

The Prestige Study Guide

The Prestige by Christopher Priest (novelist)

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Plot Summary

The Prestige by Christopher Priest is a novel written partially as a narrative and partially in an epistolary style. Andrew Westley and Lady Katherine Angier unite to discover the secrets surrounding the feud between their ancestors. The Prestige is an engaging tale that is very enjoyable to read.

Andrew Westley is sent on an assignment the day that he receives a book from his father that shows a connection to Andrew's birth parents in that it was written by a man who shares the same last name as Andrew's birth name. Andrew is pulled into a mystery of a past feud that took place between his great-grandfather, Alfred Borden, and a man named Rupert Angier. Both men were rival magicians throughout their lives and careers. Andrew's only concern is that of a twin brother who he believes he has whom he longs to connect with. His twin is out in the world somewhere. In order for Andrew to follow along with this rivalry, the book is opened and takes over as the narrative to the reader with the entries that are placed within in regards to Alfred Borden's life. His childhood is briefly described, and then he proceeds by examining his life as an illusionist. His explains his secrets are to be guarded, and yet, he longs to reveal them.

Alfred tells the tale of how his rivalry with Rupert Angier began as he struck the first blow by trying to humiliate the man during a séance by showing his tricks to the grieving family and how this was taken by Angier. The rivalry is kept alive and, in turn, each man was plagued by the other from then on in their lives and careers. He evades revealing his secret to his own most famous act, the New Transported Man, but reveals that this in fact an illusion. Alfred Borden takes the reader through a series of techniques and illusions that are commonly practiced by magicians and through the tale of how his life has progressed to this point in time. The journal also covers the personal aspects of Borden's life, including his wife, children, and his mistress.

Simultaneously, Angier's journal reveals that the blow that sparked the rivalry was that during the séance, injury was done to his wife that lead to the loss of their child. This journal also reveals a great deal of regrets on his part in the attacks that the men pit against each other.

Kate and Andrew try to uncover the death of a young boy in Kate's family home and are using both journals from their great grandfathers in order to discover the mystery that has held Kate in guilt for over two decades, and simultaneously, they try to discover if the boy was the mysterious twin brother that Andrew believes he once had. Throughout the tale, they read the accounts of both men's journals in order to discover what may have caused the tragedy of the young boy, and along the path, they learn the secrets of both men's lives and each man's rationale behind their feud.



Section 1: Part 1

Section 1: Part 1 Summary

The Prestige by Christopher Priest is a novel written partially as a narrative and partially in an epistolary style. Andrew Westley and Lady Katherine Angier unite to discover the secrets surrounding the feud between their ancestors. The Prestige is an engaging tale that is very enjoyable to read.

Andrew Westley is a journalist at the Chronicle, writing about strange events such as a bilocating priest which he has been requested to write about as a follow-up to a previous article he wrote. As he travels to the Rapturous Church of Jesus Christ, he opens a package sent to him by his father. His father's note states the book in the package was delivered by a woman who seems to know Andrew's birth family, as she was speaking about them. A man who shared the same last name as Andrew's birth father wrote the book, and he wonders if he is a direct descendant of this man, Alfred Borden, or if the man was a great uncle. Other than his interest in the name, Andrew has no real interest in locating his birth family as he feels they abandoned him, but he believes he has a twin brother in the world. Andrew's only interest in his family is in finding his brother. As the narrator, Andrew comments that he has always felt as though there were someone else in his life, sometimes so strongly he felt as though he was sharing the life with another half.

Andrew arrives at the village where his assignment takes him, and he stops for a cup of tea. During his stop, he receives a feeling of anticipation and happiness from his supposed brother. Before he has the opportunity to really explore it further, Andrew arrives at his destination, and although the building belongs to the Rapturous Church, he finds it foreboding and feels his brother is urging him on.

Andrew quickly discovers the Church did not contact his paper about a story, but a neighbor did. Andrew makes his way to the neighbor's residence and is introduced to Lady Katherine Angier, who contacted his office, not due to the story, but in order to meet Andrew. She is curious about Andrew. She is also the woman who sent the book. She explains she met Andrew when he was a boy and about how his father had brought him to the house when he was a child, when his name was Nicky. Lady Katherine is fascinated by the history of her and Andrew's great-grandfathers' rivalry. She tells Andrew about how his great-grandfather was Alfred Borden, also known as Le Professeur de Magie, and his rival, Rupert Angier, was her great-grandfather. Andrew is not as interested in his past or his family as he is in Lady Katherine, so he indulges her. When she brings up the notion he may have a twin brother, Andrew is stunned as he has told no one of his belief of this. Lady Katherine begins to show Andrew the papers she discovered of her great-grandfather's, and Andrew feels compelled to stay, as his brother had urged him.



Section 1: Part 1 Analysis

Andrew Westley has been sent on an assignment that is bringing him face to face with the prior life that he has blocked from his mind and heart. Now, with the assignment bringing him to meet with Lady Katherine, who is more interested in Andrew's past than the story, Andrew is pushed into exploring a part of his life that he has all but forgotten. The only interest Andrew has in his birth family is the intuitive feeling that he has received that there is someone sharing his life and that this person may be a twin brother out in the world. It seems as though this predicament may at least provide him with some answers to the questions he has, but in order to answer these questions, he will have to face the ones he has tried to avoid. The assignment Andrew is on brings him to a large estate that he finds foreboding, but he also feels the need to investigate. This intuition runs parallel to the foreshadowed plot of the tale that is about to unfold.



Section 2: Part 2, Chapters 1-11

Section 2: Part 2, Chapters 1-11 Summary

Alfred Borden becomes the narrator as his book takes the main focus in "The Prestige". In this, Alfred writes about his childhood and becoming a master illusionist. He states his memoir is not to be an autobiography of himself but of one of his secrets. He says an illusionist will show you his hands, front and back, proving they are empty, but if audiences did not wish to be fooled, then there would be no need for a man to show his hands were empty. Alfred writes a story of a Chinese magician, Ching Ling Foo, who he watched perform nightly. Ching Ling Foo's climax was producing a large bowl of water with goldfish from nowhere. He tells of meeting the man. Alfred explains that the real performance was the man's slow and shuffling walk because he was a very fit man who spent his every living moment shuffling about as though he were a frail so as not to show a difference in his gait with the bowl on stage.

Alfred accounts going to work for his father at the age of twelve and realizes there is a quiet strength in wood that causes it to be easily overlooked and therefore perfect as a magician's prop. He mentions an accident with a chisel where he cut his left hand badly and all he could think about was he would lose the dexterity of his hand, but luckily, it healed well. The next writing entry comments he had not known of this writing and he needed to stop. Then the following entry goes on, stating everything is alright noting, "We have agreed, and I may proceed." He notes the need to add meeting John Henry Anderson and his introduction to Maskelynes. He notes three things need to be added to his journal, even if they are not added until a later date. The first is to find out what Angier was doing and what he did about it. The second regards Olive Wenscombe, noted as "not my fault, NB, and third is Sarah and the children. Borden continues that, in 1872, John Henry Anderson brought about a touring magic show, which he attended nightly. He knew the trick but volunteered to get a closer look at the cabinet; however, he was not chosen to inspect it night after night. He waited outside the stage door hoping to speak to Mr. Anderson and was unexpectedly invited in. Anderson recognized him as a fellow performer and wrote him a letter of introduction to Mr. Nevil Maskelyne.

Alfred's journal comments only two people knew his secret before he took the Pact. He states his secret is in jeopardy, and he knows the culprit. He states people enjoy mystery. They do not want to ruin it. Alfred believes a magician may become the victim of his secret. He must live with it, hold it close, because the more people fooled, the more want to find out, and the closer one has to hold it, until it holds one captive. Borden's most famous trick was the New Transported Man, and he is ready to tell this secret. Then, he notes he put the pen aside as he agreed to do. After noting a three-week gap, his writing is agitated over his noting the secret is a trivial thing. He rants that he has spent his life protecting a trivial thing. Since he writes under the Pact, he must take responsibility for his words as though he spoke them himself, and now he writes that he will not reveal his secret, as Rupert Angier is alive and performing, so he must hobble a bit longer.



