

Razor Girl Study Guide

Razor Girl by Carl Hiaasen

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Contents

Razor Girl Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-5.....	5
Chapters 6 - 10.....	9
Chapters 11-15.....	13
Chapters 16 - 20.....	17
Chapters 21 - 27.....	22
Characters.....	26
Symbols and Symbolism.....	33
Settings.....	36
Themes and Motifs.....	38
Styles.....	43
Quotes.....	45



Plot Summary

When Lane Coolman drives from Miami International Airport to Key West, he almost makes it to his destination in Carl Hiaasen's novel *Razor Girl* (Kindle Edition). An accident stops his progress, however, and he makes the near fatal mistake of giving the girl who bumps into him, Merry Mansfield (*Razor Girl*) a ride. As it turns out, the accident was a scam, run by Merry who rear-ends people and then delivers them to members of the mob. This time, though, she got the wrong person.

While Merry and her accomplice try to figure out what to do next, Coolman worries about Buck Nance, the man he was supposed to meet in Key West. Lane was on his way to a bar called The Parched Pirate to help Buck, the star of a reality show called *Bayou Brethren*, successfully get through a live performance. Without Lane, Buck gets nervous, forgets his lines and improvises. The problem is that his impromptu jokes include racial slurs against some of the bar's patrons. They run him out of the bar. He escapes to the kitchen of a restaurant that happens to be co-owned by the mayor. He then cuts off his exquisite beard, leaves it behind, shoplifts to get clothes and goes into hiding.

Meanwhile, Merry manages to save Coolman, who cannot get anyone to send ransom money for him and cannot provide his own money due to a nasty divorce which is in progress, by providing a means for Coolman to escape. Coolman calls his boss, Amp, who tells him not to come back until he finds Buck.

Due to the hair in the kitchen, Andrew Yancy, a former policeman who has been demoted to a health inspector, has to go the restaurant, Clippy's, to investigate. Pretty quickly, the police determine that the beard hair belongs to Buck. Yancy starts to look for Buck and comes across some leads. Things get more interesting for him, however, when a Muslim man suspiciously falls off a train after being harassed by someone who fits Buck's description. Yancy teams up with Merry, whom he meets along the way, and the two try to solve the possible murder. Yancy hopes that in doing so, he will get his badge back.

The investigation leads Yancy to a tattoo shop. There he discovers that the man who got the tattoo that the harasser on the train bore is not Buck, but a man named Benjamin Krill. Inspired by Buck and his performance, Krill begins to do things that he thinks Buck would do. This includes harassing the Muslim man. He has also kidnapped Buck and Coolman. He hopes to become Buck's best friend, but Buck disappoints him because, in reality, Buck's TV persona is just that, a TV character and the more he observes Krill, the further he becomes removed from it. Coolman, however, buys time for the two men by convincing Krill that he can get him on the show. Yancy finds them, but Coolman convinces him to wait until he can sign deals for himself and Buck. Then Yancy can have Krill.

Krill, however, becomes more and more dangerous, and Yancy has to intervene. Krill takes over, though, and orders Yancy to drive them to the airport. When Yancy deviates



from the planned destination, Krill becomes even angrier. Then Merry shows up and rear-ends the car. Krill gets knocked out, but comes to, and points a gun at Yancy. At that point, Buck jumps Krill and breaks his neck.

While all of this is going on, Yancy is also trying to keep the owners of the plot next to his from building a humongous house that will block his view. The owners of the plot are a Miami lawyer who is famous for his litigation cases and his future wife, Deb. Deb loses her engagement ring and Yancy finds it, but does not return it. This delays construction while the couple hires people to look for it. Then Yancy plants a tooth and has an actor friend of his pretend that the tooth is part of what could be an important historical find. Thus, the couple cannot build until it can be deemed whether the plot is a historical site, or not.

After an attempt to get the diamond back, which works but it ends up on the finger of the future daughter-in-law of Big Noogie, a Mafia boss, and a failed attempt to get Yancy to sell his property to them, Brock does as Big Noogie (who owes Yancy a favor) suggests and sells Yancy his property for a very low price. Brock and Deb go their separate ways and Brock dies due to the side effects of the product he was handling a class-action suit against.

In addition to that, the man whom Merry was supposed to hit (and finally does), Martin Trebeaux, does not learn from his kidnapping experience. He continues to try to outsmart the Mafia and then makes a fatal error. He has sex with Big Noogie's girlfriend, Juveline. Big Noogie finds out and orders Martin's death.

After Krill's death, Yancy meets with the sheriff and finds out that he will not be getting his badge back because he still causes too much bad press. Part of that includes the fact that he was caught kissing Merry and the sheriff knows that she has a questionable past at best. He tells Yancy that if he wants to get on his good side, he needs to stay out of trouble.

Yancy goes home and finds out that his girlfriend who moved to Norway, a place that he cannot live due to the cold, and is dating another man. He takes Merry out on the boat as the novel ends.



Chapters 1-5

Summary

In Chapter 1 of Car Hiaasen's novel *Razor Girl* (Kindle Edition), a car rear-ends a Lane Coolman's car as he is on his way to Key West to provide support for one of the stars he represents, Buck Nance, during a live gig. After everything is sorted out with the police, the driver, a red head named Merry asks Lane for a ride. He gives her one and is subsequently kidnapped. In the meantime, Buck goes on stage, but without a guitarist there and Lane, the performance is a disaster and Buck flees.

Later that night, Andrew Yancy, a former detective sees a light next door. He goes to investigate and finds a woman looking for her engagement ring which she had lost earlier in the day. She does not accept Yancy's help. She does not find it, and, after she leaves he finds it himself. Once back home, he gets a call from his supervisor, Tommy Lombardo who is calling him regarding an active investigation at a place called Clippy's.

In Chapter 2, Zeto, the man to whom Merry turns Coolman over, realizes that she rear-ended the wrong car and thus, they have kidnapped the wrong guy. Coolman tries to talk them into letting him go, but Zeto's orders are to dump him in the ocean. Coolman tries to convince them that someone would be willing to pay a lot of money to set him free. Meanwhile, the man that they really wanted to kidnap is in Key West. It turns out that he has made members of the Mafia mad because he has sold them bad sand from a quarry and it is of such bad quality that the guests at the resort end up injured, giving the resort bad press. In the meantime, Buck has lost his phone, his shirt, and is now trying to mix in with the locals, thanks to shaving his beard at Clippy's.

In Chapter 3, the woman who had lost her engagement ring, Deb, goes back to Yancy's place to ask him to help her find the ring. She gets grossed out when she sees the hair from the restaurant and leaves quickly. Meanwhile, Lane calls his boss, Amp. He tells him about that he has been kidnapped and tells him the amount of the ransom. All Amp is interested in is knowing where Buck is. Lane tries to convince the kidnappers to wait. Merry wants to know how much he can raise himself, but the problem is that his accounts have been frozen. He is in the middle of a divorce. They take him to dump him in the sea, but the boat's engine does not start. So, Zeto leaves him there, tied up. As he waits to see what is going to happen to him he thinks about the fact that his boss does not seem to care what happens to him and his ex-wife-to-be who is getting even with him for his infidelity. Merry comes to give him a smoothie. He tries to get her to let him try to call again. It turns out that she was the one who sabotaged the boat, but she does not tell him that. Later, Merry convinces Zeto to let Lane ride with her during the next fake accident. Lane does not want to, but Zeto agrees. Amp calls the sheriff and gets him to take the case of finding Buck by offering campaign donations.



In Chapter 4, they make Lane go along for the planned crash. This time they get the right man. Trebeaux falls for Merry and then Zeto comes. Merry gives Lane a signal that he should use this as his chance to escape and he does.

Yancy has gone fishing and when he returns, Rosa, his girlfriend, is there. He tells her about Deb. While she is there an old detective friend of his, Burton, stops by. He tells him that the sheriff sent him. They have heard about the hair and think that Buck may have cut off his beard. They want to send it to Miami to see if it is Buck's. The two have a discussion about Yancy losing his badge. He ends up giving the hair to Burton. Lane calls Amp to say that he has escaped, but Amp is busy with damage control. He tells him that finding Buck is his ticket home.

In Chapter 5, Rosa announces that she is taking a trip, knowing that Yancy cannot accompany her. She has resigned from her job. She tells him that it has nothing to do with him and leaves. Deb's fiancé comes by with the builders. Yancy scares them off and then decides to investigate Buck's disappearance.

Buck's brothers and his mistress think that he is off with another woman and want to shoot the next episode without him, using his disappearance as a way to increase ratings.

The gangsters come and take care of Trebeaux. Merry gets rid of Zeto and runs into Lane. He says that he has to find Buck and with a nudge of the hips, she ends up helping him.

Analysis

The novel's style, plot, and characters support each other. The narration moves at a fast pace, with it interweaving between Lane's kidnapping, Buck's gig, Yancy's relationship with Rosa, the discovery of Buck's beard at Chippy's, Buck's action after his escape, and Yancy's new next door neighbors. As events take place, readers realize that everything is not as it seems.

The same is true of the novel's main characters. They are fast talkers. Lane's job depends on him being able to think fast and he has to do this when he babysits Buck, who is often at a loss for words when he has to appear live. "He started blanking - not stage fright exactly, just a few crucial gaps in the memory loop. It had happened two or three times before, but Lane Coolman had always been there, stage right, with a verbal cue to lead Buck back on track" (9). Lane thinks quickly and talks when he finds out that he has been kidnapped and continues to do so when he finds out that they have the wrong man. He offers the kidnappers money. He tells them how much trouble they will be in if they kill him. He appeals to Merry, making the quick decision that she is the softer of the two. When he realizes that he can escape, he does not waste any time doing so.



Amp, as the name implies, is also a fast talker and a deal maker. He works quickly to deal with damage control once word gets out about Buck's performance and subsequent disappearance.

Merry talks quickly to convince the men she bumps into to give her a ride. She also acts quickly to save Lane by tampering with the boat and connecting with him when she sees him again. She is street smart and has to have these traits in order to survive, given her profession.

Deb acts and thinks quickly to find her engagement ring. Rosa acts what seems to be quickly to Yancy in order to get away from it all, and the Yancy's boss acts quickly to cover up and solve the case of the discovery of the hair at Chippy's.

Just as the plot does not follow a predictable path, the characters are not predictable either. Regarding the plot, Merry gets the wrong man, a crazy person did not leave the hair at Chippy's, Yancy's relationship with Rosa is not as secure as he made it out to be, Yancy has mysterious circumstances surrounding his work, and Merry saves Lane.

The novel's characters are lively and colorful and so is the language used to describe the events. Much of this is done through the use of similes such as the opening sentence of the novel. "On the first day of February, sunny but cold as a frog's balls" (3).

When he describes Merry when she gets in the car with Lane, the narrator says that 'she was buzzing like a flagpole in a lightning storm' (5). The use of similes not only enhances the imagery of what they are describing, but also enhances the imagery of Key West and adds humor to the crazy situation everyone finds themselves in.

