

# **The Rum Diary: The Long Lost Novel Study Guide**

**The Rum Diary: The Long Lost Novel by Hunter S.  
Thompson**

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## Plot Summary

*The Rum Diary* is Hunter S. Thompson's first novel. Written when he was still honing his skills, this novel shows peeks of the brilliant musical writing style Thompson would become known for later in his career. The plot showcases a young writer who finds himself in the virgin territory of San Juan, Puerto Rico writing for a paper that is months from going under. This writer, Paul Kemp, comes to Puerto Rico with the hope of finding adventure, but instead finds love, jealousy, and violence, all pickled in rum. It is a volatile story that will please Thompson's new and old fans alike.

Paul Kemp gets drunk before boarding the plane to Puerto Rico in order to better endure the flight. Before he boards, he sees a beautiful girl who he would like to meet boarding the same plane. Paul rushes to grab the only two open seats side by side in order to entice the girl to sit beside him, but an old man takes the seat Paul has saved for the girl. Paul attempts to move the man and is accused of battery. The girl gets away, setting the tone for Paul's entire night. Once Paul arrives in San Juan and settles in his hotel, he goes out to find a restaurant for dinner, but cannot find a suitable one. Paul decides to go to the offices of the paper he has come to work for, *The San Juan Daily News*.

At the office, Paul meets a photographer, Richard Sala. Sala takes Paul to a local bar that serves hamburgers for dinner and introduces him to couple of the other reporters who work at the paper. One of these is Yeamon, a tall, volatile man. Sala warns Paul that Yeamon is trouble. Yeamon, it turns out, knows the girl Paul saw on the plane. The girl, Chenault, is Yeamon's girlfriend. Despite this setback, Paul and Yeamon hit it off. Over the next few days, Paul settles in at the paper and makes friends with a number of the other people working there. Paul also becomes friendly with a local public relations man named Sanderson. However, Paul discovers that his new boss is a paranoid man who does not have the respect of his employees. Due to this, the paper is run with little supervision and is constantly rumored to be about to fold. Paul is told not to get too comfortable.

Paul visits Yeamon and Chenault at their home in the country one morning and finds them swimming in the ocean in the nude. Paul is struck by the easy rapport between these two and is jealous not only of their rapport, but their youth and simple happiness. Paul leaves and returns a short time later. Chenault makes everyone breakfast and Paul finds himself even deeper drawn to her beauty and her wit, even as he watches the control and lack of respect Yeamon showers on her. A few weeks later, Paul is drawn into a fight between Yeamon and their boss. Yeamon has written a piece on the immigration of Puerto Ricans to New York. This piece is twenty-four pages long and virtually useless to the newspaper. The boss threatens to fire Yeamon when he refuses to edit it. Then the boss gives the piece to Paul and tells him to edit it. However, upon reading the piece, Paul decides that it should be run in a five part series, refusing to edit it. The boss becomes enraged and fires Yeamon anyway.



Paul and Sala go to visit Yeamon a few days later to see how he is doing without a steady income. Sala and Paul witness Yeamon hitting Chenault before the three of them take off to have a few drinks at a local bar that Yeamon insists will give him credit. However, once they have shared in more than ten dollars of rum, the manager of the bar insists they pay their bill. Yeamon refuses and will not allow Sala or Paul to pay either. The three of them leave only to be chased down by the bar's customers and local police. A brawl erupts and the three men are beaten severely before being taken into police custody. At court later that night, the cops lie and say that Paul, Sala, and Yeamon started the brawl. Sanderson shows up and drops a few influential names that persuade the judge to set bail for all three.

In exchange for Sanderson's help in court, Paul takes on several writing assignments for a couple of Sanderson's clients. One of these requires Paul to travel to a small nearby island where a businessman is preparing to put up a resort. Afterward, Paul goes to St. Thomas to meet Yeamon and Chenault at carnival. Carnival is a loud and out of control party in town, so Paul and his friends go out to the pier to find a quieter party among the yachts. Someone suggests they go to a party at a house on the outskirts of town. When they arrive, Chenault goes off to dance with some of the locals. Before Paul and Yeamon know what is happening, Chenault is whisked off with some men who clearly have perverted intentions. Paul and Yeamon try to rescue Chenault, but are stopped by the locals. The next day, they go to the police, but find little help there. Paul and Yeamon decide to go home and hope for the best.

Paul goes back to work trying not to think about Chenault and what might have happened to her. One night, Chenault arrives on his doorstep, clearly disturbed by what happened to her on the island. Paul takes her in, telling himself he will send her back to Yeamon the next day. However, Paul cannot make himself send her away. When Yeamon finds out about Chenault's return, he renounces his attachment to her. Paul and Chenault become lovers.

A few days later the paper folds. The reporters are so angry that they track the boss down at a party and attack him, intending to do him bodily harm for leaving them all destitute, Yeamon included. The boss wards off their attack only to die of a heart attack a few minutes later. Yeamon and another reporter led the attack and are accused of causing the death. Paul helps Yeamon escape the island before making plans to leave himself, going to New York to be with Chenault.



# San Juan, Winter of 1958,

## San Juan, Winter of 1958, Summary

*The Rum Diary* is Hunter S. Thompson's first novel. Written when he was still honing his skills, this novel shows peeks of the brilliant musical writing style Thompson would become known for later in his career. The plot showcases a young writer who finds himself in the virgin territory of San Juan, Puerto Rico, writing for a paper that is months from going under. This writer, Paul Kemp, comes to Puerto Rico with the hope of finding adventure, but instead finds love, jealousy, and violence, all pickled in rum. It is a volatile story that will please Thompson's new and old fans alike.

In the early fifties when San Juan became a tourist town, a man named Al turned his patio into a bar. Al served nothing but beer and rum at first, later adding hamburgers to the menu. As the number of tourists and Americans in town increased, so did the size of Al's bar, until it had taken over his entire house and he was forced to move his family to a better part of town. At the same time, a man named Lotterman came to San Juan and began an English language paper named *The San Juan Daily News*. Al's became a favorite hangout of the reporters who worked for Lotterman. These men ran the gamut from hard-nosed investigative reporters to vagrants simply looking for a way to pass the time. Paul Kemp was one of these, though he was never sure which, the hard-nosed reporter or the vagrant.

## San Juan, Winter of 1958, Analysis

San Juan became a tourist trap in the early fifties and as a result several businesses began to appear to cater to these new customers. One of these places was a bar built in the backyard of a residential home, Al's. Al's was a simple place that served only three things, beer, rum, and hamburgers. Within a short time it became a favorite hangout of local Americans and began to expand from the backyard into the house. Soon Al was forced to hire help and move his family to a proper home in a better part of town. This introduction of Al's introduces the reader to one of the main settings of the novel. It also introduces a mood to the reader, a mood of drinking and desperation that will prevail throughout the rest of the novel.

