

Neverwhere Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Londoner Richard Mayhew stops to help an injured girl and becomes lost in a shadowy parallel world, London Below. The girl, Door Portico, is on a mission to find out who murdered her family, and reluctantly Richard goes with Door on a quest to solve the mystery. Through many trials, they finally discover that an angel, Islington, is responsible, and they manage to send Islington off into a faraway realm. Door sends Richard back to the normal London, but soon he realizes he must return to London Below.

After Richard stops to help the injured Door, he soon finds himself forgotten by the world. Friends fail to recognize him and cabs ignore him. With Door's pursuers, Croup and Vandemar, now harassing him, Richard seeks out Door in hope of finding answers. Richard soon learns that he now walks London Below, a world of things lost or forgotten. A feral group of rat-worshippers calling themselves "the rat-speakers" helps Richard reach the Floating Market, where Richard finds Door recruiting for a bodyguard.

Door is determined to discover who murdered her family. Her investigation turns up her father's video diary. The recording urges Door to seek out the angel Islington. Still clueless and largely in denial, Richard joins Door's growing entourage as she visits the senile earl of Earl's Court, who presides over a small medieval court crammed entirely within the confines of a single subway car.

The earl directs them to the Angelus, an exhibit in the Museum of London. After some difficulty, Richard and Door gain access to the device, and Door, using her supernatural ability to "open" objects, creates a door to Islington's Citadel. They are dumbfounded to meet a real-life angel. Islington explains that they must bring the key currently possessed by the Black Fryers.

The group travels to the abbey of the Black Fryers, where each of them must undergo an ordeal. Richard's ordeal is the most difficult of all, as he must endure visions born from his own fear and doubt. Richard perseveres, however, and the key is won. Unfortunately the Angelus can only be used once. To return to Islington, they must take a longer path.

On the way back to Islington, traveling down the cavernous and winding Down Street, the group is betrayed when Hunter, Door's seemingly infallible bodyguard, allows Croup and Vandemar to kidnap Door. Hunter redeems herself, when she, guilty over what she has done, serves as bait for the Great Beast of London, allowing Richard the honor of killing it with her magical spear. Hunter dies soon after.

Richard makes his way to Islington's citadel, but he and the marquis, the only other hope for Door's rescue, soon join Door in chains. The villainous angel Islington explains that it had Door's family killed when Door's father, also an opener, refused to help it escape from its prison. Only an opener can use the key to Islington's cell.



Though initially uncooperative, Door pretends to open the angel's cell. Instead, she opens a doorway to a far-away place of high gravity. The angel, Croup, and Vandemar are all sucked through the doorway. Some time later, a tearful Door uses the magic key to send Richard home. Richard, however, is restless in London Above and eventually returns.



Prologue and Chapter 1

Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary

The story begins with a brief prologue. A young man named Richard Mayhew, who is drunk and sick, meets an old woman outside a Scottish pub. She initially mistakes him for a vagrant, but Richard explains that he isn't a beggar. He tells her that tomorrow he will be moving to London to begin a new job. The old woman then reads Richard's palm. In his hand, she foresees that Richard will go much farther than London, and the old woman warns him to beware of "doors." It begins to rain, and so Richard gives the old woman his umbrella.

The narrative shifts between Richard with the palm reader and scenes of a young woman named "Door" who is being pursued by two black-suited assassins, Croup and Vandemar. Door leads a frantic chase through an underground labyrinth. Finally, Door manages to slay Croup and Vandemar's lackey, Mr. Ross, by somehow "opening" his midsection, effectively eviscerating the man. Wounded in the altercation, the exhausted Door is run aground in a dead end, where she desperately opens a portal to parts unknown, narrowly escaping her pursuers.

For Richard, three years have passed. He is now engaged to a young, beautiful debutant named Jessica, who hopes to mold the absentminded Richard into an ideal of sophistication. Awed by her wit and beauty, Richard, despite being anxious, overworked and overwrought, does his best to please her. Now, eighteen months into their relationship, Richard is to dine with Mr. Stockton, Jessica's father. Tonight is the night.

After a frantic day at work for Richard, he is on his way to the fateful dinner with Jessica. Jessica is so intent on explaining to Richard how to make a good impression on her father that she fails to notice that Door, appearing from nowhere, has collapsed on the sidewalk nearby. Despite Jessica's insistence that they haven't time to help, Richard stops and attends to the injured girl.

Door, quickly losing consciousness, pleads with Richard not to call an ambulance, but instead to take her somewhere safe. Without thinking, and against Jessica's threats, Richard carries Door all the way back to his apartment, leaving a stunned, heartbroken fiancée on the street. Back at his apartment, as a blood-soaked Door sleeps on his bed, Richard wonders what he's done.

Prologue and Chapter 1 Analysis

The fact that the old woman mistakes Richard for a homeless person suggests that the young man might be close, spiritually speaking, to London Below. She may also be sensing the fact that Richard is neither here nor there, having not yet completed his move to London. Richard is, for the time being anyway, homeless. This establishes Richard as a luminal character, someone who exists always on a threshold.



Here, side by side, are the worlds of Door and Richard. Whereas Richard plods along in the wake of Jessica, scarcely even thinking for himself, Door is alone and fighting for her life. When these two worlds collide, Richard is forced to make an authentic assessment of his principles. Seeing that Door is injured and possibly even dying, Richard discovers his true priorities.

While Richard defies Jessica by assisting Door, it seems he's merely traded one boss for another. He does exactly as Door instructs, informing no one, seeking no medical attention for her, and taking her "somewhere safe." Afterward, Richard is dumbfounded by his actions, almost as if they were not his own. This is all symptomatic of one who does not act, but merely reacts.



Chapters 2-3

Chapters 2-3 Summary

Richard dreams he is a bestial, spear-wielding man battling in a sewer against a giant, monstrous boar. He wakes with a start to find Door waiting nearby, still looking a mess. Door is curious as to whose "barony" she has found, but one glance out the window convinces her that she is in "London Above." Despite his usual squeamishness at the sight of blood, Richard helps Door clean and dress her wound.

A knock comes on the door. Thinking it might be Jessica, Richard tells Door that she should wait in the bathroom. When Richard opens the door, he is confronted by two men, Croup and Vandemar. They tell Richard a story about a supposed "missing sister," displaying a flier with Door's likeness. Richard doesn't trust the two and becomes frightened when Vandemar, sniffing the air, pushes past him to open the bathroom door. Inexplicably, the bathroom is empty.

After the hunters are gone, Door mysteriously reappears, without explanation. Door then summons a pigeon by spreading breadcrumbs on Richard's windowsill. She seems to converse with the animal, telling the pigeon that it must find the marquis de Carabas. As Door and Richard wait for a reply, Door continues to stonewall Richard's questions, implying that he is better off not knowing the answers. Some time later the reply comes in the form of a rat bearing a small note.

Following the note's convoluted directions, Richard locates the marquis de Carabas. The marquis is pleased to learn that Door will owe him a favor in return for his help. He then leads Richard through an impossible journey, inexplicably traveling through a sewer to the top of a skyscraper, where the marquis leaves a small silver box in the care of a man named Old Bailey. Like Door, the marquis refuses to answer Richard's questions, revealing only that Door's family was murdered. The journey somehow ends in the broom closet of Richard's apartment complex.

Door is now bathed and presentable. She thanks Richard for his help, kissing him on the cheek. Richard learns that Door and the marquis are off to the "floating market" to hire a bodyguard. Richard asks for details, but Door just smiles, shakes her head, and apologizes for involving Richard. Richard replies that she was no burden; he actually had fun. Before he can even finish his thought, Door is gone.

After Door has left, Richard spends the rest of the weekend alone in his apartment, where he broods over his breakup with Jessica. On Monday, Richard tries to resume his normal routine. He quickly discovers, however, that he has become a non-person, literally forgotten by the world. Cabs ignore him. Friends don't recognize him. Vending machines refuse his coins. Richard can no longer seem to make contact with his normal world.



Even Jessica, once Richard's fiancée, can barely remember his name. Unable to communicate or get anyone's attention, Richard watches helplessly as his work desk is carried away, and later, he watches as his apartment is rented out to another couple. To everyone he sees, Richard is either completely invisible or so inconsequential as to be ignored and soon forgotten. Richard is already out of his depth. Then, a threatening phone call from Mr. Croup drives Richard from his usurped home and into the street. He now has no refuge.

Remembering that Door spoke of hiring a bodyguard at the "floating market," Richard, on a hunch, asks a homeless man about how this market might be reached, or whether he knows anything about a girl named Door. Hearing the question, the man urgently ushers Richard down a set of forgotten stairs and into a huge, vaulted room of fire, smoke, and shadowy figures. The man announces that Richard is from London Above, and that Richard had been asking questions about the Lady Door. The young man soon finds his neck beneath a makeshift blade of glass, held by a peculiar "rat-speaker," a shamanistic man wearing ragged cat-skin clothes.