Another point to note in terms of the characterization of the characters is the use of material items such as clothing and cars to denote their personalities. Merry has red hair, rhinestone flip-flops, and a maroon fleece jacket - just the type of outfit to attract the men she is sent to trap. In order to support his redneck image, Buck has a long beard and wears wife-beater shirts. Deb drives a Porsche. Yancy, who is unconventional answers the door without any clothes on and goes out in the middle of the night in his boxer shorts.

One final point to note about this section is the commentary behind the humor. People think that they are more important than they are and fame is fleeting. People do what they have to survive and can easily justify their actions to make it seem as if they are not doing anything wrong and people operate on a base level even in this day and time.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Lane would have given Merry a ride if she had not been attractive or a man? What commentary is the author making?



Discussion Question 2

What does Lane realize about his worth to others? Why does Amp treat him the way he does?

Discussion Question 3

Why would Hiaasan make Merry likable?

Vocabulary

artifacts, appraise, patriarch, monologue, conceived, summarily, vanquished, indecorously, fragments, melee, phenomenon, commiserative, gimmick, malicious, fractious, languidly, augmented, liability, infidelities, deception, granular



Chapters 6 - 10

Summary

In Chapter 6, the search is on for a beardless Buck. Clippy and Neil say that they want to prosecute him when he's found and say that they have never seen his show, but the artist who draws Buck's face without a beard admits that it is his second favorite reality show. Yancy joins in the search, focusing on a recent shoplifting spree of the type of items Buck might take. One of the ladies he talks to calls him a detective. Later Yancy meets with Rogelio Burton who fills him in on Buck's real identity and tells him that he, Yancy, is trouble for scaring his new next door neighbor away. It turns out that the new neighbor is a lawyer from Miami. Yancy strongly defends his actions, but Burton tells him that if he wants his badge back, he needs to calm down. The two men go to see a prostitute they think Buck may be with. They find the clip Buck used for his money. She tells them who gave it to her. When they find that man, he shows them where he found it.

In Chapter 7, Merry tells Lane how she got the idea to pretend she was shaving when she hit cars. Lane checks the responses to Buck's performance and is shocked. He is even more shocked by the people who have defended him. He calls Amp, who fills him in on the investigation and also the fact that they are going to tape a show without Buck. Lane realizes that this means he has less influence. Amp encourages Lane to find Buck. He is finally able to check his phone. After seeing no messages from Buck, he worries that he has gotten another agent, is dead, or is in hiding. Merry tells him that she bets she can find Buck.

Yancy calls Burton to say that he has Buck's credit cards and he finds out that the hair belongs to Buck and that they have evidence that he is alive. While they are talking, he sees Deb next door with a metal detector. He still does not tell her that he has her ring, thinking that it will buy him some time. He hopes that they will break up and sell the property. After she leaves, he sends Rosa an email and then Tommy Lombardo calls telling him to meet him at a new seafood restaurant saying that the mango salad is moving. He gets dressed to go there, but instead goes to the wine shop where Buck had been spotted. After leaving, he thinks about dropping the case. But then Burton calls to tell him about a dead body.

In Chapter 8, the gangsters torture Trebeaux for a bit and then let him loose after making him promise that he will get better sand for their resort. Still, Big Noogies thinks that he is done with him once he gets the sand.

Meanwhile, Zeto electrocutes himself as he tries to recharge the Tesla to get it ready for his drive to Miami. Yancy goes to the impound after going to the restaurant. Due to a flyer in the Tesla, they look for Coolman. Yancy learns that two Buicks were rear-ended on the same night and towed in from the same parking lot. The other had been rented by Trebeaux and the police were trying to find him.



Merry and Coolman see the tow truck going by with the Tesla. Merry thinks that Zeto has been busted and hopes that he does not tell the police about her. They eat lunch at Clippy's and try to reconstruct Buck's route. Amp had issued a statement that Buck was in rehab and they are making sure that his mistress stayed quite. Merry and Coolman go back to the hotel where reporters try to talk to him. Merry gets a message and Coolman calls his divorce lawyer. He had missed a mediation session that his wife had also missed due to her affair. He assures his lawyer that he will be at the next one. When Coolman rejoins Merry he finds out that the police want him to look at a dead man's body.

In Chapter 9, the new neighbors-to-be pay a visit to Yancy. They get into a fight and Yancy tells Deb's fiancé that she has lost the engagement ring. He is talking about them not disturbing anything on the land when Deb sees the snake Yancy had put in his pocket moving. The site sends both of them running away. Yancy goes to meet Burton. A body of a man, originally from Syria but who lived in Brooklyn Heights has been found. According to witnesses a middle-aged white man who was not wearing a shirt approached him. He either then jumped from the train or was pushed off by the white man. The police want to know if the death is connected to Buck because he hates Muslims. When Coolman gets there, he says that the dead man is not Buck. The police tell him that they think Buck may have committed the crime. Coolman calls Amp. He ends up leaving a message. When he returns, Merry has already met Yancy. Yancy asks him about the accident with his car and Coolman lies to protect Merry. Then Merry goes off to eat with Yancy, without Coolman.

In Chapter 10 Trebeaux goes with Big Noogie to New York to strike a deal about the sand. On the trip he takes a big dog with him. After the meeting, they come back and the dog is gone. Big Noogie offers to make sure it is found, but Trebeaux says that it is okay. He can get another one, but it has to be called by the same name. Big Noogie cannot believe that Trebeaux does not care about the dog and is only using it to get amenities on the plane.

Amp calls the sheriff to make sure that news would not leak about Buck being a person of interest in a murder investigation. He asks a bit about Coolman, but not much. After the conversation, he goes to meet Coolman's wife for lunch and more.

Meanwhile, Yancy finds out that the sheriff has found out that he has been working on the case and wants him off. Deb stops by and while he goes to get the metal detector, Rosa FaceTimes him. Deb answers. When Rosa FaceTimes him again, Merry answers. She had found his address after they had had dinner together. Rosa is disappointed and says that she will be staying away for a longer period of time than originally planned. After the call ends, he tells Merry why he is no longer a detective and then has to go to work, saying that he will drop her off at the hotel.



Analysis

This section continues to highlight the mixed nature of people and shows that goodness is in the eye of the beholder. Yancy is set up as the novel's sympathetic hero. He is the one who has gotten the breaks in the case thus far. He figured out that it was Buck who committed the shoplifting crimes. He retrieved Buck's credit cards. At the same time, he is sympathetic because, he has lost his badge and wants to get it back. His girlfriend has left him and he is not sure why. Yet, he is not an innocent man done wrong. He has his flaws. He continues to play with the lives of Deb and her boyfriend to serve his own purposes. He lost his badge due to being irresponsible by having an affair with a married woman and then attacking her husband.

Big Noogie shows that he, too, has a complex personality. He is willing to kill people, yet he thinks that Trebeaux, who cheats people, but has not killed anyone, is a creep and scum. When John, Trebeaux's dog disappears, Martin wants to know, "What type of creep would steal a service dog?" Big Noogie replies "You got a brother?" (113). Later when Martin says that he will just get another dog, Big Noogie thinks that his reaction is unbelievable. Big Noogie says, "He's your pet dog, for Christ's sake" (113), Then when Trebeaux explains why the new dog also needs to be called John, Big Noogie thinks, "Scum of the scum" (114).

Merry also continues to display various personalities in this section. As the opportunist that she is, she quickly dumps Coolman to move on to Yancy. The narrator uses an ironic tone to point this out and at the same time make it known that this is just her nature and that as such, she does not see anything wrong with what she is doing and readers should not be surprised by her actions. "...Coolman went looking for his redheaded companion - an she was gone. She'd waltzed off to dine with her new friend, Inspector Yancy. Just the two of them, of course" (110). The words "waltzed off" make it sound as if she has just moved from one dance partner to another - something that women at a ball looking for a suitable suitor do. The narrator adds, "of course" at the end to imply that one would not expect her to do anything else.

Later she, like Deb had done earlier, answers Yancy's phone, even though he tells her not to do so. Afterwards, though, unlike Deb, she apologizes for making Rosa mad. Then she seems to express her legitimate feelings as she explains why she is at Yancy's house, "The reason I'm here, I had a really good time that night at the oyster bar. You made me laugh - and not accidentally, like most guys. How lame is that? Because you're looking at the last girl in the world who should be chasing after a cop" (120) The use of the words, "actually" and "how lame is that," with "that" in italics implies that she has shocked herself. In fact she even says so by saying that she is the last girl in the world who should be interested in a policeman. An indication of her many sides appears when Yancy says that he has to go because of a "galloping infestation" (122). She references the Bible when she hears this. Even though she is a bit off, it shows that she does have a moral education and helps explain why she justifies her actions the way she does. She has to do so in order to convince herself that she is not a bad person.



Three of the major female characters appear in this section and their interaction with each other and the man that they have in common, Yancy, highlights the role of women in Key West. Both Deb and Merry use their looks to make a living, knowing what it takes to get a man. Both of them mark their territory when Rosa calls by answering Yancy's phone. Rosa is different though, and she is the one who has left for a country with order compared to the wild world of Key West.

Another point to note in this section is the theme that people do not realize the results of playing with fire. When Coolman checks social media, he is surprised to find out that there are people who actually support Buck's performance. Later someone kills, or at the very least causes the death of an innocent man who is a Muslim. The authorities think that Buck may have been involved in the man's death, however, given the fact that people support Buck's racist views, readers may wonder whether something else is going on. Buck is a racist, but is he a killer? He ran from the crowd and is hiding. If he did not defend himself at the bar, would he kill someone who had done nothing to him just because of his religion? Or could something else be going on? Could a Buck sympathizer be running around - one of the people who supported Buck's views on social media? This new mystery adds suspense and serves to keep readers interested in the novel.

Finally, the battleground has been set between Deb's fiance and Yancy, This is his second adversary as his first is the police chief who wants him off the case.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast the characters of Coolman and Trebeaux. Is there one that you sympathize with more than the other? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How does Rosa compare to the other characters in the novel, especially the women? Why do you think that she has essentially been written out of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Buck is a murderer? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

mitigate, dishevelment, contrition, waylaid, acquaintance, solicited, morality, vigil, peculiar, resembles, admonition, expedite, scrutiny, endanger, unilaterally, ruptured, illicit, gravitate, enumerating, diversion



Chapters 11-15

Summary

In Chapter 11, Yancy answers a call from Clippy's. A giant Gambian pouched rat came in through the fire exit and ran through the dining room, which was full of guests. Everyone understands that Yancy has to close the restaurant, but they decide to say that the closure is due to renovations. The next morning, Yancy wakes up and finds Merry on his deck. He invites her to ride along with him, which pleases her.

In the same chapter, Trebeaux talks to Burton about his car accident. He denies knowing who hit him. Afterwards, he goes to a restaurant with John the Second. When the hostess does not let him in with the dog, Trebeaux lets it go.