Also introduced is the newspaper, *The San Juan Daily News*. This paper is the only English language paper on the island and supports a group of reporters that vary from the hard-nosed investigative reporter to the vagrant simply looking for a way to pay the bills while enjoying the exotic living San Juan has to offer. Paul Kemp comes to San Juan during this period, unsure which category he falls in. In this way, Paul introduces himself to the reader, giving the impression of a young reporter looking as much for adventure as notoriety.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Paul Kemp goes drinking with his friends the night he is to fly to Puerto Rico, hoping to get drunk enough to sleep on the plane. Paul is very drunk when he arrives at the airport. However, he is not too drunk to appreciate the pretty girl in line in front of him. Paul rushes to the plane, hoping to get two seats beside each other so he can entice the girl to sit beside him. However, an old man takes the extra seat despite the typewriter Paul has put on it. Paul tries to make the man leave before the girl boards. When the man refuses, Paul is accused of hurting the man. The girl sits further up on the plane. When the plane lands, Paul tries to wait until the girl reaches his aisle before standing, but again the old man interferes by trying to climb over him. Paul tries to restrain the man and is again accused of hurting him, causing him to be retained by the pilot until he thinks he might be arrested. The girl again escapes.

Paul goes to his hotel and sleeps all day. That night he tries to find a place to have dinner, but has no luck. Paul then gets a cab to the offices of his new employer, *The San Juan Daily News*. Outside the office, Paul watches a mob attack a tall man and waits until the police come before he attempts to enter the building. Inside, Paul learns the mob is the product of a wildcat strike and the tall man is a fellow reporter, Yeamon. Paul also meets the owner of the paper and his new boss, Lotterman, and the photographer, Sala. Paul and Sala hit it off and Sala agrees to take Paul to a local bar, Al's, for dinner. Over dinner, Paul and Sala discuss the paper. Sala warns Paul that if he is sane, he will leave Puerto Rico by the end of the month. Sala believes all the people who work for the paper are nuts and tells Paul which ones he should watch out for and which ones are okay. Sala also tells Paul that the paper is in trouble and most likely will not be around much longer.

Yeamon joins Paul and Sala at Al's. Yeamon tells Paul about his girlfriend, Chenault, and how she saw a man on her flight out that was beating an old man. Paul is embarrassed, but admits that man was him. Sala and Yeamon look at him as though he is crazier than they first thought, but Paul explains that it was a misunderstanding and the man was attempting to climb over him when he knocked him back. The conversation shifts with Paul's explanation and they begin to discuss where they would go should the paper fold.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Paul Kemp is introduced in this chapter as a young man who likes to drink and who likes pretty girls. Paul goes so far as to risk jail time to get the attention of a young girl, attention that turns sour when Paul restrains an old man from climbing out of his seat. Paul misses out on the girl and is clearly disappointed, but goes on with his life. Paul is young and realizes that there are other girls out there for him. Now Paul focuses on the



adventure of starting a new job. However, the job appears in jeopardy from the first moment when the cabby does not even know where the offices are located. This seems ominous to the reader, especially when coupled with the riot taking place outside the doors when Paul arrives. The riot introduces violence into the plot which suggests that this will not be an ordinary working place for Paul.

Paul meets several people who will be important characters as the plot continues to develop. The first is Sala. Sala is a photographer for the paper and he seems to be the doomsayer of the plot. Sala informs Paul that everyone working for the paper is insane and that the paper is about to fold, news Paul does not want to hear just as he is starting a new job. Then Paul meets his new boss, Lotterman, a man who appears to be out of control and on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Lotterman's attitude also is not comforting to Paul and it emphasizes Sala's prediction of the future of the paper. Finally, Paul meets Yeamon. Like Paul, Yeamon is a reporter, but he has already shown behavior that is curious and seems fitting with Sala's declaration that he is insane. The first time Paul sees Yeamon he is taking on an entire crowd of people. Yeamon's behavior suggests he is not afraid of confrontation, and it also gives the reader some idea that he might not avoid violence later in the novel.

Paul learns that the girl he was so fascinated with on the plane is Yeamon's girlfriend. Paul is disappointed, but finds himself more concerned with protecting his character when Yeamon repeats the story of how he attacked the old man on the plane. Paul successfully defends himself, but is not happy with this turn of events. Paul spends the rest of the night listening to Yeamon and Sala discuss the demise of the paper, adding to the sense that Paul will not be in Puerto Rico for long.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

Paul goes to the office the next day and talks to Lotterman about the rumors he heard about the paper folding. Lotterman becomes irate and tells Paul not to worry about it. Then Lotterman sends Paul into the library to do research. The editor, Nick Segarra, is supposed to speak to Paul about the paper and his responsibilities, but before they can begin, a friend of Segarra's interrupts. This man, Sanderson, used to work at the paper but is now a PR man for a local agency. Later, Paul goes to Al's for dinner and runs into Yeamon. Yeamon tells him about his house out on the outskirts of town. The house is on the beach. Paul is impressed and suggests he might like to get something like that for himself since he will have to leave the hotel soon. Yeamon suggests he get a car, too.

Sala talks Paul into going with him to take some pictures at the local casinos. Paul plays a few games at the first casino and at the third meets a friendly young woman. Paul and Sala leave the casino with this girl and her friend. The girl suggests they go to the beach, but her friend does not like the idea. Sala ends up leaving Paul and the girl alone on the beach while he takes the other girl home. Paul and the girl spend the night making love on the beach before parting the next morning.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

Paul starts his first day at the paper and spends part of it talking to Lotterman. Lotterman assures Paul that the paper is not about to go under and puts him to work researching past articles published by the paper to give him a feel for the paper's style. Paul is supposed to have a conversation with the editor as well discuss his duties, but this talk is interrupted. Paul meets Sanderson and the addition of this new character suggests to the reader that Sanderson might prove important as the plot continues to develop.

Later Paul discusses the possibility of renting a home of his own with Yeamon, excited by the idea of renting a place on the beach similar to Yeamon's. Paul's thought of renting an apartment or house gives the reader a sense that Paul intends to remain in San Juan for an extended amount of time despite the rumors of the paper folding. Later Paul goes to the casinos with Sala. The casinos prove to be tame, but Paul meets a girl there that he spends the night with on the beach. Paul's behavior suggests he is not terribly attached to Chenault now that he knows she is Yeamon's girl, but he is not interested in commitment either, since this girl is clearly a one time event for him.





## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 Summary

On Tuesday, Paul is sent to the airport to meet a plane that is supposed to carry the mayor of Miami, but the mayor never shows up. Paul calls the office to report this and is told to stay away because there is a riot outside with the union strikers. Paul decides to spend the rest of the morning visiting Yeamon at his house on the beach. It is a long drive and the road is not paved, but Paul makes it safely. Paul arrives at the house, which turns out to be nothing more but a one room shack, and finds it empty. While searching around for Yeamon, he finds him and Chenault swimming naked in the ocean. Paul is jealous of their youth and their easy way with each other, but not so jealous that he chooses to interrupt. Instead, Paul goes down to a local store to give the couple time alone.