Chapters 2-3 Analysis

As Richard presciently dreams of the Great Beast of London, it is apparent that Door's sudden appearance has awakened in Richard a latent kinship to London Below. By all rights, Richard shouldn't even be able to see Door, let alone remember her. People from London Below are all but invisible to those from Above, and are quickly forgotten on the rare occasion when they are seen. Clearly there is something special about Richard.

In Neverwhere, there is safety in ignorance. With this in mind, both Door and the marquis refuse to answer Richard's questions, insisting that he's better off not knowing. Their effort to protect him, however, appears to be for naught. The weight of Richard's knowledge, meager though it may be, pulls him down into London Below. He simply knows too much to remain in the world Above. Were it not for his apparent closeness to London Below, perhaps he might have remained Above.

In addition to Door's non-human eye-color, which Richard describes as the color of a fire opal, Door can also speak to animals. This establishes the young woman as something other than ordinary. Since the marquis mentions that Door's family lived in London Below, it's likely true that Door is native to London Below. This may account for her otherworldly qualities.

Chapter 3 marks the call to adventure, as Richard falls headfirst into a world he does not understand. Nearly all the resources he once took for granted are now denied him. This new world is uncanny to Richard, being both familiar and yet strange. Because everything looks more or less as it should, Richard still operates on the assumption, despite evidence to the contrary, that cause and effect will remain the same. It isn't until Jessica fails to recognize him that Richard begins to accept his new context.

Throughout the chapter, Richard continues to behave as if some explanation will be forthcoming, as if someone will eventually explain to him how to return to normalcy. Richard, still in the early stages of loss, has not yet accepted the permanency of the change he has undergone.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Croup and Vandemar, holed up in an old cellar, get a phone-call from their employer informing them that the "other one" isn't old enough, and so Door must be brought in alive. Croup, who is aware that Door intends to hire a bodyguard at the floating market, sarcastically proclaims his intention to hire a bodyguard as well.

Meanwhile, Richard is saved from the blade-wielding Rat-speaker by the sudden arrival of an actual rat. The rat, translated via the Rat-speaker, identifies himself as Master Longtail, the very same rat who earlier bore the note from the marquis to Door. The rodent orders his people to release Richard and to escort him to the market.

Door and the marquis wander Door's family home, where they are haunted by the psychic imprint of Door's murdered family. The marquis proves ill-equipped to comfort the grieving Door. They discover the video journal of Door's father. In his final entry, covered in blood, he asks Door to avenge her family, imploring her to put her trust in Islington. The entry culminates with his apparent death.

Richard, guided by a skinny teenage girl whose name he approximates as "Anesthesia," begins his journey to the market. Along the way, Anesthesia relates the tragic details of how she, like Richard, came to be forgotten by London Above. One cannot return to the "real" world, Anesthesia explains; a person lives in one or the other, never both.

Croup and Vandemar pay an unannounced visit to Varney, a local gun-for-hire, and the best bodyguard since "Hunter." Despite Varney's telekinetic "knack," the two assassins quickly overpower the man and insist on his cooperation. They explain that, under penalty of pain and death, Varney will land the job as Door's bodyguard and protect her against anyone else other than Croup and Vandemar. Seeing that he hasn't much choice in the matter, Varney agrees.

To reach the market, Richard and Anesthesia must cross "night's bridge," a fearsome bridge of darkness and nightmares. After a brief encounter with the market-bound Varney, in which the diminutive Anesthesia stands up for Richard against the mercenary's bullying, the two, along with a third traveler, a beautiful leather-clad woman, cross the foreboding span.

As Richard crosses the bridge, he is enveloped by a tangible blackness and nearly overcome by fear and horror. On the opposite side, with the darkness abates, Anesthesia is gone. All that remains of her are the beads from the coral necklace she wore. The leathern woman proclaims that the bridge has taken its toll. Though horrified and saddened, Richard continues on, following the strange woman.



Chapter 4 Analysis

In chapter 4, the reader gains some insight into the power structures of London Below. The rat-speakers answer to actual rats, indicating that, in London Below at least, the human race may not enjoy the same special supremacy that it assumes in the world Above. Even Croup and Vandemar, who seem on the surface to be mere ravaging predators, answer to someone. There is a sense here that, in the background, pieces are being put into position.

As the marquis and Door wander the scene of Door's murdered family, it's difficult to gauge the marquis's emotional response to the visions. He complains that they hurt, but the implication is that they hurt psychically, like a headache. His decision to steal the watch of Door's father seems particularly callous in context, almost as if he were trying too hard to not seem moved by the visions. The sequence is intentionally ambiguous. At this point in the novel the reader is expected to be suspicious of the marquis.

The disappearance of Anesthesia establishes the stakes of Richard's new situation. Following Anesthesia across Night's Bridge isn't comparable to following Jessica through an art gallery. London Below is dangerous. Richard can't afford to remain complacent. Anesthesia also serves as Richard's first model of duty. Despite a dangerous and unjust world, the meek girl is determined to serve as Richard's protector and guide.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The leather-clad woman directs Richard to the market and bids him farewell. Richard is mystified by the sights and sounds of the shanty-town marketplace, where people sell everything from garbage, to magical fetishes, to human slaves. Ravenously hungry, Richard manages to trade a ball-point pen for a sandwich and cookies. By chance, he runs into Old Bailey, who, in exchange for a ragged handkerchief, directs Richard to where Door is hosting bodyguard auditions.

Bodyguard applicants, using their various Knacks, battle in single combat in the hopes of proving their worth to Door and the marquis. Varney proves himself the fiercest and strongest of them all, greatly impressing the marquis, though frightening Door. Richard finds his way ringside and is nearly flattened by Varney's vanquished competitor. Door is furious to see Richard in London Below but is surprised to learn that a rat-speaker brought him to the market.

The marquis is about to hire Varney when, at the last minute, the leather-clad woman reappears, indicating that she'd like to audition as well. Under protest, Varney fights and loses to the leathern woman; his considerable brute strength proves no match for the woman's preternatural skill. The woman, who identifies herself as the legendary guardian known as "Hunter," is hired. Varney, on the verge of tears, runs away shouting threats.

Feeling vestigial, Richard asks what he should do. By way of explanation, Door apologizes. The marquis elaborates that Richard's old life is gone and that his new life is likely to be very short. He advises Richard to simply go away. The group abandons Richard in a sewer. Alone and hopeless, sitting in absolute darkness, Richard cries. Meanwhile, Varney tries to go into hiding but is intercepted by Croup and Vandemar, and brutally slain.

Door succumbs to guilt. She insists that they go back for Richard, arguing that she owes him her life, admitting that it is she who is responsible for Richard being in the Underground in the first place. Although Marquis flatly refuses, moments later Door is hugging Richard and promising that, once she finds what she's looking for, she'll try to get him back home. Reunited with the group, Richard is incredulous to learn that Door seeks an angel named Islington. The narrative shifts to an angelic, robed figure walking a great candle-filled hall; the angel Islington is real.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The Floating Market establishes that the people of London Below have needs much as people Above. This is not a world of haunts and monsters, but a teeming world of living, breathing, human beings. The nature of the economy, however, suggests there are stark



differences between the culture of Above and Below, with garbage having value and slavery still in practice. The impression is that London Below is a far more desperate place than the world Above.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter that directly addresses the many contracts of London Below and how they serve to bind the community together. The Market Truce ensures that violence doesn't compromise trade, and yet the bodyguard competition shows that some exceptions are made. Richard trades a pen for a sandwich, but the merchant throws in some cookies to even up the trade. This indicates that Richard has yet to learn the economy of London below and that, much as with the marquis and his favors, something about London Below compels reciprocity.

While the narrative here seems initially cynical, as they abandon Richard to his fate, Door's decision to go back for Richard is evidence of a type of karma. Because Richard helped Door when she needed it, and paid a hefty price for doing so, Door is now indebted to Richard. She can't abandon him. Her affection toward him, however, suggests that the decision is not entirely one of reciprocity, but rather, much as was the case with Richard, one of genuine human compassion. The language of equal exchange might simply be Door's way of explaining her decision to the marquis.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Door's entourage travels through a seemingly endless series of identical tunnels while Richard sorts out his life by writing a mental diary of recent events. Richard, deep in denial, denies the existence of angels. The marquis trades a magical song to a local street musician in exchange for a train schedule. The marquis warns that the song, which compels people to give money, should be used in moderation.

At the train station, Richard fails to heed the familiar, recorded warning to "mind the gap." He quickly discovers that the warning has a greater significance for an underworlder, when he is briefly attacked by a tentacular entity which, as Hunter would later explain, "lives in the gaps." Now at his wits' end, Richard resumes waiting for the train as the gap warning drones on.