Meanwhile Brock and Deb are having relationship problems because she lost the engagement ring and they are having problem in the bedroom, a side effect of the cream that he is using even though he is handling a lawsuit against the company. He postpones construction on the house until they find the ring. The situations gets worse when the workers tell him that they found a tooth that looks like a human molar.

Yancy and Merry go to a tattoo parlor in Chapter 12. He finds out that a man named Benjamin Krill had gotten a tattoo that matches the one the man involved in the death on the train had, but the tattoo artist does not recognize the picture of Buck. Yancy follows up by going to Benjamin's address, thinking at the time that Buck is using an alias. Benjamin's girlfriend confirms that Benjamin exists. She thinks that he is there to arrest him and says that he does not have any tattoos. When he returns to the car, Merry is looking at the headline about Zeto's death. She tells Yancy the truth about her relationship with him, surprising herself in doing so.

While all of this is going on, Coolman is being held captive on a boat after being kidnapped again. Buck is also being held with him.

Back on Brock's property in Chapter 13, Brock finds out that the tooth is a historical find and that the project to find out what else may be there could take anywhere from two to three years. In reality, Yancy planted the tooth which he got from his dentist and a friend of his is the "Doctor" who claims that the tooth is a historical find. Not knowing any of this, Brock tells the "Doctor" to have his team keep a look out for the diamond.

Afterwards, Brock goes to see a cosmetic surgeon about the growth under his arm, but as the surgeon had to leave for an emergency, he goes to a restaurant for a drink and ends up meeting Trebeaux. Brock tells him his story and Trebeaux tells him he has mob connections and that he also got a rash from the product. Brock tells him that he can be included in the class action suit. Trebeaux offers his connections as a way to get rid of Yancy. Brock is not sure that he wants to invest any more money in the estate given his



current relationship with Deb. Trebeaux gives him his number. The two take a cab together and Brock pretends to be interested in Trebeaux's business.

Yancy believes Merry's story but does not turn her in. Burton comes over, sees her, and wants to know where Coolman is, but she says that she does not know. Yancy explains where she is sleeping. He tells Burton about Krill. Burton, though does not believe that Krill is involved in the murder and reminds Yancy that he is off the case. Later, Yancy tries to reach Rosa, but cannot. Merry is sympathetic and offers to speak to her, but Yancy declines the offer. He takes Merry to Krill's house. Detectives are staking the house, but Merry gets rid of them. While Merry is talking to the detectives, Yancy reaches Rosa who does not want to move back to Miami. He tells her to move in with him, but he does not get a response. Krill comes back and stabs Yancy.

Merry rushes Yancy to the hospital in Chapter 14. He goes home and later that night, Big Noogie's guys come to get the diamond. Yancy ends up telling them where it is. The narrative goes back to explain Krill's obsession with Buck's show and family, how he had come to spontaneously kidnap Buck and Coolman, and his involvement in the Muslim man's death, which was also an accident. He hoped to bond with Buck and was beginning to see Coolman as a pain. When he returns after stabbing Yancy he tells Buck that he wants to be on his show and be one of his brothers.

In Chapter 15, Merry continues to tell her true story to Yancy who she thinks is sleeping, but he isn't. She says that she will take care of him until Rosa returns. Rosa, though, has gotten a job in Norway.. Merry encourages Yancy to not let Rosa go. Yancy allows Clippy's to reopen. Trebeaux and Brock get in contact again. Trebeaux tells Brock that his mob connection friends did not find the ring, but says that Brock should go to talk to Yancy about selling his house. They also talk about the class-action suit. Brock makes light of his visit to the doctors, but Trebeaux tells him to keep an eye on the growth.

Yancy and Merry go to a restaurant notorious for bad hygiene where Yancy discovers that Krill's girlfriend had come in and tried to sell the mongoose. She had sold its purple coat instead. Then they go to Krill's house. While there, Merry takes a lifebuoy with the name of the boat where Krill is keeping Buck and Coolman. Krill comes home later that evening and tells Mona that he is going to be on TV as Buck's twin brother and that he even has an agent.

Analysis

Even those trying to stay clean find it hard to do so in Key West. Readers see this in Chapter 11 when a member of Clippy's staff opens the door and lets in a scary rat. In addition to infecting an otherwise clean place, the rat serves to give an authentic feel to the setting by introducing something that really exists in the area. The introduction of the rats into Florida also shows that the characters in the novel are not strange to a place like Key West. Anything goes, even exotic animal traders who would think that people would want giant rats as pets.



This section also shows an interesting parallel between what the employee at the restaurant does and what Yancy does. The employee opens the fire door and lets a rat in. Yancy opens his door and lets Merry inside. The action foreshadows trouble for Yancy. In fact, at the end of the novel his relationship with her is one of the reasons he does not get his badge back.

Yancy invites trouble in when he opens the door, but this section continues to highlight that he does not have a sparkling clean character himself. In a drastic move to delay construction on the lot next door until Brock and Deb break up, he enlists the help of friends to make it look as if they property cannot be built on due to the historical significance of what may be buried there. "Yet in fact it was an ordinary molar...Yancy had strategically positioned the Kupnick extraction on Richardson's property shortly before the hired salvors began their diamond hunt...this would have been evident to a legitimate archeologist, which "Doctor" Jimmy Whitmore was not" (144).

In addition to trying to keep Brock from building on his own property, he works behind Burton's back in an attempt to solve the case before he does so that he can get his badge back. "If Krill appeared now, the cops would snatch him...By dinnertime they'd have a signed confession - and Yancy would get no credit for cracking the Counc Train case, no redemptive brownie points with the sheriff. Yancy wasn't proud of his selfishness, yet he couldn't change how he felt" (152).

Other characters demonstrate their sleazy characteristics in this section as well. Brock and Trebeaux meet and, on the surface they get along. Brock confides in Trebeaux and then they find that they have things in common. Trebeaux has tried Pitrolux, so he can join the class action law suit. They toast the American justice system due to the ability to make money to use it to sue people and corporations. Right after that, they talk about having Yancy attacked to see if he has the diamond even though they know that he is an ex-cop. While Brock does show some respect to policemen by noting that Yancy is an ex-cop, Trebeaux shows none. "Now, if he's ex-FBI I see your point, because that's like a blood fraternity. But ex-cops lose their juice about ten seconds after giving up the badge" (148). The two men also compare the power of the connections they have who can beat Yancy up. Even though Brock is a lawyer, he has "club bouncers on South Beach. Ex-NFL" (147). Trebeaux tells him that his men are Mafia and Brock, the lawyer, continues to talk to him, wanting to know how he got connected with them. Brock does not make a decision right away, but it is not because what they are talking about doing to Yancy is illegal. It is because "given the current chill in their relationship...Richardson wasn't sure he wanted to sink another nickel into Big Pine real estate" (148).

This section also works to move the main plot forward. Yancy continues with the investigation and finds out about the existence of Krill. He quickly deduces that he is the man who caused the death on the train. In addition, they get a clue from the lifebuoy. The narration employs suspense to keep readers turning the page. Yancy gets stabbed. Readers do not find out until the next chapter that he is okay. At this point in the story there are many unanswered questions. Will they catch Krill? Who will catch Krill? What will happen to Coolman and Buck? What will happen to Yancy? Will someone force him to return the diamond? Will Brock and Deb get their house anyway? Will Brock and



Deb's relationship last and who is the real Merry? As the main plot contains a mystery, and the reader is approximately halfway through the book, it is normal that the plot would reach a peak at this point in terms of suspense.

One final thing to note about this section is the continuation of the use of metaphors to create images and the fact that the narrator shows what happens instead of telling readers. An example of the latter is when Buck stabs Yancy, readers know that this has happened because of these words, "...and two seconds later he was bleeding all over his shoes" (154). To describe how quickly the police would arrest Krill if they found him first, the narration uses the simile "the cops would snatch him like a bug off the sidewalk" (152).

Discussion Question 1

What do you think that Yancy and Merry see in each other? How dedicated to Rosa do you think Yancy is? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast Brock and Deb's relationship to that of Yancy and Rosa and Yancy and Merry.

Discussion Question 3

What is the impact of reality TV shows on people's lives? Why are they so popular?

Vocabulary

heyday, exotic, harrowing, evacuated, comped, bludgeon, menace, equestrians, stoicism, vainglorious, mulling, remnants, collisions, audacity, vanquished, nurturing, cogitating, repository, nonchalantly, meticulous



Chapters 16 - 20

Summary

In Chapter 16, Brock and Deb pay a visit to Yancy to make an offer to buy his house. Yancy refuses even though Deb threatens him. From the conversation, Yancy can tell that the men who took the ring did not give it back to them. Before they leave, he advises them to reevaluate their relationship. Merry returns after they leave and Yancy admits to himself that he has started to imagine what it would be like to sleep with her, even though he knows that it would be bad judgement to do so.

Later, the two go to the boat dock where Yancy learns about the boat, The Wet Nurse. They find the boat, but the man who took them to it will not allow Yancy to board it. Merry notices that the boat is sinking. Their guide calls the coast guard. Yancy spots a Panama hat like the one that was reported stolen during the shoplifting crime spree and retrieves it. The coast guard comes and Yancy overhears that they found two sets of handcuffs locked to the bunks.

Amp gets a lot of good news about the ratings of the show without Buck and finds out that Buck is no longer a suspect in the Muslim man's death and that they are no longer looking for Buck. He also learns that Buck's mistress is happy to be cheating on Buck with his brother who is happy to have stolen Buck's girlfriend. Afterwards, he goes to meet Rachel Coolman. While he is with her, Lane calls. Amp has to fake relief that Buck is with Lane. Lane threatens to create a spinoff with Buck and someone named Spiro. Lane gives him the story line of how Spiro can be written in as Buck's long lost brother. Amp likes it. Lane tells him be better make it happen or they are gone and hangs up on him

Yancy and Merry go to Krill's house. Burton and the detectives are there interviewing Mona. Yancy tells him his theory about Krill, but when he says that he thinks that Krill is still holding Buck, he finds out that Buck called the sheriff to apologize for any trouble he has caused. Yancy thinks that something is still strange. Burton convinces Yancy to create a complaint against Krill for stabbing him. That way at least he can get him on that even if they cannot hold him for the death of the Muslim man. Yancy does not want to because he thinks it will mean not getting his badge back, but Brock says that he will handle the sheriff. He also tells him to get back to his real job.

Merry tells Yancy that she talked to Rosa to let her know that he had been stabbed (Chapter 17). She also told her that they had not slept together, but she is not sure she believed her. Rosa is not planning to come back, though, because she likes the safety Norway has to offer. Merry still will not tell Yancy who she really is.

Krill continues to hold Buck and Lane and his actions make them nervous, but they can see that he is loosening up due to the idea of having a TV show. Lane's plan is to have



the police pick him up as soon as he gets Buck's new contract. Krill, though decides that he wants to speak to Amp and he wants him to come to them.