When Paul returns, he finds Yeamon and Chenault preparing for breakfast. Chenault insists on feeding Paul even though he protests that he has already eaten. Afterward Yeamon and Paul go fishing for lobster. Yeamon invites Paul to stay for lunch, but Paul has to get back to the office. At the office, Sala invites Paul to go with him to the University, but Sala has an epileptic fit after becoming upset at a group of children making fun of his car and they end up turning around.

### Chapter 3 Analysis

Paul goes out to visit Yeamon at his house and comes upon a romantic scene between Yeamon and Chenault. Paul is jealous. Paul puts his jealousy down to the fact that Yeamon seems so young and carefree, touching on both the theme of jealousy and the theme of youth. However, the reader notes how carefully Paul describes Chenault's nakedness and realizes he must be a little jealous of Yeamon's relationship with her as well. The reader knows, because of the last chapter, that Paul has no trouble finding girls for himself, so it must be something about Chenault that keeps dragging his thoughts back to her.

Paul helps Yeamon catch some lobster before returning to the office. Paul seems uncomfortable in Yeamon's company. Perhaps it is Paul's feelings for Chenault that cause this discomfort. Whatever it is, Paul chooses to leave rather than share another meal with the couple. Paul goes back to the office where Sala quickly whisks him off to the University, only to turn around because Sala has an epileptic fit after becoming aggravated at the traffic and a group of rude children. This episode shows Paul's growing affection for Puerto Rico and Sala's growing dislike of the same place.



# Chapters 4-5

## Chapters 4-5 Summary

Paul has his postponed conversation with Segarra and finds it to be a waste of time. Paul decides that Segarra's sole purpose at the paper is as a go-between, helping the staff of the paper make important friends in the community of San Juan. Paul also comes to believe that for some reason Segarra has chosen to blacklist him, keeping him out of the social society of San Juan. Paul had not wanted to be a part of this social circle, but finds the act offensive anyway. Almost as if in retaliation, Paul becomes friends with Segarra's friend, Sanderson. Paul begins spending a great deal of time at Sanderson's. Sanderson's house is like a bus station for the influential and wealthy in the area. There is always someone at Sanderson's, like a perpetual party. Paul likes all of Sanderson's friends, except for his neighbor Zimburger. Zimburger is a retired Marine and Paul finds him irritating.

Paul moves into Sala's apartment until he can find a place of his own. The place is small, hot, and noisy, so neither Paul nor Sala spend much time in it. Paul routinely goes to Al's for breakfast, lunch and dinner. One morning he finds Chenault. Paul is curious about Chenault, so he spends breakfast asking her a few questions, learning that she is happy being with Yeamon. After dropping Chenault at the bank, Paul goes to the office where he is dragged into the middle of a fight between Yeamon and Lotterman. Yeamon has spent several weeks working on a story about immigration from Puerto Rico and has turned in a twenty-four page story. Lotterman cannot use such a large story and insists Yeamon shorten it, but Yeamon refuses. Lotterman gives the story to Paul and tells him to shorten it, but Paul decides it is such a good story it should be run as is. As a result, Lotterman fires Yeamon and refuses to give him severance.

## Chapters 4-5 Analysis

Paul believes his editor, Segarra, dislikes him, and as a result has someone exclude him from the social circles among the San Juan elite. Paul dislikes Segarra as well, thinking the only reason he has a job with the paper is because of his influence with the San Juan elite. As a result, Paul thumbs his nose at Segarra by becoming a regular at the home of his good friend Sanderson. Sanderson is a PR man who has a great many friends. Paul meets people of all kinds at Sanderson's, finding himself in the middle of a classy group of people despite Segarra's attempts to blacklist him. The only person among these that Paul dislikes is a man named Zimburger. Zimburger is a zealous retired Marine and a drunk. Paul dislikes him with a passion, a fact that should make the reader think this man will return to the narration later in the novel, if only as an irritation to the main character.

Paul moves in with Sala until he can find a place of his own. However, Paul has yet to begin his search. Paul later finds himself in the middle of an argument between



Lotterman and Yeamon. Despite the fact that Paul is new on the job and should be attempting to get himself on Lotterman's good side as often as possible as suggested by the theme of ambition, Paul takes Yeamon's side in this argument. Yeamon has written an exceedingly long piece for the paper that Lotterman feels is useless. However, Paul reads it and identifies with what Yeamon has written, causing him to come to the conclusion that it should be run as is. Lotterman disagrees, firing Yeamon for his incompetence and his insubordination. Yeamon is not happy, especially since Lotterman has refused to pay him severance, suggesting to the reader that this situation will continue to fester in the following chapters.



## Chapters 6-7

### Chapters 6-7 Summary

The city editor quit a few days before Yeamon was fired and Lotterman is forced to take over his responsibilities. Lotterman offers the job to Paul since no one else in the office is capable, but Paul turns it down as a result of Lotterman's treatment of Yeamon. Not only this, but Paul is becoming aware that the paper is in trouble. Lotterman is an ex-communist and this threatens his reputation in Puerto Rico, where the population does not trust communists. Also, half the staff is full of drunks, especially Moberg, who is drunk almost constantly. There are constant rumors that the paper is about to go under and Paul is beginning to believe them.

In March, Sala has a freelance job in Fajardo and invites Paul to go with him. Paul watches as Sala takes his photos and then they buy some rum and ice before going to Yeamon's. Sala is curious how Yeamon is surviving after being fired. They arrive to find Yeamon in good spirits despite his bad luck. However, when Chenault returns to the house after sunbathing in the nude, Yeamon becomes irate with her because there are a group of locals who watch her from the bushes. Yeamon and Chenault fight, making Paul and Sala uncomfortable. Yeamon suggests a game of football with a coconut, and Paul agrees to distract Yeamon from Chenault. However, after the game is done Yeamon and Chenault argue again, resulting in Yeamon hitting Chenault. Neither Paul nor Sala is happy with this turn of events, but they do not do anything about it.

Yeamon decides to go into town with Paul and Sala when the rum runs out. Yeamon locks Chenault in the house and leads the way on his scooter. Yeamon decides to stop at a local bar where he can get a tab. However, after the three men have drunk eleven dollars worth of rum, the manager wants his money. Yeamon insists on a tab, but the man will not agree. Yeamon gets angry and walks out of the bar. The manager follows, promising to call the police. Yeamon continues to leave. Paul and Sala follow. Before they are even half a mile down the road, Yeamon, Paul, and Sala are overrun by patrons of the bar. A fight breaks out and all three are badly beaten before the police arrest them.

### Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Paul has only been in Puerto Rico a short time, but already he is beginning to believe the rumors that the paper is going under. Paul has gotten to know his coworkers and sees that many of them are drunks who would not be able to get a good job with another paper. Paul also sees that Lotterman is a man on the edge. Lotterman is having a nervous breakdown trying to keep his paper afloat. Not only this, but Lotterman has a political history that threatens his success in Puerto Rico. Lotterman was once a communist and the people of Puerto Rico had a bad experience with this political



affiliation and do not wish to have a similar experience, thus threatening Lotterman's success.

Paul and Sala go to visit Yeamon to see how he is handling his unemployment. Clearly Yeamon is not handling it well, as exemplified by the drastic change in his relationship with Chenault. Where Yeamon and Chenault were happy before, now they are fighting constantly. Yeamon even hits Chenault in front of Sala and Paul. Paul and Sala do nothing about this, however, because it is not appropriate for them to interfere between a man and woman. At least, that is how things were in the fifties, the time in which this novel is set. However, the reader must wonder how this makes Paul feel since he is secretly in love with Chenault. The reader also wonders, if given the chance, will Paul do something if this were to happen again.

Paul and Sala go drinking with Yeamon, understanding that Yeamon will run a tab and pay it later. However, when the manager refuses to run a tab, Yeamon leaves the bar and Paul and Sala can only follow. This leads to a brawl that ends with the three of them being arrested. Once again, Paul and Sala are in a position where they can do something to stop Yeamon in his reckless behavior, but they chose not to do anything, causing them to be beaten and arrested. The next chapter will show the reader what happens to an American arrested in Puerto Rico.



# Chapters 8-9

## Chapters 8-9 Summary

Paul and his friends arrive at the police station and are put in a cell. When a cop comes to interview them, another fight breaks out when Sala attempts to stand. All three are again beaten and then they are roughly taken from the cell and led down a hallway. Paul sees Moberg at a desk and screams to him to get help, hoping he is not to drunk to realize who is yelling at him. Paul and his friends spend six hours in another cell before they are taken in front of a judge. The cops give their side of the story first, and from what little Paul and Sala can understand, they are being accused of starting a fight with the cops. They try to protest, but are silenced by the judge. Then Sanderson appears. Sanderson begins dropping names and making veiled threats to the judge. Finally the judge agrees to release Paul, Sala, and Yeamon on bond, setting Paul's bond lower than the others. Moberg uses a company check to make the bond.

Paul, Sala, and Yeamon go back to Sala's to get some sleep. However, before they have slept for long, Sala remembers his car has been abandoned on the road to Yeamon's house. Sala is afraid the car will have been stripped and stolen. They get a cab and race out to the road only to find the car is still there, although the wheels have been stolen. Yeamon's scooter is still there as well, but it has been hidden in the bushes as if someone had intended to return for it later. Sala sends Yeamon to call for a tow truck. When the tow truck arrives, it has four wheels. Sala signs Lotterman's name to the invoice. Afterward they go to have breakfast together. Later Paul visits Sanderson to thank him for his help. Sanderson tells him that he has a job for him with *The New York Times* in order to stay true to his word in court that Paul already worked for the paper. Paul agrees to meet Sanderson in his office to discuss it and then he goes for a walk, ending up at Al's.

## Chapters 8-9 Analysis

The police in San Juan have it out for Paul, Yeamon, and Sala because they are Americans and they work for the *News*. After beating them a second time, the cops stash the three men in a cell for six hours without the liberty of a phone call before taking them before a cop who seems intent on putting them in jail. However, Sanderson comes to the rescue, dropping some important names and encouraging the judge to let the men out on bond. For some reason Paul gets a lower bond, something that will bother him in later chapters. The bond is paid by Moberg with a check from the paper. Lotterman is out of town, suggesting he does not know about the bond, and with the fact that the paper is struggling, Lotterman most likely will not be happy about it.

The three men then rush out to the country to rescue their vehicles, finding them relatively unharmed except for Sala's missing wheels. Once again, Lotterman pays for something without his knowledge, suggesting it is not uncommon that the reporters use

paper money on more than expenses related to their jobs. Paul visits Sanderson to thank him for his help and is blackmailed into taking a small job with the *Times*. This job will propel the next few chapters forward as Paul learns its nature and begins his work.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Paul visits Sanderson at his office the next day. After they discuss the *Times* article, Sanderson tells Paul about another job he would like him to take. The PR firm is representing a man who is attempting to build a resort on a nearby island. This man would like to have a brochure about the resort written and Sanderson wants Paul to do it. The only problem is that the man is Zimburger. Paul agrees anyway and learns that he will have to travel to the island that weekend with Zimburger in order to see the area where the resort will be built. Paul leaves there and goes to Al's where he finds Yeamon and Chenault. Paul's picture is on the front page of the *Diario* along with Sala and Yeamon, making their arrest front page news. Paul is not happy, but learns that Lotterman is out of town looking for financing and knows nothing of the events of the night before.

Chenault and Yeamon are planning on going to St. Thomas for carnival that weekend and they invite Paul to come along. Paul agrees to meet them there after his business with Zimburger. Then Yeamon tells Paul he wants to go to Europe or maybe Mexico after his lawsuit against Lotterman for his severance is done. Paul does not think Yeamon will really go since he has no job prospects in these places and suggests instead he talk to Sanderson about a job. Later, Paul goes back to Sala's apartment and thinks about finding his own place.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

On top of his job with the paper, Paul gets a job writing articles for the *Times*. This job does not pay much, but Sanderson also offers him a job writing a brochure. Paul takes the job even though it means working with Zimburger. Paul had thought Zimburger was just a drunk Marine, but now that he knows he is very rich he sees no problem cashing in on some of that cash if he can. Later Paul finds out his picture is on the front page of the local Spanish language newspaper. Paul is not happy about it. However, the news that Lotterman is out of town and knows nothing about the arrest or the bond money makes Paul feel a little better.

Paul talks to Yeamon about his plans to leave Puerto Rico and either go south or to Europe. Paul does not think this will happen. To the reader, Paul seems a little jealous of Yeamon's ability to just pick up and go without any thought to his welfare, touching again on the theme of youth and immaturity. However, Paul does not seem to envy Yeamon's lack of funds or the instability of his lifestyle. However, Paul does make plans to meet Yeamon and Chenault in St. Thomas for carnival, an event that will be explored in several of the next chapters. Finally, Paul returns to Sala's apartment and resolves to find a place of his own.





