

Our Man in Havana Study Guide

Our Man in Havana by Graham Greene

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Contents

Our Man in Havana Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part 1, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2.....	4
Part 1, Chapter 3.....	6
Part 1, Chapter 4 - Interlude in London.....	7
Part 2, Chapter 1.....	10
Part 2, Chapter 2.....	11
Part 2, Chapter 3 - Interlude in London.....	13
Part 3, Chapter 1 - Chapter 3.....	15
Part 4, Chapter 1.....	17
Part 4, Chapter 2 - Interlude in London.....	19
Part 5, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2.....	21
Part 5, Chapter 3.....	23
Part 5, Chapter 4.....	25
Part 5, Chapter 5.....	27
Part 5, Chapter 6.....	29
Part 5, Epilogue in London.....	30
Characters.....	32
Objects/Places.....	35
Themes.....	37
Style.....	40
Quotes.....	42
Topics for Discussion.....	46



Plot Summary

Jim Wormold is a British vacuum salesman in Cuba. His wife has left him and his business is not doing well. The only positive thing in his life is his young daughter, Milly. He wants to give her everything she wants but as his business declines this becomes continually more difficult. When an odd stranger confronts him in the restroom of a bar and recruits him to be a spy for the British Secret Service, Wormold sees an opportunity to provide for his daughter. Wormold is the most unlikely of spies as he knows nothing about intelligence gathering or how to run a covert operation. But he does not let this stop him from writing reports. He proceeds to send in reports to London that he fabricates completely. He then begins to recruit imaginary agents and collect their salaries. As his reports become more exciting, London becomes very interested.

Wormold sends in a report detailing a large military structure being built in the mountains around Havana. When the head office hears this, they take it very seriously and send him a staff. His new secretary is Beatrice, a well trained and serious secretary. As she starts to go over Wormold's files, he has to stay one step ahead to keep up his many lies. The novel is largely a satire and has many hilarious scenes. Things start to come to a head when mysterious agents from another unknown government go after Wormold and his phantom agents. One man who meets the description of his pilot is killed in a mysterious car accident. Then an engineer who unwittingly has been playing a role as Wormold's engineering expert is shot at in public. Wormold now knows someone is trying to kill him.

Wormold discovers someone is going to try and kill him at a business luncheon. He manages to avoid death when he discovers a British agent named Carter is the man sent to kill him. Wormold is confused and does not know what to do. Then Carter kills Wormold's best friend Dr. Hasselbacher and Wormold decides he has to retaliate. He gets the notorious police officer Captain Segura drunk and takes his gun. He then takes Carter out and kills him. After this, Wormold's world starts to spiral out of control and he reveals his secret to Beatrice. To his surprise she understands and even falls in love with him. When Wormold finally faces his bosses at the Secret Service he is shocked to learn that they are not punishing him, they are in fact giving him a position as a trainer and awarding him the Order of the British Empire. Wormold has managed to provide for this daughter Milly and keep himself out of prison. At the end of the novel, Beatrice has left her job, started a new relationship with Wormold and they are now living in London with Milly.



Part 1, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2

Part 1, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2 Summary

Jim Wormold is a British vacuum salesman in Cuba. His wife has left him and his business is not doing well. The only positive thing in his life is his young daughter, Milly. He wants to give her everything she wants but as his business declines this becomes continually more difficult. When an odd stranger confronts him in the restroom of a bar and recruits him to be a spy for the British Secret Service, Wormold sees an opportunity to provide for his daughter. Wormold is the most unlikely of spies as he knows nothing about intelligence gathering or how to run a covert operation. But he does not let this stop him from writing reports. He proceeds to send in reports to London that he fabricates completely. He then begins to recruit imaginary agents and collect their salaries. As his reports become more exciting, London becomes very interested.

The novel opens with Jim Wormold and Dr. Hasselbacher having a drink together in the Wonder Bar in Havana. They talk of Wormold's daughter, Milly, who will be turning seventeen soon. Wormold is a Briton and owns a store selling vacuum cleaners in Cuba. Wormold's wife left him some time ago and he lives alone with Milly. Milly goes to an American convent school. Wormold is not Catholic but agreed to raise Milly as a Catholic when he married her mother, and even though the mother has left them, he continues to honor that promise.

Wormold returns to his store on Lamparilla Street. He sees his Cuban assistant, Lopez, talking to a customer he has never seen before. Wormold introduces himself to the customer and immediately identifies him as someone who is not at all likely to buy a vacuum cleaner. The man asks Wormold if he is British, as in a British passport holder, and Wormold confirms that he is. The stranger says that he is just looking around. Wormold shows the man a few vacuum models but recognizes the man is not really interested. Finally the man thanks Wormold and says he has to be going, but he tells Wormold he will be seeing him again. Once the man leaves, Wormold asks Lopez about the man. Lopez says he watched the man stare through the front window for a long time before coming in. He suspects the man may have been looking for a prostitute.

Wormold is watching his daughter, Milly, walk down the street. He recognizes she is turning into quite a beautiful woman and he knows men are starting to lust after her. Unlike himself, she is a Catholic. He promised her mother he would raise her as a Catholic and even though her mother has left them, he continues to honor his promise. Milly is often a difficult child, causing trouble with the nuns at school, but she is strong headed and Wormold loves her very much. Wormold has trouble refusing his daughter anything and lives to please her. As he watches her walk down the street he wonders, not for the first time, if he should have remarried. But he still loves his wife and, as a Catholic, Milly would not like him remarrying.



As Milly enters the store Wormold tells her that they will go to a night club with Dr. Hasselbacher for her birthday. He then asks her what she would like for her birthday. At first she says there is nothing she wants, but after being pressed by her father she admits there is one thing. She begins by saying the present can count as several birthday presents and Christmas too. Wormold prepares himself for a major request. First she says she has already bought all the necessary accessories for the present. She leads her father into her bedroom above the store. Wormold sees she has bought a saddle, bridal and a host of other accessories related to a horse. He realizes she wants him to buy her a horse. He tells her he could not possibly afford such an expensive animal, business is too bad. But Milly says she has thought of everything. She says she has arranged everything with someone named Captain Segura, he has offered to give them free boarding. Wormold wants to know who this man is. She says he is a police officer and he often gives her a ride home from school. Wormold says they still cannot afford a horse and he tells Milly to stop taking rides from Segura. As if reading his thoughts, she tells him not to worry, he never touches her. They continue to argue and Wormold knows the threats and the tears will be coming soon. He begins to relent, saying maybe next year they will be able to afford it. She presses him a little harder and he relents, saying he will buy her the horse, even though he has no idea how he will pay for it.

Part 1, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2 Analysis

The strange man visiting Wormold's store is obviously suspicious and interested in Wormold for some reason other than vacuum cleaners, although it is not clear what that reason is.

Wormold has a great love for his daughter and wants to give her everything she wants. However, it is obvious she takes advantage of this and asks for anything her hearts desires even if she knows her father cannot afford it. These wants make Wormold quite desperate for money as his business is failing.

Captain Segura appears to be a suspicious character. Milly is described as very beautiful and reaching the age where men are really starting to take notice. Wormold is probably worried that something tawdry is going on between them. He is afraid Milly will be taken advantage of but it seems Milly is much more in tune than her father thinks.

Part 1, Chapter 3

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary

Wormold is daydreaming he will somehow come into a great deal of money. He is constantly worried he will not have enough money to support Milly in the manner she has become accustomed. He is at the bank trying to withdraw the money necessary to purchase Milly's horse. When he finally gets the money, he discovers his account has an overdraft. As he leaves the bank, this puts him in a rather foul mood and he does not want to meet Dr. Hasselbacher for their normal drink at the Wonder Bar, so he goes to a different bar and orders a drink. The bar is mostly empty except for a few customers. Finally, one of the other patrons looks over at Wormold and recognizes him. It is the odd man Wormold met in his store. The man begins chatting and tells Wormold he has been meaning to speak with him. Wormold is surprised to learn the man knows a great deal about his personal life. The man wants to peak in private and insists Wormold follow him into the men's room. Wormold reluctantly agrees.

Wormold learns that the man's name is Hawthorne and he is a spy for the British Secret Service. He is working on setting up a Caribbean network of agents and wants Wormold to be his man in Havana. Wormold at first thinks this is ridiculous as he is in no way qualified to be an agent. Hawthorne keeps pressuring him and reminds him he will be paid. Wormold grudgingly agrees though he is not sure why. They make plans to meet later that night at Hawthorne's hotel room to go over the details of the job.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

Wormold falls into the position of spying. Hawthorne is almost a clown like character—it almost seems he has chosen Wormold by default. He does not care that Wormold is unqualified and unenthusiastic. He has met Wormold at just the right time because Wormold is particularly desperate for money. He is probably be willing to take any job that will allow him to make some quick money to support his daughter.