Brock is still using the defective product because he and Deb are having great sex in spite of the fact that he is still suffering from the side effects. He calls Trebeaux to see if the mobsters can come back and get Yancy to sell him his house. Trebeaux says that they cannot, but suggests that Brock use his own people and the element of surprise to get it done. They also talk about Trebeaux's photos and Brock says that he got off easy.

In Chapter 18, Yancy calls Rosa and tells her that he is coming to Norway. She puts him off though, telling him that he needs to finish his case first. Afterwards, he and Merry go out and spot Mona. They follow her to a house and call Burton to tell him where they are, but have to leave a message on his voicemail. While they wait, Mona comes out, forcing Yancy to have to kiss Merry. Then a black limo drives up and Krill, Buck, and Coolman get in. They follow it.

Big Noogie comes to meet Trebeaux. He has John with him as well as his girlfriend. Trebeaux ends up sleeping with her. He goes to Clippy's to eat.

The Limo is going to the airport where one of Amp's assistants arrives to make the deal. Krill wants to only talk to Amp and sends the man running back to the jet. When Yancy and Merry get to the airport, the jet is already leaving. They go to Clippy's where Merry recognizes Trebeaux. She waves to him and tells Yancy how she knows him. Trebeaux leaves without speaking to her.

In Chapter 19, Brock's men are waiting for Yancy when he returns home, but he outsmarts them and ends up having them arrested and sending them to the hospital. Afterwards, Yancy and Merry go out and have sex.

Buck and Lane have a chance to escape when Krill goes out of the limo to relieve himself. Lane is so wrapped up in his divorce proceedings, however, that they are too slow and Krill gets back in the car before they can make their escape.

In Chapter 20, Brock starts to have real problems due to the gel. Then he finds out that his men did not complete the job and that the mob gangsters took the ring. He vows to deal with them. Burton gets called in by the sheriff to make sure they get Krill because the dead man's wife is complaining that the police are not paying enough attention to the case. He also wants to make sure that Yancy did not do anything to embarrass the force during the home invasion incident.

Amp makes plans to go to Key West. When Rachel finds out he is going there, she convinces him to talk Lane out of going to divorce court.

Back in Florida, Krill, Buck, and Lane travel in another limo the next morning. They get stuck in a traffic jam and Yancy, who is traveling in the opposite direction spots them, but he cannot turn around. When he gets back home he finds that Merry is still there. He tells her that Krill, Lane, and Buck are still in Key West. She tries to convince him to leave it alone, but does not succeed. They go to see Mona and she tells them about



Krill's plan to be on TV. Afterwards, he and Merry have sex again. Later they go out and Merry goes to take a walk. When he goes looking for her, he runs into the dog, John, who runs away. He chases him and brings him back. He cannot find Merry, but runs into the Big Noogie. They have a drink and Yancy finds out that he is the one who ordered the men to retrieve the diamond and that his son's future wife now has it. Dominick realizes who Yancy is. He gives him his card because he is grateful for the return of John. When Yancy gets home, he finds that Merry is gone. She has left him a note telling him to call Rosa.

Analysis

This section functions to demonstrate how fixated Hollywood is with ratings and finding the next big thing. The Hollywood entertainment industry is so focused on this that it fails to consider how shows the executives may find to be entertaining can influence people in negative ways. Executives do not even consider the risk to their own lives as they are so fixated on trying to make deals. Amp's biggest concern since all of the trouble started with Buck has been the effect on the series. Now that ratings are up and Buck's mistress is satisfied, Amp no longer needs Buck for the show. In addition Buck is no longer a suspect in the death on the train. Amp does not take much notice of the fact that Buck's show influenced Krill except for how the news might impact the ratings. When the sheriff tells him that he will not be able to keep the fact that Krill got the tattoo because he is a major fan of the show from the media, Amp thanks him for the "heads-up" (187).

When Coolman calls and tells him that he is with Buck, Amp has to strive "for an approximation of relief" (188). Amp also takes the same attitude towards the other members of the show. It is all about how their actions will affect the series. When the agent who is in charge of keeping Miracle happy reports that Junior's wife is threatening to taint Junior's mouthwash with lighter fluid, Amp wants the girl to do research to find out if that will kill him because they "don't need any more surprises" (188). His response does not surprise the girl at all. She tells him, "I'm on it" (188). Amp's next biggest concern is to make sure that no one finds out that she searched the topic. He tells her to make sure that she deletes her search history.

Lane's attitude is similar. Instead of turning Krill in right away, he wants to wait until he has the deal for Buck and himself. He is so disconnected with the reality of their situation, that when Buck sees that they have an opportunity to escape in the limo, they are too slow because Coolman is too busy discussing his divorce case with his lawyer. "Inside the limo, Buck elbowed Lane Coolman, testing his interest in making a run for it. Coolman didn't respond; he was busy trading texts with Smegg" (223).

Buck, in this section, though begins to grow. As Lane had done earlier when no one came to his rescue upon the news that he had been kidnapped, Buck sees his brothers turn on him. He gets so angry at Krill for berating their driver that he tells Krill to shut up. "Buck was no fan of Hispanics, but he couldn't bear listening to Blister berate the driver. When Buck was a boy he'd overheard his father speak to a Puerto Rican auto mechanic



in the same way, and he remembered feeling uneasy and possibly ashamed" (238). He knows that he and his brothers are "dickheads" like their father, but they are not "in-your-face racist dickheads" (238). He blames the jokes told at the bar on being nervous and looking at Krill, he realizes that Krill might "have been a different person before becoming obsessed with Bayou Brethren. It was one thing to market a television program to attract low-class shitkickers; it was another thing to create them" (238). Even when Krill pulls out his gun again because he wants to talk about whether or not Buck is really Jewish, Buck yells at him. The tone Lane uses in telling Krill to put the gun away is like one would use with a child. "Come on, Spiro. Put the gun away" (239).

Another important element in this section is the merging of good and bad characteristics in the characters, supporting the theme that people's characters are complex. On the one hand, Merry behaves as if she wants Yancy for herself. She constantly flaunts herself at him. On the other hand though, she tries to help him mend his relationship with Rosa. She calls to tell her that he has been stabbed and that she has not slept with Yancy. Then, at the end of the chapter she leaves in a way that he cannot hold her back and advises him to call Rosa.

Dominick shows his soft spot again and that he is loyal to those who earn his loyalty. He becomes "friends" with Yancy when Yancy returns John to him.

On the flip side, Yancy, who is supposed to represent the law, takes his card even though he knows that Dominick is a member of the Mafia. Brock, who is also supposed to represent the law, sends his men to force Yancy to agree to sell his property to him.

Discussion Question 1

Compare the conversation Lane has with Amp in this section with the ones he had with him at the beginning of the novel.

Discussion Question 2

What is your opinion of Mona? Why do you think she is with Krill? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

What do you think of Buck's assessment of his show in Chapter 20? Do you think that a TV show can change someone and turn them into a different type of character? Support your answer.

Vocabulary

travails, disembowled, enthralled, grueling, audible, debris, combustible, rancor, consolation, bedlam, mischief, inconclusive, specimens, counterproductive, vanity, aggrieved, naively, astounded, dismount, tumult



Chapters 21 - 27

Summary

In Chapter 21, Big Noogie's girlfriend convinces Trebeaux to take her to Cuba with him even though he knows that it is not a good idea. Yancy is on his way to Norway when he reads an article about the Muslim's man death. He calls Rosa and they argue. The next day, he looks for Krill and the other guys. Merry texts him saying that she saw their car, but she thinks that he is in Norway. He finds them. Krill tells him that he did not kill the Muslim man. On his way to Key West, Brock actually reads a doctor's report about Pitrolux. He goes to see Trebeaux about the ring and says he wants it back. After trying to talk Brock out of his wish to see Big Noogie, Trebeaux agrees to try to arrange a meeting, but says that Brock has to talk to Big Noogie alone.

In Chapter 22, Krill makes everyone watch the show. He ties Yancy up, but he escapes and manages to get the help of a neighbor. Merry is back rear-ending people. This time it is a man named Vance Banks. Later she goes to get her money, but she offers to let him keep it if he does not hurt Vance's cat. It turns out that Vance managed to get the money so he and the cat are fine. The man offers her another job, but she says that she will be out of town because a friend of hers needs help. Krill, Buck, and Lane go out and end up buying a drink for Yancy who is there as well.

In Chapter 23, Trebeaux is with Juveline. He is about to meet Big Noogie and she swears that he does not know about them. He tells him that things are set for Cuba and invites Big Noogie along, but he cannot go because a judge has his passport. He also talks to Big Noogie about Brock, and Big Noogie agrees to talk to him. Coolman talks to Yancy. He tries to pay him off, but Yancy says that he wants Krill. Coolman agrees to hand him over in a couple of days. He meets Clippy who has two of the giant rats. He leaves Yancy to take care of them.

In Chapter 24, Amp arrives with a body guard who is black and is not really a body guard by training. Lane frustrates Amp by not answering his phone. When he does call back the body guard, Prawney answers. Lane warns him that Krill has a gun. Deb goes to pay a visit to Yancy to try to seduce him to get him to sell the house. He refuses to fall for it and then the two rats come to the glass door, scaring her off.

Burton goes to question Mona about Krill's whereabouts. She claims to not know where he is, but after he leaves, she gets picked up by the men. They are on their way to the plane and she is hopeful that Benny is not going to let her down and really is going to become a star. The driver thinks they are being followed, and they are, by Yancy. Once he realizes he has been spotted he plans to drive on, pretending not to be interested in the car and resume the trail, but instead almost has a car accident because of a car driven by Merry. When they get to the airport, they see the plane and Yancy thinks that Coolman is taking Krill to California. They leave and while they are checking into a hotel, because of the rats in the house, Dominick calls.



In Chapter 25, on the plane, Amp negotiates with Coolman about his title, Buck attacks Amp because it was his idea to let Miracle choose one of his brothers. Prawney gets him off of Amp and Krill pulls his gun out and insults Prawney. Mona gets Krill to calm down and Amp gets Krill to apologize to Prawney. On the side, Amp talks to Coolman about his divorce, telling him that he is coming back to California with him because he needs to show up in court. Krill continues to show how ignorant he is and Amp and Coolman make plans to meet in a business center the next day to sign the contracts.

Brock meets Dominick and finds out that his daughter-in-law to be has the ring. He agrees to just get a new one for Deb. He is about to leave when Dominick tells him that they are not finished.

Yancy talks to Rosa, who fails to convince him to move to Norway. Later, Yancy gets rid of the rats by putting them on a ship. Coolman calls Yancy, tells him where they are, and says that he can have Krill in an hour, but then the line goes dead before they can finish the conversation. Yancy leaves. The phone had gone dead because shooting was going on in the car where Amp was with Krill, Prawney and Buck trying to come to a deal with Krill in Chapter 26. Krill ends up shooting Prawney in the mouth and then Yancy shows up. Krill waves his gun and tells Yancy to get in. They are going to the airport. Krill makes Yancy drive. They are supposed to go to the airport, but Yancy takes them to the hospital first for Prawney. Krill threatens Yancy with a gun. While all of this is going on, Merry comes and rear-ends them. Yancy knocks out Krill, but he comes to, goes for the gun and aims it at Yancy. Buck jumps Krill and kills him.