# Chapters 11-12

## Chapters 11-12 Summary

The next day, Paul finds an apartment over someone's garage and pays the first month's rent. Later Paul goes into the office and learns that Lotterman has found out about the bonds. Lotterman and Moberg had a huge fight in the office over it. Lotterman is afraid the check will bounce and cause him to lose what little is left of his reputation among the social elite in San Juan. Lotterman calls Paul into his office and asks him about the arrest. After Paul tells his story, Lotterman begins to complain about Yeamon suing him for severance and about the money problems of the paper. Afterward, Sanderson calls Paul and sets up a meeting between him and Zimburger the next morning. They meet and decide to fly to the island Thursday. Paul then arranges to meet Yeamon and Chenault on St. Thomas on Friday.

Paul spends the next few days trying to find out just how bad of shape the paper is really in. When Paul calls in sick for the weekend, the editor jokes with him that everyone is jumping ship like a bunch of rats. The next morning, Paul flies to Vieques with Zimburger and his two business partners. When they drive out to the site of the planned project, Paul is impressed with the beauty of the area and thinks it is a shame that Zimburger wants to develop it. When they return to town, the business partners are unhappy and want to leave right away. Paul begs off, telling everyone he is staying to catch the ferry the next morning for St. Thomas. After Zimburger leaves, his man on the island sets Paul up in the local hotel, paying for it himself in order to charge Zimburger for it. The man also provides Paul with his meals and gives him a ride to St. Thomas the next morning, all on Zimburger's tab. Paul enjoys his stay and feels that the island is a money-making opportunity waiting to be found, wishing he had the ambition to do something about it.

## Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Lotterman finds out about the bond check and is furious, but he can not do anything about it because if he does not honor it he will lose face with a community that already does not trust him. Lotterman pulls Paul into his office and cries on his shoulder, but Paul has little patience for it. Paul would rather talk to Chenault and Yeamon about going to St. Thomas for carnival. However, Paul does keep his ear to the ground to find out if the paper is really going under as everyone seems to believe it is.

Paul goes to Vieques with Zimburger and finds the island enchanting and Zimburger untrustworthy. Zimburger's own business partners seem unhappy with him and there is clear tension when the visit to the site is over. Paul is unconcerned about this, however, because it is really none of his concern. In fact, Paul would be happy if Zimburger's project does not happen because he likes the natural beauty of the place. Afterward,

Paul stays behind while everyone else leaves, putting his stay on Zimburger's tab at the insistence of Zimburger's island man.



# Chapters 13-14

## Chapters 13-14 Summary

Paul arrives at St. Thomas and makes his way downtown. Paul is supposed to meet Yeamon and Chenault at the post office, but the crowd is so dense he cannot get through, so he goes to the balcony of a local hotel instead. After a while Yeamon finds him here. Yeamon, Paul, and Chenault go to a local restaurant and have a meal before returning to the hotel with a large amount of rum. Later, they go to a local beach to sleep since they have been told all the hotels are full and this is the best place to sleep. The next morning, Paul wakes up and finds Yeamon and Chenault sleeping naked beside him. Paul takes a long look at Chenault before he strips himself and goes into the ocean for a bath.

While Chenault and Yeamon get cleaned up, Paul goes to the airport for some breakfast. Afterward they meet up again and go back into town. They stumble on a group of people who have broken into a liquor store. Paul wants to join in, but is afraid of the police. However, he finally works up the courage and steals three bottles of whiskey. From there, they join the parties of carnival, but it becomes too crowded. Yeamon suggests they go to the harbor and look for a boat on which he might be able to get a ride south. However, no one is willing to take him on. Instead they meet up with a guy who is willing to give them a ride back into town. They go, hoping to find a good party.

## Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Paul meets Chenault and Yeamon for carnival and immediately begins to get very drunk. They go to eat and later party in a hotel. They sleep on the beach because all the hotels are already booked. This is the ultimate party experience, proving how young and immature they all are, not just Yeamon. Paul wants to have fun, not make a success of himself. This brings into the narration the theme of ambition. Paul seems like an ambitious guy at the beginning of the novel, taking the job in San Juan to further pad his resume in order to make him a candidate for a larger paper, but now he seems like he just wants to have fun and stay drunk like everyone else.

The next morning Paul and his friends rejoin the party after first stealing from a liquor store that has been ransacked by looters. The party becomes tiresome, however, and they decide to go to the harbor and check out the yachts in hopes of finding either a party or a boat that will be willing to take Yeamon down south. They do not find a ride, but they do find one guy who invites them to go back into town and party with him. Once in town, they return to the hotel from the day before, which suggests to the reader that they might find a good party in the next chapter.



# Chapters 15-16

## Chapters 15-16 Summary

Paul and his friends move on to a party at a local bar where they meet a girl who invites them to another party. This party is at a private residence where the owner is charging everyone three bucks to get in. Yeamon is annoyed, but goes anyway. Inside, Paul goes off with the girl who invited them, but finds her boring and loses her in the crowd. When Paul finds Yeamon to suggest they leave, Yeamon shows him where a very drunk Chenault is dressing with a local man. Yeamon tries to drag her away, but she will not go. Soon, Chenault and her date are surrounded by the party goers. Chenault seems to be in some sort of trance and she begins to take off all her clothes. Yeamon tries to stop her, but the crowd holds him back. Chenault is soon naked. The man with Chenault takes her hand and leads her from the house. Paul follows while Yeamon struggles with the crowd. Paul and Yeamon are grabbed by a bunch of men and told to leave. Paul insists on finding Chenault, but the locals throw him into a car and tell him to leave.

Paul and Yeamon attempt to find a cop in town, but have no luck. Instead they go to the beach and sleep. The next morning they go to the police station, but the cop who finally comes in will not take them seriously. The cop does agree to go to the house where the party was, but when the homeowner denies knowing anything about Chenault, the cop advises Paul and Yeamon to return to San Juan and forget about Chenault. Paul and Yeamon decide to do exactly that. Paul goes to the newspaper and learns that Segarra has quit. This does not bode well for the paper. Later, Paul goes to Sanderson and turns in his article for the *Times* and asks about the possibility of making it his permanent job.

## Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Paul, Yeamon, and Chenault go to a party and before long Chenault, who is very drunk, becomes involved with a local. Yeamon and Paul try to help her, but the locals will not let them. Paul tries after Yeamon is beaten by the locals, but again they stop him. Later they go to the police, but this is no help either. Chenault is gone and there does not appear to be anything anyone can do about it. Paul and Yeamon decide to leave her behind and return to San Juan. The behavior of all three again illustrates the theme of youth and immaturity since none of them would have been in this position if not for their poor judgment.

Paul returns home to find that the paper is on the verge of going under, as evidenced by the fact that Segarra has left. Everyone is worried and Lotterman is missing. However, Paul's mind is still on Chenault. Paul tells Sala about it, giving the reader an idea that he is feeling guilty for what he and Yeamon have done in leaving her behind. However, Paul has done nothing to find Chenault and has left her to whatever might happen. This seems callous and again suggests immaturity.