Part 1, Chapter 4 - Interlude in London

Part 1, Chapter 4 - Interlude in London Summary

That night Wormold heads out to meet Hawthorne. Before he gets to the hotel, however, he passes the Wonder Bar and is called in by Dr. Hasselbacher. Wormold tells him he has an important appointment to get to but Hasselbacher insists they have a drink first. They go into the bar together and after two drinks, Wormold quickly realizes Hasselbacher is quite drunk. Hasselbacher tells Wormold that he is sure he knows the winning lottery numbers and insists they go out and find a ticket vendor immediately. Wormold protests, reminding his friend that he has an appointment. Hasselbacher will hear nothing of it and hustles Wormold out onto the street to hunt for his winning ticket.

As they walk through the streets littered with homeless people, a police car speeds by them. One of the homeless men says it was the Red Vulture. Wormold asks who that is and Dr. Hasselbacher is shocked to hear that Wormold does not know that is the nickname for Captain Segura, the man who has been giving Milly rides. He has gotten that name because he specializes in torture and mutilation. Wormold is shocked at this information but Hasselbacher quickly changes the subject and continues on his hunt for the winning lottery ticket. After an hour of searching they finally find a ticket that satisfies Hasselbacher. Wormold then says he has to be going to his appointment. Hasselbacher asks him where it is and he tells him it is at a hotel. Hasselbacher tries to get him to move the meeting to the Wonder Bar but Wormold says no, and says he really has to be going. Hasselbacher insists on accompanying him to the hotel. Wormold tries to convince Hasselbacher not to come along but his friend is very drunk and cannot be persuaded.

Wormold knows he has to lose Hasselbacher before meeting Hawthorne. They reach the hotel together and Hasselbacher trips and hurts his ankle. Wormold takes the opportunity to try and get into the elevator but Hasselbacher catches him. Wormold needs to go to the fifth floor but presses the button for the sixth. As the elevator doors open Wormold goes out quickly and is moving much faster than the drunk and now limping Hasselbacher. He rounds the corner of the hallway and goes into the stairwell before Hasselbacher can see where he has gone. He goes down one floor and very quickly enters Hawthorne's room using the key he gave him at their previous meeting. He is very late for the appointment and the hotel room appears to be empty. Wormold looks around and finds a notepad and two copies of the same book containing Shakespeare stories. As he is examining the books, he hears a voice tell him to put his hands up.

It is Hawthorne, who quickly realizes it is just Wormold. Wormold has obviously woken him up as Hawthorne is in his sleeping clothes. They get down to business and Hawthorne tells Wormold one of the books is for him, they are to be used as a book code to write secret messages between them. He gives him some other supplies as well. He then tells him he will have to recruit some sub-agents as well. Hawthorne tells



Wormold he will be paid one hundred fifty dollars a month plus another one hundred fifty for expenses. Wormold insists he will be of no use to him as he knows nothing important. Hawthorne asks him if he is refusing to serve his country. He plays on Wormold's patriotism and gets him to agree to the job. Hawthorne does not seem to care that Wormold is totally unqualified.

The next morning Wormold is eating breakfast with his daughter. She tells him she is trying to cut costs and will eat only potatoes. He tells her she is being ridiculous. He asks her about Captain Segura, if she knows about his nickname. Milly says she does and also tells her father that Segura has a cigarette case made of human skin. Wormold insists that Milly stop seeing him. Milly agrees but first they have to get a membership to the country club, it is the only place she will be able to ride her new horse. She says Segura is a member and will help them become members.

Hawthorne is meeting with the Chief of the Secret Service in London. He reports he is doing well in the Caribbean. He tells him about Wormold. He says Wormold was stubborn at first and has already requested an increase in expenses. The Chief says this is a good sign. Hawthorne describes Wormold as a successful businessman with a large import company. He says he is confident his reports will be very reliable and informative. He recommends sending down a secretary and a radio man to assist Wormold. The Chief tells him to speak to the secretary pool to see if anyone is available.

Part 1, Chapter 4 - Interlude in London Analysis

Dr. Hasselbacher is acting somewhat suspiciously when it is considered that Hawthorne has warned Wormold about him. He tries his best to get into the meeting with Wormold although it is not clear why he does this. This is also a good example of the role of alcohol in the story. There is scarcely a scene where the characters are not drinking. This is one example of the excessive drinking nearly all the characters do.

Captain Segura is becoming a more interesting and frightening character as his background as a torturer is revealed. This obviously has to worry Wormold as Segura is becoming close with his young daughter. He wonders about his true motivations for being so kind to Milly.

Hawthorne is again aloof and strange. He is a parody of a true secret agent as he cares little about Wormold's qualifications. This is the center of the satirical portion of the story. Milly is seen again controlling her father in her typical teenage way. She feigns being understanding and concerned for her father but is really pushing his buttons and twisting him into giving her what she wants. She knows that he does not want her seeing Segura and uses this to get him to agree to a country club membership.

Hawthorne proves to be a pretty bad agent. He lies to the Chief about Wormold's background and makes no attempt to correct him as the Chief continues to make his own assumptions about his agents. Other characters working for the Secret Service are

portrayed as unserious and comical. They take their jobs seriously but their actions are often stupid. Greene is being satirical and thus often hilarious.



Part 2, Chapter 1

Part 2, Chapter 1 Summary

Wormold is coming home from the British Consulate where he collects a telegram from London. He uses his Shakespeare book to decode it. The message says it has been a month says his country club membership has been approved and they have still not received any reports and there have still not been any sub-agents recruited. Wormold realizes for the first time that he has taken their money but given nothing back in return, so he decided he must do something. He calls in his assistant Lopez and tells him he will pay him a little extra money. He tells Lopez just to keep his eyes and ears open and report on anything unusual going on around town. Wormold realizes he has no idea what he is even supposed to be doing. Lopez is his first recruited subagent.

Later Wormold is having his usual drink with Dr. Hasselbacher at the Wonder Bar. He tells Hasselbacher that he has been offered money to give secret information. Hasselbacher tells him this is the easiest kind of information, because if the information is secret no one can refute it. He tells Wormold just to use his imagination and create some information, if it is secret enough, they will be interested.

When Wormold returns home he takes a list of country club members and chooses some English sounding names. He encodes the name in a message and sends it off to London saying these men are his new recruits. He requests salaries for the men. Now he just has to wait for a response and in the meantime create an economic report. He gets all the government reports and local newspapers he can find and reads them all. He then sets about creating an economic report. After a week he has no response from London. Finally he gets a message in the form of an envelope full of money intended to be pay and expenses, but no word on his agents. He takes the money and deposits it in his bank account, but feels quite guilty about it.

Part 2, Chapter 1 Analysis

In this chapter Wormold begins his deception. He starts to make up his reports. He does not seem to struggle with this decision at all. He does not consider any possible consequences of these actions. He is only focuses on making his superiors happy so they will keep paying him. Not only does he make up the reports but he also creates fake agents so he can make even more money. He chooses to use real people as his agents, but these people have no idea they are being used in this way. This may well have serious consequences for the future, and again Wormold does not consider this possibility. The only time Wormold does feel any guilt is when he deposits the money in his bank account, but not enough to change his actions.



Part 2, Chapter 2

Part 2, Chapter 2 Summary

After ten days he still has no word from London on his agents. He has to make his annual trip to visit retailers around Cuba. He sends a message to Hawthorne saying he is going on a fact finding mission and will need fifty dollars a day in expenses. When he is on the road he writes a postcard to Dr. Hasselbacher. The postcard is a picture of his hotel and he marks an X in the window of his room. Later that night he heads out to meet his retailer. As he is leaving the meeting it is dark outside and Wormold is spotted by two policemen. They stop him and ask what he is doing out so late. Wormold says it is only ten o'clock and asks if there is a curfew in place. To Wormold's great surprise, one of the policemen slaps him in the face. The other policeman knocks him to the ground and shoves him into the nearby police station. Wormold protests saying he is a British citizen and demands to speak with the British Consul. They ask him for his passport but Wormold says it is at his hotel. They search him and find the postcard to Dr. Hasselbacher and find it suspicious that he has marked the window with an X. Wormold makes up a story and tries to explain it. He realizes the futility in trying to explain anything to a man in power. Then Wormold says he is a friend of Captain Segura in Havana. At the mention of this name the atmosphere changes. The policemen say it will take too long to reach Havana by phone so they cannot check the story. However, they let Wormold go and it is only later that he realizes he has left the postcard to Hasselbacher at the police station.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Analysis

Wormold continues to take every opportunity to milk the secret service for more money. He is taking his normal trip around Cuba for his vacuum business but reports it as an expense to the secret service so he can collect more money. Wormold consistently shows the motivation to look out for his own interests and those of his family. His main loyalty is to his daughter and not to his country.

This chapter also shows some of the political unrest going on in Cuba. As soon as Wormold gets outside of Havana, things are very chaotic. The streets are described as quite dangerous and the regular chain of command is obviously not working. The police seem to run the streets at their own whim, as if they have complete power. All of these things are conditions which make a place ripe for revolution. This is emblematic of the very negative situation Cuba was in at this time in history. In retrospect, it is obvious that Cuba was ready for the revolution which would happen in just a few years after this story takes place. Greene describes the scene perfectly, showcasing the many troubles on the streets.

The postcard left at the police station is also probably foreshadowing something that is going to happen in the future. This, along with Wormold's mention of Captain Segura,

makes it quite likely that the police will not forget him. He has also tied himself to Dr. Hasselbacher.