Croup paces about the ruins of a hospital courtyard, ranting to Vandemar about how much he loathes, and wants to kill, their boss. Vandemar advises that Croup curb his violent feelings until after they are paid. Inexplicably, an unplugged phone, cast away in a pile of junk, begins to ring. Croup answers it to find his boss at the other end of the line.

When Croup opens with a complaint, the boss accuses him of being unprofessional. Croup reminds his boss that he and Vandemar are legendary assassins, responsible for numerous high-profile murders throughout history. Croup is displeased to hear that the boss's plan calls for merely scaring Door and not killing Richard. They aren't even to kidnap Door, as previously instructed.

Richard waits for the train, making sidelong glances at the silently fidgeting Door. As their train approaches, a train in whose apparent normalcy Richard is disappointed, the marquis warns Door that the earl might not be pleased to see him. The train rolls to a halt, a dark and locked car stopping before them. The marquis uses a special knock on the car door. The door slides open just enough for the marquis to introduce the Lady Door and her companions. They are permitted entrance into the Earl's Court.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Clearly, most elements of London Below have filtered down from Above, creating a chimeric world stitched together from remnants of hope, fear and history. The marquis's magical song, however, shows that backward contamination is possible, allowing those of London Below to influence those above. The fact that the backlash is possible, however, implies that safeguards may be in place.

If Mr. Croup is to be believed, he and Vandemar are ancient and responsible for an untold number of atrocities throughout the annals of history. Since neither "man" bleeds,



it is likely they aren't human. Their penchant for pain, suffering, and destruction, coupled with the story's inclusion of a fallen angel, hints that this pair might be agents of Hell, or demons. This would also explain Mr. Croup's reluctant deference to Islington.

Mr. Croup's anger at being denied permission to kill is reminiscent of a dog straining against its leash. His point, however, is valid. They are indeed predators. It's in their nature to hunt and kill. To ask them to do otherwise is to deny their nature and underutilize their talent. Unfortunately it would appear that Croup and Vandemar, though fierce, are also domesticated. They are trained to obey.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Earl's Court lives up to its name, looking very much like an aging medieval court crammed into a single subway car. After requesting an audience, Door regally introduces herself to the earl as the Lady Door, oldest daughter of Portico. Though half-senile and missing an eye, the earl warmly recognizes the name. The marquis's introduction, however, earns Carabas a sharp reminder that he is banished from the court, but Hunter's introduction causes everyone to momentarily fall silent. Richard is almost a non-person to the court.

Enraged to see the marquis de Carabas in his court, the earl reminds the marquis that he is responsible for him losing twelve men and an eye during the retreat from White City. Door intercedes, insisting that the court recognize the marquis as her guest and reminding the earl that he and her family have been friends for many years. The marquis volunteers to leave. Door doesn't like the idea, but convinces the earl to allow Carabas to depart peacefully. The marquis promises to reunite with them at the next market. Later, before a feast of vending machine spoils, Door expresses her hope that the earl will help her solve the mystery of her family's murders. Richard is struck by Door's regal bearing.

The marquis finds Lear, the street musician from earlier, being swarmed by a coin-hurling mob of ensorcelled Londoners. Battered and bleeding, Lear begs for the marquis to help. Carabas, in exchange for a future favor, plays the countercharm on his pennywhistle, dispersing the crowd. The marquis immediately calls in the favor, suggesting that he'd like Lear to steal for him a piece of T'ang Dynasty sculpture. Lear is disgusted by the marquis's blatant manipulation of him.

While feasting Richard learns that the earl rules all the train stations of the Underground, save for Underside Line—which Hunter suggests is a dark topic. The group joins the earl in his "library," a room full of shelves overflowing with lost objects spanning several centuries. Fighting senility, the aged earl explains that one can only reach the angel Islington once by the easy way, and that is by way of the Angelus. He hands door a scroll containing all the necessary details. Door is thrilled. To Richard's utter amazement, the train stops at the British museum, a location which Richard is absolutely certain has no such stop. The group disembarks.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Earl's Court is a junk drawer of London's past, but like any pile of junk, it has its share of sharp bits that pose a danger to the hand. While the earl is old, senile and ridiculous, Richard aptly sees a warrior still there beneath the weight of so many years. The old man's wandering mind makes him unpredictable, as is evidenced both in the way he



responds to the marquis and in the sudden way he flirts with Door. There is a sense that, if handled improperly, the earl could become a liability, possibly even a threat. Door's restraint in dealing with the old man shows that she possesses the wisdom and grace of one who is born to lead.

Chapter 7 shows the intricacies of the marquis's Machiavellian machinations. It is likely that the marquis expected to be barred from Earl's Court, using it as an excuse to separate from the group. This gives Carabas the freedom to return to the street musician, extract from him a favor, and then, later, to visit Croup and Vandemar with the necessary T'ang dynasty figurine. While it isn't clear whether or not Carabas expects or intends to die at this point, he has prepared for the eventuality. The marquis leaves little to chance.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As the sun sets, Old Bailey is startled from his evening routine by the sudden appearance of the marquis de Carabas. The marquis asks him about statue he swiped from the desk of Door's father, promising Bailey a hat, shoes and a new set of gloves in exchange for the information. Old Bailey explains that the statue is of "The Great Beast of London," a mythical creature purported to live in London's sewers. The marquis insists that Bailey keep the silver box from his last visit, adding that he hopes its use will prove unnecessary.

Richard discovers that the British Museum Station is quite real and still adorned with the now half-century-old advertisements posted since the day of its closure. With Door's help, Richard reports the fate of Anesthesia to a passing rat. The rat thanks Richard, explaining that the rats don't blame him. The rat comments hopefully that "tributes to the night" sometimes come back.

Using the special gift common to everyone in her family, Door opens the long-sealed station door leading up to London Above. Seeing that Door intends to go up to London Above, Hunter, with fear in her voice, proclaims that she cannot leave London Below and that she can only serve as Door's guardian if she remains Below. She says that the marquis was aware of her limitation and is surprised that Door is not.

Door stubbornly insists on going Above, determined to find the Angelus somewhere in the museum. Richard, unable to reason with her, reluctantly joins Door. Richard suggests that the marquis is untrustworthy. Door agrees but won't comment on why she sought his assistance. Door opens a passage into a storage room near the museum.

Suddenly, the two encounter Croup and Vandemar. Croup explains that he is merely there to frighten them. He tells Door where she's been and what she's been doing, claiming that Door has a spy in her midst. Croup reminds Door that they can kill her whenever they like. Richard and Door flee.

Now outside, and on the wrong side of the museum gates, Door is too exhausted to open one of the locked side gates; she needs rest and food. Using their Underworld invisibility they manage to sneak in the front, mingling among the guests for a dinner party. Door explains that the object they seek, whatever it is, has a picture of an angel on it. Meanwhile, Croup and Vandemar loiter in Trafalgar Square.

Chapter 8 Analysis

As Old Bailey watches the sun set over London, he reminisces about a younger London, before the industrial revolution. Old Bailey, it would appear, is quite old. While Door later establishes that there are pockets of "lost time" throughout London Below,



Old Bailey's understanding of London is not comprised of discrete moments. Rather, he sees London as a living organism, something which grows and changes over time. Old Bailey has watched London grow for, at least, hundreds of years.

The relationship between the marquis and Bailey says a great deal about them both. That the marquis would go to Old Bailey for information shows that he respects the foolish-seeming old man. The marquis also entrusts Old Bailey with the silver box containing his very soul. Though not contractually obligated, Old Bailey raises the marquis from the dead, demonstrating that he is driven by a sense of moral duty. Old Bailey is competent, wise and responsible, an all around good guy.

Richard still carries guilt over the loss of Anesthesia, again demonstrating that Richard feels responsible for the safety of others. He is, at his heart, a protector. This is further demonstrated when he abandons Hunter's protection to accompany Door to the surface. Later, confronted by Croup and Vandemar, Richard declares that the two will have to kill him to get to Door. Richard, like Anesthesia, is afflicted by fear and self-doubt, but is still willing to stand up in the defense of others.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Jessica is under a lot of stress. Tonight is the unveiling of her father's exhibit. Jessica is responsible for the ceremony, but her father's tardiness is delaying the proceedings. As an unruly mob of celebrities, personalities, and socialites await entry, Jessica's thoughts continually return to the slippery notion of the faceless boyfriend missing from her life. Fearing the unruly crowd, and seeing that Jessica is paralyzed by indecision, Jessica's assistant, Clarence, admits the clamoring guest into the chamber.

Meanwhile, Door and Richard make their way to the party, where they note that the exhibit is entitled "Angels over England." The room is filled with angel exhibits of every possible description. Richard is stunned to see Jessica on the opposite side of the room and concerned she might recognize him. Door, unimpressed by Jessica, suggests not talking to her lest he draw unwanted attention to himself. Seeing that food is offered, Door enthusiastically stuffs her face as she searches for the Angelus.