Section 2: Part 2, Chapters 1-11 Analysis

Alfred Borden's journal takes the narration of the tale by bringing the reader back to the time when he first became interested in magic, and although the purpose for the journal is to explain secrets, it is not his secrets or the secrets of his magic, but that of magic in general that is the purpose. All the entries show Alfred's need to purge himself of something to come that the reader will be unable to understand without a basis of magic and the secrecy that magical performances require of those who wish to succeed in the skill. He later explains that his most famous trick was the New Transported Man, indicating that this was one such illusion that the reader may need such information in order to understand. Borden's journal becomes fragmented as though he is, in his writing, speaking with another person. He mentions the Pact, which he has spent his life protecting, and describes it as something trivial. He also comments that he has put the pen aside as he agreed to do but does not comment as to whom he has made this agreement with, indicating that this person with whom he has made this agreement has something more to do with the secret that he is driven to reveal, but he must wait to do so.



Section 3: Part 2, Chapters 12-22

Section 3: Part 2, Chapters 12-22 Summary

Alfred's journal continues to elaborate; as Angier has been introduced, he should clarify. He advises there were a great many magicians exploiting the bereaved peoples of the time by using magical techniques to gain funds from the rich by claiming spiritual powers. Rupert Angier was such a man, and Borden witnesses Angier at the home of his grieving aunt. Taken with indignation, Borden set out to reveal the man as a sham. Borden discovered the next séance Angier was to perform and procured a seat. At this séance, Alfred tried to expose Angier as a fake and was thrown into the street. Angier vowed to follow Borden closely along with his career from that day out, and this is how their feud began.

Alfred admits he was the one to issue the first strike, but after time, he became guilt-ridden over the incident and wrote an apology to Angier, who in turn tore it up and sent it back. Angier made several attacks on Borden by shouting out in mid-performance or writing over the place cards the secrets of the tricks that were being performed, before Alfred had the opportunity. Alfred notes the New Transported Man is the only trick Angier did not attack, as he could not figure it out.

Alfred's journal narration proceeds to cover the area of magical techniques and the parts of each trick, that each consists of the set up, where the magician explains the trick, the performance, where the magician produces a display, and finally the prestige, where the product is revealed to the audience. Alfred's journal then takes a personal notation that he has been away with his wife Sarah and the children and brought the notebook. He confirms he was correct in noting he struck at Angier first and that he is adding a lot about a secret he had called trivial. He notes Angier must have guessed the secret and the others may have too. Mainly, he makes a point of acknowledging the secret had a great effect on his life. He then takes a moment to explain the illusion of the New Transported Man and how it appears to the audience.

The journal then proceeds to notations on Alfred's life early in his career, when he left home and was playing in music halls at the age of eighteen. He notes he was neither rich nor famous from his work, even with the help of Mr. Maskelyne. Primarily, he built stage cabinets for other performers and assisted them on stage. By the age of thirty, he was performing on his own, including the early stages of the Transported Man, but in the early stages, it did not have the bravado needed for the performance. This is where Nikola Tesla entered into his life. Tesla was regarded as a controversial scientist in the USA, but his work created a machine that created a great deal of sparks but no real harm. This is what Alfred needed to add to his show. Alfred and his ingenieur, Thomas Elborne, built new cabinets and added this into the New Transported Man for the effect. Borden then decides to backtrack in his writing, noting his marriage to Sarah Henderson, a well-born woman, and the birth of their twin children, Graham and Helena. He comments further that Sarah never traveled with him on tour. Alfred then recounts



his meeting with Olive Wescombe, a dancer by trade, who had applied and was hired as his assistant. He also covers his relationship with Thomas Elborne. Alfred notes Thomas has been with him since the beginning and admits there is little he knows of magic that he did not learn from Thomas.

Section 3: Part 2, Chapters 12-22 Analysis

The journal explains more about how the feud between Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier began. Borden's writings show his guilt over the origin of his feud. He readily admits to his responsibility in the events, though he also feels the need to note Angier's part in keeping the rivalry heated. Borden's comments on his family are significant in that they reveal he has kept his secret even from his family and friends. He also reveals the addition of the cabinet that lent a mystical effect to his performance, which contained none. This only partially hints at the secret of his performance of the New Transported Man. In doing so, Borden introduces the other key people in his performance, even if they were knowledgeable of the parts they played in keeping or revealing his secret.



Section 4: Part 2, Chapters 23-31

Section 4: Part 2, Chapters 23-31 Summary

Alfred's journal returns to a personal aspect as he backtracks to correct the story of how Olive Wescombe was hired. He noted the official version was presented earlier, but the truth was she nearly made a fool of him. Borden notes that Georgina, his prior assistant, was not present during the interview. Only Tommy, Olive and Borden were there, and soon after, Tommy left. Although the standard tricks were measured, the majority of the interview took place on the couch. Alfred's journal then returns to his act and its presentation. He covers the stage list and then the lead up to the New Transported Man. He advises how his build up to the machine is designed to frighten the audience and how the machine is also engineered to induce reminders to the audience of past tragedies that have taken place due to electrical equipment. His assistant brings out two dark-brown gauntlets for him to handle the wires. She also brings out a large cabinet and then scurries off the stage as though she were afraid, when in truth the machine only emits sparks and noise but nothing of any danger. Borden enters another note that, if he says no more of this, he may continue and will not intervene again.

The journal then returns to more personal matters. He advises of a flat he rents not far from his home and workshop and how he spends many an hour there alone. He comments on how his neighbors all found too much interest in him for his liking but that he had not planned on how his having a family would threaten his secret. Olive's introduction to his life became more personal. She moved into the flat as his mistress. After a few weeks, she tells Alfred she no longer wishes to be his assistant but only his mistress. She also reveals she was sent by Rupert Angier to be a spy and obtain his secrets. Though she admits to her lie, she also states she has taken nothing to Angier, but if she were to remain his assistant, then Angier would still have expectations of her doing so. Alfred decides to send her with a message to Angier, and they would decide further on the future upon her return. Alfred comments this was only one of the several crises the Pact has dealt with, so he remained at the workshop while he returned to the flat.

In the following entry, Borden notes two years have passed, and this entry is an unwilling one. He states he had not planned to continue with the journal, but as Angier has died, he feels explanations are necessary. He proceeds with Angier's obituary and his debilitating health. However, Angier's death was due to an accident that took place during his most recently famous act, In a Flash. Alfred recounts having purchased a ticket, seeing the show, and noticing Angier favoring his left arm and the sallow look to his face. He tells of how Angier's machine was so wondrous looking and massive that it gave no inkling as to what feat was to be performed. After a volunteer was selected to mark Angier with powder, Angier stepped into the contraption, electricity filled the auditorium, the light blinked out, Angier disappeared, and then Angier reappeared at the rear of the auditorium, looking disoriented and struggling. Borden marveled the feat.



Section 4: Part 2, Chapters 23-31 Analysis

Borden's journal reiterating the tale of Olive Wescombe and her hiring tells a different tale than the one presented in the previous chapter, but it is again disjointed. There are moments where the reader's perceptions are to be corrected in the tale, but in doing so, Borden reveals that he was and was not present, indicating the separation of personalities to the reader. This is repeated in his telling of the cabinet where he notes that if he says no more of this, it may continue, and he will not interfere again. This separation in how he views himself edits himself in a way. This editing also seems to work as he returns the tale in the journal to more personal areas of his life, such as his affair with Olive. In the journal, Borden finds out that Olive's original motives for involving herself with him were at the instruction of Angier. Her actions in saving Borden from Angier cement her connection to Borden and, therefore, the Pact. Later, Borden's concern over the performance of Angier's death again reveal his guilt for his antagonistic involvement with the man. His commentary on the man's physical condition shows his concern. He notes that it has been two years and that he was entering the notes unwillingly, which leaves the reader to wonder why he enters them at all if he is unwilling.



Section 5: Part 2, Chapters 32-38

Section 5: Part 2, Chapters 32-38 Summary

Borden watches Angier's performance and is unable to figure out how it has been done. He is angry that his illusion has been copied, even angrier that it has been bettered and most of all that he cannot figure out how it has been done. He watches for all the tells, but he knows a double has not been used, nor could Angier have actually traveled the distance. Borden, confounded by the illusion, sets out to work out its mechanics, but he cannot come to terms with a practical solution. The most irritating for him was his certainty that there is a simple solution at the heart of the illusion. His only consolation is that his own secret has not been discovered; therefore, his own illusion was not duplicated in his method nor was his speed. The distance traveled is the question Borden sets out to discover. He tells of how he gained access to the stage to check and measure the illusion. He travels to visit Tommy in order to work it out. He tries presenting it as though it were an illusion he would like to try, but as Tommy knew his secret, there is no real challenge to this. Otherwise, Tommy is unable to assist him.