Part 2, Chapter 3 - Interlude in London

Part 2, Chapter 3 - Interlude in London Summary

When Wormold gets back from his trip, he finds several telegrams waiting for him. He also has a note saying Dr. Hasselbacher wants to speak with him urgently. Wormold deals with the telegrams first. He learns that some of his proposed agents have been rejected but a Engineer Cifuenes and a professor Sanchez have been accepted. He also learns that his proposed salary for the men was too low and has been increased. As he is reading the messages Lopez tells him that Hasselbacher is on the phone and it sounds urgent. Wormold speaks with him and Hasselbacher asks him to come over quickly, something bad has happened.

Wormold goes to Hasselbacher's house and finds the man very shaken. He looks older and Wormold can tell something violent has happened. As he walks in, Wormold sees that the house is in disarray. Hasselbacher then leads him into his laboratory, also in a chaotic state. Hasselbacher says someone telephoned him and got him out of the house. When he came back someone had done this to his house, he does not know who it was. He is most upset about his laboratory, which was his only passion in life, where he was trying to develop a new culture. Hasselbacher also says a few of his papers have been taken. He thanks Wormold for coming, saying he is a good friend. They have two drinks together and Wormold leaves.

Wormold suspects the incident has something to do with his reports. He decides to get revenge by writing a new report describing a large military installation he has heard is being built in the mountains. He also says he will recruit a pilot to fly over and take pictures of the project. He then sets up one of his vacuum cleaners in his office and begins to sketch it. He sends the sketch along as a picture of the military installation he has discovered. Milly asks him what he is doing and he says he is starting his new career. He tells her he will be writing lots of reports and she will be able to buy whatever she likes.

Hawthorne is summoned to London immediately. He takes the first available flight and goes straight from the airport to the Chief's office. The Chief is very concerned with the reports send from Wormold, especially the drawing. He says the Air Ministry is also very worried about the drawings of the military installation. He says they must have photos. The Chief says one of the drawings was especially frightening, and it reminded him of a vacuum cleaner. At the mention of a vacuum cleaner Hawthorne is very worried, but he does not say anything to the Chief. The Chief says they must have pictures and he says Wormold needs a staff. He instructs Hawthorne to send over the secretary and radio man right away. The Chief also congratulates Hawthorne on recruiting such a good agent in Wormold.



Part 2, Chapter 3 - Interlude in London Analysis

Wormold's reports continue to escalate as his imagination takes off. Wormold reports having more recruits as subagents. He also takes his reports to a new level as he creates the drawing of the imaginary military installation. He does not seem to put any thought into what this might mean. It should be obvious that the government will be very interested in this and may well move to act against it. Wormold is only thinking about his immediate situation and not thinking about what consequences might result from his action.

The incident at Hasselbacher's apartment more than likely has something to do with the postcard from the previous chapter and Wormold's run-in with the police. They will now know Wormold was lying about his story and he will be under the close scrutiny of not only the police but also other organizations probably working with the police.

When Hawthorne hears that Wormold's drawing looks like a vacuum cleaner, he is immediately suspicious that Wormold may have faked the reports. However he does not reveal his suspicions to the Chief. He does not want to tell his boss Wormold's true identity after leading him to believe Wormold is a successful businessman. So the analysts do not have reason to doubt Wormold's reports.

The Secret Service is again shown as a bumbling unprofessional organization. It also shows the futility of intelligence gathering. The nature of the job is such that clandestine operations are necessary. This creates an inherent problem as it is hard to monitor employees or confirm their information. This fact is exaggerated in the story to show the problems inherent in the system.



Part 3, Chapter 1 - Chapter 3

Part 3, Chapter 1 - Chapter 3 Summary

The next morning Wormold is in his office going through his papers making sure they are all in order. He does not want Beatrice to become suspicious. At this point he has quite a few agents reported to be working under him. Milly comes in and says there is a woman here to see him. It is Beatrice and she comes into the room with them. Wormold introduces her to Milly and right away Milly asks her if she is married. Beatrice says she is divorced from a man who used to work for UNESCO. She says their marriage just faded away.

Milly leaves the room and Beatrice and Wormold get down to business. She tells him he must have a safe for the office and says she will go out and buy one. She comes back later with a very large safe that takes up nearly all the space in the office. While delivery men are brining it in, Rudy comes up in a taxi. Beatrice tells him he can sleep in the office. Wormold says there will be no room with the safe but Beatrice says it will ok, she tells Rudy to go out and buy a cot.

Back in the office, Beatrice is going through Wormold's files on the agents. She wants to meet Teresa, a nude dancer who is supposed to be a mistress of some government administrators. Wormold tries to change the subject. She also tells him London is very impressed with Engineer Cifuentes' work. Wormold tells her he does not speak English so she cannot meet him. She continues to ask him questions about the agents and he answers quickly, even though he is making up the answers as he goes along. Then Rudy comes back carrying a cot and they begin to make arrangements for where he will sleep.

Wormold is becoming uncomfortable with the new situation. He has been drawing quite a few salaries and expenses from his fake agents and keeping all the money for himself. He has been planning on using it as a dowry for Milly. To justify these payments, he had been sending one report per week. He had gotten quite creative with the reports and has gotten used to his new routine. Now his routine is upset as he has to deal with the new people in the office. Beatrice insists on giving him all kinds of special training. He also has to think up all kinds of cables for Rudy to send in order to keep him happy. London continues to push him to get photographs of the military installation in the mountains. Beatrice also wants to take over all contact with the agents. It has become quite difficult for Wormold to stay on top of it all and make sure no one discovers his lies.

Wormold surprises himself how quickly he is able to answer all of Beatrice's questions about his agents. He makes them up as he goes along and he begins to feel that the agents are taking on a life of their own. He is a little scared how quickly it is all growing out of control. Suddenly Wormold has an idea and calls in Beatrice. He instructs her to take down a cable for London. He tells her his pilot, Raul has been fired for being drunk



on the job. He says Raul has agreed to fly over the military installation and take pictures for a reasonable bonus. Wormold requests a great deal of money for the operation to cover the cost of renting a plane and bribing airport staff. The mission is also quite dangerous so he suggests a large bonus for Raul. Beatrice is excited and begins to feel they are really getting something important done. In his mind, Wormold is thinking the money will be able to pay for a boarding school in Switzerland for Milly.

On the night Raul is suppose to undertake his mission, Wormold takes Beatrice out to dinner. She is quite nervous for the fictitious Raul. Wormold is not sure exactly how he is going to end the situation, the only thing he knows for sure is that Raul will not make it home. Beatrice is getting frustrated that Wormold is not anxious about the mission, she is very afraid for Raul who is putting himself in danger. He avoids responding to her. After dinner they are walking down the street and they run into Dr. Hasselbacher, who is obviously upset about something. He invites Wormold and Beatrice to his apartment for a drink. They all go to his home and have a drink. They look at Hasselbacher's photos and they learn he was in the army. As they are chatting about it, the phone rings. Hasselbacher goes to answer it, and when he comes back in the room he is obviously disturbed about something. He says he has to go and apologizes to his guests that they must leave. Wormold asks if he has gotten bad news. Hasselbacher says he has, he has gotten word that a young man has died in a car accident near the airport. He says the man's name was Raul.

Part 3, Chapter 1 - Chapter 3 Analysis

It is going to get harder to sustain the lie as Wormold now has a staff working with him. They are sent to support him but in reality they will only hinder him. It will be more difficult for him to keep up his lies as he has to constantly hide them from Beatrice and Rudy.

As Wormold constantly has to answer Beatrice's questions about his agents, he is surprised to learn how easy it is to keep up the lies. As he constantly makes up more about agents, they are taking on a life of their own. They are beginning to become real in the sense that they are doing things without Wormold even knowing. He answers the questions so fast that he does not even know where the answers come from. This is making his life more difficult as he has to remember the more complicated lies.

Wormold knows something strange is going on. A man named Raul is dead and he matches the description of Wormold's pilot, Raul. Hasselbacher is also proving more suspicious. He gets the call informing him of Raul's death and repeats the information to Wormold. It is not clear who has called him, it is possible that someone is setting up Wormold.



Part 4, Chapter 1

Part 4, Chapter 1 Summary

Wormold and Beatrice go back to Wormold's house. She is very cautious as she is afraid someone may be there trying to attack them. They hear someone moving but it is only Milly. She tells them that someone has shot at a government officer coming out of the Ministry of Interior. They discover the man who was shot at was Dr. Cifuentes, however he was not hurt. Now they know someone has discovered their spying operation. While Wormold feels this is absurd as all his agents are fake, Beatrice does not understand, she is only worried that someone is trying to kill them. Beatrice says they have to notify the other agents, they have to get them to safety. This obviously presents a problem for Wormold as the agents are real people but they do not know they are involved with any spy operation. He is tempted to tell Beatrice everything but he is in over his head, he does not know what to do. Finally he agrees to follow Beatrice to the Shanghai Theater where he has told Beatrice the nude dancer works.