Not heeding Door's advice, Richard speaks to Jessica, drawing attention to himself as well as to Door. Jessica recognizes Richard, but can't remember how or why. Mr. Stockton arrives and, after a short speech, the unveiling takes place, revealing a giant pair of church doors engraved with the likeness of an angel. Recognizing this as the Angelus, Door calls out to Richard.

Unfortunately, Jessica, determined to get to the bottom of things, has her security detain Richard. Desperate, Door takes the stage and screams into the microphone, distracting and confusing all assembled. Richard uses the distraction to race to the stage, whereupon Door touches the Angelus and, with a bright flash of light, she and Richard are gone. After a moment of awe over the sudden spectacle, everyone goes on about their business as if nothing unusual had happened.

Richard and Door find themselves in a hall of stone, where they are warmly greeted by a graceful being garbed in robes of pure light. It identifies itself as the angel Islington. Meanwhile, Croup and Vandemar arrive at their hideout to find the marquis de Carabas waiting for them. The marquis, smiling, tells the two that it was time he came to speak to them in person.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Richard's decision to talk to Jessica and to fruitlessly tell her everything, indicates that he still harbors some resentment concerning his situation; he has moved from denial to anger. On the other hand, the fact that Jessica remembers something indicates that Richard isn't completely lost to London Above. There may yet be hope of his return.



Chapter 9 demonstrates the limits of the invisibility that denizens of London Below have to those above. No one notices Door stuffing her face at the buffet table, but Richard's prior relationship with Jessica makes him prone to visibility. Behavior plays a role as well. Had Richard not spoken to Jessica, nor Door screamed through a microphone, they might never have drawn attention to themselves. The crowd's reaction to the Angelus, however, shows that London Above naturally gravitates to the status quo.

The marquis's visit to Croup and Vandemar, positioned here at the end of the chapter, is a red herring. Since the marquis has behaved suspiciously in the past, the reader is now supposed to suspect that the marquis is the "boss" of Croup and Vandemar. This is further reinforced by the marquis's comment about "finally" speaking to them "in person." This calls to mind the number of times that Croup has spoken to the boss on the telephone.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

As Richard and Door share a bottle of Atlantean wine with Islington, Door and Richard tell Islington what is that they want. To assist them, Islington needs them to recover a magical key from the Black Friars. The angel gives them a Great Beast of London figurine explaining that it will bring them safely through the final stage of their return journey via "the long way."

Suddenly, Door and Richard find themselves back in the museum, the party long since over. More than a bit tipsy, and feeling as though progress has been made, the two share a silly, celebratory dance. They fall in a tumble and nearly kiss.

Meanwhile, being aware that Mr. Croup collects T'ang dynasty figurines, the marquis de Carabas holds Croup and Vandemar at bay by threatening to smash such a figurine. He offers Mr. Croup a deal: In exchange for answering three questions, and then giving him an hour head-start afterward, the marquis will give Mr. Croup the figurine. Mr. Croup agrees.

Mr. Croup answers vaguely. Vandemar, however, accidentally reveals that they need Door alive because she is the only one who can "open the door." The marquis concedes that he is protecting Door because he owes Door's father a favor. With figurine in hand, Mr. Croup extols its many virtues, and then, with rabid enthusiasm, devours it.

Richard and Door, still drunk, return to London Below. Richard offers to Hunter a brief, indistinct summary of their recent successes. Door passes out cold. Hunter, ever vigilant, watches over Richard and Door as they sleep on a bed of hay. Meanwhile, not thirty-five minutes after parting company with the marquis de Carabas, Croup and Vandemar catch and subdue him.

Hunter sleeps standing up, dreaming of hunting a giant weasel. Door dreams that she is a child again and with her father. She finds herself wondering who hid her father's video journal. Richard dreams again of a monstrous boar. Richard and Door wake to discover that Hunter has brought them to the lair of the infamous Serpentine. Serpentine, an old friend of Hunter's proves very hospitable, providing both food and shelter. Elsewhere, Old Bailey notes that the silver box has begun to glow, indicating that the marquis is in trouble.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The story often hints at a budding romance between Richard and Door, but always shies away from the topic, likely due to Door's youth. The moment here where they nearly kiss, along with the eventual tearful goodbye as Richard returns to London Above, serve as the strongest evidence of a shared attraction between the two.



While the story provides numerous examples of the ever-hungry Vandemar devouring small prey, this is the first and only time that Mr. Croup is seen eating. It isn't the statue itself he craves, nor the material of which it is made. If that were true, Croup wouldn't mind if the marquis smashed it. It is precisely its existence as masterful art that make the figurine appetizing to Croup. In essence, Croup feeds on beauty and wonder. This further reinforces the idea that Croup and Vandemar are inhuman beings who, by their very nature, sow evil for its own sake; they are demons.

Lady Serpentine is the inverse of the angel Islington. Whereas Islington is pleasant, yet deceitful, Lady Serpentine is caustic yet direct. Islington is beautiful. Serpentine is ugly. Islington brings drunkenness. Serpentine brings the cure for the resulting hangover. This encounter reminds the reader that things are not always what they seem. If the boogeyman Lady Serpentine can show hospitality, might not an angel prove false?



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

As the group makes its way along a raging underground river, Hunter, responding to Richard's query, explains that she has long hunted the mythical beasts of the Underground and that she intends to slay the Beast of London. The conversation is cut short by the sudden arrival of a noxious London Fog, wafting up from a time pocket of London's industrial past.

As the travelers make their way through a stinking marsh, they come to a bridge. There they encounter a group of black-skinned friars, the very "Black Friars" they seek. To win the key, each of the group must undergo a challenge. Hunter bests one of the friars in a quarterstaff duel. Door answers a riddle.

Having yet to face a challenge, the last and most dangerous task falls to Richard. Hunter offers to go in Richard's stead, but the friars insist that each must face a challenge. As Richard is led away, it is clear that the friars do not expect him to survive, let alone succeed. Door wishes that she'd brought the marquis rather than Richard.

The fryers take a photograph of Richard, to add to their ever-growing gallery of past seekers who failed. Richard is told nothing about his ordeal. The fryers offer him some tea, but Richard, anxious to be done with the ordeal, refuses, so the Fryers escort Richard through a door and lock it behind him. Meanwhile, Croup and Vandemar have crucified the marquis on a giant X-shaped construct.

Richard finds himself walking down the platform of the Blackfriar's District Line station. He feels slightly sick and has difficulty remembering why he's there. Richard soon finds himself haunted by doppelgangers of Gary and Jessica. They try to convince him that he is psychotic, that he hasn't been living in the real world; there is no London Below. In the real world, Gary asserts, Richard has become a raving homeless man. The vision of Gary, claiming to be the voice of Richard's subconscious, suggests that what Richard really wants is to end his own suffering, to commit suicide.

Richard sees a vision of himself as a homeless man, wild eyed and filthy, and then he becomes that man, somehow waking in a pool of vomit. Time is lost. Day becomes night. Night becomes day. With Gary egging him on, and even posted advertisements counseling suicide, Richard very nearly throws himself in front of a train. At the last minute, he feels Anesthesia's coral bead in his pocket. Richard imagines that he hears her voice telling him to hold on. Richard regains his composure. The train arrives, the doors opening to reveal a carload of corpses. Richard boards.

The fryers, expecting either a corpse or a lunatic, are surprised to find neither. Richard is shaken, but somehow stronger for the experience. He returns to Hunter and Door



bearing the key they sought. Hunter sees that Richard has changed, matured. Door is ecstatic, crushing Richard in a bear-hug.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Door wishes that she were with the marquis instead of Richard, in part, because she cares for Richard and doesn't want to see him harmed. She also, however, lacks confidence in Richard's strength. Door likely sees someone harder, more jaded, as better suited to overcoming ordeals, someone like Hunter or the marquis. While Richard may have proven himself compassionate, he has yet to prove himself capable of true endurance.

Hunter and Door, merely by being themselves, meet and overcome their ordeals without recognizing them as such. What they do comes naturally. Because Richard does not participate, the biggest ordeal defaults to him. This speaks of destiny. Even if Richard does not choose, he still will be chosen. Non-participation is not an option, and so Richard becomes the reluctant hero.

Richard's ordeal is a journey into his own subconscious. The visions play on his doubt and fear, turning his own natural cynicism against him. Richard, who had considerable difficulty accepting London Below as real, is now presented with evidence of his own madness. The physical presence of Anesthesia's coral bead, however, serves as his anchor to reality. With it, Richard, who has long shared the girl's timidity, now invokes her courage as well. This gives Richard the strength to endure and, in the process, also gives value to Anesthesia's sacrifice.

