though Raymond's programming still superseded his affection for Josie and her father, the reader sees the control of his programming has begun to slip. Even before he kills the senator, he tells Chunjin he is sad about it, and after killing them, he cannot help but whimper over what he has done. This event is what finally pushes his assignments to bleed through into his conscious mind, establishing Josie was able to in some ways break his programming.

## Vocabulary

sublimely, detrimental, reflexively, serenity, fugitive, surveillance, sanctity, tilting, mimeographed, brandishing, chided, concurred, allegation, brooder, absorption, rile, conviviality, intermittent, liquidation



# Chapters 25-26

## Summary

After the news of Josie's death break, Marco reviews a transcript of her interview with the FBI while she was still in Argentina. He lies on the couch at home with Rosie and asks her to read the transcript for her. It's reprinted in the book, with Josie going by the name Mrs. Seward Arnold, after her first husband. In the transcript, the doctor awkwardly explains the urgency and importance of his visit and that Raymond's actions and personality are a matter of the utmost national security. Josie earnestly relates her deep personal feelings for Raymond the summer they met, describing him as the handsomest man she ever met and explaining how his mother had reduced him to a painfully shy boy who expected the world to hate him. Regretfully she says that they never made love; they never even kissed. When Rosie is done reading, Marco tells her that Raymond killed his wife and hands her the newspaper.

When Chapter 26 opens, Raymond is already in the middle of a solitaire game with his mother. She is completely high on heroin and tells Raymond she plans to get revenge on the Soviet's for what they have done to her, to Raymond and Josie. Explaining her shock and deep emotion over discovering Raymond was the assassin chosen by Yen Lo, Eleanor kisses Raymond's hand in devotion and then begins to look at him luridly. Musing on how he looks like her father, she commands Raymond to kiss her and pretending he is her father, reenacts their affair from her childhood.

## Analysis

Chapters 25 and 26 offer a disturbing contrast between the pure between Raymond and Josie and the twisted affections of Raymond's mother. After a heart-wrenching transcript of Josie's feelings for Raymond and her ability to see into his soul, Raymond's mother seduces him, taking him for her own father, who seduced her as a girl, in her drug-induced haze. Despite the incestuous scene, it shows an important facet of her relationship to Raymond. Her own father was the only person she every truly loved, and Raymond deeply reminds her of her father. This is why she, despite using him, cares more for Raymond than she did for Johnny or Raymond's father.

## Vocabulary

verbatim, transcribed, idiosyncrasies, compulsions, deplore, neurotic, sparing, laboriously, ballistic, overtones, contemptuously, ecstatic



# Chapters 27-28

## Summary

In a narrative discourse, the author opens Chapter 27 describing the history of and rational behind party conventions and primary voting. The Convention of 1960 began with a bustling area of festivity, with banners on every car, hotel, and freeway overpass. Marco's army intelligence men and the FBI brief themselves on their mission as the candidate's speeches begin. Johnny and Eleanor skip the speeches, as they are busy behind closed doors, conniving, trading, and generally inching their way towards the vice presidential nomination. Their collaborator, General Francis Bollinger, leads a parade in honor of the Ten Million Americans Mobilizing for Tomorrow with a long petition for Senator Iselin trailing behind them. Meanwhile, Eleanor meets with the party delegates and trades away General Bollinger's nomination for Secretary of State to secure Johnny's nomination.

In Chapter 28, Raymond calls Marco from a pay phone, terribly confused about what he has done and is going to do. After receiving word Senator Iselin nabbed the vice presidential nomination, Marco heads to meet Raymond in Central Park and finds him in rough shape, as he used to be when he suffered his nightmares and was placed on medical leave. Raymond confesses to Marco he's afraid that he killed his wife and slept with his mother. As eager to relieve his friend's pain as to get answers, Marco suggests Raymond play some solitaire and hands him the deck full of queen of diamond cards. Raymond tries to stop playing after pulling up the first red queen, but Marco forces him to keep turning over cards, until he has seven queen of diamond's looking up at him.

Marco pushes Raymond to remember everything he has done under the influence of his controllers, and Raymond recites all of his assignments into Marco's recorder. When he gets to his recent acts--killing Senator Jordan and Josie--Marco commands Raymond to forget about Josie until he tells him to remember. Marco finally discovers Raymond's assignment and decides to give him new instructions. As the two leave the park, Chunjun hits Marco with his moving truck and scoops up Raymond, taking him to his mission. Changing into a priest costume, Raymond moves through the convention and sets up his equipment from the assassin box.