They get to the theater and go in to see a show. Beatrice wants to go back stage and find Teresa, the nude dancer. However, Wormold points out that she is not sure what Teresa looks like, he says they should just watch the show and he will see if he can pick out Teresa. They sit through a pornographic show and Wormold thinks he spots Teresa but he is not sure. After the show Wormold tries to get Beatrice to go home but she refuses, so they go back stage. Wormold begins yelling the name Teresa but no one answers. Finally someone responds in Spanish, which Wormold speaks but Beatrice does not. She says she is Teresa's sister. Wormold speaks to the woman in Spanish and asks her to come with him. He tells Beatrice the girl will inform Teresa although now she is out of town. Beatrice tells Wormold to drive the girl to her sister. Wormold plays along hoping he will figure something out later. So they all get in Wormold's car and then head off to find professor Sanchez. As they are leaving they spot the police and have to hide from them. With a bribe to one of the club employees, Wormold manages to get them all away safely.

Beatrice knows the address of Professor Sanchez and tells Wormold how to get there. They pull up in front of a large house and Wormold gets out telling the others to stay in the car. He approaches the house and as he gets near, a man comes out and points a gun at him. It is Professor Sanchez, he wants to know what Wormold is doing there. He thinks Wormold has been sent by his estranged wife to spy on him. He is inside with his girlfriend, a stripper. They have a round about conversation with both parties very confused. Wormold is trying to get Sanchez to come with him, he tells him he is in danger. Sanchez thinks it is a trap setup by his wife trying to get revenge against him. Wormold tries to explain to the man that his life is in danger. It is at this point that he realizes the consequences of his previous actions, he is not quite sure how he ended up at this point. Sanchez does not believe him and refuses to leave, so Wormold leaves believing he has done his best.



As he walks back to the car Wormold wants nothing more than to confess everything to Beatrice. However, he knows he cannot do that, it would mean giving up security for Milly. Then as he gets to the car he sees the police there and another gun pointed at him. They demand to know what he is doing there. They do not bother to listen to his response, just take him back to the police station. At the station Wormold meets Captain Segura. Segura asks him what he was doing at Sanchez's house, the professor had called him to report a break-in. He also wants to know why he has a nude dancer from the Shanghai Theater with him. He tells Wormold not to get involved with Professor Sanchez or his wife. He then wants to know why Wormold sent a postcard to Dr. Hasselbacher. He says Hasselbacher is involved with some dangerous business. Segura does not wait for answers, he keeps speaking. He says Hasselbacher's phone is tapped and he knows Wormold and Beatrice were there earlier this evening. The Captain then shows Wormold a photograph, of the pilot named Raul who was killed in the car accident. Wormold says he does not know the man. Next Segura plays a tape he has on his desk. It is a recording of the phone call Hasselbacher received that evening informing him of Raul's death. However, the call is actually a man's voice instructing Hasselbacher to inform Wormold that Raul is dead. Hasselbacher says it was only supposed to be a warning, no one was supposed to die. But the voice says it could not be helped and again tells Hasselbacher to inform Wormold that Raul is dead. Segura turns off the recording and again asks Wormold if he knows Raul. Wormold swears he knows nothing of Raul. Segura says he has to accept his word since he is Milly's father and he lets him go home. As he is walking out of the police station, Segura says they must play a game of checkers one day soon. When they get home Beatrice tells Wormold he is much more professional than she thought.

Part 4, Chapter 1 Analysis

There are now very serious problem for Wormold—someone is trying to kill his fake agents. This is obviously ironic as the agents are not real. Wormold never considered this possibility when he started his reports. The situation is now way over his head and is quickly spiraling out of control. Wormold chose people at random and without their knowledge to be agents. He has now endangered those people unnecessarily and without their knowing about it. They may not know they are in danger but they are. Wormold tries to get these people out of trouble without telling them why. Green's language is quite comical.

Wormold stays consistent as Milly is his only real worry. He does care about the people he has endangered but Milly is his first priority. He knows he may be able to help his 'agents' by telling Beatrice about his lies but does not because he fears this might harm Milly.

It is also evident now that Segura knows something about Wormold's actions. Wormold is lucky that Segura has affections toward Wormold's daughter as this gives him some leeway and credibility with an otherwise famously brutal man. Segura lets Wormold leave despite the obvious tension that has built between them. His final suggestion that they play checkers together foreshadows something to come.



Part 4, Chapter 2 - Interlude in London

Part 4, Chapter 2 - Interlude in London Summary

Wormold goes to Hasselbacher's apartment, but he does not knock on the door, he sneaks around and peers through the window. He sees Hasselbacher in his bedroom dressed in an old German Army uniform. His eyes are closed and he looks to be asleep. Wormold taps on the window and Hasselbacher looks up. He is surprised to see Wormold and he lets him in through the window. Wormold asks him who Raul was. Hasselbacher says Wormold already knows who Raul is but Wormold denies it. Wormold then asks him if he is a fan of Shakespeare, specifically the edition he has used to encode his messages to London. Hasselbacher says Milly lent it to him. He then tells Wormold he was an army officer as a young man, he says it was a peaceful, happy time in his life. He says before the war it was so happy, before he had to kill someone. He then says both of them are responsible for Raul's death. He says they made him help them, that if he did not cooperate they would have deported him, and he has nowhere to go now. He says this all happened only because he is a friend of Wormold's. Wormold asks who they are, but Hasselbacher only says he should know better than him. Hasselbacher says he was forced to break his code. Then Wormold tells him Raul was not even real, he invented him. Hasselbacher says he is real now, there is a whole file on him.

Hasselbacher says Raul denied working for Wormold. They offered him a lot of money to work for them but he refused. He was a drunk pilot who was fired from his job. They wanted pictures of the military installation as well. Hasselbacher read all of Wormold's cables. Hasselbacher says they have known about Wormold from the beginning, but at first they did not take him seriously. But when London increased his staff they started to take him seriously. They could not believe London would go to so much trouble if Wormold's cables were not real. Hasselbacher asks him why he did it. Wormold said he needed the money for Milly. Hasselbacher says he would have lent him the money. Wormold would says it would have been too much money. Hasselbacher tells his friend to take care of Milly, in this business it is unsafe to love anyone, they will only be in danger. Wormold calls his house to make sure Milly and Beatrice are all right and they are. He tells Beatrice he is on his way home. Hasselbacher tells him to be careful and asks him not to tell anyone about this meeting.

In London, the Chief is meeting with a government minister. They are discussing the military installation in Cuba. They believe it has a Communist origin. The Chief says he will ask Wormold for a full assessment. They worry it may be the Soviets moving towards war. They agree they must have photographs, they say obtaining them are worth more than a man's life. The Chief says their code has been broken and one of their agents has been shot at. The minister says they must be willing to accept casualties. He then says Wormold, his 'man in Havana,' has recruited a police captain as a double agent. They are hoping to get something from him. The conversation ends



by the minister saying that the Prime Minister is concerned with the Cuban situation and is pressing for answers.

Part 4, Chapter 2 - Interlude in London Analysis

Hasselbacher constantly refers to 'them' but it is never revealed who 'they' are. It really does not matter, they simply represent the enemy, the other side. Hasselbacher and Wormold's secrets are finally revealed to each other as their suspicions of each other are confirmed. However, neither of them are truly agents, they are not enemies. Both of them have been forced into their respective roles by events beyond their control. They have no zeal for their job and are not loyal to their organizations. The two still respect and like each other.

It is now obvious that all the events in Cuba, the shootings and killings have been a big misunderstanding. This is part of the central point of the novel, the total futility and absurdity of intelligence gathering. The nature of the business requires such secrecy that it is very difficult to control. The British government has positive intentions when starting the Cuban office, but the necessary secrecy of the business means they really do not know what is going on. They try to recruit good agents but they are not able to reliably monitor them. This allows Wormold to receive his position and allows his seemingly innocent lies to cause major international incidents. There are no checks in place to prevent these things from happening. It is evident that the Secret Service is not as omnipotent and well informed as most people believe. They are thought to be all powerful but in reality they are rely heavily on capricious sources.

Wormold is afraid that his loved ones are in danger. This is foreshadowing something happening to them in the future. It is also obvious that he is still continuing his lies as he has reported that he has recruited Captain Segura.



Part 5, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2

Part 5, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2 Summary

Wormold and Captain Segura are playing checkers in a bar and discussing Wormold's earlier trip around Cuba. Wormold is telling him it was just his normal business trip and Segura says it really does look like that. Wormold asks him if he really believes he could be a spy. Segura says he is beginning to think Hasselbacher's friends have made a mistake, but he will not say who those friends are. Segura says he knows Engineer Cifuentes well and he knows he could never have been a spy for the British. Wormold asks Segura if he tortured Cifuentes but Segura says the engineer does not belong to the torturable class. Wormold has never thought of people in this way before. Segura says only poor people can be tortured, that they expect to be.

Wormold leaves the bar and as he is walking out he reflects on the fact that he has not seen Hasselbacher since the night in his apartment. It would be too embarrassing for both of them. He looks up and sees Beatrice waiting for him. She says she does not like it when he meets with Segura. She is afraid Segura will trap him, and that their lives are still in danger. He tells Segura is on their side and he is going to give them a list of all the rival spies in Cuba. So Wormold is still lying to Beatrice. As the two go home they begin to flirt.