In overcoming the ordeal, Richard proves that he can contribute to the group. He has faced the darkness and returned with object of the quest. Hunter regards it as an incremental accomplishment, but Door is overjoyed, both to see him safe and, likely, out of pride over his achievement. Richard's actions have proven Serpentine's assessment—that it is Richard who is Door's hero.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

The angel Islington dreams of Atlantis' last hours. He hovers above the doomed city, listening to a chorus of screams, hearing each one distinctly, as the Atlanteans burn, drown or otherwise perish. The sun rises on a vacant patch of sea littered with the corpses of men, women and children. Islington wakes, walking over to a clear pool. He uses the pool to contact Croup and Vandemar, ordering them to keep Door safe on her journey back to him and giving them permission to do what they like with the marquis. The two assassins are relieved—the marquis has already died an agonizing death.

Pleased at having finally killed someone, Croup is disappointed that they can't make better use of the marquis's body. Vandemar pitches the corpse into a brown river of sewage. Meanwhile, Door, anxious to reunite with the marquis, asks a boy where the Floating Market is to be held. The boy replies that the market will be held that night in Belfast. A beautiful, dark-haired young woman, who Richard recognizes from the last market, later asks the group where the market will be held. Hunter passes the information along: Belfast. Tonight.

A rat spies the body of the marquis de Carabas flowing down the sewer. He then reports the sighting to The Golden, a cat-sized rat with a golden coat. The Golden issues an order. The rat departs. Meanwhile, downstream, a band of Sewer Folk busily fish things from the passing sewage. Seeing the marquis's body, one of their number, Dunnikin, is overjoyed. The corpse is recovered and stripped of its valuables.

A rat appears atop the rooftop of Old Bailey, interrupting the man's hanging of laundry. Hearing the rat's news, Bailey launches into a flurry of motion, thrice entering his tent: once for weapons, once for trade goods, and lastly for the marquis de Carabas's ornate silver box. Prepared at last, Bailey puts the rat in his pocket and climbs over the edge of the building.

The market's location, Belfast, is a decommissioned WWII gunship. Finding no sign of the marquis, Door runs into an old friend named Hammersmith. Door asks Hammersmith to forge a chain from which to hang their newly-won key. Apparently wanting to speak to Hammersmith in private, Door asks Richard and Hunter to go and find her some curry, reminding them that the market truce will keep her safe in their absence. Richard is proud to be given a task. Elsewhere in the market, Old Bailey negotiates the purchase of Carabas's body from the Sewer Folk.

While purchasing curry from a vendor, Richard again encounters the dark-haired woman. She introduces herself as Lamia, one of the Velvets. She offers her services as a guide, claiming she can take them anywhere they need to go. Hunter doesn't like the idea. Meanwhile, Old Bailey lays the marquis's corpse atop a remnant of the London



Wall and, using the ornate silver box, restores the marquis de Carabas to life. The marquis immediately coughs up a torrent of sewer water.

The marquis explains that he died for information, suggesting that people tend to be less guarded around those whom they expect to kill. The marquis, reluctantly admitting that he now owes Old Bailey a favor, departs for the market. Meanwhile, Door thanks Hammersmith for his handiwork by opening a stubborn puzzle-box. Richard and Hunter, Lamia in tow, return with curry. Seeing Richard, Door throws her arms around him and pats him on the bottom.

Hearing that the group seeks the angel Islington, Lamia warns that the angel is found at the end of Down Street, making for a perilous journey. Door insists they can't afford a guide, but Lamia enigmatically claims that she'll take her payment from Richard. Since Hunter admits she doesn't know the way to Islington, Door reluctantly agrees to employ Lamia. By the time the marquis arrives at the market, the group is already gone.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Islington's dream is particularly haunting because, despite its impeccable detail, it does not reveal the angel's emotion at seeing its city destroyed. Though the angel sees every agonizing moment and hears every pitiful scream, Islington is literally unmoved by the sight. It merely hovers above it all, as if basking in the experience. The scene is unnerving, setting the reader up for the shock of discovery: Islington is the antagonist.

The correspondence between the black rat and The Golden suggests a pecking order among rats, with The Golden being the highest tier. Since rat-speakers defer even to common rats, The Golden likely tops their chain of command as well. Since it was the rats who ordered that Richard be released and taken to the market, and now again the rats who facilitate the recovery of the marquis's body, there is a sense that The Golden might be one of the big players behind the scenes.

Here again are examples of how the cogs turn in London Below. The market's location is spread by word of mouth, with some force compelling people to answer and to answer truthfully. Information is also spread by rodent network, with rats seeing, hearing and relaying information across the city. Sewer Folk, meanwhile, recycle sewer trash reliably enough that Old Bailey is sure to find the marquis's corpse among them.

The story provides several indicators that Door has Hammersmith secretly replicate the key. First, Hammersmith forges a rose. He therefore has the skill to make something so delicate as a key. Second, Door sends away both Hunter and Richard, giving her time to speak to Hammersmith in private. Third, when Richard returns, Door pats him on bottom. Since she has never before been this familiar with him, it's safe to assume that she's planted the real key on Richard's person.

Richard's first decision, as a member of the group, is to hire Lamia as a guide. While his reason is clearly compromised by the woman's beauty, the decision does further the advancement of their quest. They do need a guide. It is apparent that Hunter at least is



aware of Lamia's true nature, but she makes no effort to warn Richard as to the specifics of the danger. Hunter is likely confident that she can deal with Lamia if need be and possibly feels that Richard needs to learn the hard way.

From this point on, the marquis de Carabas carries his soul on his person, just like everyone else. If he dies this time, he's truly dead. Any heroism that Carabas may have undertaken before was compromised by the fact that his soul was hidden elsewhere. Now, Carabas truly risks his life.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Richard is surprised to learn that Down Street is a house. After descending a long series of stairs, they take an elevator down. When the doors open, the car seems to hang in open space, with just a narrow ledge beneath it. The expanse beyond is a tremendous gorge carved into solid rock, with a narrow path spiraling downward around its circumference. A plank extends from the elevator to the cliff-side path.

Most everyone crosses the span without incident. Richard, however, paralyzed by fear, clings to the plank on all fours, unable to move. Hunter walks out on the span, gently coaxing Richard to inch his way along. In moments, Richard is safe on the opposite side, relieved.

Richard and Lamia talk and flirt as Door and Hunter disappear along the grade. Lamia kisses Richard, draining heat from his body. Seeing that Lamia intends to kill Richard, the marquis suddenly on the scene, grabs Lamia. He threatens to break her neck if she doesn't return Richard's life force. She reluctantly does so.

The marquis, still looking like a corpse, suggests that they catch up with the others. Far away, on the opposite side of the path they see Hunter and Door. One ledge below the two women, the marquis spies Croup and Vandemar waiting in ambush. Richard runs ahead to warn Door and Hunter but arrives a moment too late.

Croup restrains Door and, in a sudden betrayal, Hunter kicks Richard in the chest, knocking the breath from him. Croup explains that he and Hunter have a common employer. When Croup asks for the key, Richard tries to offer them the key to his flat. The two assassins are amused by the transparent ruse. Vandemar punishes the fallen Richard with a series of painful kicks.

Finding the key on Door, Croup and Vandemar give Hunter her payment: a magical spear. The two assassins leave with Door. Richard is incredulous, realizing that Hunter betrayed Door in exchange for a weapon to use against the Great Beast of London. Before Hunter can depart, the marquis appears, covering Hunter with a crossbow. Hunter drops the spear. Richard picks it up. The marquis compels Hunter to tell Richard who is behind everything. Hunter admits that it's Islington. Richard is dumbfounded.

Chapter 15 Analysis

While Richard has earned the trust of his companions, he still doesn't trust himself. He does not believe his legs will carry him across the plank. Earlier in the novel, while reflecting on his fear of heights, Richard worries that, faced with a precipice, some crazy notion will compel him to jump to his death. This suggests a feeling of helplessness, as one who lacks control over his own life.



Hunter is a complicated character. As her name suggests, she identifies herself in terms of hunter and prey. Unknown to Hunter, however, her true nature is that of a protector. This is why she sleeps standing up, waking to the slightest hint of danger. This is why, even though she plans to betray Door to the angel Islington, she risks her life to help Richard across the plank. She is a protector. Her betrayal of Door is therefore a betrayal of self.

Death has changed the marquis. Whereas before he was happy to leave Richard for dead, now he rescues Richard without hesitation. What's more, after doing so, he makes no mention of favors owed. Gone too are his wisecracks. This change in attitude is matched by a change in appearance. He is barefoot, wearing only a blanket and a soiled rag. His newfound sense of urgency shows that his priorities have also changed. The marquis reborn has friends, and he intends to see them safe.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Several hours pass as the group slowly travels to the bottom of Down Street, the marquis covering Hunter the whole way down. The street ends at a gate. The marquis explains that the Great Beast of London guards the labyrinth between the gate and Islington's citadel. Hunter affirms that Islington's citadel is also his prison; the angel cannot leave. Richard explodes at the marquis, indignant that he would even listen to a traitor like Hunter. Hunter reminds Richard that she has saved his life several times.