Trebeaux goes to Cuba. Juveline is supposed to take a later plane, but shows up on his. He lets her stay because he does not know that she talks in her sleep and that now Dominic knows about them. When he gets to Cuba, the man with the ivory toothpick comes out of the airport instead of Juveline.

Brock goes back home and tells Deb that he is getting her a new ring and selling the plot to a friend of Dominick's for \$2,500. She opposes, but he says that that is the way it is.

In Chapter 27, a couple on their honeymoon finds Trebeaux's body. Juveline ends up back with Dominick. Brock and Deb break up and later Brock dies. Amp and Coolman start their own agency. They lose Buck who is tired of it all, but he does not rat out his brothers. Yancy helps Coolman find Mona and he signs her for the show. Coolman and Rachel settle and get their divorce. She starts dating an actor. Amp sends Yancy money. He needs it to pay back Merry who had lent him money to buy the lot next to him. Yancy goes to meet Sonny who tells him that he will not be getting his badge back in spite of what he has done and part of the problem is Merry. He tells Yancy that he needs to stay away from trouble to get another chance. Yancy goes back home and Merry tells him that Rosa called and has a new boyfriend in Norway. He is not surprised as he knew that Rosa was not coming back and he could not live there. He and Merry go off on the boat. She still does not tell him her real name. At the end of the novel, she is holding on to him and he is smiling.



Analysis

The first point to note about this section is that, as the last section of the mystery, it serves to bring all of the plots to an end. Trebeaux relationship with Juveline leads to his death. Brock and Deb break up and Brock's addiction to the cream leads to his death. Coolman and Amp start a new agency and Coolman's divorce settlement is not as bad as he had thought it would be. Krill dies which is the only way he could have been stopped. The police realize that it may be hard to make a case against him for the death on the train as witness accounts vary regarding what actually happened. Yet, he is a dangerous man. Thus, when his threatening of Yancy at gunpoint gives Buck the perfect opportunity to end it all. Merry also realized that it had to end and thus may have been willing to use her razor to stop Krill if necessary. Yancy and Rosa cannot agree when it comes to where to live and things are made easier for Yancy when Merry tells him that Rosa has a new boyfriend in Norway.

It is interesting to note that the boat that Yancy gets on with Merry at the end of the novel is moving forward and he is smiling. This is one of the few vehicles that does not go around in circles, stop due to accidents, or sink. This could imply that Yancy is now ready to embark on a journey of his own.

Another point to note is who lives and who dies. The people with no hope of redemption die. Krill, Trebeaux, and Brock are flat characters who do not grow throughout the narrative. They make bad choices and continue to play with fire. Krill grows more unpredictable and menacing with his gun. He becomes more vain and thinks that his gun gives him power. Trebeaux continues to attempt to outsmart the Mafia. Brock continues to use the cream even though he knows that poses a threat to his health and his profession. "He knew of no other big-time TV lawyer in such a sorry predicament - hooked on the very substance that was the target of his own commercials. If the truth got out, Richardson would be sensationally discredited, if not disbarred...Potentially it could cost him millions" (315).

Amp and Coolman go back to California, the world they are made for. However they did become a slightly more aware of the world outside of Hollywood during their time in Key West. Amp makes Krill apologize to Prawney and Coolman does take care of other people in trying to develop a deal. He even helps Mona in the end and he finds a role for Yancy's friend Miso who is now called Jane. He even apologizes to Rachel for his indiscretions.

Of the group, Buck has grown the most. He is the one who kills Krill. He leave show business, but not reveal his brother's real background to the world. He holds to his decision even though he is more popular than ever after taking care of Krill. He decides to move back to Milwaukee and open a music shop. "He said his dream was to introduce young people to the joys of the accordion" (326).

As Yancy is an imperfect character who continues to do things his way in spite of the warnings he gets from Rosa, Burton, and even Merry, the ending does not reward his



actions by giving him his badge back. The ending also reminds readers that Merry is a criminal.

Finally this section takes another look at couples. Rosa and Yancy's relationship ends as they each want different things and cannot come to a compromise. Yancy wants to live in Key West. Rosa does not. She tried to compromise by taking another job in Miami, but this was not enough for her. She needs to give Norway a try. She wants Yancy to stay out of trouble because she worries that one day his body will show up in the morgue as a murder victim. He loves trouble. The idea of getting his badge back obsesses him. She thinks that he will never get it back. In some ways, Yancy and Merry have more in common in terms of personality. They both revel in trouble and are creative thinkers when they are in a jam. Yet, he represents the law and she is a criminal. Even if she gives up crime, can she hide from her past? This is an open-ended question when the novel ends.

As Yancy predicted, it is difficult to sustain a relationship based on only money and sex. When Deb leaves, she acts sad, but there are no tears in her eyes and Brock quickly gets over her departure, especially when he sees himself on TV.

Discussion Question 1

Is it fair for Rosa to want Yancy to move to Norway? Why or why not.

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Sonny's decision to not reinstate Yancy to the police force? Why or why not.

Discussion Question 3

Has Merry changed during the narrative? Do you think she can be trusted? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

circumspect, renowned, discretion, diligence, vectored, unimpeded, obligation, evasion, incriminating, reveling, deranged, impressionable, elaboration, pathological, deterrents, configuration, counseled, proactive, accusations, extolled



Characters

Merry Mansfield

Merry is the razor girl that the title references. She works for people who order a rear-end fender bender crash so that they can get the victim to pay a debt they have been trying to avoid paying. As the goal was to always get money, to kills the person, Merry sees herself as "an independent contractor in the collection process" (17). Her signature is the bikini-shaving aspect that blames on causing the crash. When the novel opens, she has hit a car, but his time it is the wrong one. The subsequent kidnapping of Lane Coolman instead of the intended victim, martin Trebeaux, sets off the major storyline in the novel. As Buck has to perform without the Help of Coolman, he makes racial slurs that cause him to shave his beard at Clippy's, go into hiding, keeps Coolman in Key West, and spurs Krill to taunt a Muslim man, causing the man's death. In addition, she attaches herself to Yancy and, even though she saves him, their relationship causes another rift in his relationship with Nora and gives Sonny an excuse to deny his reinstatement in the police force.

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When the novel opens, she has hit a car, but his time it is the wrong one. The subsequent kidnapping of Lane Coolman, instead of the intended victim, Martin Trebeaux, sets off the novel's major storyline. As Buck has to perform without the help of Coolman, he makes racial slurs that cause him to shave his beard at Clippy's, go into hiding, keeps Coolman in Key West, and spurs Krill to taunt a Muslim man, causing the man's death. In addition, she attaches herself to Yancy and, even though she saves him, their relationship causes another rift in his relationship with Nora and gives Sonny an excuse to deny his reinstatement in the police force.

Merry is a complex character. While her scams are illegal, she is not a bad person. In addition, while she plays the role of a dumb red head, she is not dumb at all. Regarding her ethics, she saves Coolman when Zito plans to kill him. Coolman, however, would not have had his life threatened if she had not delivered him to Zito. She tries to mend Yancy's relationship with Rosa. She would not have had to do that though if she had not answered his phone when Rosa called. In addition, even though she tries to help, she continues to temp him sexually. When she thinks he has gone, she temps him once again, this time with work, by texting him that she has seen the guys he's been looking for. She continues to do her job, but turns down another one because she feels that she has to go back to help Yancy stay out of danger. She is willing to turn down the money for the job she does in Miami due to her concern for the victim's cat.



Regarding her level of intelligence, she is quick on her feet, savvy, imaginative, and can talk about appraising artifacts. She is also people smart. She and Rosa seem to relate to each other. Merry understands why she is in Norway and Rosa tells her about her new boyfriend, Ole. When Yancy offers to take her on the boat after hearing the news, she knows that he is on the rebound. The way she conducts her "collection operation" also shows that she is not stupid. She has a unique selling point - that being the bikini-shaving aspect of the scam. She is smart enough to add a twist that will lure almost any man, thus making sure that she delivers her victims.

All in all, even though Merry causes trouble, she intervenes to try to help those who do not deserve bad things to happen to them such as Coolman, Yancy, the cat, and Rosa. In the end, she assists in saving Yancy's life, but like almost all of her actions, there is a flip side. She is also the prime reason he does not get his badge back. She is a strong woman who does not let people take advantage of her.

Andrew Yancy

Andrew Yancy is the ex-detective who, with Merry's assistance, locates Lane Coolman, Buck, and Krill. He is in a relationship with Rosa and he is still close to Rogelio Burton who had been his "best friend and calming influence" during his time as a detective. Yancy needs calming influences in his life because he tends to get himself into trouble through unwise actions. In addition, he tends to walk on a fine line when it comes to ethics.

This type of behavior caused his demotion which happens because he attacks the husband of the woman he is dating with a vacuum cleaner. It does not take long for readers to discover that this is part of his character. They are only on page 11 when they find out that he bore indirect responsibility for the fire that destroyed the villa under construction on the plot of land adjacent to his. Then, he finds Deb's engagement ring, but does not give it back to her, hoping to delay the construction of their new home and that she and Brock will break up in the meantime, meaning that they would not build anything at all. This turns into a saga of deception as he continues to play with them by creating a scheme to make it look as if they cannot build at all due to the historical significance of what might be buried there. Finally, he uses the Mafia to help him buy the land himself, for an extremely low price.

His drive to find Coolman, Buck, and Krill also causes him to make unwise decisions. His wish to get his badge back is the driving force and in order to do that, he has to get the credit for solving the case. Thus, he hides information from Burton, allows Merry to work with him, and almost gets killed. His irresponsible actions overshadow his contribution to solving the case and he is not re-instated on the force.

Yancy's personality makes it impossible for him to settle down with Rosa who is the complete opposite in character. He even says that he is surprised that she is with him. She leaves him though, because she needs to get away from the madness and she tells him not to come to Norway until he has finished the case. She needs all of him and she



needs for him to stay out of trouble. Those are two things that he cannot deliver. Key West is hot, in terms of the weather and action. It is a place that on some level tolerates his behavior. He knows himself well enough to know that he cannot live in Norway, and in fact makes his choice when he turns around to continue working on the case instead of going to Norway.

Lane Coolman

Lane Coolman is Buck's talent agent. He happens to be driving a car that looks like the one Martin Trebeaux has, and thus, Merry rear-ends him instead of Martin. His kidnapping causes the series of events that create the novel's main plot. His boss is Jon David Ampergrodt (Amp). While he is in Key West, he is also in the middle of divorce proceedings with his ex-wife-to-be, Rachel.