Wormold tells Milly that he has been invited to give a speech at the European Traders' Association. He tells her it is an honor but he does not know what to say so he will have to decline. Milly is very excited and convinces him to give the speech, she tells him he will be great. Then Rudy comes in and gives Wormold a telegram. He takes it to his bedroom and reads it, discovering it is an urgent message from Hawthorne in Kingston directing him to come there immediately.

Wormold flies to Kingston in Jamaica and meets with Hawthorne. Hawthorne says he has seen Wormold's drawings and suspected they were fakes, just copies of a vacuum cleaner. However, he has learned someone is trying to kill him, so he knows they must be real. Hawthorne continues to talk about another subject but all Wormold wants to hear is who is trying to kill him. Hawthorne finally tells him he will be poisoned at the European trader's union. Wormold says he better not go but Hawthorne says he must go. If he does not go it will be obvious they have discovered their leak. He just tells Wormold not to eat or drink anything. Wormold is very nervous but Hawthorne is no consolation, he just tells him to be careful and sends him back to Cuba.

On the flight back to Cuba, Wormold meets another Englishman. He says his name is Carter and he is also a vacuum cleaner salesman, he is coming to Cuba to open a new office. He and Wormold chat the whole way home and become friends. Carter says he is also going to the Trader's dinner and Wormold is glad to know he will have one friend there. They split up at the airport where Beatrice is waiting for Wormold. He tells her the news that someone is going to try and poison him. She tells him he must not go, but he



says he has to. He says if he does not go they will just think of some worse way to get at him, maybe even through Milly.

Part 5, Chapter 1 - Chapter 2 Analysis

Segura has a list of the spies in Cuba. This would finally reveal the identity of the constantly mysterious enemy. Wormold feels that if he is able to get a copy of this list, he would actually have done something positive for the Secret Service. He does feel a small responsibility to them as they have paid him so much money.

It seems that a relationship may be starting between Wormold and Beatrice. They are showing increased emotion towards each other and seem to care about each other more than simply friends or co-workers

The story is approaching its climax as in the next chapter Wormold will face an attempted killing. Hawthorne again shows his customary aloofness as he relays information to Wormold. Hawthorne seems to always be going through the motions and does not take his job seriously. The character seems to be Greene's way of describing the ridiculousness of the Secret Service and shows his bitterness towards the organization.

The man Wormold meets on the plane, Carter, will more than likely be a significant character in the coming chapters.



Part 5, Chapter 3

Part 5, Chapter 3 Summary

The morning of the speech Beatrice again tries to get Wormold to stay home but he refuses, mostly out of fear for Milly. He tells her he only has to be careful what he eats and drinks. He figures there will be a common wine bottle which will be safe to drink from. Later, as he is entering the dinner hall, Hasselbacher comes running up to him. He tells Wormold not to go in, that someone is going to poison him. Wormold tells Hasselbacher he knows that and he is still going in. He tells the doctor to go home and not to worry about him. As he watches his friend walk away, he feels very alone. Then he sees Carter, the man from the plane. They walk into the room together and Wormold is feeling confident with his friend and fellow countrymen at his side.

Waiters are passing around cocktails in the dining room. Wormold thinks he sees the waiter turn the tray as he comes to him and offer him a certain glass. He declines, refusing to drink anything, saying he will wait for the wine. Carter walks away and Wormold meets a new man named MacDougall. He tells him they are sitting together. He tells Wormold he better have a drink now as there is no wine with the meal. Wormold looks at the table and sees individual milk bottles at each place. There is also no common dishes, each plate will be served up individually. He feels defeated, knowing now he can eat or drink nothing. He is weary of MacDougall, wondering if he is the one sent to poison him.

When they sit down at the table MacDougall offers Wormold some whiskey from his personal flask. Wormold declines, fearing it might be the poison. However, then MacDougall offers some whiskey to Carter sitting across the table. When Carter takes it and drinks it Wormold knows it is safe. He accepts some whiskey and feels confident in his cleverness. When the food is served, the waiters put down a specific plate in front of Wormold. He notices there are no carrots on his plate so he passes it on to MacDougall saying he wants carrots. MacDougall says he also wants carrots so he passes the plate onto the person next to him, who in turn continues to pass it on. Wormold watches the plate go down the table until one of the waiters takes it and goes back to the kitchen. Meanwhile Wormold takes a different plate passed to him. He is confident that this plate is not poisoned and eats it. Again he feels proud of himself for his cleverness.

Wormold, MacDougall and Carter continue to drink the whiskey until the flask is empty. At this point, it is time for Wormold's speech. Just before he goes up, Carter takes out his own flask and says there is only one drink left in it. He offers it to Wormold and says he needs it before his speech. Wormold is immediately suspicious as he takes the glass. He sees a dog under his table that must have wandered in from outside. He pretends to knock the glass over and it spills on the floor. Wormold apologizes and heads up to the podium. As he begins his speech he hears the dog run out of the table making awful noises. He knows it has been poisoned, that Carter is the one sent to kill him. The dog runs into the kitchen and Wormold follows it. He finds the dog at the feet



of a waiter, evidentially its owner. The waiter hugs the dog as it dies in his arms. Wormold leaves the building very pleased with himself for having survived.

Part 5, Chapter 3 Analysis

Wormold is finally starting to act like a real spy. He is proving to be clever and good at his job. He has somehow started acting with deftness and foresight. Earlier foreshadowing about Carter has proved true as he appears to be the one sent to kill Wormold. However it is not clear who Carter is working for. Wormold has outmaneuvered him and survived the assassination attempt. It is probable, however, that Carter and Wormold will meet again as Carter has failed at his mission.



Part 5, Chapter 4

Part 5, Chapter 4 Summary

The next day Captain Segura comes to Wormold's house and meets with him. He tells Wormold he wants to have a word with him. At first he is nervous but Segura tells him there is nothing to worry about. He tells Wormold he has come to ask Wormold if he can marry Milly. Wormold is surprised and asks if Milly knows about this. Segura says she does not. He tells Wormold he has a large amount of savings, enough money to take care of Milly no matter what happens. He also has plans to get to Miami in the case of a revolution. Eventually Segura convinces Wormold to say yes if Milly agrees, though Wormold is confident she will never agree. Segura then says he has another matter he needs Wormold's help with and he asks him to come with him.

Segura leads Wormold into the Wonder Bar. Wormold immediately knows something is wrong and then he sees a man lying on the floor. He sees it is the dead body of Dr. Hasselbacher. Segura says he just needs a formal identification, which Wormold gives him. He learns that a random gunman came into the bar and starting shooting, killing Hasselbacher. The police have no leads. Wormold then asks Segura for the list of spies in Cuba. Segura says he will try and get it. Wormold knows now it is time to leave Cuba.

Back at home Wormold is sitting on his bed contemplating. He suspects it is Carter who killed Hasselbacher to get close to Wormold. He decides he has to kill Carter. He needs a gun and tries to think of how to get one. He then walks out into the dining room and sees Beatrice and Milly. He tells them about Hasselbacher and then tells Milly Segura wants to marry him. She finds this ridiculous and says she will not ride in his car anymore. Wormold begins to make a plan. He tells Milly to go see Segura and tell him to come to their house at ten o'clock and to bring the list. Milly agrees and leaves the room. Then he turns to Beatrice and tells her his agents are fake. She does not react, just filing away the information. He says he knows it is her duty to report this to London but he asks her to wait just one day. To his surprise Beatrice says she loves him. She understands what he has done, that he has only been looking out for Milly. She likes the fact that he has made a fool of London and only been loyal to what is really important, his family. He tells her he just needs to get the list of agents from Segura and then he will return to London.

Part 5, Chapter 4 Analysis

Segura's hope to marry Milly does not come as a major surprise as he has shown an overt interest in her throughout the story. Wormold remains calm and does not seem upset at the request. However, this may be because he knows his daughter would never consider marrying Segura. He also may be calculating how he can use this new development to his advantage.



The death of Hasselbacher is a surprise. There is no lead up to the scene-Hasselbacher is all of a sudden dead on the floor. He is killed in the Wonder Bar where he has spent so much time with Wormold. This seems to be the beginning of the end for Wormold, his world is totally collapsing.



Part 5, Chapter 5

Part 5, Chapter 5 Summary

Captain Segura comes to Wormold's house late that night. At Wormold's suggestion they sit down to play a game of chess. When they sit down Segura sees that instead of the normal chess pieces Wormold has set up small whiskey bottles as the pieces. Wormold purposes that when someone takes a piece they must drink the bottle. Segura sees right away the trick of the game, the better player will have a disadvantage as he will have to drink more. Segura is not crazy about the idea but reluctantly agrees. As they play, Wormold asks about Carter. Segura says he is suspicious but they have no evidence against him and as he is a foreigner they cannot interrogate him. He says they have no surveillance on him at the Seville-Biltmore Hotel. As they continue to play the chess game, Segura is winning and has to drink several small bottles of whiskey. After several games Segura is quite drunk but so is Wormold. Wormold is trying to keep his wits about him. Finally Wormold's plan succeeds and Segura passes out. Wormold takes Segura's gun and goes out to his car.