Meanwhile, Croup and Vandemar push on through the labyrinth following the subtle direction of the Great Beast of London talisman. Door, still bound, taunts her captors, implying that they are afraid of the beast. Vandemar shoves a filthy rag into Door's mouth.

Meanwhile, Richard's group trudges through a marsh full of preserved corpses. The marquis, referring to his own Great Beast of London statue, indicates that the talisman guides him. Just then the marquis stumbles and drops the statue in the muck. Richard locates the figurine just in time to see it sink into the mud. No sooner is the statue lost than the Great Beast of London is upon them.

Overcome with joy, Hunter snatches the spear. The beast charges. Hunter miscalculates her intercept. The beast tramples her, opening a gash in Hunter's side. The monster vanishes, disappearing into the darkness. Richard rushes to Hunter's side. Hunter weakly indicates that she will not survive.

Hunter tells Richard to hold the spear and despite the agony of her broken body, she stands. Hunter regrets betraying Door; she explains that she wanted to be the one to kill the beast. Now she intends to make amends. Hunter draws her knife and shouts a challenge to the beast. The monster appears, charging once again. Hunter screams for Richard to use the spear. Richard stabs the passing beast, killing it.

Hunter, partially buried by the beast and fading fast, gives her knife to Richard, explaining to him that, since he has slain the beast, he is now "the warrior" of London. She instructs him on how to anoint himself with the creature's blood so he can find his way through the maze without a talisman. Seeing the deed done, Hunter dies. The marquis tells Richard to catch up with Door and he will follow as best he can. Meanwhile, Croup and Vandemar arrive at Islington's citadel with Door in tow.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Hunter engages the beast in a state of euphoria. This is "the dance" she dreamed of, the beautiful struggle between life and death. Hunter forgets that, just the night before, it was the whimper of the Lady Door that woke her from her dream dance with the giant



weasel. Then she abandoned the dance to see to her charge's safety. This time it is the other way around. She has abandoned her responsibility in favor of the dance.

Hunter is the classic tragic hero. Her excellence knows no equal. She is famous and infamous, loved and feared. Hunter's quest for the dance, however, blinds her to what her priorities should be. In proving herself false to Door's contract, Hunter proves herself unworthy of her role. Her skills fail her as she has failed herself. In recognizing her error, however, she retains the reader's sympathy. In sacrificing herself to save the others, however, she is redeemed. Hunter dies a hero's death.

In killing the beast, Richard also slays the creature of his nightmares, the substance of his own fears. By anointing himself in the creature's blood he symbolically takes on some of the beast's strength, thus completing his conquest. For the first time, with the beast's blood inside of him, Richard's path is clear. He knows the way and is not afraid. Richard's journey, both within and without, is nearing its end.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

The citadel opens for Richard. Door is chained between two pillars. The angel greets Richard with disturbing warmth. Croup and Vandemar discuss the possibility of torturing Door into cooperation, but decide she might prove too resilient. They postulate that she might be more receptive to a friend's suffering; Vandemar snaps one of Richard's pinkies.

Islington sends Croup to intercept someone else approaching the citadel. Just outside, the marquis suddenly feels Croup's knife at his throat. Mr. Croup taunts the marquis for failing to stay dead. Croup enters the citadel holding the marquis at knife point. Islington is disappointed to learn that Croup misreported Carabas's death. Croup is indignant.

Richard appeals unsuccessfully to Islington's angelic nature. The conversation turns to the topic of Atlantis and whether or not Islington had a hand in its fall. Prodded by the marquis, Islington temporarily loses its angelic composure. Manifesting a sudden, maniacal righteousness, Islington declares that the Atlanteans deserved their fate.

Islington yanks the key from Door's neck, explaining that he also needs an opener, someone who can use the key. Door's father, Islington explains, refused to help, laughed even. The angel took offense and had Door's family killed. Vandemar faked the video diary that motivated Door to seek out Islington.

Islington implies that the door leads back to heaven, where, rather than return to the celestial hierarchy, it plans to hatch yet another plot. Seeing that Vandemar intends to hurt Richard, Door reluctantly agrees to cooperate. Door walks to the limit of her chain and uses the key on the door. The door is suddenly framed in light.

As the door opens wider, gravity reorients itself toward the door. The prisoners dangle by their chains. Islington grabs a pillar, complaining that what lay beyond the portal isn't heaven. Croup and Vandemar scramble to hold on. Door triumphantly explains that she didn't use the real key, but a fake made by Hammersmith. Instead she herself opened a door to somewhere far, far away. Islington pleads with Door, offering to tell her the location of her still-living little sister. Before she can respond, Islington is sucked through the portal. Croup and Vandemar soon follow.

The portal finally closed, Door, exhausted and bordering on emotional collapse, frees everyone of their chains. Door and Richard fall asleep in each other's arms. The marquis, reluctant to return to a state so similar to death, watches over them for a time, but exhaustion soon overtakes him.



Chapter 17 Analysis

In Chapter 17, the story builds to its climax. Tension mounts as Richard, armed only with Hunter's knife, prepares to face foes he cannot hope to defeat. The reader is left to wonder how the story will resolve, seeing no apparent solution. Once the marquis is captured the heroes have seemingly lost their one ace in the hole, plunging the story into its darkest moment. Everything points to a clever solution.

Carabas and Richard both tell Door not to cooperate with Islington, citing that their lives are of secondary importance compared to the threat of Islington's release. This shows that both men have truly become heroes. They have learned the importance of self-sacrifice in the cause of the greater good.

Door is not the stereotypical princess in need of saving. With her would be rescuers in chains, it falls upon Door to rescue them all. The readers, however, are momentarily misled. The frame of light suggests a door to heaven. As the gravity reverses itself, it quickly becomes apparent that Door has pulled a fast one. What Door lacks in strength, she makes up for in guile and sheer audacity.

The solution is satisfying because everything is set up in advance. There was sufficient evidence that Door copied the key and that she then hid the real one on Richard. The attentive reader might have predicted this outcome, or something similar, but anyone can recall the events as they occurred and see that everything adds up.



Chapters 18-19

Chapters 18-19 Summary

Serpentine and her retinue recover Hunter's corpse as well as the spear which slew the Great Beast of London. Later, Richard wakes in the care of the Black Fryers. All of his wounds have been cleaned and dressed, his finger set and splinted. The abbot soon reunites Richard with Door and the wheelchair-bound Carabas. Richard points out that everyone has achieved their goal save for him - Richard still wants to go home.

The abbot asks about the key. Door explains that she slipped the real key into Richard's back pocket when he brought her curry at the Floating Market. Richard is dumbfounded; when he told Croup and Vandemar that he had the key, he really did have the key. Indeed, the key is found in Richard's back pocket. Annoyed, Richard doesn't see the point in having recovered the key, since it was never put to any use. The abbot explains that the key has power. Richard, having passed the ordeal, is the key's master. If Richard wills it, the key can take him home.

Richard begins his journey home. As he waits for an Underground train, Old Bailey arrives to bid him farewell, gifting Richard with a long black feather. On the train, the earl knights Richard, the warrior, using Hunter's knife. Richard disembarks to find the rat-speaker waiting for him. He tells Richard there are no hard feelings about Anesthesia. He also returns Richard's sports bag, with contents intact. Now aboveground, beneath an underpass, Richard nearly runs afoul of Velvets, but Lamia comes to the fore, blows him a kiss, and the dark women vanish.

Richard meets Door atop a grassy hill. Door explains that she hopes to find her sister and plans to pursue her father's work of uniting the Underground. Suddenly emotional, Door admits that she's grown fond of Richard and begs him to stay. Richard reciprocates Door's feelings, but insists that he doesn't belong in her world. They share a hug, knowing that they will never see each other again. Door puts the key in an invisible door, turns it, and tells Richard to walk through. Richard walks through. The world goes black.

Chapters 18-19 Analysis

The climax having passed, the story now enters a state of falling action. Richard wakes at the abbey of Black Fryers, with no explanation given as to how he passed back through the labyrinth, up Down Street, back across the plank, and up the elevator. Richard wakes as if from a nightmare, waking to safety of friends and allies. Evil has been banished. Only Richard's wounds serve to remind him of the recent horrors.

Richard still wants to return home. It's been his goal all along. There is a sense here that returning home is necessary for Richard's continued growth. Having seen London

Below, Richard now must put it all in context. London Above is his touchstone, his context for understanding everything that's happened since he left.

The journey home is a ritual, sending Richard metaphorically backward through time. He meets a succession of allies, ending with the friend he made first: Door. True to her name, Door serves as Richard's exit much as she inadvertently served as Richard's entrance. It is clear that Richard can't leave without Door's cooperation, and it is equally clear that she doesn't want Richard to go. Door's opening is a sacrifice on Richard's behalf. In turning the key, she breaks her own heart.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Richard returns to his old life, discovering that his employer has promoted him to junior partner. His newfound confidence inspires him to negotiate recompense from his negligent former landlord, which includes a furnished penthouse apartment and, eventually, the return of his lost possessions. Day after day, Richard can't bring himself to unpack the objects of his former life.