## Analysis

After the action-packed and revelatory Chapter 26, the author returns to an intense historical narration in Chapter 27 to bring down the action and create suspense for the upcoming events. Chapter 28 is when all of the different plot arcs of the novel finally come together: Marco gets validation of his memories, Raymond confesses to all of his crimes, and Eleanor's final plan for Johnny's rise to president is revealed. Though the author doesn't share Marco's new instructions for Raymond, there is a brief sense of victory for the good guys before Chunjin appears and takes Raymond back for the



Soviets. This is another important classical plot element to heighten the suspense for the final scene.

## Vocabulary

travesty, magistracy, festooned, partisan, Legionnaires, keynote, prosperity, axiomatic, effigies, fustian, curate, perceptibly, pantheon, gantlet, chamois



# Chapters 29-30

## Summary

Bandaged up, Marco meets with his team to review the tape. Listening to the recording, the team learns Raymond will be wearing a priest costume and that his mother has commanded him to say he is working for the Russians if captured. He also reveals he knows that his mother is angry that they chose him and that it was the first time in his life he had ever seen her upset. The tape abruptly cuts off after Raymond describes his mission to kill the presidential candidate and pretend to wound his step-father, who will then hold up the dead candidate and recite an impassioned speech the Russian have been working on for eight years. Marco refuses to tell the team what happened after the tape stopped, only saying they have to hurry.

Back at the convention, Chapter 30 opens with Johnny and Eleanor seated onstage. Johnny is so nervous about being shot Eleanor gives him a sedative so he does twitch and gets hit somewhere besides his bulletproof vest. Marco's men see Eleanor give Johnny some pills, but they don't make it to Raymond in time, and at the line "that which I would not gladly give myself--my life before liberty" Raymond shoots Johnny and his mother. Amjac looks up to the booth where the shots came from and sees Marco heading inside with a deck of cards. After Marco leaves the booth, a third shot rings out from the booth as Raymond shoots himself.

## Analysis

The author keeps Marco's plan from both the reader and the FBI in Chapter 29, building anticipation and suspense for the final, fulcrum scene. He does however, share some of Eleanor's possible motives and in doing so show Raymond understands that despite his mother's actions, she does care for him.

At the beginning of Chapter 30, it's significant that Eleanor gives Johnny some sedatives. Throughout the duration of the novel, she constantly numbs herself to her life and her actions through heroin, tranquilizers, and sedatives, showing her somewhat passive acceptance of the events around her. Johnny, however, is a drinker, choosing a drug that makes him rowdy and aggressive, instead of passive. In the moments before his death, he takes the pill that symbolizes passive acceptance of his fate.

## Vocabulary

inexorable, anesthesia, ecclesiastical, pandemonium, velocity, martyrdom, rousing, succor, anarchism, subversion, unobtrusively



# Characters

## Raymond Shaw

Raymond is the novel's protagonist, the main character. He served as a sergeant in the Korean War, where he was brainwashed by a Soviet and Russian and programmed to become a sleeper assassination in service of the communists. In the army, he was known as an expert marksman, capable of felling anything he aimed a weapon at. Upon returning from the war, he takes up a job at the Daily Press, rising to become the political columnist when his Soviet controllers activate his programming and have him kill his boss.

## Arthur Mavole

The father of Raymond's dead comrade Eddie, Arthur Mavole makes a long appearance at the beginning of the book. He is a small, constantly sweating man whose demeanor enrages Raymond even while he tries to show sympathy for the family.

## Eddie Mavole

Eddie was a member of Raymond's unit during the Korean War. He was originally thought to have died during the enemy attack that merited Raymond his medal of honor, but in the flashbacks to their time at the Soviet research facility, the reader sees Raymond was commanded to kill Eddie and Bobby Lembeck as a test of his programming.

## Bobby Lembeck

The youngest member of Raymond's unit in Korea, Bobby may have actually been too young to serve and had many firsts during their time in Korea. He was killed by Raymond, along with Eddie Mavole, during the test of Raymond's programming at the Soviet research facility.

## Mardell

A young, ambitious newspaper reporter, Mardell was sent to interview Raymond when he flew out to meet Mr. Mavole on his way to receive the Medal of Honor. She reminds Raymond a bit of himself early in his news career, and they have a brief affair during his visit.