# Chapters 17-18

## Chapters 17-18 Summary

The next morning Chenault shows up at Paul's apartment. Chenault seems to be in a state of shock, though she has no memory of what has happened, nor is there any physical evidence that she had been assaulted. Paul does not know what to do with her and decides to leave her in his apartment while he goes to work. That night they discuss St. Thomas, but Chenault cannot remember anything and does not want to talk about it. The next morning Chenault is more like her old self. After Chenault makes breakfast, she climbs into the shower and seduces Paul. Paul, who had been scheming ways to get Chenault back from Yeamon, decides to let her stay. Paul goes to Yeamon's, tells him about Chenault's return, and retrieves her things.

On Friday, Lotterman is back from his latest fundraising trip. Lotterman announces that he has gotten financial backing from a friend in Miami. However, Lotterman cannot pay anyone until Monday because his new silent partner does not want him to make any financial moves until he has signed the contract sealing their partnership. Lotterman then asks Paul into his office and tells him that Segarra's leaving has left them hurting and begins to dump his problems on Paul. Paul becomes angry and tells Lotterman that he quits. At home, Paul tells Chenault that he's tired of San Juan and wants to move on. Chenault thinks it is a good idea and asks him to take her with him.

## Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Chenault has returned to San Juan and to Paul. Paul does not know what to do with her because now she is damaged goods and he is not sure he wants to be involved with her. However, when Chenault comes out of her shock from the experience on St. Thomas she is like the old Chenault and Paul cannot keep away from her. Paul becomes her lover and ends her relationship with Yeamon for her. This is the culmination of the theme of love and jealousy that began when Paul first saw Chenault at the airport in New York.

Lotterman announces to the paper that he has found financial backing. However, they cannot get paid until the partnership is formed. This upsets everyone and Lotterman takes Paul into his office to dump his frustrations on him. Paul becomes angry and quits his job. Paul effectively ends his reason for being in San Juan and tells Chenault he would like to leave. Chenault thinks it is a good idea, if only he will take her with him, giving the plot a direction for the final chapters.



# Chapters 19-21

## Chapters 19-21 Summary

The next morning, Paul has breakfast with Chenault before wandering out to Al's. Paul is feeling nostalgic about his early days in San Juan. Paul wanders around town, looking for something to do, something to make him feel better about the way things have gone. When he returns to the apartment, Paul discovers that Chenault has gone back to New York. On Monday, Paul goes to the paper to get his last paycheck and learns no one has gotten paid. The paper has folded. Everyone from the paper is angry.

That night a group from the paper goes to a party where Lotterman is going to be. A couple of the reporters want to confront Lotterman, including Yeamon. Paul watches as they walk up to Lotterman and begin an argument. Lotterman begins to scream that someone is trying to kill him. In the chaos that takes place after this announcement, Yeamon and another reporter jump the fence at the back of the property. Paul slips out when the police are called and goes to Al's. There he learns that Lotterman had a heart attack and died.

When Paul returns to his apartment he finds Yeamon there. Yeamon is scared because the police are looking for him, saying he had a hand in Lotterman's death. Paul drives Yeamon out to Fajardo where he can get a ferry off the island. The next morning, Paul arranges to fly back to New York.

## Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Paul is feeling nostalgic, as though something good has ended. Paul spends the afternoon trying to regain that feeling he had when he first came to San Juan, but has no success. When he gets home, Paul finds Chenault gone. Later, the reader learns that Paul has decided to return to New York and assumes he will reconnect with Chenault there. Finally, this love story has been concluded.

The paper has folded, ending the suspense that has been building since the early part of the novel about the paper's fate. However, this leaves everyone without a paycheck, leaving a large group of very angry people. Not only this, but Yeamon has also been cheated out of his severance and is in the middle of litigation over it. So when they learn that Lotterman will be at a party that night, they all go to confront him. Someone pulls a knife and Lotterman begins screaming that someone is trying to kill him. The police are called and Lotterman dies of a heart attack.

Paul is loyal to his friends despite his clear negligence toward Chenault earlier. Paul helps Yeamon when he learns that the police are after him for Lotterman's death. This ends this storyline as well, pulling all the story lines together neatly. Now Paul is leaving, returning to New York where the novel began. The novel has come full circle, as has Paul's life.



# Characters

## Paul Kemp

Paul Kemp is the first person narrator of the novel. Paul is a reporter who has taken a job with an English speaking newspaper in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Paul arrives in San Juan and discovers a world much more exotic and violent than he had anticipated. Paul has expected an adventure, but finds a world full of people who do not want him and a workplace full of crazy, unpredictable people. From the plane, Paul finds himself falling in love and making a poor first impression, only to learn the object of his affection is the lover of one of his new coworkers. Paul becomes friends with his coworker only to find himself jealous of his relationship and jealous of his youth.

Paul finds trouble on San Juan. First Paul becomes involved with some of the reporters and gets himself arrested. A friend rescues him, but then he goes to carnival and gets drunk, steals, and parties like a child. Later, he and Yeamon lose Chenault at a party and leave her behind on the island to be violated by the locals. When Chenault shows up at his apartment Paul is put off by his ideas of what must have happened to her. However, Paul cannot keep his desires at bay and becomes her lover. The romance is finally consummated and Paul has everything he has wanted. However, the paper has folded and the owner dies in a confrontation with Paul's coworkers. Paul hangs up his hat and returns to New York to be with Chenault.

## Richard Sala

Richard Sala is the photographer at the *News*. Paul becomes friends with Sala and they go off on many assignments together as well as getting arrested together. Sala also allows Paul to move into his apartment with him because it is a small, noisy place where neither spends much time. Sala has been in San Juan longer than any of the others at the paper and he is bitter about the atmosphere in which he lives. Sala does not like the poor attitudes of the locals toward the Americans and does not like the way it appears things are going at the paper. Sala spends most of his time complaining about these things.

Sala wants to move on from San Juan, but does not do it. Yeamon teases him, saying that he is afraid of change and that is why he does not leave. Yeamon might be right. Sala remains at the paper even when it becomes obvious that it is no longer doing well and will be closing soon. Sala stays even after he is arrested with Paul and Yeamon and has no other reason to stay. Sala is a good photographer who makes more money on his freelance jobs, yet he still stays. In fact, the morning Paul leaves the island, Sala is still at Al's with no plans to leave.





## Addison Yeamon

Yeamon is a reporter at the *News*. Yeamon is a big man who Paul sees for the first time when he drives up to the paper office his first night in town and sees Yeamon fighting with the strikers out front. Yeamon holds off a whole group of angry men all on his own, impressing Paul with his bravery. Later, when Paul learns that the girl he saw on the plane is Yeamon's girlfriend, he is jealous, but he likes Yeamon enough that he becomes friends with him anyway. When Lotterman tries to get Paul to edit a story Yeamon wrote, Paul admires Yeamon's writing so much that he refuses to edit it. Yeamon is promptly fired. However, Paul remains his friend and goes out to visit him after he loses his job to be sure he is doing well. It is during this visit that Paul, Sala, and Yeamon are arrested after a brawl over a bar tab.