Borden plans to discover Angier's secret by the end of this next season or place the rivalry aside and ask him directly. Unfortunately, Angier takes an absence to America, so Borden humbles himself by sending several messages in order to end the rivalry and make amends. As his attempts meet with no response, he finds he must proceed alone. He notes several attempts to gain access to the show's backstage but finds them inadmissible. He is forced to attend by infiltrating as an audience member. He makes his way backstage, past a stagehand. Beneath the stage, he finds a converter much larger than his own. He comments how it frightens him, but he presses on. In his fear of the acidic blue smoke, he turns off the power and, in doing so, wreaks havoc on the show. He admits this was not his intention, and in his escape, he runs strain into Angier. Seven weeks later, Angier dies. The newspapers state his death was due to injuries he had sustained during his act, but Borden is sure the injuries were due to his own actions that night. His recollection of the events focus on the grease covering Angier and the idea that for a moment he had seen through him as though he were an apparition. Borden takes actions to contact Angier's family to apologize for their past and offers to purchase Angier's secret. He notes his reply was that what was to be sold would be placed for auction.

Alfred feels that his career died along with Angier. Though he still performs if requested, he no longer feels the call of the arts which are his profession. He comments on how his own company was the only company he longed for, yet this is the one he is denied.

Borden's entries move into self-introspection, where he asks which version of himself Sarah married and loved and which Olive first loved. He even notes that, although this seems incoherent, it is quite the opposite. He writes about awakening to find Angier's form coming at him with a knife and asking which one he is. Alfred's only answer is that



he no longer knows himself. Alfred blocks Angier's attack, and the specter leaves, but the knife he carried remains.

Section 5: Part 2, Chapters 32-38 Analysis

Borden's obsession is fueled by his jealousy that Angier has found another method that allows him to complete a transportation over an even greater distance than his own and in his knowledge that his own method has not been copied. His obsession causes him to sneak backstage only to interrupt Angier's performance, and in doing so, he causes Angier physical pain. He later finds out that Angier had died from this interruption, adding to his guilt over the feud between them. He also becomes more disjointed with his writing, commenting that his own company was the only company that he longed for, and how he questions as to which of himself his wife and his lover loved, adding to the separation between the two versions of himself that Borden's writing has indicated so far. The reader is left to question if the guilt that he has carried has caused a greater separation in his personalities that have been apparent in his journal so far. Yet, he also notes specifically that although this must seem to the reader that he has lost his mind, that it is in fact quite the opposite. Borden's encounter with the specter of Angier is a further question of Borden's sanity, with the exception of the knife being left behind, but the reader also has to wonder if it was really left behind or if it was only in Borden's perception that it remained.



Section 6: Part 3

Section 6: Part 3 Summary

Kate takes over the narration of the main book at this point, giving her perspective on how and why she has sought out Andrew Borden. She tells of her family and its history briefly but then focuses on the particular night that she met Nicholas Borden. Kate remembers her family preparing to receive a visitor, and the man was Clive Borden, along with his son Nicholas. Kate tells how she and her sister entertained the boy for hours before dinner and how, after dinner, the adults began a debate which the children were not welcomed into. She notes that her father was in a mood she often feared at that age.

She also tells of a basement door which she was afraid of and how her sister would tell her stories that fed that fear. The night of the visit is the only night Kate had ever seen the door opened. The adults went to the basement, and she followed. She saw a contraption set in the center of the room. The contraption emitted great serpentine sparks of electricity, and her father dared Clive Borden to step inside. When Clive backed away, Kate's father threw the young Nicholas into the machine, where he died. Kate has been convinced the boy somehow must have survived, as she is confident that Andrew is the same boy. She explains that ever since the night of the horrible sight, she has been plagued by guilt over the boy and, as such, has never left her family home. She reveals her reason for seeking out Andrew is to solve the mystery, purge herself of the guilt and end the feud.

Section 6: Part 3 Analysis

Kate's role in the tale comes to a fuller light regarding why she has sought out Andrew. Her guilt has been eating at her since her childhood when she had seen the boy, Nicky Borden, thrown into the machine by her father and killed. There is another note that when she asked her mother, her mother had told her that she was as guilty as them for what happened to the boy as she did not do anything about it, which indicates that not only did her mother carry her own terrible guilt over the child's death, but she also fed the guilt of a young Kate. This fed Kate's obsession that she find out what had happened to the father and to the boy. It has also caused her to become housebound in her searching and guilt. In this, Kate's emotional state is wrought with such guilt that she is convinced she may be either losing her mind, that she was party to murder of a child, or that she may know a secret that is impossible to explain to the world.



Section 7: Part 4 (pages 155-182)

Section 7: Part 4 (pages 155-182) Summary

Rupert Angier's journal becomes the narration of the book at this point, lending his perspective to the tale. He begins the journal at the age of nine, noting his interest in the arts of illusion. His other first entries are removed, admittedly by him, for the comments they contain. He recounts the death of his father and his life after his older brother took control of the family estates. From there, Angier's journal is infrequent in its entries. He notes his first appearance on the stage was a humiliating affair. Still, he persists in seeking a booking at a theater but is always rejected. He comments that he thinks he is in love with a woman named Drusilla MacAvoy, but immediately, the following entry notes this as folly as his love lies with a woman named Julia Fensell, an actress whom he had seen traveling the paths of theaters. They become good friends, and Rupert is taken with her beauty. He comments on the time they spend together and the way they begin to work together. He reveals that many of their successful ideas are Julia's and between the two of them, they work well together, so well in fact that they marry. Angier explains how they broaden the mentalist act to the area of spiritual séances. He tells of many séances they perform, and then he focuses on the one that was interrupted by Alfred Borden. He first thought the man to be a reporter there to expose him as a hoax. Borden's face appears bent on revenge, but Angier has no idea why that would be, other than possibly jealousy. Once Borden throws a pregnant Julia to the floor, Angier recognizes Borden as a part-time illusionist and has him thrown out into the street. The séance dissolves, and Julia is taken home.

Section 7: Part 4 (pages 155-182) Analysis

Rupert Angier's journal now takes the primary narration of the tale so that the reader, and also Kate and Andrew, have the perspective of the man who also participated in the feud between the families. Angier's journal shows the disparaging beginnings that Angier had in his life. Though many of the entries seem upbeat in their notes, they are also short, not emotional, with occasional commentary that suggests he has failed in some way. Angier's emotional removal of comments, except for the ones about failure, speak a great deal to the possible depression he may have been suffering before the introduction of Julia into his life. Julia's presence brings life to Angier's notes, providing emotion that was lost previously, so when she is thrown to the floor by Borden in the séance, it becomes clear to the reader why Angier may have taken such measures in fueling the feud against Alfred Borden.



Section 8: Part 4 (pages 182-202)

Section 8: Part 4 (pages 182-202) Summary

Angier's journal proceeds with the further consequences that follow in the wake of the failed séance. Julia is injured in the fall to the floor and loses the baby she was carrying. Due to this, she is taken with depression and spends her time in her room alone. Rupert comments that they both suffer over the loss of the child, but he has his work to distract him. Angier decides to never allow her to be in danger again and hires an assistant to assist in the séances, but in between his own performances, he follows Alfred Borden's performances as well. Angier notes three years with only his yearly incomes and no further information, other than noting he has bought a home, his bookings are full, and that he is the most sought after illusionist in London.

Ten years pass until the following entry in which Angier notes in full detail a performance that Borden appeared and disrupted. Angier tells of the conditions of the illusion and how the distraction of Borden being on stage had nearly caused him to drown. His immediate summary of the event is that Borden had tried to kill him, and though they had played many malicious pranks on each other, none had ever put the other's life in danger, as Borden had this time. Angier then introduces Nicholas Tesla and describes how his life is affected by seeing Tesla's performance of electricity. He contacts Tesla for a more definitive description of how it works, but he does not understand Tesla's response.