Wormold drives to the Seville-Biltmore Hotel and goes into the lobby. He calls Carter and asks him if he would like to go out for a drink. He says the incident with the dog was all a mistake and he wants to clear the air. Carter is not happy about going out but finally he is convinced. Wormold waits in the bar and Carter is taking a long time. When he finally comes down, he tries to stall Wormold. It is obvious that he is trying to wait for someone to come. But Wormold insists that they go out now before it gets too late. Wormold says he will show Carter around some of the brothels in town.

First they stop at a strip club and they have a drink. As they watch the woman, Wormold realizes Carter is very uncomfortable around woman. He asks him about it and Carter tells him he is scared of woman, he has never found a need for them. Wormold begins to feel sorry for him and decides to leave before he loses his nerve. They go out to a street and head to a brothel. Outside the building, Wormold stops and confronts Carter. He asks him about the whiskey and about Hasselbacher. Carter is scared and he tells Wormold that he was just under orders. As Carter's hand goes to his pocket Wormold pulls out his gun and fires. Carter was just going for his pipe but the bullet hit it smashing it to pieces. Wormold is strangely relieved that he did not have to kill Carter. As Carter stammers that Wormold almost killed him Wormold gets back in his car and prepares to go home. As he turns the ignition, Carter fires a gun at him.

Part 5, Chapter 5 Analysis

Wormold does not want to kill Carter but he feels a strong desire to revenge Hasselbacher's death. This is the first time he has showed a real passion or any violent emotion. He has a real loyalty to his family and his friend. He has not shown any motivation to revenge those who have wronged his country. Even though he is working



for his country and likes his country, he does not have a great loyalty for it. All of his loyalty is towards his friends and family. Wormold is, at heart, a good and gentle man. He begins to develop a strong sympathy for Carter as he sees his pathetic life. When it seems that finally he will not have to kill him, Wormold is relieved. But Wormold's weakness is exploited as Carter shoots at him after Wormold lets him go free. The chapter ends with a cliffhanger as it is not revealed whether Wormold is dead or alive from Carter's shot.



Part 5, Chapter 6

Part 5, Chapter 6 Summary

Back at Wormold's house, Wormold is recounting his encounter with Carter. He says Carter's bullet just missed him and he fired back and killed Carter. He brought the gun back home, wiped it off and put it back in Segura's holster. He then took the list of agents from Segura's pocket and photographed it with a micro camera. He took the microfilm on a stamp and mailed it the Secret Service. Now they are waiting to see what happens next.

The next day, a messenger from the British Consulate comes to Wormold's store reporting that the Ambassador wants to see him. He goes to the Consulate and right away the Ambassador tells him he is in trouble though he knows no details. The Ambassador tells Wormold he has spoken with Captain Segura and been informed that Wormold has been creating fake agents and collecting the salary. The Ambassador has informed the Foreign Office in London. The Ambassador tells him to return to London immediately.

Beatrice and Rudy have gone on to Jamaica to get their new orders. Before Beatrice leaves she tells Wormold he will probably be sent to the Middle East somewhere as a punishment. They hope to see each other in London before that. After Beatrice leaves, Wormold packs up all his possessions and ships them to England. They sell the horse to Captain Segura. Milly is surprisingly not upset about leaving Cuba. At the airport Milly and Wormold see Segura. He tells them he is sad to see them go, especially Milly. As their flight is announced, Segura gives Wormold a present. Wormold opens it on the plane and inside is a small bottle of whiskey and a bullet from a police gun. Milly asks what it is but he tells her it is just a joke between them. Milly says Segura was not a bad man but not good for a husband.

Part 5, Chapter 6 Analysis

It is immediately revealed that Wormold is alive and has been forced to kill Carter in self defense. Then everything starts to fall apart. Segura has turned Wormold in to the officials. The British Ambassador in Cuba informs the government and the Secret Service certainly knows about Wormold's actions now. Wormold is forced to leave Cuba although he is not upset to do so. He is primarily relieved that Milly has gotten out unharmed and he has revenged Hasselbacher's death. Wormold is prepared to face his fate in London. Beatrice and Wormold's relationship is not clear, although they know they like each other. They are primarily waiting to see what will happen next.



Part 5, Epilogue in London

Part 5, Epilogue in London Summary

In London, Wormold is in the Secret Service building. He is waiting outside the Chief's office watching a Colonel and other military officers go in and out. Then he sees Hawthorne, and he goes up to him. He asks if Beatrice arrived safely and he learns she did. Wormold asks what is going on here and Hawthorne tells him it is a court marshal. Before saying anything else, he walks away and into the Chief's office. Wormold continues to wait for what seems like a very long time. He wonders if there is anything they can really do to him besides firing him, and he has no intention of giving them back their money. Then the light above the door finally goes green indicating that he can go in, and, to his surprise, Beatrice is standing in the doorway. She says she can not speak to him now but they make plans to meet that night. She tells him not to worry and to go on in.

In the office he sits in front of the Chief's desk. The Chief tells him they have decided to shut down his office in Havana. He then says he has decided to give Wormold a position on their training staff. He will teach trainees how to run a foreign office. He then tells Wormold they have also awarded him the Order of the British Empire.

Later that night Wormold is meeting with Beatrice and she is telling him what has really gone on. She tells him they are pretty mad with both of them. They told her she should have spotted what was going on. But her only punishment is to be sent to Jakarta. They all believed his drawings of the military installation. Hawthorne is the one who got it the worst. He had not told them about Wormold's true background. To cover up all the mistakes, the Chief ordered a final report be created from the Havana office. It will say that the military installation has been deconstructed and dismantled. This way the other departments will not worry about it and they will not be embarrassed. They have decided to give Wormold a job to prevent him from telling his story to the press.

Beatrice then tells Wormold she told the Chief she thought what he had done was very honorable. She says she would not have stopped him even if she knew he was faking all his information. She tells him what he was doing was important, working for his family. She says working for the security of his daughter is so much more important than for the security from some war which may never happen. She begins to walk away but Wormold stops her. He asks her if she really wants to go to Jakarta and she says she has no choice. He suggests that she quit her job and they get married. She agrees but says it will be hard to get Milly's approval. He says not to worry about that and kisses her. As they kiss Milly walks in and sees them. She smiles and gives them her blessing. Wormold says he knows his job at the Service will not last long and he asks Beatrice what they will live on. Beatrice just says they will find a way.



Part 5, Epilogue in London Analysis

Wormold gets off very easy. Greene again shows the absurdity of the Secret Service as someone who has willfully deceived them is rewarded. This shows the futility of intelligence gathering and additionally the negative role politics plays in the operations. Wormold and Beatrice begin their relationship and Beatrice leaves her job. Beatrice is attracted to him primarily because of his loyalty to his family. She thinks that is honorable and different than most of the men she has known.



Characters

Jim Wormold

A British vacuum cleaner salesman in Havana, Cuba. His wife has left him alone with their young daughter, Milly. His business is failing and he is having trouble providing for his daughter's many wants. For her seventeenth birthday, Milly wants a horse and Wormold agrees to give it to her, despite not knowing how he will pay for it. Then he meets a man who offers him a job as a spy for the British government. He has no qualifications for the job but he does not let this stop him. He begins to write fake reports not based on any real intelligence gathering. He also recruits fake agents and collects their salaries. He feels somewhat guilty doing this and figures he will be caught at any time. He collects the money and saves it in order to give Milly a better life.

The Secret Service send him a secretary, Beatrice. At first he tries to hide his actions from her but eventually he confesses to her. To his surprise she understands. When his actions come to light, he is forced to leave Cuba and move back to England. At the end of the story Wormold faces the Chief of the Secret Service and is not reprimanded. In fact, he is given a position training other agents and awarded an O.B.E. In the last scene, he and Beatrice confess their love for each other and start a relationship.

Dr. Hasselbacher

A German physician and Wormold's friend, they often drink together in the Wonder Bar. He is largely retired and spends most of his time drinking and working on developing a kind of vaccine. He served in the German army as a young man. Towards the end of the novel it is revealed he has been forced to work for some organization against Wormold. He has been forced to reveal information about his friend, he also breaks the secret code Wormold uses to communicate with London. He is eventually shot and killed in a bar by Carter because of his involvement with Wormold.

Milly Wormold

Wormold's seventeen year old daughter. She attends an American convent school and is a devout Catholic. Her father gives her nearly everything she asks for and she often takes advantage of this. For her birthday she demands a horse which she knows her father cannot afford. This causes Wormold to take the job offered him by Hawthorne. She is often a difficult child and causes mischief at school. She has a relationship with the police officer Captain Segura. He gives her rides home from school and hopes to marry her. However, Milly has no intention of marrying the man.



Beatrice

The secretary sent from London to work with Wormold. She is half French and half British. She is divorced from her husband who worked for UNESCO. She eventually falls in love with Wormold and at the end of the novel they begin a relationship. When she discovers that his operations have all been fake, she is not angry and understands and supports his reasoning.

Hawthorne

The British secret agent who recruits Wormold. He is often aloof and not a particularly good agent. He is not trusted by his superiors. He suspects Wormold's reports may be fake but does nothing about it.