Yeamon is younger than Paul and Paul finds himself admiring Yeamon's youth and ability to live his life without concern for his future. Paul also admires Yeamon's easy relationship with his girlfriend, Chenault. However, after Yeamon loses his job, his relationship with Yeamon changes. Yeamon becomes violent with Chenault. When they all go to St. Thomas for carnival, Yeamon is separated from Chenault and is convinced that she is going to be sexually assaulted. Yeamon fights for her, but gives up when some locals beat him up and send him on his way. Yeamon washes his hands of her. However, Yeamon does not give up on the idea of getting money out of Lotterman for his severance, so when the paper folds, Yeamon joins the other reporters in confronting Lotterman. The confrontation ends in Lotterman dying and Yeamon going on the run from the law.

## Chenault

Chenault is a beautiful girl Paul sees on line at the airport in New York. Paul schemes to speak to her, but his luck strikes out when an old man takes the seat beside him. Later, Paul learns that this girl is the girlfriend of one of his new coworkers. Paul is still in love with her, but does not try to seduce her while she is with his friend. However, this relationship turns sour when Yeamon loses his job and begins to become violent with Chenault. Paul does nothing to help Chenault, however. Later when they all go to St. Thomas for carnival, Chenault gets drunk and is dragged out of a party with a group of locals. Paul and Yeamon attempt to save her but they are stopped by a group of locals.

Chenault solves her experience and returns to San Juan and Paul. Chenault does not go to Yeamon because she is afraid he will not take her back. Paul takes her in, however, though he does not know what to do with her. Paul thinks he might send her away; however, when Chenault returns to the same girl she was before, Paul becomes her lover. Chenault then goes back to New York to escape the bad memories of San Juan and Paul eventually follows.





## Ed Lotterman

Lotterman is the owner and manager of the *News*. When Paul joins the staff Lotterman is on the verge of a nervous breakdown because he is having such a hard time keeping the paper from going under. Lotterman does not like most of the people on his staff because many of them are drunks or ambitious young men using his paper as a stepping stone. Most of the people at the paper have little respect for Lotterman and treat him like he were a subordinate instead of their boss. When Paul and Sala are arrested with Yeamon, Lotterman is stuck with their bond because one of his reporters bailed them out with a check from the paper. Lotterman is afraid to resend the check because he would lose face with the all important social elite in San Juan who are helping to keep the paper going. Finally, Lotterman gives up and sells the paper to a friend in Miami who dissolves it. When the reporters confront him on this at a party, Lotterman dies of a heart attack.

## Hal Sanderson

Sanderson once worked for the paper but is now a PR man for a prestigious company in San Juan. Sanderson is friends with the editor, Segarra, and through him Paul becomes friends with Sanderson. Sanderson often entertains a group of people in his home so Paul spends a great deal of time with him at his home. When Paul is arrested it is Sanderson who comes to his rescue. Sanderson drops a few important names to the judge and tells him that Paul and his friends work for important American publications. In order to prove he is correct, Sanderson gets Paul a job with the *New York Times*. Sanderson also gets Paul a job with Zimburger that takes him out to a beautiful island that makes Paul feel optimistic about his future.

## Nick Segarra

Nick Segarra is a local Puerto Rican who works for the paper. Segarra is technically the editor, but Paul quickly figures out that Segarra is on staff in order to make connections between the paper and the social elite of San Juan. However, Segarra does not work his magic for Paul, and blacklists him in social circles. Paul is angry about this even though he is not interested in moving in these circles. Due to his anger, Paul becomes good friends with Segarra's friend Sanderson and becomes a burr in Segarra's side. Among rumors that the paper is going out of business, Segarra quits his job. This makes the employees believe that the paper is going to close sometime soon.

## Moberg

Moberg is a reporter at the paper. Moberg is a journalist who has become a drunk. Moberg is drunk almost all the time, even while he is working. Moberg covers the criminal beat for the paper and does a good job despite his disease. Lotterman wants Moberg to sober up and hopes he will after he is beaten up by the strikers, but Moberg



goes right back to the bottle. On the night that Paul, Sala, and Yeamon are arrested, Moberg is at the police station and he calls Segarra to help. Segarra tells Moberg to pay any fines with a check from the paper. Moberg pays for their bail with a check even though it is more money than anyone thought he would spend. Moberg and Lotterman get into a huge fight over this, but they eventually work out a settlement.

## Zimburger

Zimburger is a friend of Sanderson's. Zimburger was once a Marine and he is still fiercely proud of this. Zimburger is also a drunk. Paul dislikes him because he is intense and unkind. However, when Paul finds out that he is very rich and looking for a writer, Paul has no problem signing on. Paul agrees to write a brochure for a resort that Zimburger is planning on a nearby island. Paul goes with him to the island and finds a gorgeous area that he does not think should be developed. Paul stays the night there, feeling very optimistic about his future, putting all his expenses on Zimburger's tab.

## Puerto Rican People

The people of Puerto Rico are not very kind to the English speaking foreigners who come to their island as tourists or to work. They feel that these people are infringing on their kindnesses and taking advantage of their island. When Sala, Paul, and Yeamon refuse to pay a bar tab, they attack them. Paul, Sala, and Yeamon are beaten and then arrested and blamed for the situation. Ironically, these are the same people who are fleeing their island at a huge rate and whom Yeamon and Paul both felt sympathetic toward in the article Yeamon wrote about their exodus. It is the article that got Yeamon fired from his job and was never published, which never allowed these people to see how much these English speakers understood them.



# Objects/Places

## The San Juan Daily News

*The San Juan Daily News* is an English language newspaper in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Paul comes to San Juan to work for this paper, but the paper is struggling and goes under just months later.

## El Diario

*El Diario* is the Spanish language newspaper published in San Juan and the *Daily News*' biggest competitor.

## Rum

Rum is the drink of choice in Puerto Rico, and Paul and his friends spend a great deal of the novel drinking it.

## Police Station

Paul, Sala, and Yeamon are arrested after a misunderstanding with some police officials and taken to the police station where they once again get into a physical confrontation with the police.

## Court

Paul, Sala, and Yeamon go to court over allegations that they caused a riot. Sanderson arrives at the court just in time to drop some important names and get his friends out on bail.

## Bail

Bail is given to Paul, Sala, and Yeamon during their time in court to secure their release from jail after a brawl over a bar tab. However, Paul's is set much lower than Sala and Yeamon's.

## Carnival

Carnival is a huge party on the island of St. Thomas that Paul attends with Yeamon and Chenault.