Lane Coolman is, as his name implies, a cool man. He is highly creative and lives in the make believe world of Hollywood. It engrosses him to the point that he, at times, does not take life-threatening situations seriously. He constantly sees his situation as opportunities for TV shows. For example, when he is kidnapped for a second time, he envisions a show called "Hell Island" (140). In addition to thinking about new shows, his divorce preoccupies him to the point that he misses an opportunity to escape because he is exchanging texts with his lawyer.

He does learn a few things during his time in Key West. He realizes that he is expendable when he is kidnapped and no one comes to his aid. He also sees the series taking a successful direction that does not include him. Another thing that surprises him is that people take what he defend Buck's performance. "The condemnations of Buck's tasteless performance were to be expected, but the ranting responses of his defenders...were so loathsome that Coolman was taken aback. He hoped that Amp was working to have the offending posts deleted" (77).

The knowledge of how people perceive him wakes him up to the point that he begins to take charge of his life. He puts Amp in the position that Amp has to negotiate with him. Even though he is always thinking of his career, he does look out for others. He includes Buck in the negotiations and helps Mona by giving her a place in the show. Coolman is superficial, but in the end he learns how to take control of his life in a manner that works in his world.

Buck Nance

Buck is one of the brothers who stars in the reality show Bayou Brethren. He is the family patriarch. His nickname is Captain Cock. His real name is Matthew Morgan Romberg and he was born in Milwaukee. His wife is Krystal and his mistress is Miracle. Lane Coolman is his agent.

His show motivates him to behave in public like the character Buck. However, the background portrayed in the series is not his background. The one thing that he does



share with the “Buck” character is Buck's racist sentiments. This is what gets him into trouble at The Parched Pirate. He has no backbone, though, and runs when he gets into trouble. He cannot even get through an appearance without Coolman by his side.

He starts thinking about his own racist views while Krill holds him hostage. "Spending time with Benny the Blister had shaken Buck Nance's confidence on the superiority of the white male...While redneck stardom had exposed Buck to many white fans who were poor advertisements for a master race, Blister stood out as one of the worse specimen he'd ever met - stupid, reckless, dirty, and delusional" (197)

By the end of the novel, he has grown. He gives up show business, and even though his brothers betrayed him when he was gone, he does not reveal their real background and he turns his efforts towards giving back by teaching music to children.

Benjamin Krill

Krill idolizes Buck to the point that he gets a tattoo that says Captain Cock and harasses a Muslim man on the train, causing his death. His girlfriend is Mona. When he first kidnaps Buck, he hopes to be his best friend. His motivation changes. He feels that he is not being treated right and Buck does not live up to being the racist man he thought he was.

He is a stupid man and a dangerous man because he is so unstable. At the same time, he seems to love Mona. He disappears at times, but always comes back. He buys a big screen TV for them so that they can watch their favorite shows together, and he comes back for her even after he thinks that he has sealed a deal to be on TV.

Rogelio Burton

Burton is the detective working on the case. He is Yancy's friend and is the opposite of him in character. He is calm and logical and he tries to keep Yancy out of trouble. Burton has the type of marital relationship that none of the other characters have. He has only been married to one woman, he participates in the lives of his children, and he sets boundaries. Yancy envies him for his steadfastness. In addition, he treats everyone with respect, including Mona, and Merry. He knows that Yancy is a good detective and follows his leads.

Brock Richardson

Brock is a sleazy lawyer from Miami, Deb's fiancé and Yancy's future neighbor. He is also an unwise man who becomes addicted to the product that he is supposed to be suing. He and Deb have a superficial relationship. He does not even care enough about her to get her own engagement ring. He is willing to resort to criminal methods to try to get Yancy to sell his house. He does have a conscience and realizes that he and Deb



are not a good fit. However, his unwise decision to continue to use the toxic product does not end well for him.

Deb

Deb is Brock's fiancé. She creates a subplot when she loses her engagement ring. She is a woman who only knows how to get what she wants through sex. When she goes to Yancy to try to convince him to sell the house, she tells him, "It's my go-to move" when he asks her whether she really thought that seducing him would work (285).

She makes the right decision not to marry Brock, but does it for the wrong reason - he was taking too long to get her a new diamond. In addition, even though she knows that the product he is using is bad for him, she does not truly discourage his use of it because they have good sex because of it. She is a selfish woman.

Martin Trebeaux

Trebeaux is the man whose car Merry was supposed to hit as Big Noogie wants to scare him. Trebeaux wants to be important and he cheats the wrong people along the way in order to make money. He is a fast dealer and a fast talker and does not care about anyone but himself. He only has his dog, John, to get advantages when he flies and shows no remorse when the dog disappears. He even gets another one and then lets it go because it is not working out. His entire sand scam shows that he has bad judgement, but he shows just how bad his judgement is when he sleeps with Big Noogie's girlfriend. He knows that it is a mistake and does it anyway.

Martin is a flat character. He does not grow throughout the novel and his actions show the dangers of pushing one's luck.

Dominick Aeola

Big Noogie is a Mafia head who orders the kidnapping of Martin Trebeaux because he provided the resort he owns with bad sand. Later he orders his death because Martin sleeps with his girlfriend. He does not like Martin and dislikes him even more after Martin shows no feelings when his dog disappears.

In his treatment of the dog, John, Dominick shows that he has feelings. He even finds the dog himself and keeps it. Yancy earns Dominick's gratitude later when he returns John to him. In fact, he is the one who helps Yancy buy the property next door.

Dominick also takes care of his family. When he gets Deb's diamond, he gives it to his son to give his fiancé. In essence, he has no mercy for those who double cross him, but he respects those who do him a favor or are members of his family.



Rosa

Rosa is Yancy's girlfriend for most of the novel until she announces that she has found a new boyfriend in Norway. Rosa is level-headed and tired of the destruction of human life she encounters in Florida. She decides to go to Norway to escape it all.

Norway fits her personality. It is a peaceful place where nothing really happens. While she loves Yancy, she does not love his tendency to get into trouble. She wants peace and she worries about Yancy, fearing that he will get himself killed one day. She hopes that he will also come to Norway and, by doing so, will remove himself from trouble and be able to give himself to her. Unfortunately, this makes her incompatible with Yancy who loves trouble.

John David Ampergrodt

Amp is Lane's boss. After Buck's performance and his disappearance he worries about the show, but then calms down when the ratings are still high. He is having an affair with Lane's estranged wife. He and Lane start their own agency when they return to California.

Mona

Mona is Krill's live-in girlfriend. She is loyal to him even though she does not like his addiction to Buck's show. After Krill dies and Amp returns to Hollywood, she gets a spot on the show.

Juveline

Juveline is Dominick's girlfriend. She sleeps with Martin and goes to Cuba with him. As a result, Big Noogie has Martin killed.

Sheriff Sonny Summers

Sonny is the sheriff who is up for re-election when the narrative takes place. He is the man Yancy has to please in order to get his badge back. Burton works for him.

While Sonny is an authority figure, he, at times, walks a fine line regarding what is legal and what is not. He takes contributions to his campaign from Amp and thus he provides information to Amp and looks for Buck when he first disappears. He gets on Burton to solve the possible murder case when the victim's wife goes to the press with her complaints. Sonny does not like negative press and this is what Yancy attracts. At the end of the novel he meets with Yancy in a place nobody goes to and tells him why he will not be getting his badge back and what he has to do to get on his good side.



Irv Clipowski and Neil Gluckman

Irv and Neil are the owners of owners of Clippy's Neil is also the mayor. Irv gets very upset when things go wrong that might ruin the restaurants reputation. Neil is the calmer and more logical of the two. As he is an honest major, he aims to follow the rules, even if it means closing down the restaurant. The two men work well with Yancy and respect him for what he does for them.

The two are also romantic partners and plan to get married.

Miracle

Miracle is Buck's mistress. Amp has to work hard to keep her satisfied when Buck disappears. She settles down once she is allowed to choose to be the mistress one of Buck's brothers.

Abdul-Halim Shamoon

Abdul-Halim is the innocent man who falls off the Conch Train and dies after Krill accosts him.



Symbols and Symbolism

Lane Coolman's Last Name

Lane is, as his name suggests, a cool man. Even when someone is threatening his life, it takes a long time for the danger to register with him. He thinks of everything as a TV show. Even when Krill is holding him he comes up with the idea of a new show in case Amp fires him. He never seems to think that he might not get out of the situation alive.

His attitude symbolizes California, especially Hollywood where people are not really aware of what is going on in the real world. In this state, it is possible to be cool because everything is cool.

Merry's Red Hair

Hair, in general is a symbol of virility and strength, instinct, feminine seduction, and physical attraction. All of this is true of Merry's hair. In addition it is red, a color which carries demonic symbolism. Merry uses her hair as part of the scam to attract men. When they let her get in the car, they make a deal that does not lead to a good outcome for them.

Diamond

It is fitting that Deb loses her diamond engagement ring and never gets another one from Brock due to what a diamond symbolizes. Diamonds symbolize durability and constancy, sincerity, and innocence. It represents purity, perfection, and of invincible spiritual power. In addition it is a representation of the promise commitment and faithfulness between and husband and a wife.

Deb offers Yancy sexual favors twice even though she is engaged to Brock and she says that that is the only way she knows how to get what she wants. If she is not faithful before they get married, chances are that she will not be afterwards either. In addition, she is not a pure and innocent person and neither is their relationship. She schemes to get what she wants as she does when she tries to get Yancy to sell his property and help her find her ring.

Beards

Beards symbolize manhood, virility, and sovereignty. It is this symbolism that partly caused the producers of Bayou Brethren to choose Buck and his brothers. They have "exquisite beards" (8). Beards are fitting for those who believe in the superiority of the white male.



It is interesting that Buck shaves his beard which can be seen as a symbol of penance, and indeed Buck's experience causes him to have second thoughts about his views of the superiority of the white man, his relationship with Miracle (he decides that he just wants his wife back), and the show in general. These feelings are so strong, that he leaves the show to go back home and teach children music.

Norway

In the novel, Norway symbolizes order and peace in contrast to all of the crazy things that go in in Miami and Key West. This is how Rosa sees it. Yancy sees it more in the association of with what ice symbolizes. It is a sort of death. It is a cold place both literally and figuratively and a place that is not conducive to human life.

Transportation

Usually transportation in literature takes people places that causes them to learn and grow. In this novel though, characters takes trains, planes, and automobiles that take them in circles, thus the forms of transportation in this novel represents people being stuck in their ways and habits. The only person who does take a journey that can lead to growth is Rosa who is not yet ready to come back to Florida as her journey has just started.

Yancy, however, does take a boat trip that does not end in the novel. This is the one he takes at the end with Merry. As the novel ends at this point, readers do not know whether it is a trip that will lead to some type of growth for either, or both, characters.