## Eleanor Shaw

Ostensibly the villain of the novel, Eleanor Shaw, Raymond's mother, is a deeply troubled woman with delusions of grandeur. As a young girl, she had a prolonged sexual relationship with her father, which she recalls as the only happy time in her life. After her father's death, her brother observed her psychopathic tendencies when she wanted to nail their dog's paw to the floor after it refused to stay put, and he tried to beat the urges out of her with a hockey stick, unsuccessfully. When she was married to Raymond's father, her thirst for power had led her to become involved with any organization that would have her, and when she saw that her first husband was not angling for political success, she moved onto the more malleable Johnny Iselin.

## Johnny Iselin

Eleanor's husband and Raymond's stepfather, Johnny is a slimy man with a penchant for deceit and working outside the system. As a young judge, he accepted bribes to speed along couples' divorces. He is based on the real life senator Joseph McCarthy, whose tactics brought about the suspicious anti-communist McCarthyism movement during the Cold War.

## Hungarian Charlie

Charlie is the owner and proprietor of Hungarian Charlie's, the saloon in New York that Raymond and Marco meet at.

## Al Melvin

Al Melvin was part of Ben Marco and Raymond Shaw's unit during the Korean War. After the war, he begins to have the same nightmares as Marco and writes to Raymond asking what to do. He and Marco talk on the phone often, providing the only comfort for each other during their worst periods.

## Ben Marco

Marco, as he is called throughout the novel in standard military usage, is the head of Raymond's unit in Korea. An unusual soldier, he loves books of any kind, particularly non-fiction works on obscure artistic, historical, economic and technical subjects, as well as classic novels and theater. After the war, he moves in with Raymond and begins to have vivid nightmares about their experiences at the Soviet research facility. He begins an investigation into his memories and manages to unravel Raymond's programming and save him from assassinating the presidential candidate.





## **Rosie**

Rosie meets Ben on a train to New York during his worst period of psychological stress. The two form a fast and deep bond and make plans to marry. She supports him during his investigation and help him begin sleeping again and regain his health.

## **Josie Jordan**

Josie is the love of Raymond's life. She briefly saves him from his programming and subjection to his mother, but he accidentally kills her when he is sent to kill her father. Raymond never recovers from her death and kills himself when he remembers what he has done.

## **Senator Jordan**

Senator Jordan is a liberal senator diametrically opposed to Iselin and everything he stands for. He bonds with Raymond after his daughter saves him from a snake bite, and they remain close until Raymond's operator orders him to kill the Senator.

## **Dr. Yen Lo**

Dr. Yen Lo is an incredibly respected psychological researcher viewed as little less than a god to people in his field. He is well liked by his peers, and viewed as the successor to Pavlov in terms of the importance of his research. He developed the method used to program Raymond and ran the research facility that brainwashed Raymond and his unit.

## **Chunjin**

A highly trained Soviet soldier, Chunjin posed as a Korean interpreter and guide for Raymond's unit, setting the men up for capture. After the war, he poses as Raymond's personal assistant and chef to keep an eye on him and take him out if necessary.

## **General Francis Bollinger**

Eleanor and Johnny use retired General Bollinger to advance their cause for Johnny's vice presidential campaign, appointing him head of Ten Million Americans Mobilized for Tomorrow. They quickly drop him from their plans when he is no longer useful.

## **Lou Amjac**

Rosie's long-time ex-boyfriend, Lou Amjac is an FBI agent who helps Marco start the investigation into his mysterious nightmares. He and Marco run the unit together.



## **Holborn Gaines**

When Raymond gets out of the army, he gets a job as the assistant to Holborn Gaines, a well-regarded political newspaper columnist for the Daily Press in New York. Like Raymond, Gaines abhors idle chit-chat and the two get along well until Raymond's operator orders him to kill Gaines.

## **Zilkov**

The head of the North American branch of the KGB, Zilkov works as a New York taxi driver as a cover, allowing him to meet easily with Raymond's operator.

## **General Nils Jorgenson**

General Jorgenson is a respected officer who knew Raymond's father and grandfather. After 40 successful years in the army, the general takes his own life in an act of protest against Iselin's attempts to control the army.



# Objects/Places

## Tunghwa

Tunghwa is the Soviet research facility built near the Korean border before the capture of Raymond's unit. Dr. Yen Lo runs the facility and reprograms Raymond and his unit there during their capture.

## Queen of Diamonds

The queen of diamonds is Raymond's trigger to accept programming. After someone says, "Why don't you play some solitaire?" Raymond plays until the queen of diamonds appears and then stops to await instructions.