Richard becomes increasingly restless. When Jessica tries to patch things up, Richard shows no interest, explaining to her that he's changed. Riding the tube, Richard finds himself searching the faces around him, wondering if any of them are from London Below.

After work one day, Richard joins some coworkers for a night on the town. In the midst of such a mundane scene, Richard sees the trajectory of his life's path, a suburban dream of a wife and children. He leaves his coworkers for the cool night air outside. Gary follows. Richard spends the rest of the night and morning telling the story of London Below to Gary who is incredulous.

Growing increasingly anxious, Richard unsuccessfully tries to discuss the London Below with a homeless woman. Using Hunter's knife, he carves a crude likeness of a door on the side of a brick wall. Richard is about to give up hope when, surprisingly, a doorway appears in the wall. The marquis de Carabas impatiently waits beyond. Richard happily walks through the door, leaving the "real" world behind.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Richard can't return to his metaphorical childhood, his carefree life of ease and comfort. He can't be satisfied following Jessica around through art galleries, catering to her every whim. Richard understands this on some level, and so he neglects to unpack the trappings of his old life, unwilling to lay roots in this world.

Now that Richard has returned to London Above, he is at last free to choose. Before, his choice was to help Door, not to become trapped in a parallel dimension. Now that Richard is in London Above, both choices are before him. He understands the qualities of each and what each has to offer.

Richard's makeshift door attracts the attention of the marquis de Carabas. This implies that Richard's friends have been paying attention, waiting for his return. Whether it was some property of Hunter's knife, the crudely hewn "door," or merely Richard's desire to return, his friends get the message. Richard's return to London Below is facilitated by those who have missed him on the other side.



Characters

Richard Mayhew

Richard is a British everyman, being polite, pleasant, and generally non-confrontational. Originally from Scotland, the twenty-something Richard is a recent transplant to London, where he now pursues a career in securities. As the story unfolds, Richard is forced to confront his fears and overcome his preconceived notions of the world. Richard does this through a series of ordeals, each leaving him incrementally stronger and better prepared to face adversity.

Richard is initially inflexible, rejecting many tenants of London Below and insisting his own reality, the one he has known for most of his life, is the only true reality. He dismisses, for example, the possibility of angels, persisting in his disbelief until he sees one for himself. Even then, having met the angel Islington, Richard has a hard time believing that the being is corrupt and, in fact, quite diabolical. Even when engaging the fantastic, Richard clings to a preconceived idea of what an angel should be.

From the time that Richard enters London Below, he is like a child: helpless, ignorant, and prone to poor decisions. While he grows gradually over the course of the story, his pubescence can be marked at the ordeal of the key, when Richard at last is able to contribute in a meaningful way. Hunter, seeing Richard emerge from the trial, notes that he looks less boyish, concluding that he at last begun to "grow up."

Door Portico

Door, as her name might suggest, is an "opener." She can open anything that might conceivably be opened, even people, creating passageways and throughways. Door can also open portals that cross a vast distance, allowing for a kind of teleportation. Using her opening talent, however, drains her bodily reserves, necessitating rest and sustenance. Door's capability is also metaphoric. She makes journeys possible by creating openings to new places and things. For Richard, Door acts as his doorway, not only into London Below but also into a journey of self-discovery.

A native of London Below, Door is a noble of the house Portico and descended from a long line of prestigious openers. In the company of her fellow nobles, Door blossoms into the Lady Door, adopting the regal bearing of one who is accustomed to being obeyed. With Richard, however, and other close friends, she behaves as one might expect of a typical teenage girl. Door is living between two worlds herself, the world of a grown-up royal personage and the world of a young adolescent girl.

Despite Door's youth, she is clever, caring and resolute. She tries to spare Richard his ordeal, offering to be tested in his stead. Captured by the angel Islington, Door would rather die than release the monstrous angel, showing her courage. Her decision to copy



the key, and then to hide it on Richard, shows that she, unlike most teenagers, has foresight, and is capable of planning for the future.

Mr. Croup

Mr. Croup is one of the two otherworldly assassins pursuing the Lady Door. He is the more talkative and witty of the two.

Mr. Vandemar

While no less sadistic than his partner, Mr. Vandemar is both calmer and simpler than Mr. Croup.

Jessica Stockton

The daughter of media mogul Arnold Stockton, Jessica is Richard's fiancée. She is wealthy, beautiful and somewhat shallow.

Gary

Gary is Richard's closest friend at work.

Marquis de Carabas

The marquis is a wheeler and dealer, a go-to-guy who knows everyone and everything. He barter in an economy of boons, helping others in exchange for future favors.

Old Bailey

Old Bailey is a friendly old man who lives on the rooftops of London Below, where he catches, befriends, and even eats, birds.

Rat-Speaker

Rat-Speaker is the shamanistic leader of the rat-speakers who serves as translator for Master Longtail.

Master Longtail

Master Longtail is the rodent who initially serves as a courier between the marquis and Door. Later, it is Master Longtail's order that frees Richard from the rat-speakers.



Anesthesia

A member of the rat-speakers, Anesthesia serves as Richard's guide to the market. She is lost on the night's bridge.

The Earl

The elderly earl presides over Earl's Court. He is half-senile.

The Great Beast of London

The Great Beast of London is a legendary creature that purportedly began as a Christmas pig, but which fled into the Fleet Ditch and grew monstrous in the sewers.

Arnold Stockton

Stockton is Jessica's father and the media mogul who funded the reconstruction of the Angelus.

Serpentine

Serpentine is the second oldest of the Seven Sisters, regarded by some as a boogeyman. In the context of the story, Serpentine is hospitable, if not friendly.

Islington

The former guardian angel of Atlantis, Islington was also instrumental in the city's destruction. For its crimes the now fallen seraph is imprisoned at the end of Down Street, beyond the Labyrinth, within a citadel that shares his name.

Brother Sable

Brother Sable is the Black Friar who administers the first ordeal, losing to Hunter in single combat.

Brother Fuliginous

Brother Fuliginous is the Black Friar who administers the second ordeal, providing the riddle that Door answers.



The Abbot

The abbot is the superior of the Black Friars. He administers the third and final ordeal, allowing Richard entry into the room where he is tested.

Hammersmith

An old friend of Door's family, Hammersmith is a metalworker of remarkable skill. He copies the key of heaven.

Lamia

Lamia is one of the heat-stealing Velvets, who sleep during the day in London Below, and walk London Above at night, searching for prey.



Objects/Places

The Umbrella

Richard's umbrella was given to him as a going away present. It is etched with a map of the London Underground.

The Earl's Court

Earl's Court is a medieval court presided over by an aging earl and is held entirely within the confines of a subway car.

Beast of London Talisman

The Beast of London Talisman is a carved figurine that allows safe passage through the labyrinth beyond Down Street. In the story, there are two such items.

Down Street

Down Street is, at its highest point, a house. Within, it becomes a spiraling path winding its way around and down a massive gorge.

The Angelus

The Angelus looks like pair of ancient cathedral doors decorated with the image of an angel. When opened by an opener, the doors lead to Islington's citadel; this method of entry, however, may only be used once per person.

London Above

London Above is the "real" world, where the people of London go about their daily lives. It is constant and predictable.

London Below

London Below is a volatile world, comprised of the hopes, fears, and memories of London Above. Though Below overlaps with Above, the people of London Below move virtually unseen by their above-world brethren.



Hunter's Knife

Hunter, in her last moments, gives her knife to Richard. It represents Richard's rebirth as the Warrior.

Hunter's Spear

Hunter accepts a spear in exchange for her betrayal of Door. This spear is also the weapon which Richard uses to slay the Great Beast of London.

Richard's Troll Collection

Richard keeps a collection of troll dolls in and around his desk at work.

The Key to Heaven

The key to heaven is the only means to opening the door to Islington's cell. With Door's help, the key facilitates Richard's return to London Above.



Themes

Bildungsroman

Richard's story is about coming of age. In London Above, Richard is a metaphorically a child. He knows neither fear nor worry. Richard's problems, whatever they might be, are not matters of life and death. Jessica, in this metaphor, is like a mother; she tells Richard what to do, what to feel, and how to behave. It isn't until Richard thinks for himself, in defiance of Jessica, that Richard begins to mature.

While Richard doesn't choose to embark upon his journey, it is his choice which carries him across the threshold and into London Below. In helping Door, Richard takes his first steps from childhood to adulthood. London Below is the metaphorical world of adulthood, where Richard is fearful to discover that actions have consequences. Decisions have weight. Richard's desire to return to his old life is analogous to an adolescent's longing for the simplicity of childhood.