Rupert is then called on a European Tour of which he writes his expectations, and on his return, he notes that he now considers himself a man of wealth, but he then comments that his joy on returning is interrupted again by Alfred Borden and the success he is receiving over the reviews of the New Transported Man. Julia advises him to forget Borden and instead to concentrate on the offer he has received to tour America. Angier attends a performance of the New Transported Man and is amazed by it, commenting that he even applauds. He describes the illusion as it appears to the audience and admits he is unable to figure out the illusion, so he seeks the advice of his ingeniuer. Harry advises Angier that Borden is using a double, but Angier is determined that he is not. This causes a bit of friction between them. Once Cutter sees the illusion, Angier is convinced Cutter will see the real illusion, but Cutter maintains that Borden is using a double, an identical twin brother, to be specific. With this explanation provided by Cutter, Angier is pacified, until he meets with a reporter, Mr. Arthur Koenig. Koenig meets with Angier to interview him and, in doing so, he reveals to Angier that he has checked up on Borden and Borden has no twin brother. Koenig even provides Angier with his own notes in order for Angier to research for himself.



Section 8: Part 4 (pages 182-202) Analysis

Rupert makes very few notations regarding his life and the happiness that he has found in the missing years. In fact, he notes only his income for three of the year's entries and then again lapses in his journal entries, but he returns once he has a new conflict with Alfred Borden in the presentation of the water tank escape in which he almost was killed. He even admits in his notes that he was distracted by the fact that Borden was a volunteer, and this is what caused him to allow his arms to be bound as tightly as they were, yet he blames Borden for almost killing him with a renewed vengeance. After Angier finishes his notes on the events of the performance, and therefore the presence of Alfred Borden on the stage, he attempts to fill in any of the missing time that was not recorded in the journal regarding his own life, wealth, success, happiness and family. Even then, the note is basically a footnote summary, indicating Angier's fixation on Alfred Borden and the extent that he views the feud between them.

Angier then focuses his attention on his praise and the remarkable work of Nicholas Tesla and how he related it to his own profession, which begins to bring the journal back to his own life rather than how it involves or is interrupted by Borden, as he often does. Also, when Angier does comment on his own personal life in his journal, one cannot help but notice the commentary on his status as an illusionist or his other professional successes, not personal life ones. In his comments regarding his European Tour, he even notes that he expected to bask in his after tour success, only to have it ruined by Borden's London-found fame for his illusion, *The New Transported Man*. He sets out to view this new illusion and admits that he has no idea how it is done. This only fuels Angier's determination to discover the secret, much like Borden's journal revealed that Borden was determined to discover Angier's secret for the illusion, *In a Flash*. This draws the parallels between to the two men and they way they regard each other.



Section 9: Part 4 (pages 202-225)

Section 9: Part 4 (pages 202-225) Summary

Angier is excited about his tour to America, so he does nothing about the information regarding Borden. Before the show, however, he is invited to perform for two weeks in a town near Hastings where Borden was born and grew up. Angier makes several notes on what he discovered in his research in Hastings, but primarily, he discovers that there was no twin nor a brother that could have passed as one. As such, he vows he will discover Borden's secret while he is in America, and within one month of his return, he will perform a superior version of it.

The next entry in the journal is eight months later, where he notes his depressed state. He is tempted to destroy the journal as he destroyed everything else. He has left Julia, and therefore his children, for a young woman named Olivia Svenson, whom he met in Boston while on tour. He notes she advanced on him, and he took her up on her offer. She then joined the party and became his assistant. Cutter was unhappy with the addition of Olivia, and though he completed the tour, he left Angier's employment on his return to London.

Angier and Olivia take the stage, but on hearing there may be a whisper campaign against him, Angier suspects Borden. Fortunately, there is an opening left by Borden, which Angier picks up and decides to perform Borden's illusion of the Transported Man. He found a double for himself, named Gerald Root, who he trained for the illusion. Even Angier admits once Borden hears of this, he will know how Angier completes the illusion, while he has yet to learn Borden's method. Nevertheless, the show is a success, but Angier is irritated that Root takes the final bow. Root becomes a problem and blackmails Angier with revealing his secrets of both the stage and his affairs with another woman. Again, Angier catches a fortunate break when Borden leaves on tour and is not to perform the New Transformed Man, so Angier takes the opportunity to fire Gerald Root. Instead, he hires a new assistant, a young man named Adam, to assist with the cabinets.

During a performance, a card arrives for Angier which says, "I know the address you go to with Sheila MacPherson. Abracadabra, Alfred Borden." In retaliation, Angier destroys one of Borden's performances, but makes note of the guilt he feels over the action. He remembers the letter of apology Alfred had sent him after Julia's fall and thinks to himself how foolish he was to have spurned Borden at the time. He wishes only for the feud to end and decides to set a meeting with Borden in order to accomplish this, but when he arrives home, he finds that Olivia has been told of Sheila. Angier settles the matter, vowing to never see Sheila again and to no longer join in the rivalry with Borden. Several entries are noted, spanning a year's time, all saying, "Another Borden incident." The final of these incidents consists of Borden lowering an advertisement in the middle of Angier's performance, and Angier decides to take retaliation. He performs Borden's illusion again, but he meets only with polite applause, leaving him to wonder why.



Section 9: Part 4 (pages 202-225) Analysis

Angier's notes again come in a succession of importance in his life. He relays his career success by the announcement of his American Tour, then he focuses on Borden's secret, and finally, he comments on his family. When the journal resumes eight months later, Angier takes a different view of his family as he has left his wife and children for Olivia. As they begin their stage life together, it becomes difficult to survive, but then they have the opportunity to take a performance that was booked for Borden, and Angier cannot resist the rivalry. He decides to perform Borden's Illusion. He knows how this will eat at Borden, yet, he admits that Borden will know his secret while he does not yet know Borden's. Angier's actions in order to perform Borden's illusion cost him far more than he was prepared to pay. The man he hired as a double blackmails Angier, and it appears he also revealed the secrets to Borden, especially in regards to a secret affair that Angier was having. After several attacks by Borden on Angier, Angier takes revenge during one performance, but then immediately feels guilty over the episode. He is reminded of the apology that Borden had written him, and he decides that he no longer has any interest in the feud. In fact, he comments that he wonders why Borden bothers with him at all. Eventually, it is the same old story of what goes around comes around, and Angier is discovered by Olivia regarding another affair he has been having, and he is forced to rethink his past losses and the pain he held over them.



Section 10: Part 4 (pages 225-253)

Section 10: Part 4 (pages 225-253) Summary

Angier notes he has two goals at this point in his life. One is to regain the relationship he had with Julia; though he knows this will no longer be love, he hopes for an amiable relationship. The second is to out-perform Borden's illusion. He comments that he and Olivia no longer share a love but are more like companions who cling to each other. Olivia suggests she apply for a position as Borden's assistant and return with the secret Angier longs for. She uses her mother's maiden name, Westcombe, for her employment. She is hired, but as she begins work, she does not have any answers and is distant from him on her returns. Eventually, she sends word to her maid that her belongings are to be forwarded to her, and she meets with Angier one last time, providing him with an envelope that contains Borden's secret. The word Tesla is all that is written.

Two years pass until the next entry, and at this point, Angier is in route through America to Colorado. He arrives in Colorado Springs, where the laboratory of Nikola Tesla is located. He takes up residence and sets out to meet with Tesla. After a few days of getting to know each other, Angier participates in some of Tesla's experiments in order to gain the man's admiration, and then he broaches the topic of why he has traveled the distance to meet with him. He hires Tesla to create an apparatus that will be able to transfer matter from one place to another over a distance. Tesla accepts the request.

Section 10: Part 4 (pages 225-253) Analysis

Olivia's plan to join with Borden in order to gain the secret that is driving Angier is one that does not set well with Angier, though from the entries in the journal when he comments on it, it appears that he does not express his true feelings on the matter to her. As he did with Julia, he becomes emotionally reserved and focuses more on the rivalry that he has with Borden. The rivalry drives him across the world to Colorado Springs in order to track down Tesla to create a machine that he needs in order to out-perform Borden. In reference, from the journal of Borden, Olivia proves her love for Borden by meeting with Angier, bringing the reader to understand that this meeting with Tesla may not play out for Angier as he is hoping that it will.



Section Eleven: Part Four (pages 253-278)

Section Eleven: Part Four (pages 253-278) Summary

The day following the arrangement, Tesla increases the price of the apparatus, but Angier agrees to the fee. Through the meetings with Tesla, Angier realizes Borden has never met with Tesla, and the information passed to him was a ruse to get him away. Tesla's work on the machine takes longer than Angier believes it should have, and they bicker about the matters of time and money. Testing on an iron rod does nothing more than provide a cold rod, and Angier becomes more irate. He states the machine will not do for his purposes, which Tesla points out were not specified. Angier informs him the machine is to transport a man. Renewed by the idea of transporting organic materials, Tesla experiments further while Angier returns to the town by a trail. In his walk back, Angier finds an iron rod and takes it back with him, not thinking at the time. Later, when Tesla's next experiment fails, Angier is reminded of the rod and produces it for Tesla. They realize the machine creates a duplicate of its original. The machine is then tested on a cat; though it is noted that there is a hitch, the hitch is unidentified.