## Force Deck

A force deck is deck of cards with 52 of the same card. Often used by magicians to help them guess a card their target has picked from the deck, Marco uses a force deck full of queen of diamond cards to reprogram Raymond.

## Operation Enigma

Marco and Amjac put together the Operation Enigma task force to uncover the truth of Marco's memories, including which Soviet and Russian agents are involved in the research.

## Ten Million Americans Mobilized for Tomorrow

Ten Million Americans Mobilized for Tomorrow is the somewhat bogus political association set up by Eleanor, Johnny and General Bollinger before the party convention to drum up support for Johnny's vice presidential run. The association stages a parade before the event where they stroll through town trailing a long petition filled with fake signatures from the General's family.

## Medal of Honor

The Medal of Honor is the highest military award given in the United States. Members of any military branch are eligible for the award, which the President bestows in the name of Congress and the American people. Only given for matters of the utmost bravery at the risk of one's own life, Raymond's erroneous receipt of the Medal of Honor due to Soviet brainwashing is a central element of the novel.



## Primary

A primary is a state-wide vote leading up to the presidential nominations at the party convention. In the primaries, different candidates vying for their party's presidential nomination compete for votes within their own party's supporters.

## Daily Press

The Daily Press is a fictional newspaper based in New York but with nation-wide recognition where Raymond gets a job when he leaves the army. After he kills his boss as a test of his programming, he becomes an influential political columnist for the paper.

## Party Convention

The party convention is the height of the primary season. After different presidential candidates have campaigned and elicited votes from the people, the politicians in each party select the candidates who will have the party's support as vice-presidential and presidential candidates for the next election.

## Iselinism/McCarthyism

In the novel, the political term "Iselinism" is coined to stand for the extreme anti-communist political stance promoted by Johnny Iselin. It is based on the actual historical practice "McCarthyism," named after Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose political career Iselin's character is based on.

## Communists

Communists, also sometimes called Marxists, were individuals who believed in a radical economic-based political system in which all individuals were equal and received equal pay and equal distribution of material goods, while the government controlled all aspects of human action and interaction. Though Communism theoretically promotes individual liberties, in practice, no such liberties exist. In Cuba and the USSR, Communism was actually the vehicle by which totalitarian states came into existence.

## Pavlov Technique

Most typically illustrated by a dog who associates the sound of a bell with his feeding time, and salivates when the bell is sounded even if its food is not present, Pavlovian or classical conditioning is a type of neural conditioning wherein the subject so closely associates two phenomenon that it reacts to both as it would to the original response-inducing stimulus.



## **Hungarian Charlie's**

Hungarian Charlie's is the New York City saloon where Raymond and Marco typically meet up during their friendship. It is the proprietor, Charlie, who accidentally sets off Raymond's programming, causing him to jump in the lake at Central Park.

## **Central Park**

Occupying a central portion of the island of Manhattan, Central Park is a major New York City landmark and a common meeting point in the city. Several scenes of the booking, including Raymond's hypnotized jump in the lake and Marco's reprogramming of Raymond take place in Central Park.

## **Swardon Sanitorium**

In New York City, the fictional Swardon Sanitorium is the Russian-operated facility Raymond is taken to by his operators for his programming check-up.

## **Senate**

The United States Senate is one of the two houses of the U.S. legislative body. The upper of the two houses, the other being the House of Representatives, it is modeled after the British House of Lords. Each state sends only two senators to the Senate, as opposed to a varying number of population-based representatives to the House, so a position in the Senate is viewed as a more prestigious or in-demand political appointment.

## **KGB**

KGB, an abbreviation of the Russian name *omitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*, was the term commonly used for the Soviet intelligence and security forces in the USSR during the Cold War.



# Themes

## Evil

The theme of evil, and specifically the nature of evil, are explored throughout the novel. Through gradual revelations about several of the key villains in the novel, Condon implores the reader to question what it means to be evil or commit evil acts. At the beginning of the novel, Dr. Yen Lo is introduced as an individual esteemed by his colleagues and idolized by his underlings. He jokes, tells his group stories, and brings them together in a positive community. But then he brainwashes a group of men and orders them to kill practically as a sport. Eleanor, on the other hand, is shown to be conniving from the outset, but the true depths of her darkness only reach their highest point later in the novel when the reader learns that she is Raymond's operator and then the reader sees her force him to commit incest with her. However, the author shows her doping herself up on tranquilizers, sedatives and heroin throughout the novel, showing that perhaps she is not as comfortable with her atrocious actions as she appears. Raymond, on the other hand, is shown to be an essentially good--though perhaps ruder than necessary--man throughout the novel, even though the reader knows that deep down, he is a cold-blooded assassin. These three different images of people who commit evil actions, and the personalities each had, serve to show that people can often be capable of far more than they seem and question whether people who commit evil acts are evil and how those acts can be separate from the individual.