Rats

The two rats help symbolize the dual nature of the characters and Key West itself. Generally rats symbolize negative elements, like a negative personality or diseased elements in a person's life. In Japan, though rats are the companion of the god of good fortune. When the rat appears at Clippy's, it is enough to shut the place down. They are diseased, ugly, and terrifying creatures that no one even wants as an exotic pet. Yet when Yancy gets the couple, he cannot bring himself to kill them and, in fact, keeping them alive does bring him good fortune because he is able to use them to scare Deb off. Thus, like many of the things that happen in Key West in this novel, the rats have a dark side, and a lighter, more sympathetic side.

Yancy's Home

Houses represent the center of people's worlds. They provide shelter and represent security. Yancy's house is all of this to him. He will not let it go and he fights hard to keep his world centered around the house.

Dogs

Dogs are man's best friend. They symbolize loyalty vigilant, and intelligence. As the John dogs are in the novel, they are often used as guide dogs for that very reason. Their loyalty usually begets loyalty. The way Dominic and Martin treat John says a lot about their character. Dominick is loyal to John as he is loyal to his family and those who are loyal to him. Martin is, as Dominick says, scum. He is not loyal to anyone, but himself, thus not even the dogs are loyal to him.

Women

Women are symbols of seduction the main female characters in the novel are all seductresses. Even Rosa who is the most professional and round-rounded of them all, almost seduces Yancy to come to Norway, a place he knows that he will not like because of the cold.



Settings

Key West, Florida

This is where most of the action takes place in the novel. Yancy lives here. Lane Coolman and Buck are there because Buck is making an appearance at a bar.

The Parched Pirate

This is the bar where Buck makes his ill-fated appearance which sets off a chain reaction including Andrew Yancy first becoming involved in the case when Clippy finds Buck's beard at his restaurant and then later in the search for the missing Buck. Buck's performance also sets off Krill's actions.

Andrew Yancy's House

Andrew Yancy lives in a house that he loves with a sunset view that he treasures. Worrying that the new owners are not going to honor the building code height restrictions causes him to try to break up the relationship between Brock and Deb by keeping her ring when he finds it on their lot. Finally he buys the lot himself, with the help of a Mafia head.

Clippy's

Clippy's is a restaurant owned by Irv Clipowski and Neil Gluckman. Neil is the major and the restaurant has a "heart healthy" menu. As Neil is a partner in the restaurant, when something happens there, Yancy has to respond quickly and discretely. Neil however, does not try to take advantage of his title. In addition to the discovery of Buck's beard hair there, the huge rats show up there as well. Trebeaux, Yancy and Merry cross paths there. Merry recognizes Trebeaux and tells Yancy about how she knows him.

The Wet Nurse

The West Nurse is the boat Krill keeps Buck and Coolman on when he first holds them captive.

The Conch Train

The Conch Train is where Krill verbally attacks Abdul-Halim, leading to Abdul-Halim's death.

Cuba

Trebaeux is killed in Cuba after going there with Big Noogie's girlfriend.



Themes and Motifs

Playing with Fire

One of the major themes in the novel is that it is dangerous to push your luck or continuing to do things that you know that you should not be doing. The narrative reinforces this theme through the stories of Martin Trebeaux, Brock, and Yancy. Each one of these characters have instances when they can make a choice to say no to trouble or getting deeper into the troublesome situation. Each one of them decides to continue down dangerous paths and end up suffering negative consequences because of their relative decisions.

Martin is already in trouble with the Mafia. They have already given him one warning about the quality of sand he delivered to Bog Noogie's resort. He knows that he did indeed deliver a bad product, but he shows no remorse. In fact, he keeps on scheming and trying to be a big wheel. His attitude continues to annoy Big Noogie and things only get worse when he shows no loyalty towards John the First and shows how he uses the dog to scam the airlines. Even though he knows better, he decides to take Juveline up on her offer and sleep with her. "One offhand remark, one careless slipup...could be fatal for both of them" (252). He is right. Big Noogie already wants to kill him once he has his sand, but there is no way that he is going to change his mind about that once he finds out that Martin has dared to sleep with his girl.

Brock makes the same type of life and death decision every time he uses the defective crème. He knows that it is toxic, still for selfish reasons (impressing Deb) he continues to use it. Even when he thinks about throwing it away, he rationalizes that he should not do so because an innocent person could find it and start using it. The side effects of the crème continue to worsen. He is so depraved that he gets excited when he sees his commercial saying that he is a victim of the product his firm has the lawsuit against. His sleazy behavior leads to his death.

Even though Yancy is an ex-cop who wants to become a detective again, he consorts with criminals. One of these is Merry. He makes the decision to enter into a relationship with her and even though he knows that it is a bad idea. What's more, he does not try to hide it once he dives in. He kisses her in public. In hanging out with her, he is playing with fire and while he is still alive at the end of the novel, he does not get what he wants the most, his badge, partly because he is in a relationship with a questionable character.

Complexity

The characters in the novel tend to be complex. Even though they are criminals, they show signs of being good people and even though they are authority figures who one would think would be good, they are not. Merry, Dominick, Yancy, Brock, and Sonny are examples of the them that good and evil are on the eye of the beholder.



Merry is a criminal, something Sonny reminds Yancy of at the end of the novel. She works for the Mafia, causing fake car crashes and delivering the victims to those who have an issue to settle with them. She, however, justifies her actions by seeing herself as a bill collector. These people owe money and she is simply facilitating the collection of the payment. This justification suits her because no one gets killed. She takes her job so seriously that she creates the bikini-area shaving stunt as a way to distinguish herself. It is her unique selling point. In fact, it is true that Merry does not have a bad character. She sabotages the boat and gives Coolman a chance to escape when she realizes that she got the wrong man and that Zito is going to kill him. She tries to help mend Yancy's relationship with Rosa after she answers his phone. She also helps Yancy find Buck and Krill.

Like Merry, Dominick is a criminal. His infractions are worse than Merry's though because he is the head of a Mafia family. He orders deaths. Still, he has a good side. When Martin's dog disappears he is ready to do whatever is necessary to find it for Martin. Martin's attitude, that he will just get another dog, shocks Dominick. The dog is Martin's pet. He is now sure that Martin is truly scum. Readers later find out that he has found the dog and it is now his pet. He helps Yancy after Yancy returns the dog to him when it runs off once again. In addition, he seems to try to keep his girlfriend happy and he spares her life even though he orders Martin's death. Dominick takes care of his family. He gives the diamond ring to his son so that he can make his fiancée happy. He does not try to profit financially from it. He even carries a picture of his future daughter-in-law wearing it. Readers sense that it is much better off with her than it was with Deb.

Yancy, is not a criminal. He represents authority on the side of the law. Yet, his actions are questionable at times. He befriends Dominick and even has him help him buy the property next door to him. He finds Deb's diamond, but does not return it to her because he hopes that the couple will break up and not build their new house after all. In order to delay construction even further, he hires a friend who is also an actor to pretend that the plot has historical significance and thus has to be preserved. What's more, the main reason he wants to find Buck and Krill is to get his badge back. In order to do this he withholds information so that he will be the hero when the case is solved. He also decides to enter into a relationship with Merry who, while being fun, creative, and intelligent, is a criminal. She works for the Mafia and it is this relationship, in part, that denies him the return of his badge. Even though Sonny tells him he needs to stay out of trouble if he wants to get on his good side, he still chooses to cohort with her.

Finally Brock is a successful lawyer, but he has reached this level of success by being sleazy. Sonny is the sheriff, yet he walks on a fine line when it comes to taking contributions for his campaign, only really takes the death of the Muslim man seriously when the man's wife goes to the press, and is more concerned by what he is going to wear to his fund raiser than anything else while Burton fills him in on the case.



Couples

A motif that runs throughout the novel is that of couples. Almost all of the major characters have a partner or casual sex. Krill is with Mona, Brock is with Deb, Dominic is with Juveline, and Yancy is with Rosa and Merry. Their respective relationships implore readers to ask several questions. What makes a compatible couple? Do people make good choices when it comes to love? What are people looking for in a partner? Do people confuse lust with love? Does true love mean being willing to make sacrifices for each other?

Readers learn about Mona when the police start looking for Krill. She knows that Krill has trouble with the law, yet she still loves him and tries to protect him. When Burton questions her about Krill's whereabouts she tells him, "A million bucks says you wouldn't never snitch out your wife, no matter what she done. Cause she's everything to you, right? Your whole world" (287). She is happy that during the conversation, Burton does not call Benny by his nickname, Blister. This shows her that "he respected her as Benny's wife" (287)

Respect for being good enough to be someone's wife (even though she and Krill are not married) and a better life are two things that Mona wants. She goes to Key West with Benny when they first meet because he offers her something better and when he picks her up and she meets Coolman and Buck, she realizes that he was really going to give her a better life. "After a lifetime of being disappointed by men, Mona felt herself longing to believe that this time was different..." (288). She really wants this to be true, but cannot yet, herself believe it. She longs to believe it.

For his part, Krill has shown, in his own way that he cares for her. He goes off, but always returns home. He bought a big screen TV which allowed her to watch her favorite TV shows and he includes her when he thinks that he is going to be on the TV show when he could have simply run off without her. Their relationship gives both of them something that they cannot get on their own. They make sacrifices for each other. She hides him from the police and he risks being caught by meeting her.

Brock and Deb also get something from each other that they cannot obtain on their own, but in their case, the bond is superficial. Brock has a trophy wife and Deb has Brock's money and fame by association. Brock does not care enough about Deb to get her own engagement ring, or even to get the one he gives her resized. Deb does not have enough self-worth to demand that he does. Their relationship falters when there are sexual issues. Yancy even tells them that they are not meant for each other. "Besides ritually overspending on jewelry and clothes, what do you lovebirds have in common? This ridiculous villa you want to build, it's only a diversion from the brewing domestic storm" (181). His lecture seems to make them think because Brock does not get her a new diamond quickly when he finds out that he cannot retrieve the previous one and Deb leaves. The superficial basis of their relationship is not enough to sustain it.

Yancy is in two very different types of relationships in the novel. His relationship with Rosa lines him up to have the same type of relationship that causes Yancy to envy



Burton for his steadiness. Burton is married to his college sweetheart, participates in the lives of his children, and does not cheat on his wife. Burton's was a life of "clear boundaries and deep commitments" (67). Burton was the grownup even in his friendship with Yancy. Rosa is the type of woman whom which he could build a relationship similar to the one Burton has with his wife. He cannot, however, because he cannot set the necessary boundaries and make the necessary sacrifices to build a deep relationship. He looks for trouble. He makes bad decisions when it comes to setting boundaries with women, like Merry, who he knows want to sleep with him. He wants Rosa, but he wants her on his terms. That is not possible though as Rosa needs all of him. She worries about him losing his life. She thinks that he is crazy to do the crazy things he does to try to get his badge back. Not only are his actions life-threatening, but she thinks they are a waste of time as Sonny is not going to reinstate him. Her way of removing him from all of this is to take him out of the hot Key West environment and cool him off by placing him in a place where he is removed from it all - a place where nothing happens that could get him into trouble.