Meanwhile, Angier is informed that his brother, Henry, has died, and as such, he has now inherited the estate and title of his father. Rupert returns home and finds he is drawn to speak to Julia. He writes to her, and she agrees to meet with him. They have a comfortable time, and he again meets with her, begging her to forgive him and return as his wife. Eventually, she accepts on some conditions, one being that Angier resumes his occupation as an Illusionist and another being that he stay in London instead of moving to the family home as he had wished. She comments that she believes Borden was the reason for their failed marriage, as the distance between them was created by his attack on her which resulted in the loss of their child. Angier agrees and finds word waiting him the apparatus was shipped to his workshop. He has the machine assembled and rehearses daily. In the next entry, Rupert comments that he has done something terrifying, but he does not specify what it was. He states only that he and his servant have entered the family vault and deposited some of his prestige materials there, making sure to place rat poison about.

Section Eleven: Part Four (pages 253-278) Analysis

Angier spends a great deal of time in this section recounting his meetings with Tesla and the difficulties he has come across in the creation of the machine. Eventually, just as the machine is successfully operational, he is informed of his brother's death, thus leaving him with the title and estate of his father, so he imagines he no longer has need of the machine. Subsequently, the estate is in disrepair and nearly bankrupt, so he then needs the funds he procured for the machine returned, only to have the machine provided instead. His attentions have returned to Julia, whom he finally begs to return to



him. He and Julia reunite, provided he remains an illusionist, which oddly he was just about convinced that he was going to be able to give up. Julia's enthusiasm regarding his return to the stage and the money needed will prove to be a catalyst for the event to come, bringing the rivalry between Borden and Angier back to life. This is foreshadowed by Julia's comments that she blames the marriage's failure on Borden's attack on her and therefore the loss of their child.



Section Twelve: Part Four (pages 278-308)

Section Twelve: Part Four (pages 278-308) Summary

Angier's journal reviews his rehearsals, and he notes his eagerness to perform the illusion, In A Flash. He comments on the process being a very painful one, but the physical recovery is far faster than the mental recovery he has to endure. At first, he finds the process causes him great bouts of depression. He also notes Tesla had warned him about this and the other after-effects he must deal with at the end of each performance. This first appearance of the illusion did not bring Angier's desired result, as the illusion was completed so quickly that the audience did not seem to register the feat. Angier realizes he needs to build up the illusion further before the performance and hopes that within a month's time he will have this accomplished and be able to pull off his own recovery in a more unnoticeable way. His second showing is raved about and he finds the theaters clamoring to book him. There are even some who installed electricity for this purpose. Despite the success, the disposal of the prestige materials is still a problem.

One year passes before Angier's next entry. He notes his tours and his grand financial income due to the illusion, but Angier also reveals that he has become eager to perform the illusion which he no longer finds painful. In fact, he admits to occasionally performing the illusion in his workshop merely for the enjoyment of performing it. Arthur Koenig visits Angier after a winning performance and reveals Angier was correct in thinking that Borden did, in fact, have a twin brother. He explains how he has seen the pair together and how the information in the files of Hastings were falsified. He also admits to Angier that Borden, or actually the Bordens, are quite beside themselves on how Angier's illusion is accomplished. Angier notes he has made a change to the illusion in which he now looks more weakened by the performance of the illusion. He now wears greasepaint and uses lighting to appear this way. He also favors certain limbs in order to assist the illusion. He is doing this in order to stage his own death and spend his time with Julia.

An entry Angier writes describes the events of his performance in which he chooses a volunteer to assist with a card trick and then later notices the volunteer did not return to his seat afterward. He realized it was Borden in disguise, but he also knew it was too late for him to be able to stop the illusion. He stepped into the machine, and the transformation began. Then the power to the machine was cut, and just for a moment, Angier saw a faint image of himself in the loge where he was to arrive. The image fell backwards and disappeared. He closed the curtains and rushed to the loge but was unable to make it up the stairs. He became winded and collapsed. After this entry, Angier's following entries note his weakness, his breath being short and he fears he may never be able to work again. He notes he lost thirty pounds. He checks the gold coins in his pocket and finds they too are lighter.



Section Twelve: Part Four (pages 278-308) Analysis

Angier's success has made his life easier, but the admission of the gold coins, which he keeps in his pocket when performing the illusion, also adds to the wealth of his estate. Angier has made himself a wealthy man, but the notes from Tesla advising against this action are foretelling of Angier's upcoming state. He focuses too greatly on the material wealth but, so far, has overlooked many of the emotional riches he has received thus far in the tale. Now that there is another secret revealed, the reader might foresee a loss to fall upon Angier, and this is proven. What Angier would believe to be another attack on him by his enemy was the actions in which Borden cut the power to the apparatus, therefore causing Angier's separated state, and ultimately, his lack of ability to perform. In a way, Borden inadvertently killed Angier.



Section Thirteen: Part Four (pages 308-325)

Section Thirteen: Part Four (pages 308-325) Summary

Angier canceled the remainder of his bookings and used the apparatus only to duplicate the gold coins to ensure his family's fortune. He and his family return to Caldlow House separately as he uses the opportunity he has available to fake his death, something he was planning to do anyway. He uses one of his prestiges as a body for the death of Danton. Arthur Koenig comes to visit Angier's wife and speaks with Angier instead. He has the journal of Alfred Borden and has come to sell the pages on behalf of Olive Wescombe. Arthur advises Rupert that Borden, or at least one of the Bordens, has died of heart failure and Olive is in need of the funds. Angier purchases the book, and he and Julia read it several times. Julia finds Borden's tone in the journal upsetting.

Angier is then overcome with terrible sores, and he is sure he will pass by the year's end. He admits that in reading the journal, he admires the man's thinking and wishes they had been friends rather than enemies. He decides to take his final revenge on the remaining Borden. He intends to publish the journal, along with his own additional notations. Borden will know it was Angier who published the journal, but as Angier is supposedly dead, it will bother Borden, as will the fact that Angier decides not to reveal Borden's secret within the publication. He and Julia are working on the changes, and a publisher is chosen when Angier takes ill again. Angier passes away, but it is noted in the journal by Angier. He comments he is the living prestige. He writes that he has seen himself dying of cancer and will tell his tale tomorrow.

Section Thirteen: Part Four (pages 308-325) Analysis

Angier's deteriorating health is noted throughout this section as he often thinks more of his wife and children than he does of many things which ail his own body. This indicates he has come to the realization that he will, in fact, be dying and is reviewing the actions of his life. This seems apparent, as well, in his comments of Borden's journal, where he states that they should have been friends. Also, there is the matter of the journal coming to Angier. Olive Wescombe, or Olivia Svenson, had believed thoroughly that Borden was only one man, even though she had seen him die, yet he performs on stage after his supposed death. This is reminiscent of a biblical line, "The greatest illusion the devil ever performed was to convince the world he never existed." In a way, this is the true performance of Borden, to convince the world and his lover that he was only one man, much like the tale he wrote in his journal of Ching Ling Foo, who convinced the world he was an invalid. In this way, Borden had revealed his secret at the beginning of this tale.



Section Fourteen: Part Four, Chapters 1-9

Section Fourteen: Part Four, Chapters 1-9 Summary

Angier continues to tell his tale, but he is not the Angier who was writing earlier. This is the partial Angier who was created during the interruption of power during the illusion Borden interrupted. He writes of continuing his life in London as a resident who knew he cannot be seen. He realizes he is visible with a great deal of lighting, but in dim light, he is invisible. He also discovers he could be visible when he chose, and he comes to the realization that there are two of him. The other is in poor health, living with his wife and children. Angier decides to kill Borden for vengeance for his current state and for taking Olivia. He sneaks easily into Borden's dressing room and finds Borden grey-haired and physically weak. Angier is unable to kill Borden as he had planned and leaves.