## Man as Machine

The concept that men could be used as machines is explored to great extents in the novel. Psychology, and studies of the brain were far less advanced when this novel was written in the mid-twentieth century, and yet the question of brainwashing and human conditioning is as chilling and confusing today as it was then. So little is understood of what the brain does, how it works, and how it is controlled, that it is not difficult for the average reader to believe that it is in fact possible, through ground-breaking psychological techniques to deconstruct and reconstruct an individual's memories. Condon does a brilliant job at referencing and quoting from major real works of psychological research to construct the methods and philosophy of Dr. Yen Lo's lab work, but what are perhaps more stunning and notable are the instances of human conditioning that were not created in Dr. Yen Lo's lab. Why does Eleanor dope herself up every time she encounters a stressful situation? Why does Raymond always acquiesce to his mother when she uses a certain tone of voice on him? While the novel focuses on the effects of the overt conditioning techniques used on Raymond, the author incorporates dozens of smaller situations of conditioning to strengthen the theme and the believability of the plot.



## Politics

Politics, and its ill-use, are examined as an underlying theme in the novel. Though the artifice of American politics--politicians claim to be elected by the people and doing their will--is not the main political focus of the novel, which primarily tells a fictionalized version of the rise of McCarthyism/Iselinism, the way that Condon presents the facts of the political plot-line betray this theme. Eleanor and Johnny's entire political careers is shown as a series of parties, meetings and press events, never showing the couple interacting with the people, working on any issues related to their constituents, or going about the every day tasks of a Senator on Capital Hill. The author frames their version of politics as one that happens entirely through handshakes and deals. Indirectly, Condon also seems to show that without this behind-closed-doors, favor trading behavior, events such as the rise of McCarthyism, persecutions of supposed communists, and certain assassinations may have been avoided.

## Control

Control is an overarching and dominant theme in the novel. Who controls who? It is a difficult question to answer at every turn in this novel, as the author constantly adds new layers to the mystery and hierarchy of the relationships between his characters. While it is initially clear that Eleanor has some control over Raymond as his mother, the reader later learns that she has actual programmed control over him as his operator. When the reader learns that Eleanor was surprised that Raymond was chosen as the assassin and devastated by the choice, it seems that she is a subordinate to the wishes of the Soviet intelligence, but then she reveals that she is the one who ordered them to create an assassin in the first place. Marco's path to regain control over himself and then gain control over Raymond's programming is the thread that ushers the action along and brings it to its conclusion. Control--who has power over who and how they can use it--is the central driver of the plot's unfolding.



# Style

## Point of View

“The Manchurian Candidate” is narrated by an omniscient third person voice, allowing the reader to see, hear, and know things not known by the characters. For this type of book, third person narration is necessary so the reader understands the background of the psychological experiments, even though Raymond does not. It is this tension between the reader's knowledge and Raymond's ignorance that makes the work so poignant. Meanwhile the reader's inability to understand Eleanor's true thoughts or feelings on the events of the novel makes her character more complex, as the reader is initially given information that constructs an evil, conniving view of her, but little by little comes to understand how she feels about these events, and that she numbs herself to the pain.

## Setting

The action of the novel and the associated flashbacks take place all over the world, though primarily in United States. Korea, during flashbacks to the war, and Europe, during Eleanor and Raymond's tour, are also included. Most of the book takes place either in Washington, D.C., where Marco, Eleanor and Johnny are concerned, and in New York, where Raymond lives for much of the novel, but scenes also occur in many other U.S. cities when Raymond and Marco visit other men from their unit or their families.

## Language and Meaning

Though the book is narrated in the third person, the narrator uses a distinct voice, strongly seen in the heavily narrated scenes, as opposed to the dialogue-driven scenes that move the action forward. A quick, rat-ta-tat tone, like a fast talking newspaper man would use, the narration establishes the novels quick pace through short sentences, heavy with punctuation giving the text breaks almost like a wire message. This tone heavily informs the author's word choice, because he gives the narrator a heady vocabulary that a newspaper man would likely use, regularly dotting the text with long, precise words like peremptory or paroxysm.