Through Richard's relationship with others, he matures. Anesthesia teaches Richard a lesson of courage and sacrifice and Door a lesson of friendship. Hunter compels, through her betrayal and subsequent redemption, lessons of compassion and forgiveness. In learning to set aside his selfish concerns, Richard moves from dependence to interdependence, defining his societal role as adult. Ultimately, Richard cannot return to his old life, as he has simply outgrown it.

The Contract

When Richard first meets the marquis de Carabas, he tells him that Door offers "nothing" in exchange for his services, only mentioning the "really big favor" as an afterthought. This demonstrates the difference in thinking between the two Londons. To Richard, a mere favor seems almost without value. To the marquis, however, a promise is as good as gold. This suggests that, in London Below at least, something compels such obligations to be met.

From the Market Truce, which mandates that none bring violence to the Floating Market, to the hospitality owed from one friend to another, to the many favors traded by the marquis de Carabas, London Below seems to operate on an economy of absolute reciprocity. Everyone pays their debts. No one cheats. When Richard trades a pen for a sandwich, the merchant is compelled to throw in a few cookies. The implication is that cookies were necessary to maintain parity; value for value, equality in trade.

The story leaves it unclear who or what enforces the observation of these myriad agreements, but the seriousness with which such deals are met speaks of dire consequences for any who might consider defaulting on such an arrangement. Hunter speaks briefly of one who broke the Market Truce, implying that the violator faced a fate



worse than death. Hunter herself later breaks her promise to protect Door. By story's end, Hunter is dead. This implies that karma itself may separate the false from the fair.

Morality and Free Will

In *Neverwhere*, morality is depicted both in stark contrast and in shades of gray. Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, for example, are essentially demons in human form. Though they are also professional killers, limited by their contract for hire, they glory in death and destruction for its own sake. Never is there a sense that these two could be anything other than what they are. They are exemplars of evil.

With Islington, matters are less clear. As an angel, Islington should be a bastion of light and goodness. Indeed, it still bears the countenance of heaven. That Islington began as an angel, only to become the monster of *Neverwhere*, implies that Islington chose to fall. It has free will. Croup and Vandemar, by comparison, seem almost slaves to their nature, much like the animals to which Richard compares them.

Free will is most apparent among the mortals of *Neverwhere*. The marquis de Carabas, like Islington, goes against his own selfish nature. The marquis wills himself to suffer and die on behalf of the Lady Door. He then rises from the dead, as a Christ-figure, redeemed by his actions. Hunter, too, is redeemed, but at the cost of her life, and only after she succumbs to a predatory nature more befitting an animal.

Style

Point of View

Gaiman exclusively uses a third person omniscient narrative perspective, with the point of view often colored by the current character of interest. In this way, the reader experiences multiple perspectives as the story progresses. While the story is primarily concerned with Richard Mayhew, the reader is also privy to the hearts and minds of other characters, giving a broad view of the world and the relationships of the characters. As Old Bailey, for example, observes a particularly beautiful sunset, his melancholy is apparent on the page. This gives the reader a degree of intimacy unachievable from someone else's perspective. In a book centered primarily on character, the reader experiences many characters' unique points of view.

Since the narrator speaks from outside the story, the voice is authoritative. While the narrative is occasionally colored by the perspective of individual characters, there is not a sense of bias for or against any one character. Rather, the narrative is objectively transparent, being no more or less reliable than the characters themselves. An observant reader, however, will likely note evidence that, perhaps intentionally, allows inference beyond the story as told.

To understand the characters of *Neverwhere*, it is necessary to read between the lines. Richard characterizes himself as a coward, a notion which is necessarily reflected in the narrator's treatment of him. There are several instances, however, where Richard's behavior differs from his self-perception, where he is courageous or even self-sacrificing. Similarly, the marquis de Carabas thinks of himself as selfish, corrupt and deceitful, but many of his actions are arguably quite noble.

Setting

The events of *Neverwhere* take place in London, but straddle two parallel worlds. In the "real" world, the so-called London Above, ordinary Londoners live out lives familiar to the reader. In London Below, however, people eke out a scavenger's existence in a hidden world of anachronisms and nightmares. The people of the world Above are visible to those Below, but not the other way around. London Below is a mysterious and shadowy world, and it is a metaphoric underworld. London Below is like Londoners' subconscious, filled with the things that have been forgotten and ignored. In it, Richard is able to explore his inner demons because a journey to London Below is also a journey beneath the surface consciousness of the mind.

London Above is much as one might expect, with apartments, taxi-cabs, offices and department stores, everything one might see in a modern city. Though these same places exist in London Below, the people of the underworld can't make use of them. The



"real" world is, therefore, little more than a backdrop to those below. The real world, in fact, loses its reality in the underworld.

Many of London Below's locations are, literally, below ground. Below-worlders live in sewers, hide in basements, and ride forgotten subways. This is not exclusively so, however, as London Below also extends to the silent rooftops of lonely buildings. In essence, the only locations which are real to London Below, are those places which are abandoned, forgotten or, alternatively, places which no longer exist in London Above.

Language and Meaning

The world of London Below is marked by a literalization of London's place-names. Earls Court, for example, one of London's inner city districts, is an actual medieval court in London Below, complete with earl, jester and attendants. This pattern extends to homonyms as well. Knightsbridge becomes Night's Bridge in the Below, a bridge of absolute darkness and nightmares. This pattern suggests that the reality of London Below is susceptible to metonymic associations. In essence, London Below is, in part, created by an understanding of language.

Words can take on new meaning in London Below. London subway commuters are numb to the ever-present warning that they should "mind the gap." Londoners are already aware of the gap and the easily-avoided danger it represents. In London Below, however, Richard learns that the "gap" is a place from which shadowy tendrils might attack. His complacency toward the "gap" nearly proves deadly. Assumptions regarding meaning, therefore, are not to be taken lightly in London Below.

The narrator's choice of language always reflects upon the current character of interest. When the story is following Richard, the narrative is overwrought and wordy. When it follows Old Bailey, the language becomes lower class, almost cockney. This reinforces the notion that the narrator is truly privy to the inner world of the characters and can be trusted to speak on their behalf.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty chapters of roughly diminishing length. The first few chapters concern themselves with Richard and his life in London Above. As the story progresses the plot quickly shifts to London Below and the mystery surrounding the death of Door's family. The action centers primarily on Richard, but also deviates to the perspectives of other characters, sometimes excluding Richard altogether.

The plot makes ample use of foreshadowing, some of it quite subtle. Richard's umbrella bears a map of the London Underground. The old woman, the very one he gives the umbrella to, prognosticates that Richard should be aware of "doors." Even the "Angels Over London" exhibit, where the Angelus is located, is established early in the story, almost as an aside.

Dreams punctuate the story throughout. When they occur, they are usually, but not always, written in italics, visually setting them apart from the main narrative. Functionally they serve to reveal the character's subconscious, or to impart memories relevant to understanding the character's motivation. They give the reader a glimpse at the innermost world of the character.



Quotes

"Richard had been awed by Jessica, who was beautiful, and often quite funny, and was certainly going somewhere." —Chapter 1, page 11

"They wore black suits, which were slightly greasy, slightly frayed, and even Richard, who counted himself among the sartorially dyslexic, felt there was something odd about the cut of the coats." —Chapter 2, page 32

"There was something deeply tribal about the people, Richard decided." —Chapter 4, page 112

"It was, Richard realized, as if someone had taken a small medieval court and put it, as best they could, in one car of an Underground train." —Chapter 7, page 151

"There are little pockets of old time in London, where things and places stay the same, like bubble in amber." —Chapter 11, page 228

"The marquis de Carabas was not a good man, and he knew himself well enough to be perfectly certain that he was not a brave man." —Chapter 11, page 237

"Just edge forward Richard, a bit at a time. Come on..." —Chapter 15, page 290

"Her cheeks were glistening. The orange sunlight gleamed on the key." —Chapter 19, page 349

"People tell you so much more when they know you're just about to be dead. And then they talk around you, when you are." —Chapter 14, page 280

"When angels go bad, Richard, they go worse than anyone. Remember, Lucifer used to be an angel." —Chapter 16, page 303

"For a moment, upon waking, he had no idea who he was." —Chapter 19, page 335

"The old Richard, the one who had lived in what was now the Buchanans' home, would have crumbled at this point, apologized for being a nuisance, and gone away." —Chapter 20, page 356



Topics for Discussion

Why can Richard see Door even though Jessica cannot?

What role does religion play in the story, and where in the story is this role apparent?

Is the marquis de Carabas heroic? Why or why not?

What does Richard have in common with Hunter? In what ways do they differ?

Why does Mr. Croup bargain for the T'ang Dynasty sculpture only to then destroy it?

By the end of the story, how has Richard changed?

What is the nature of Richard and Door's relationship?

Why does Richard return to London Below at the end of the story?