Angier becomes depressed and suicidal. He decides to waste away, but it does not work. He realizes this state is not just Borden's doing but his own as well. He returns home to Julia and his prestige. Julia informs him of the death of Borden, which occurred three days after his attack on Borden, and she tells him of the journal which she and the prestige have been working on. Angier realizes then that he and the prestige are one man, completing each other for the time they have left. Shortly after, Angier's ailing prestige, the Lord Angier, passes away, and it is recorded by the specter version of Angier which remains. He decides the best thing he can do is allow his family to be, so he decides to use the apparatus one last time and transport himself into the body of his recently diseased prestige, but he secretly hopes he will be able to reanimate the body by fusing the two pieces back together.

Section Fourteen: Part Four, Chapters 1-9 Analysis

Angier's spectral self taking the narration provides his additions to the journal of the prestige of himself, whom has passed away. This part of Angier, that carried the vengeful nature of Angier, was not apparent in the tale since the incident of Borden interrupting the power to the illusion. Since then, Angier's character had become more concerned with his wife and children, and it becomes apparent that this emotion was transferred to the specter of Angier, who is also Angier. Once Angier realizes he is unable to kill Borden, he returns home to his family only to find Borden has died. Coincidentally, Borden had died three days after the attempt on his life by Angier's specter, indicating Angier did kill one of the Borden twins after all, just as Borden had killed Angier.



Section Fifteen: Part Five

Section Fifteen: Part Five Summary

Andrew awakens in the Caldlow house, cold in the room he was assigned. He hears his brother's voice in his head, begging him not to leave. He ventures downstairs to find Kate awake and with clothes awaiting him so he can bear the cold. He goes to the Angier family's vault to find his brother. He travels down into a larger cavern where he finds brown metal shelves, each three shelves high with a body on each shelf. None of the bodies show decay, and all are the same man. All have their eyes open, and each is in a position of action. Each body was labeled by the date and time of the performance in which the prestige was generated. At the end of the aisle, he finds the body of a young boy. This boy was labeled as Nicholas Julius Borden.

Andrew pulls the body into his arms and immediately finds that he feels nothing from his brother. There is no voice in his head. He gets the sensation there is someone watching him, and he becomes frightened. He struggles to get back to the house when he hears a voice asking him if he will be taking the boy and telling him he is the boy. Andrew does not turn around. He runs for the house where he is met by Kate. He tells her to watch the vault. He pulls the label that was attached to the boy out of his pocket and gives it to Kate. She confirms the writing is the same as Rupert Angier's. As they watch the vault, they see a man's figure hunched against the snow, walking away from the vault.

Section Fifteen: Part Five Analysis

Andrew finally comes to the point where he needs to know the answer to the questions he has about a brother and the ones Kate had raised about how the past has really played out. He ventures into the Angier family vault, finds the body of Nicholas Borden, and for the first time he is aware of, he cannot hear the boy's words in his head. When he runs into the specter version of Angier, he knows Angier's plan to either reanimate his prestige or to die trying has failed. Andrew and the reader then know there is nothing that can be done for the young boy in Andrew's arms, and Angier has been forced to live with this secret forever.



Characters

Andrew Westley

The narrator of this story, Andrew Westley is a man who was adopted at the age of three years old. He was born Nicholas Julian Borden, and then his name was changed when he was adopted by Duncan and Jillian Westley. Andrew has no interest in the family that put him up for adoption, but he believes that he has a twin brother somewhere in the world. His belief comes from a strange feeling that there are times when someone else is living his life with him.

Andrew is a newspaper journalist for the Chronicle, writing stories on mysterious happenings such as UFO appearances and witch's covens. He is called into work to do a follow-up piece on a prior story that he had written and instead comes face to face with his past, which has him more unnerved than intrigued. When he meets Lady Katherine, he is presented the opportunity to review not only his great-grandfather's journal but hers as well. This presents him with the truth of what may have happened to his brother.

Lady Katherine Angier

Lady Katherine is the young, attractive descendant of Rupert Angier, who was an illusionist at the same time that Andrew's great-grandfather was. She is fascinated by Andrew and seeks him out to speak with him about their ancestors' feud and about them meeting once when Andrew was a child before his adoption.

Kate is convinced that during that meeting as children that Andrew, then named Nicky, was killed by her father and yet survived the death. She has been haunted by this family secret ever since she was a child. It is for this reason that she has never married nor left her home. She feels trapped by the guilt of what she witnessed and is determined to put an end to both the guilt and the feud between the families by discovering the truth of the past by meeting with Andrew and researching both of their great-grandfathers' journals. In these journals, she and Andrew discover the truth of her great-grandfather's secret and, therefore, the fate of young Nicky, enabling them to recover his body.

Alfred Borden

Alfred Borden is a magician, also known as Le Professeur de Magie, who has a secret to his greatest trick. This is a secret he both wants to and is afraid to share. His secret is eating away at him. He has also a longstanding rivalry with another magician, named the Great Danton, or Rupert Angier. Borden begins a journal-style book, noting that it is for himself rather than to be printed for the masses. Through the book, Borden begins to reveal his secret that is eating at him, but he also reverts to a disturbing and disjointed compilation of fighting with himself in written word.



Throughout Alfred's notes, he conveys his guilt over the feud between himself and Angier, which has spanned the course of their lives, even when his actions have caused a much greater interruption to Angier's life than he knows. One such moment of curiosity eventually causes Angier's death. Borden also notes several points in his life where his life has become separated into two lives that live independently of each other, one with his wife, Sarah and children, and one with his mistress, Olive Wescombe.

Rupert Angier

Rupert Angier was known to Alfred Borden before their lives intersected. Angier wrote letters to several magical publications advising that if the magicians were so skilled that they should perform in the round, surrounded by the audience. Ironically, these were published long after Angier had written them, and he was embarrassed by how they read when they were published. Later, Borden and Angier meet when Angier takes on grieving families as a spiritualist and Borden exposes him. In Borden's attempt to expose Angier, he pushes Angier's pregnant wife to the floor, causing her to miscarry. Angier takes every opportunity to expose and embarrass Alfred Borden from that point on.

Later, he becomes a magician known as The Great Danton. As such, his skill in the magical arts becomes known, and he tours Europe and America. Angier becomes wealthy and famous, but each time he has an encounter with Alfred Borden, he takes it personally, which feeds his own side of the feud. He creates his illusion called In a Flash in order to best Borden at his own illusion, the illusion that eventually leads to his death. Even after his death, Angier haunts Borden and even tries to kill him.

Olive Wescombe

Born Olivia Svenson, Olivia becomes Angier's lover while he is on tour in America. He takes her on as a lover and as an assistant, bringing her back to London with him, where he leaves his wife for her. She changes her name to Olive Wescombe and arrives in Alfred Borden's life while applying for the position of his assistant. She and Alfred become lovers as well as a stage team, but Olive reveals that she was originally sent to Borden at the request of Rupert Angier to spy on him, but in truth, it was Olivia's idea to seek out employment with Borden. For this reason, she requests that she no longer maintain the place as his assistant so as not to provide Angier with any expectations that she will have access to his work. Instead, Borden has her play the part of a double agent and provide Angier with false or half information, taking to Angier the name of "Tesla" as the secret to his illusion. Olive later witnesses the death of Alfred Borden and then discovers he is again performing on the stage. She is convinced Borden has left her and seeks to sell his journal to Angier for the funds she needs to remain in her home.



Thomas Elbourne

Thomas is an elderly man who has worked with Borden throughout his career and is one of the only people that has ever known Borden's secret. He is Alfred's assistant in creating the illusions that Alfred performs on the stage.

Julia Fensell

Julia is an actress who has come to meet and befriend Rupert Angier. They become close, and he is greatly smitten with her. Julia is experienced in memory skills and teaches them to Angier. Together, they put together a mentalist act and then a spiritual act. She becomes his wife and loses her child during a séance which Alfred Borden interrupts. She suffers great depression over the loss but later has three children with Angier before he leaves her for Olivia Svenson.

Harry Cutter

Harry is Rupert Angier's ingenieur, who assists Angier in figuring out the illusions of others, builds cabinets for Angier's performance and designs new illusions. The moment that he has seen Borden's illusion of the transported man, Harry is convinced that Borden has a twin brother that he uses as a double.

Nikola Tesla

Tesla is a scientist in the area of electricity and is associated with Thomas Edison. It is Tesla's performance in London, accompanied by a lecture on what the future may hold for the world in the areas of electricity, that catches the attention of both Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier. Borden adds an apparatus, designed by Tesla, to his performance of the New Transported Man. Angier travels to Colorado Springs to purchase an apparatus able to send matter over a distance for his illusion, In a Flash.