## Structure

The novel is broken into thirty chapters over widely differing length. The chapters in the beginning of the book, where the author gives extensive background and flashbacks to the true action of the novel, are considerably longer than the later chapters. While the novel as a whole relies heavily on dialogue, the author uses a suspense building technique common to thrillers. After the set-up for a big event, such as Raymond's press



conference for the Medal of Honor or the assassination at the end of the novel, the author gives a long, drawn-out history of the event that is about to take place to slow down the pace before the climax. In other places, the author chooses not to narrate an important event, such as Iselin's TV appearance, but instead provides a movie script style transcript of what was said.



## Quotes

They were an odd combination: the civilian who tried to talk like a soldier and the soldier who had been ordered by the joint chiefs to talk like a civilian; the frosty Brahmin and the earthy, ambitious man; the pseudomystagogue with the counter-puncher; the inhibitory with excitatory.

Raymond, why don't you pass the time by playing a little solitaire?

Although the Paranoics make the great leaders, it is the reseners who make their best instruments, because the reseners, those men with cancer of the psyche, make the great assassins.

There is so much fraud in this world and it needs to be turned away with fraud, the way steel is turned with steel and the way a soft answer does not turneth away wrath.

The smugness and complacency of this country will be dragged through the blood and the noise in the streets until it becomes a country purged and purified back to original purity, which it once possessed so long ago when the founding fathers of this republic--the blessed, blessed fathers--brought it into life.

The old sayings are the best, and Marco looked like death warmed over.

To the people of Iceland, Peru, France, and Pitcairn Island the label of Iselinism stood for anything and everything that was dirty, backward, ignorant, repressive, offensive, antiprogressive, or rotten, and all of those adjectives must ultimately be seen as sincere tributes to any demagogue of any country on the planet.

The queen of diamonds, in so many ways reminiscent of Raymond's dearly loved and hated mother, is the second key that will clear his mechanism for any assignments

It was the queen of diamonds, his patron and his destiny.

Each newspaper made a comparison with the plot of Romeo and Juliet . . . Both paragraphs referred to the groom as being of the House of Montague (Iselin) and to the bride as being of the House of Capulet (Jordan), then went on into divergent reviews of the murderous bitterness between the two senators . . .

I thought, and I still think, he was the handsomest man I have ever seen in life, or in photograph or in a painting. His eyes had such regret for the world

. . . the old, old man with the withered, merry smile who said his name was Yen Lo and who promised him solemnly that in other lives, thought which he would journey beyond this life, he would be spared the unending agony which he had found in this life.



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

What does the Medal of Honor mean to the characters in the novel? What is the symbolic significance of Raymond receiving the Medal of Honor? How does he come to deserve the honor by the close of the novel?

## Topic 2

What is the effect of Josie and Raymond's youthful relationship on Raymond? What is the significance of the fact that she only re-enters his life when his brainwashing begins to unravel?

## Topic 3

Yun Lo says that the queen of diamonds is like Raymond's mother, but Josie becomes the physically embodiment of the card at the costume party. Who is the real queen of diamonds for Raymond? How are these two woman similar and different in their control over Raymond?

## Topic 4

What is Raymond's personality like before his is brainwashed? How is he different at the end of the novel? Would you say his experiences after the war made him into a better or worse person?

## Topic 5

Why are Raymond and Josie compared to Romeo and Juliet? How does their story parallel Shakespeare's famous star-crossed lovers? How does it differ?

## Topic 6

What is the significance of Marco's girlfriend Rosie? How does the relationship between her and Marco create a juxtaposition to the relationship between Raymond and Josie?



## Topic 7

In chapter 26, when Eleanor instructs her hypnotized son to make love to her, the reader learns that she had a sexual relationship with her own father in her youth, and it was the only happy one of her life. How has this history shaped her character?

## Topic 8

What is the significance of Eleanor's heroin addiction? How does it relate to the theme of control? Does it change your thoughts of Eleanor as the architect of the novel's events?

## Topic 9

When you discovered that Raymond's mother was his handler, were you surprised that a mother could do such a thing to her son or was her personality so dark the revelation did not come as a surprise? How did your feelings change as the novel progressed?

## Topic 10

Before the final scene Marco thinks of the general who killed himself, and in the last line of the novel, Marco says "No electric chair for a Medal of Honor man," even though Marco knows that Raymond didn't actually do the heroic acts that merited the medal in the first place. What is Marco's concept of military honor and how does that affect the novel?