Captain Segura

The police captain of Havana. He is known as 'the red vulture' as he tortures people. He carries a cigarette case made of human skin. He gives Milly rides home from school and helps her with her horse. He asks Wormold if he can marry Milly but she ultimately refuses him.

Lopez

Wormold's assistant at the vacuum store and one of his fake agents.

The Chief

The head of the British Secret Service.

Rudy

The man sent from London to help Wormold with communications.

Teresa

One of Wormold's fake agents. She is reported to be a nude dancer in a night club and the mistress of several important government ministers.



Engineer Cifuentes

One of Wormold's fake agents. He is a real person but is not aware of the role he is playing in Wormold's reports. When the mysterious enemy agency discovers he is supposed to be working with the British, he is shot at but is not hit.

Carter

A rival agent sent to kill Wormold. He is fond of whiskey and smoking his pipe. Wormold meets him on an airplane and Carter is posing as a rival vacuum cleaner salesman. He first tries to poison Wormold with whiskey but fails. Later, Wormold decides to kill him to revenge the death of Dr. Hasselbacher. Wormold takes him out and discovers he is afraid of woman, this makes him feel sorry for the man. He decides not to kill the man but then Carter shoots at him. In self defense, Wormold returns fire and kills Carter.



Objects/Places

Cuba

An island nation in the Caribbean, just ninety miles from the United States. Cuba is the main setting of the novel. The story is written and takes place just before the revolution led by Fidel Castro. At the time of the story, Cuba is a largely poor country. There are many European and American tourists and businessmen on the island.

Havana

The capital city of Cuba and the home of Wormold.

Montinque

A small island in the Caribbean that is an overseas territory of France. Hawthorne is described as visiting this island in the story.

Kingston

The capital of Jamaica, a British territory at the time of the story. Hawthorne is based here and it is the headquarters of the Caribbean spy network. Wormold visits the island once during the story to meet with Hawthorne.

Duenna

Literally a nanny. But Wormold often imagines a nanny governing his daughter. The imaginary Duenna is present when Milly is acting lady-like and not present when she is acting naughty and mischievously.

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a charitable organization.

Draughts

A board game better known in America as checkers.



The Secret Service

The British organization that recruits Wormold to spy in Cuba. In real life, the organization is called M.I.6. They collect intelligence around the world and use it to protect England. In the story, it is portrayed as an ineffective and almost comical organization. Many of their agents are described as daft and comical.

O.B.E.

The Order of the British Empire, an honorary knighthood conferred by the king or queen of England.

Hillman

A classic British made car, the type owned by Wormold.



Themes

Loyalty

One of the primary themes of this novel is loyalty. Wormold is faced with the decision between loyalty to his country and loyalty to his family and friends. He quickly makes the decision that his loyalty first must go to his daughter, Milly. He is put in an unusual position as few people have to make this decision, but he does not seem to struggle with the choice. When Wormold is presented with the quite strange opportunity of being a spy for his country he immediately thinks of his daughter. By all accounts he should have rejected Hawthorne's offer. He has no background or training of any kind that would qualify him to be a spy. However, he sees a chance to make some money and he exploits it. He not only takes the basic pay offered him but goes out of his way to make as much money as possible by creating phantom agents and missions all requiring more money, which of course he keeps for himself.

The fact that this could be viewed as treason against the British government is hardly considered as Wormold puts the wellbeing and wants of his daughter well before the country he left years before. He has also not thought out the consequences of his actions. His overwhelming desire to provide for his daughter overshadows his ability to think rationally. He sees the chance to make money and that is all he focuses on. As he continues to create agents and use real people, he does not think that something bad might happen. He sees himself as a little man and cannot believe that something he is doing could ever have far reaching consequences. Wormold's loyalty to his daughter overshadows everything else in his life.

Wormold also has a great loyalty to his friends. The only time he ever shows any real emotions or gets truly angry during the story is after the death of Hasselbacher. He does not get particularly angry when Carter tries to kill him, but when Carter kills Hasselbacher he gets very upset. This is the only time Wormold is at all violent and he is eventually forced to kill Carter. He never feels a desire to seek revenge for wrongs against his country but he does for wrongs against his friend. This attitude is what attracts Beatrice to Wormold. All of the other men in her life have been intensely loyal towards an organization and a country. Wormold is the opposite of this and she likes him. Her ex-husband only cared about his career at the UN. When she realizes Wormold acts only in the interest of his loved ones, and even against the interests of his country and employer, she is attracted to him. This unique loyalty is what brings Wormold and Beatrice together at the end of the story.

Futility and Absurdity of Intelligence Gathering

While this story is written largely 'tongue-in-cheek,' there is still a great deal of seriousness to be found in it. Wormold is charged with doing a very serious job. The reports he writes will influence the decisions made by important people at the top level



of government. His fake reports may well have serious consequences which Wormold does not consider until it is too late. Towards the end of the story, it is even alluded to that the Prime Minister is aware of his reports, which means Wormold's reports have reached the highest level of government. The military even begins to take action to counter a perceived threat from Cuba. Several people do in fact die indirectly because of Wormold's fictitious reports. The Secret Service is supposed to be the all-knowing organization, but in reality they are unwittingly relying on the unqualified Wormold for information.

The nature of the business means that the Secret Service has to rely heavily on sources that cannot be easily confirmed. They have to put a great deal of trust in people like Wormold. While it is likely that most of them are reliable and diligent intelligence gatherers, there are few checks and balances in place to confirm they are not. The information they provide is obviously secret and not easily verifiable. This is dangerous because decision makers have to put a great deal of weight on these sources when making serious decisions. When wrong information gets through the system, whether it is intentionally wrong or not, it can have disastrous consequences. When Wormold sends through sketches of a fictitious military installation, it sets in motion a series of events he could never have imagined.

Greene seems quite bitter towards the Secret Service as he portrays them in a very negative light. Most of the agents seem stupid and irresponsible. The man who recruits Wormold, Hawthorne, seems to be a total fool. These views run throughout the entire story. While Greene certainly has a negative view of the organization, his observations prove to be quite revealing in the light of future events.

Thought this written was written before the Cuban Missile crisis of the 1960's and well before the current age of terrorism, there are many lessons that can be drawn from this book. The great responsibility given to a small number of people to collect vital intelligence is somewhat dangerous. This is the nature of the beast—gathering intelligence is inherently clandestine and cannot be publicly debated. This is also significant because the decisions made from this intelligence by government executives often have serious and lasting effects. Yet it is often not possible to verify intelligence. The decisions makers are forced to rely on unreliable information. This is the inherent flaw in the intelligence gathering field. These topics are still very relevant today as intelligence agents are in the news as much as ever and this topic continues to be debated.

Cold War

The novel takes place against the background of the cold war. This is important because the paranoia surrounding the cold war is what drives the Secret Service to recruit agents so quickly without giving them proper training. The British are so desperate for any information that they are very excited when they get Wormold's fake reports. Their desire to outmaneuver the Communists overshadows their common sense. The Secret Service, representing intelligence agencies around the western



world, are obsessed with defeating the Communists. Cuba is, of course, the battle ground in the western hemisphere. This is before the Communist revolution in Cuba, so it proves very insightful of Greene to set his story there.

Much of Greene's literature deals with the Cold War and especially Communism. While the book is sprinkled throughout with underlying satire, the story is still serious. The brilliance of the novel is the combination of the humorous satire, the straightforward thriller and the underlying social commentary. This novel was written when the Cold War was still building and now it can be seen as a great example of the chaos of the era. Governments were so obsessed with defeating their enemy that they made bad decisions and did not follow proper protocols. They felt a desire to move very quickly and because of this mistakes were easily made.

Greene obviously sees the Cold War as absurd and even comical. This is revealed by his use of satire. Serious situations are deftly portrayed in a 'tongue in cheek' manner. The humor is satire and not always obvious but when noticed reveals Greene's true feelings about the political situation of the world.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person. The narrator is reliable and knows all the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. The novel is also largely dialogue-driven, the spoken word being very important to the story. The narrator also describes the scenery and gives opinions on it.

Setting

The novel takes place primarily in Havana, Cuba. The time is just before the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro, the novel was also written before these events. This means it is before the American embargo and the Cuban missile crisis of the 1960's. At this time there is still plenty of contact between America and Cuba and characters are frequently traveling between Havana and Miami. However, the undertone of the rocky political situation is alluded to. Captain Segura has money stashed away in case he needs to escape to America at the advent of a revolution. In hindsight, these events are very significant and add more relevance to the novel.

The city of Havana is described as quite dark and seedy. The city seems to be full of brothels, bars and nightclubs. Many foreigners seem to be there to partake in the illicit activities associated with such places. A very large number of scenes in the story portray the drinking of alcohol, often in very large amounts.

The novel also has short sections taking place in London, within the headquarters of the British Secret Service building. The Secret Service offices are described, predictably, as very secretive with underground rooms and lights over the doors indicating access.

Language and Meaning

Graham Greene is British and so writes using British English, which is slightly different than American English. This is no hindrance to the story however, it should just be realized that a few words are spelled differently. The novel is close to fifty years old so some of the language is dated.