Even though Yancy wants to commit, he cannot. Thus he allows sexy women in his apartment and let them answer his phone. He enters into a relationship with Merry even though he knows he should not. He does not go to Norway.

Regarding his relationship with Merry, it is fun, but she is a criminal and he wants to be policeman again. Are they really interested in each other in the long-term and would their relationship work considering that they are on opposite sides of the law? Merry has already shown in her dealings with Coolman that she is an opportunist. Will she run off with someone else if she finds someone better than Yancy? As the novel ends and Yancy embarks on a journey with Merry on the boat, readers do not know whether their relationship has elements that will allow it to endure.

Titles

The search for fulfillment, self-respect, and inner self satisfaction is a common theme in literature. Within in *Razor Girl*, there are three major characters who find these things, or wish to find them through titles.

Yancy has a jobs that allows him to earn a decent living. He has a home that he loves and his has a girlfriend in Rosa who he feels lucky to have. He also has friends who are willing to help him when he is in need. Yet, he is obsessed with getting his badge back. His obsession drives him to the point that he risks his life to try to find Buck and later bring in Krill without Burton's help. He wants to make sure that he gets the credit. He risks his relationship with Rosa. He knows that she thinks he should give up the obsession, but he needs the title of detective to find fulfillment. When he is questioning witnesses about the shoplifting spree, he feels good when a woman calls him "detective." The narration also shows that his current job is wearing him down. "The roach patrol was sapping his spirits, one wriggling baggie at a time" (153). Yancy needs his title in order to be complete.



Martin is another person who obsesses over titles. He is already in trouble with the Mafia. Yet, when he tries to cut a deal with the Mafia, he wants to be the chairman and the CEO. When he gets to New York the crime lords say that they want the whole company. Martin agrees, after being threatened, but still says that he wants the chairman title.

Mona is another person who gets respect from a title. For her, the title is wife. She is not married to Krill, nor is she his common-law-wife as there is no such thing in Florida. Still, she is happy when Burton does not call Krill by the name of Blister. To her, this proves that Burton respects her as Krill's wife.

One's name is also a title. Amp shows how important having the right name is when it comes to fulfillment. He does not like people calling him by any of his given names. Instead he likes people to call him Amp. Merry hides behind her name and her name creates her identity. She is really someone else though with a name that she refuses to provide.

Women in Key West and Miami

Several of the characters that appear in the novel are women. It is interesting to note though that the women who stay in the Key West and Miami area all have similar traits. Each of them make up their own rules to get by in life and part of this involves using sex as a way to attract men. Women who are not like this leave Florida or are not main characters.

Merry, Deb, and Juveline are each versions of the same type of woman. Each of them uses sex and their sex appeal to get what they want. Merry uses it to catch her victims and to entice Yancy. Deb uses it to get Brock and try to entice Yancy. She admits that it is her go-to method for getting what she wants. Juveline uses it to be kept by Big Noogie. None of them are faithful. Merry was using Coolman until Yancy, a better catch, comes along. Deb offers Yancy sex several times in spite of being engaged to Brock and when Brock does not get her a new diamond quickly enough, she leaves him. Juveline has an affair with Martin. Using the assets they have, though, they all manage to get by in life.

Mona is a bit different in that she is loyal to Krill and she does not use sex to attract any of the other men in the novel. Yet, she still looks to a man to get her where she wants to be.

Rosa is different from all of them. She is intelligent and a professional with a good, legal, job. As such, she does not fit. First she leaves Key West to go to Miami. That is still not far enough away though, so she has to go to Norway. Another woman with values that are different from the Key West Crowd is Burton's wife. The narrative only talks about her in passing, however, and the mention of Burton's marriage makes it sound as if it is a rare thing.



Styles

Point of View

The author uses a third person perspective in the narrative. This is appropriate given the numerous characters in the novel and the fact that there is not one character who is constantly with the others. By using this point of view, the author gives a unique perspective to readers as he sometimes uses humor to explain events. For example, when Merry leaves Coolman and attaches herself to Yancy, the author writes, "She'd waltzed off to dine with her new friend, Inspector Yancy. Just the two of them, of course" (109). This perspective also allows the author to easily give readers background information as he does with he tells readers about the rats and introduces them to Clippy's. It is like the author is the reader's friend, guiding him or her through the wacky world of Key West. The narrator's voice builds well-defined characters.

The use of the third person also works well with the novel's structure. As one chapter often covers the main plot and sub plots containing different characters, it is helpful to be able to unite the narrative under one voice. This tactic eliminates potential confusion and allows the reader to enjoy the content as opposed to spending time trying to determine where they are in the content.

Language and Meaning

As the narrative takes place in Florida and not all of the characters are well educated, the novel contains Southern expressions and sentences that are not always grammatically correct. The similes also often contain comparisons that one may only find in Florida or the deep South. The simile that opens the novel is as example. "On the first day of February, sunny but cold as a frog's balls..." (30). Even though readers may not be personally familiar with the comparisons, the use of similes create vivid images that give readers a clear picture of the situation. The language adds a sense of authenticity to the novel, placing readers in Key West with the narrator and the characters.

In addition to similes the author also uses rich, descriptive words to describe events and thoughts. While the words are not too sophisticated, they are still more sophisticated than what the average person may use on a daily basis. Still, readers will not have problems understanding them.

As there are characters with specific professions such as Hollywood agents, lawyers, doctors, policemen, and chefs, language associated with the professions appears in the novel. For the most part, the words tend to be ones that readers will be familiar with, though. The author, however uses humor to show that those who live outside of Florida may not understand everything that goes on there. Fishing is an example. When Amp talks to Sonny, he offers to send some flies (for fishing) made with rooster feathers.



When the sheriff declines the offer saying, "Blue water's my thing," Amp has "no clue" what that means (187).

Structure

The novel is divided into chapters of approximately the same length. Each chapter is divided into different sections that move several plots forward. At times, the section contains a backstory or one character is in one place and later in the narrative readers see another character going to the same place so the two characters meet or cross paths.

As the novel contains a mystery, the novel is set up like one. It has a dramatic opening, major plot twists, rising tension, a confrontation, and a resolution. The subplots also follow this pattern. The author often ends the chapters with some form of irony or humor, or foreshadows, through a comment, that things are not going to go as a character would like it to go. This adds to the element of suspense as readers want to read on to find out what ends up happening. Along the way, there are clues and red herrings to facilitate the solving of the mystery and to keep the reader interested by throwing them off track at times. For instance, the author leads readers to believe that it is Buck who harasses the tourist on the train. Once readers remember, however that Lane realizes that Buck has sympathizers it makes sense that there would be a copy-cat Buck. Also, the Buck that readers have been introduced to is not violent. He runs from the bar. He gets scared on stage. Does the behavior on the train fit Buck's character?

While a lot goes on in the novel, the structure is tight. Everything serves a purpose and by the end of the novel everything comes together to complete the narrative.



Quotes

Clippy was Irv Cipowski. His partner was Neil Gluckman, who happened to be the major.

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 73)

Importance: This shows the superficial nature of the keys. First of all, Clippy's real name is not Clippy. He makes it shorter to fit in better. Secondly, the case gets action because the major is one of the owners. Power speaks.

At first they were distrusted because of their sobriety and competence, but in time, the locals accepted them.

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 74)

Importance: This makes a commentary on how crooked politicians are such the norm in today's society that even the local population has trouble accepting honest ones at first.

The Bahamian government, which is sensitive to negative publicity in the same way kittens are sensitive to firecrackers, immediately shut down Trebeaux's dredging rigs.

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 131)

Importance: This quote shows the hypocrisy of governments. In this case, the government does not care that what is being done is bad for the environment. It only cares about the negative publicity associated with it.

Jon David Ampergrodt liked to be called Amp. He was the chairman-director of Platinum Artists Management, the talent agency that employed Lane Coolman.

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 52)

Importance: This quote backs up the idea of people using their names to represent themselves. Amp is a cool sounding name so it is the one he uses instead of his real name which sound geeky.

While he wasn't one of those loudmouth fools who uttered every thought that popped into his head, his idea of self-editing often fell shy of the social norm.

-- Narrator (chapter 4 paragraph 63)

Importance: This quote helps define Yancy's character and sets him up in the mind of the readers as someone who will tell it like it is as opposed to putting on airs.

The election of a black president brought a boom in TV reality shows featuring feisty rednecks, and talent scouts began scouring the Dixie belt in a fevered search for the next Duck Dynasty franchise.

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 45)



Importance: This quote comments on how far the country has eroded into a society that only thinks about money. There is no respect for figures of authority, like the President, and instead of marveling on the historical significance, people saw a way of making money by attracting viewers who would prefer not to have a black president.

This is Florida, the land of the batshit, trigger-happy motherfuckers. Love it or leave it is what I say.

-- Andrew Yancy (chapter 6 paragraph 33)

Importance: Yancy says this to Burton in defense of his behavior towards Brock. In reality, this quote represents the actions of almost all of the characters. They all do things that would not be tolerated anywhere other than Florida.

Who knows...Not my circus, not my monkey.

-- Merry (chapter 13 paragraph 91)

Importance: Merry says this to Burton when he asks about the whereabouts of Coolman. The manner in which she blows Coolman off, after using him for as long as it suited her, shows the opportunistic side of her character. It is interesting to note that she comes back to Yancy even after she leaves to go back to work. One wonders whether she really feels something for him or she is only there because it he suits her purpose for some other reason. Readers, do not get the answer in this novel.

The roach patrol was sapping his spirits, one wriggling baggie at a time.

-- Narrator (chapter 13 paragraph 98)

Importance: This quote emphasizes how important titles are to people and how much they identify with their jobs. Yancy has a house he loves and does not seem to have trouble attracting women. Yet, it is his job and the fact that he is no longer a detective that is bringing him down. It is, in fact his motivation for finding Buck and capturing Krill. He will do anything to get his badge back, even if it means making unwise decisions and risking his life.

Vanity always trumps common sense, Coolman had whispered to Buck. First rule of Hollywood.

-- Lane Coolman (chapter 17 paragraph 91)

Importance: This quote shows why Lane has the last name of "Coolman." He is able to stay cool because his life is the la, la world of Hollywood. The fact that he is basically right allows him to continue to keep this attitude.

In his love life Yancy specialized in devising scenarios that could lead only to unwise decisions.

-- Narrator (chapter 19 paragraph 119)

Importance: This quote personifies Yancy. He makes unwise decisions in general



which get him into trouble and has led to his current job. In fact, his decision to get involved with Merry is one of the reasons he does not get his badge back.

He was a septic inspiration to impressionable mouth-breathers such as Benny the Blister, who had accosted an innocent Muslim man only because he imagined that's what his hero Captain Cock would have done.

-- Narrator (chapter 23 paragraph 88)

Importance: This quote shows the danger of such not only reality shows, but certain type of TV shows in general. While the producer may think they are harmless and see them only as a way of making money, there are people who watch them who take them seriously.