Gerald Root

Gerald is a drunken, unemployed actor who resembles Rupert Angier, enough so that Angier employs him to play his double. Gerald realizes the power over Angier that he carries as he is privy to many of Angier's secrets, and he takes to blackmailing him with the knowledge of Sheila MacPherson, a woman with whom Angier is having an affair.

Mr. Alley

Mr. Alley is the assistant of Nikola Tesla in the laboratory in Colorado Springs. He serves the purpose of Tesla's assistant, servant and companion. He is also a fan of



Angier's illusions, and takes time to show Angier some of his own tricks that he has learned.

Randall Gilpin

Randall, called Randy by Angier, is a coachman in Colorado Springs who is hired by Angier to take him back and forth to Tesla's laboratory. He is an older fellow with a leather hat and is missing a finger on his left hand. Randy is clearly uncomfortable in the presence of the laboratory.

Arthur Koenig

Arthur is a reporter who meets with Angier to interview him on his performance. In the midst of the interview, he asks about Angier's theory that Borden is using a double in his show. He reveals that he has confirmation that Borden has no twin and provides Angier with a great deal of information for Angier to use to dig up the truth about the illusion of the New Transported Man.

Sheila MacPherson

Sheila is another woman with whom Angier has an affair while he is living with Olivia Svenson, but the affair is discovered by Gerald Root and Alfred Borden, who tell Olivia, causing her to leave Angier.

Sarah Borden

Sarah is the wife of Alfred Borden and the mother of twin children, Graham and Helena. She does not travel with Borden on his tours nor does she know the secret of his act of the New Transported Man.



Objects/Places

Secret Methods of Magic

"Secret Methods of Magic" is a book that is received by the narrator, Andrew Westley, written by his great-grandfather and has recently been published. The book itself appears to be no more than notes on magical illusions, which is a topic that does not interest Andrew.

Hastings

Hastings is the name of the town where Alfred Borden was born and raised by his father and mother. This is where he first took interest in magic and in the woodworking skills that his father used, bring the two together to shape his life from the age of twelve. In Hastings, Alfred was introduced to magic while in the employment of his father by a man that used the Three Card Monte to gain additional funds, and in doing so, created the beginnings of Alfred's obsession. Later, Angier discovered Hasting, and it is in Hasting that he received confirmation that Borden was not a twin as he had presumed.

In a Flash

In a Flash is the apparatus which Angier used on stage to complete the illusion of disappearing and reappearing at a distance of over one hundred feet away. This is also the machine Angier was in the process of using when Alfred Borden cut the power and left Angier mid-performance. Borden believes that this action also facilitated Angier's death. Later, the machine is used again in the basement of Angier's family home on a young boy, Nicholas Borden, who died from the use of the machine at the hands of Kate's father.

Lamb and Child

The Lamb and Child is a tavern in Hampstead Heath where Angier and Julia first decide to take their mentalist act into their own hands and performed without a booking, but they were found to be successful in the amount of money that had been given them before they were thrown out by the landlord.

Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs is where the laboratory of Nikola Tesla is located and where Rupert Angier travels to seek out an apparatus to be made by Tesla to add to his illusion act. It is noted that the entire town of Colorado Springs is entirely electrified, from private homes to the street lamps.



Tesla's Laboratory

The laboratory of Nikola Tesla is the reason the entire town of Colorado Springs has electricity. The laboratory is described as being one entire coil to collect the electricity of the storms that pass the area, and in return, Tesla is able to use the equipment within to pull the electricity from the town to aid in his experiments.

Prestige

A Prestige is the remnant body of Angier which is left behind when he is being duplicated. It is frozen in a half dead, half alive condition. These duplicates are disposed of after each of Angier's performances.

Derbyshire

Derbyshire is the name of the town where the family home of Rupert Angier is located. This is the town which Andrew travels to in order to meet with Lady Katherine and discovers the secrets which reveals the twin brother he believes he has.

Caldlow House

Caldlow House is the family home of Rupert Angier and also Lady Katherine. It is in this home that Lady Katherine lives and believes she witnesses the death of the young boy, Nicholas Borden. In the basement of this home, the apparatus of Tesla's creation is resting. Also, within this building is the residence of a church which follows the teachings of a man who is supposedly bi-locational.

The Vault

The Vault is the family cemetery for the Angier family, found on the grounds of the Caldlow House, the family estate. This is the final resting place of the Angier family and where Rupert Angier hid the remains of the prestige of each of his shows. This is where Andrew found the undisturbed or decayed body of himself as a young boy that had been thrown into the Tesla apparatus at a young age.

The Knife

The knife appears in both the journals of Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier. Angier used the knife in an attempt to kill Borden but was unable to do so in the moment. The knife was left behind him, even as Angier disappeared from Borden's view.



Basement Door

The basement door is a door in the Caldlow house which has been locked for as long as Kate can remember. Since the door was locked, Kate's sister would tell her terrible tales of what lied behind the door. The only time Kate remembers the door being open is on the date that her father killed Nicholas Borden. On this, her first visit through the door, she witnessed the horrible death of Nicky at the hands of her father.

Lowestoft

Lowestoft is the name of the town where Angier was performing In a Flash when Alfred Borden cut the power below stage and, in doing so, created a only half completed transfer and a half completed prestige which left Angier's life separated and ultimately caused the public death of the Great Danton.

Gold Coins

Angier was keeping gold coins in his pocket when he was using the machine to duplicate himself and simultaneously increase his wealth. It is the coins that clued Angier to the partial transfer that had taken place as the coins were the same percentage lighter in weight as his own body was. It was also the collection of these coins that ultimately financed the estate repairs of Caldlow house.

Angier's journal

Angier's journal fills in several blanks and the opposite side of the story, which was the feud between the two men. It is this journal which leads to the location of the missing Borden boy which Kate had believed was killed by her father. This journal also explains the creation of the apparatus which Angier used in his illusion called In A Flash, which in part lead to Angier's fortune and continued existence.

Themes

Misunderstandings and perceptions

Several aspects of this book are based on the foundation of the feud between Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier. There are several instances in the tale where the misinterpretation of actions fuels the fire of the feud. From the beginning, the feud is based on misinterpretation. Borden is convinced that Angier is a fraud, using his illusions to fleece the rich into believing they are being contacted by their deceased relatives through Angier. In his attempts to reveal Angier's scheme, Borden pushes Angier's wife to the floor. This fall causes the loss of Angier's child, which causes the need for revenge of the life lost. This incident also causes a depression in Angier's wife, Julia, which creates a rift in their marriage; however, from this point forward, both Rupert and Julia seem to blame this incident instead of focusing on the possible future they could build for themselves. This is noted in Angier's journal when he and Julia reconnect and Julia states her conditions of their rejoining. She states specifically that she feels Borden had caused the rift between them, though Angier's journal notes that Julia becomes distant and locks herself in her room.

Throughout the tale, written within the journals of both Borden and Angier, there are several prank-like and childish incidents such as Angier writing on Borden's theater signs the secrets of his illusions and Borden lowering an advertisement during one of Angier's performances. Angier's journal refers to these actions as attacks. As Angier sees these pranks as attacks, he feels justified in his attacks on Borden as retaliation. In one such instance, Angier notes in his journal that he was so distracted by Borden's presence on the stage as a volunteer that he allowed his hands to be tied too tightly, causing him to almost drown. Angier finds this to be an attack by Borden when in truth he was not paying attention based on Borden's presence and may have caused his own drowning. In the instance where Borden cuts the power to the apparatus used in Angier's performance of *In A Flash*, Borden's intention was to save the theater from a fire. His intentions were not to injure Angier and certainly not to endanger Angier's life. As in this instance, and in the profession of both men, one would not have expected a man's life to be endangered as it ultimately was, since the objective of this profession is illusion, as opposed to the science used by Angier.

Guilt

Both Angier and Borden express guilt in their journals regarding the actions they have taken against each other. After the incident that starts the feud, Borden writes Angier an apology letter. Angier returns the letter in pieces. Later, in the journal of Angier, Angier notes how he wishes he had not replied to Borden's apology the way he did. Julia admits she blames Borden for not only the death of her child but also the failure of her marriage to Rupert. Julia externalizes the guilt she may have felt over having shut Rupert out when she was suffering from the loss of her unborn child.



Guilt also appears in the life of Lady Katherine, who believes she witnessed the murder of a young boy in her home when she was a child herself. Her mother advises her that she was as guilty as her father was for the death of the boy. This guilt has eaten at Kate throughout her life, and instead of reacting outwardly by blaming others as in the case of Julia, Kate has internalized the guilt. In doing so, she has become housebound and not had any relationships. She becomes obsessed with this guilt, causing her to seek out Andrew and face up to her actions or inactions at the time of the incident.