As the story takes place in Cuba there are some Spanish phrases used as well. They are not crucial to the story however, they can be understood through the context of their use. Nearly all expletives are rendered in Spanish.

The language of the novel is often satirical and circular. Many of the characters are portrayed as comical but still play it straight. The dialogue of many of the characters is spoken in a serious manner but is obviously meant to be humorous.

Structure

The book has a somewhat unusual structure, it is split into five parts, each with several chapters. Some of the chapters themselves are also split into shorter numbered sections. The chapters are all quite short and can be read quickly. The sections of the parts of the book all end with an interlude in London. The arc of the story is fairly simple and straightforward. The main characters are introduced in the beginning and minor characters in the middle. The story progresses steadily and finally culminates in the final pages of the novel. There is some suspense as it is not clear what will happen to Wormold if and when he is discovered.



Quotes

- "I don't want any job. Why do you pick on me?"
 - "Patriotic Englishmen. Been here for years. Respected member of the European Trader's Association. We must have our man in Havana, you know. Submarines need fuel. Dictators drift together. Big ones draw in the little ones."
 - "Atomic Submarines don't need fuel."
 - "Quite right, old man, quite right..."
- Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 2, p. 26.

"Wormold felt an enormous bewilderment. He wondered why he had not stopped all this nonsense at the beginning. No wonder Mary had left him. He remembered one of their quarrels. 'Why don't you do something, act some way, any way at all? You just stand there...' At least, he thought, this time I'm not standing, I'm sitting."

Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 2, p. 27.

Wormold "loved her [Milly] when the duenna was there, and he loved her even more when the duenna was absent: he couldn't afford the time not to love. It was as if he had come with her a little way on a journey that she would finish alone. The separating years approached them both, like a station down the line, all gain for her and all loss for him."

Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 3, p. 29.

"We should all be clowns, Milly. Don't ever learn from experience." Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 3, p. 30.

- "Are you still unhappy about Mother?"
- "Sometimes"
- "Are you still in love with her?"
- "Perhaps. Now and then."
- "I suppose she was very beautiful when she was young."
- "She can't be old now. Thirty-six."
- "That's pretty old."
- "Don't you remember her at all?"
- "Not very well. She was away a lot, wasn't she?"
- "A good deal"
- "Of course I pray for her."
- "What do you pray? That she'll come back?"
- "Oh no, not that. We can do without her. I pray that she'll be a good Catholic again."
- "I'm not a good Catholic."
- "Oh, that's different. You are invincibly ignorant."
- "Yes, I expect I am."

Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 3, pp. 30-31.

"It always seemed strange to Wormold that he continued to exist for others when he was not there." Chapter 4, Section 1, p. 33.



- "The other day I was offered money."
 - "Yes?"
 - "To get information."
 - "What sort of information?"
 - "Secret information."
 - Dr Hasselbacher sighed. He said, 'You are a lucky man, Mr. Wormold. That information is always easy to give.'
 - "Easy?"
 - "If it is secret enough, you alone know it. All you need is a little imagination, Mr. Wormold."
 - "They want me to recruit agents. How does one recruit an agent, Hasselbacher?"
 - "You could invent them too, Mr. Wormold."
- Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, p. 58.

"There is something about a secret which makes people believe." Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, p. 58.

- "Be careful Mr. Wormold. Take their money, but don't give them anything in return. You are vulnerable to the Seguras. Just lie and keep your freedom. They don't deserve the truth."
 - "Whom do you mean by they?"
 - "Kingdoms, republics, powers."
- Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2, p. 58.

"He was glad that she [Milly] could still accept fairy stories: a virgin who bore a child, pictures that wept or spoke words of love in the dark. Hawthorne and his kind were equally credulous, but what they swallowed were nightmares, grotesque stories out of science fiction." Part 2, Chapter 3, p. 75.

- "I believe we may be on to something so big that the H-bomb will become a conventional weapon."
 - "Is that desirable, sir?"
 - "Of course it's desirable. Nobody worries about conventional weapons."
- Part 2, Interlude in London, p. 80.

"It's not a real living. All this spying. Spying on what? Secret agents discovering what everybody knows already..." Part 3, Chapter 2, Section 2, p. 102.

"The professor was the economic authority, and Engineer Cifuentes dealt with the mysterious constructions in the mountains of Oriente (his reports were sometimes confirmed and sometimes contradicted by the Cubana pilot—a contradiction had a flavor of authenticity). The chief engineer supplied descriptions of labor conditions in Santiago, Matanzas and Cienfuegos reported on the growth of unrest in the navy. As far as the nude dancer, she supplied spicy details of the private lives and sexual eccentricities of the Defense Minister and the Director of Posts and Telegraphs. Her reports closely resembled articles about film stars in Confidential, for Wormold's



imagination in this direction was not very strong." Part 3, Chapter 3, Section1, pp. 104-105.

"It astonished Wormold how quickly he could reply to any questions about his characters; they seemed to live on the threshold of consciousness—he had only to turn a light on there they were, frozen in some characteristic action." Part 3, Chapter 3, Section1, pp. 106.

"There were moments when Wormold thought that it might have been easier if he had recruited real agents." Part 3, Chapter 3, Section1, p. 106.

Wormold "had only one wish: to tell Beatrice everything. I am no secret agent, I'm a fraud, none of these people are my agents, and I don't know what's happening. I'm lost. I'm scared. Surely somehow she would take control of the situation; after all she was a professional. But he knew that he would not appeal to her. It meant giving up security for Milly. He would rather be eliminated like Raul. Part 4, Chapter 1, Section 4, p. 137.

At first they promised me they were planning nothing. You have been very useful to them. They knew about you from the very beginning, Mr. Wormold, but they didn't take you seriously. They even thought you might be inventing your reports. But then you changed your codes and your staff increased. The British Secret Service would not be so easily deceived as all that, would it?" Part 4, Chapter 2, p. 146.

- "I didn't know there were class-distinctions in torture."

- "Dear Mr. Wormold, surely you realize there are people who expect to be tortured and others who would be outraged by the idea. One never tortures except by a kind of mutual agreement." Part 5, Chapter 1, p. 155.

"Of course in your welfare state you have no poor, so you are untorturable. In Cuba the police can deal as harshly as they like with émigrés from Latin American and the Baltic States, but not with visitors from your country or Scandinavia. It is an instinctive matter on both sides. Catholics are more torturable than Protestants, just as they are more criminal." Part 5, Chapter 1, p. 155.

"We hear a lot nowadays about the cold war, but any trader will tell you that the war between two manufacturers of the same goods can be quite a hot war. Take Phastkleaners and Nucleaners. There's not much difference between the two machines any more than there is between two human beings, one Russian—or German—and one British. There would be no competition and no war if it wasn't for the ambition of a few men in both firms; just a few men dictate competition and invent needs and set Mr. Carter and myself at each other's throats." Part 5, Chapter 3, p. 181.

"Wormold said to himself, At least if I could kill him, I would kill for a clean reason. I would kill to show that you can't kill without being killed in your turn. I wouldn't kill for my country. I wouldn't kill for capitalism or communism or social democracy or the welfare state—whose welfare? I would kill Carter because he killed Hasselbacher. A family-feud had been a better reason for a murder than patriotism or the preference for one



economic system over another. If I love or hate, let me love or hate as an individual." Part 5, chapter 4, p. 192.

"London seems pretty silly. And Henry Hawthorne. Do you think I would ever have left Peter if once—just once—he'd made a fool of UNESCO? But UNESCO was sacred. Cultural conferences were sacred. He never laughed..." Part 5, Chapter 4, p. 194.

- "You are loyal."

- "Who to?"

- "To Milly. I don't care a damn about men who are loyal to the people who pay them, to organizations...I don't think even my country means all that much. There are many countries in our blood, aren't there, but only one person. Would the world be in the mess it is if we were loyal to love and not to countries?" Part 5, Chapter 4, p. 195.

- "I suppose if I hadn't missed the war it would have seemed much less serious a thing killing a man. Poor Carter."

- "Why should you feel sorry for him?"

- "He was a man." Part 5, Chapter 6, p. 210.

"A romantic is usually afraid, isn't he, in case reality doesn't come up to expectations. They all expect too much." Part 5, Chapter 6, p. 210.

"And we don't believe you any more when you say you want peace and justice and freedom. What kind of freedom? You want your careers...a country is more a family than a Parliamentary system." Epilogue in London, p. 223.

"Oh, pagans can do most anything, and you are pagans. Lucky you." Epilogue in London, p. 224.



Topics for Discussion

Does Wormold owe more of a loyalty to his country or his family?

Why does Hawthorne choose to recruit Wormold as his secret agent?

If Wormold's vacuum cleaner business had been more successful would still have become a secret agent? Would Hawthorne still have recruited him?

How does the intelligence gathering of the 1950's portrayed in this novel relate to the current state of intelligence gathering seen today? Does the message of this novel relate to the current debate surrounding the Iraq War?

When marrying, Wormold promised his wife they would raise their children as Catholics. Even when his wife leaves he continues to raise Milly as a Catholic. What is the significance of this?

Why does Milly constantly refer to her father and Beatrice as pagans?

Why is Wormold not reprimanded and in fact rewarded for his actions?