Relationships

There are multiple relationships in this tale, all containing a deception with the partner of the relationship. Rupert and Julia have a friendship that develops into a marriage from their common interests and needs for funds by the use of their combined skills. At many points, Rupert's journal places more attention or focus on his career or his rivalry with Borden than it does on the relationship he has with his wife. Therefore, when the marriage ends, it is over a woman who has more interest in Rupert as a man. Oddly, when Rupert and Julia rejoin, a part of him is still so attached to Olivia that he seeks revenge and attempts to kill Borden.

Olivia, on the other hand, becomes involved with Borden on behalf of Angier in order to obtain the information Angier desires so that she may save her relationship with Rupert and, in turn, winds up dissolving the relationship entirely in order to be with Borden. In such, Olivia enters Borden's life with a false name and false intentions, but soon she admits her deceit to Borden. She then participates in a deceit in order to rid Borden's life of Angier.

Later, when Olivia is faced with the fact that she has been lied to by Borden for the entirety of their relationship, she refuses to believe it, and so she turns to Angier for funds by betraying Borden with his journal. Borden has a similar relationship with his wife Sarah, as he has not explained that he is in fact two men and that she has been living part of her life with his twin brother. Angier and Borden also have an extremely odd relationship in the way that it is almost love and hate simultaneously, in the sense that without each other they really have no one else to drive them to create better illusions of the masses, nor do they have any one else to blame for their shortcomings. Each of these men have many areas in their lives in which they seek revenge for the misdeeds that have befallen them at each other's hands. In the end, both Borden and Angier kill each other in a way, and yet, it is in these deaths that their remaining selves are faced with the ability to forgive and therefore dissolve the dispute between them.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. This point of view is limited and unreliable, proven by the fact that the point of view varies between several characters which allows the reader to see the inconsistency between the ways that these characters view certain events. This point of view is important in *The Prestige* as it allows the reader to witness the misunderstandings and miscommunications that inevitably result in the destruction of the two main characters, Angiers and Borden. Without this point of view, the reader would not have access to each man's perceptions of the events that initiate and sustain their irrational feud.

This story is told primarily through exposition and mostly through an epistolary style as Andrew and Lady Catherine read the journals of their antagonistic great-grandfathers. These journals detail events in the past, which is necessary for Andrew and Lady Catherine to understand in order to solve the present mystery before them. This point of view is most likely used to allow the reader to compare and contrast the journals of the two deceased men, as their progeny does, and come to an unbiased opinion about the truth of their feud. The viewpoint of this novel begins with Andrew, but it also alternates between Angiers, Borden and Lady Catherine.

Setting

This novel is set in the real world, and it spans throughout the twentieth century due to the utilization of Angier's and Borden's journals. The events described in these journals occur in the early part of the century while the events surrounding Andrew and Lady Catherine occur in the later part as they read their ancestors' journals. The vast majority of this story is told in a realistic manner, but around twenty percent of the story enters a more surreal realm as Angiers and Borden as illusionists who occasionally utilize the field of science to create true magic for their audience.

The tale is set in Europe, primarily London, for the most part, as this is where Andrew and Lady Catherine live, as well as the location of the majority of Angier's and Borden's performances. A small portion of this novel enters into the United States of America, specifically Colorado Springs, Colorado, where Tesla is sought out to improve Angier's performances. The journals of Angier and Borden can also be viewed as a portion of the setting as Andrew and Lady Catherine discover the facts surrounding their ancestors' feud through this medium.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel varies depending on whose perspective is narrating the events at any particular time. The language varies, as does the point of view. When



Andrew or Lady Catherine narrate the story, the language tends to be more casual and informal. This is perfectly understandable as the actions portrayed in their lives occur in the later part of the twentieth century. In opposition to this, the journals of Angier and Borden tend to be more formal and stiff, as expected due to being written near the beginning of the twentieth century.

The language does not hinder readers' comprehension of the novel, despite the fact that it varies based on perspective. The language serves to characterize not only the individuals but also the time period during which they live. The language allows the reader to identify themselves with the characters and their eras. The overall effect of the language is fairly easy to understand and very effective in differentiating between time periods and narrators.

Structure

This novel consists of 368 pages, which are separated into five sections. These sections are numbered rather than titled. Each part of the novel focuses on the story from the perspective of a different narrator. Andrew narrates the first and fifth sections, and Kate provides the perspective of the third part of the novel. The second part of the novel is narrated by Alfred Borden through his journal, and the fourth part utilizes Rupert Angier's journal to share his point of view. The second and fourth parts, those that contain the two illusionists' journals, are much longer than the other sections of the novel.

The plot of the novel is fairly complex as the events surrounding Lady Catherine and Andrew resemble a frame story through which the narrative involving Angiers and Borden is told. It varies in the fact that the frame story is much more detailed than usual. The novel tells of Lady Catherine seeking Andrew because she believes she saw her father murder him when she was a child. Their investigation into the journals of their great-grandfathers reveals a feud between the two illusionists which ultimately explains the murder that Lady Catherine is so guilt-ridden about.

The novel is slow-paced at times, especially as Andrew and Lady Catherine delve into their ancestors' journals. The novel is easy to read, though, and quite entertaining in its descriptions and explanations of the illusions performed. The second and fourth sections, which are the epistolary portions of the novel, occur in a way which is similar to a flashback as they do not occur during the same time as the main narrative involving Andrew and Lady Catherine. Overall, the novel is easy to read and very entertaining.



Quotes

"All my life, as long as I can remember, I have had the feeling that someone else is sharing my life." Section 1, p. 4

"I remember someone once saying that the trouble with magic was that the more a magician protects his secrets, the more banal they turn out to be." Section 1, p. 7

"I have compared my method with the display of seemingly bared hands, but in reality everything in this account represents the suffering walk of a fit man." Section 2, p. 36

"This Oneness of purpose, of action, of words is essential to the Pact." Section 2, p. 50

"What will seem new or baffling to an audience is simply a technical challenge for other professionals." Section 3, p. 66

"My life was in two distinct halves, kept emphatically apart, neither side suspected the other existed." Section 4, p. 85

"Shards of Light prowled the walls of the auditorium." Section 4, p. 92

"I don't know Angier! I no longer know myself!" Section 5, p. 116

"I find it a simultaneously a torment and a challenge to see such illusions performed." Section 7, p. 163

"Why should we not, between us, devise a magical act of a kind no one before us has ever performed." Section 7, p. 169

"What has happened tonight has forced our feud to a new level." Section 8, p. 191

"I am damned if I know how he did it." Section 9, p. 225

"You and this Alfred Borden are like two lovers who can't get along." Section 13, p. 310



Topics for Discussion

When you first read of Andrew Westley's belief that he had a twin brother in the world, what did you think of this character and why?

When Olive reveals the truth of her presence in the life of Alfred and returns to Angier with the note which Borden asks her to deliver, she takes several hours to return. Do you think that Alfred's secret has already been discovered?

At what point in the story did you discover Alfred Borden's secret, and what clues in particular lead you to this conclusion?

As Alfred lives in both his home with his wife, Sarah, and in his flat with his mistress, Olive, do you think that these women were really as oblivious to each other as Alfred believes, or do you think that Alfred is too focused on his own actions to see any effects that they may have on the people surrounding him?

At one point, Kate's mother told her that she was as much to blame for Nicky's death as the rest of the adults, even though she was only five years old. Why do you think her mother told her this?

Why do you think Kate's father left his family?

What other written character does Kate's obsession and guilt remind you of and why?

Do you think that Alfred Borden intended to drown Rupert Angier in the tank, or do you think that this is Rupert's emotion blaming Alfred for the almost drowning?

As Olive had presented the idea of her obtaining employment with Borden and from Borden's own journal, the reader discovers that the interview took place mostly on the couch. Do you think it was her intentions to hurt Angier or to really obtain Borden's secret for him? Why?

Do you think Julia's belief that her marriage to Rupert failed due to Borden is correct, or is she fueling a grudge due to her own misgivings about how the past played out, and if so, why?

Why do you think Olivia is so reluctant to believe that there were two Borden twins?

Do you think there is a solution to the status in which Andrew finds Nicholas, or is he to be in this state forever?

Do you think Tesla knew the full extent to which his machine could create duplicates?