## Al's

Al's is a bar built out of a residential home that becomes the home away from home of most of the reporters who work at the *Daily News*.

## Yeamon's House

Yeamon's house is little more than a one room shack on the beach. However, Paul finds this home romantic after he sees Yeamon and Chenault swimming nude in the ocean.

## Caribe Hilton

The Caribe Hilton is a large hotel in San Juan that is part of the new tourist industry in the city. Paul visits this hotel often throughout the novel.

## St. Thomas

St. Thomas is a Caribbean island near Puerto Rico where Paul goes to attend Carnival with Yeamon and Chenault. It is here that Chenault becomes separated from her companions and later shows up at Paul's door.

## Vieques

Vieques is an island between Puerto Rico and St. Thomas that is used by the Marine Corp for tactical exercises. It is here that Paul travels in order to view the area that Zimburger plans to develop into a resort.

## San Juan

San Juan is the capitol of Puerto Rico and it is the city that Paul comes to live in while living in Puerto Rico.



# Themes

## Love and Jealousy

Love and jealousy go hand in hand; where a reader finds one they can expect to find the other. In this novel, it is the main character, Paul Kemp, who finds himself wrapped up in these emotions. Paul falls in love with Chenault on sight before he even has a chance to speak to her or learn her name. Paul makes a fool of himself trying to put himself in a position to get to know Chenault and loses the chance to make that important good first impression. To make matters worse, Paul discovers that Chenault is the lover of one of his new coworkers, a large, crazy man he has only just met. Paul feels as though the situation is hopeless when he learns this, but it does not keep him from becoming friends with Chenault and her lover, Yeamon.

Paul's relationship with Yeamon only leads to pain and heartache, not to mention a stint in the local jail. However, Paul remains close to Chenault and gets to know her as he had wanted to when he thought he had a chance. When Chenault's relationship with Yeamon reveals itself to be a violent one, Paul feels sorry for Chenault, but does nothing to interfere. Finally, Chenault finds herself in a situation in which she is abused and Paul's opinion of her has changed. Finally Paul has what he wants, the girl of his dreams, but she is used and he no longer has the same respect for her. This does not stop Paul from becoming her lover, however. Chenault is now his, but at what cost?

Yeamon accepts Chenault's decision to go to Paul after her ordeal, but this does not keep him from displaying a jealousy and a hurt that are almost painful for the reader to witness. Despite Yeamon's poor treatment of Chenault, it is clear he loved her and had hope for their relationship. Paul does not have this same depth of feeling and the contrast makes his feelings for Chenault seem adolescent compared to Yeamon's despite the fact that Yeamon is the younger, the more impetuous, of the two. These men's relationships with Chenault reveal the depth of the characters and the contrast between their behaviors, which is what makes the emotions of love and jealousy a theme of this novel.

## Ambition

Ambition, or the lack thereof, is what has brought most of the reporters for the *Daily News* to Puerto Rico. Most of the reporters see this newspaper as a way of getting much needed experience and to pad their resumes in order to get better jobs in the States. Paul comes to San Juan with this idea, assuming that the job will be much like many other jobs he has had in various states and countries, taking him as far from his roots as possible and giving him the experience he will need to get bigger and better jobs. Some of his coworkers, however, see their jobs as a party, the opportunity to live in an exotic location, to drink and party all night, and still get paid. This is true for almost



all the reporters, as Paul and his coworkers spend many nights drinking in Al's or the various other establishments on the island.

Ambition is an important theme of this novel because it is a motivator. Where Paul and his coworkers have moved to San Juan to build their resumes, they have also come to enjoy an exotic life. However, when the paper folds and this opportunity is taken from them, Paul's coworkers are frightened and determined to get revenge for what they see as a great wrong being perpetrated against them. Paul's coworkers rush their boss at a party and cause him to suffer a fatal heart attack. If not for the ambition, or lack thereof, that has brought them to San Juan, this death would not have happened and it would not have compelled Paul to return to New York.

## Youth and Immaturity

Paul finds himself watching Yeamon and marveling at his youth and his ability to live his life without thought to the consequences of his actions. Although Paul is not much older than Yeamon, he already feels as though he has lived his youthful years and is now moving into middle age and a settled life. Paul admires Yeamon and his relationship with Chenault. However, Paul does not see the immaturity in Yeamon's actions that are dangerous to himself and those around him until they are both arrested for not paying a bar tab. Paul is introduced to Yeamon's immaturity in a rude awakening that leaves them both beaten and facing a jail term.

It is this behavior that makes youth and immaturity a theme of the novel. If not for Yeamon's impetuous behavior and Paul's blind jealousy, many of the volatile situations they find themselves in would not take place. Paul follows Yeamon like a child following his idol, not learning a thing from the trouble they find themselves in until Yeamon goes on the run for his part in the death of Lotterman. Suddenly Paul is on his own again, making his own decisions, and returning to his previous life. Paul has learned little from his relationship with Yeamon and leaves the reader with the impression that he blames San Juan for the events of the past few months rather than his desire to recapture the youth Yeamon takes for granted.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. The narrator is the main character, Paul Kemp. Paul reports to the reader his observations as well as the events that transpire around him. At times, Paul is the main character and at other times, he reports on things that have taken place outside of his scope of knowledge. The novel is written in past tense rather than present tense, suggesting events that have already taken place and are being reported on after the fact, as if the reader is reading a diary or a personal essay on the events described.

This point of view works because it gives the impression of reading a personal diary. The reader feels more deeply drawn in due to the intimacy of the point of view. Since the novel lacks other intimacies, such as in-depth character back stories, this sense of reading a diary helps the reader to become more emotionally attached to the characters in a way that they might not be able to otherwise. Emotional attachment to the characters in a novel is important for the reader because if a reader does not care what happens to the characters in a novel, they will lose interest in the novel or they will not care when bad things happen to the characters. It is emotional attachment that makes a novel interesting. This novel only offers the reader one sense of intimacy and it is the point of view that draws the reader into the emotional life of the main character, sharing with the reader things they might not be privy to otherwise, and without which would make the novel like reading a text book.

## Setting

The novel is set in San Juan, Puerto Rico. San Juan is at the beginning of a tourist boom, with its Spanish citizens being overrun by American tourists. The industry is building up all over town with new hotels and resorts, causing a flow of new money into the area. This boom to the economy is a plus to the area, but the citizens resent the English speaking tourists and their strange ways. There is tension between the two factions that causes a great deal of violence and resentment. Not only this, but the English language paper in town is also deeply resented and often the center of volatile behaviors between the reporters and the local unions. It is this atmosphere that Paul walks into when he moves to Puerto Rico to work for the English language paper.

In San Juan, there is a bar that was begun in the backyard of a residential home named Al's. This bar only serves beer and rum, as well as hamburgers. These hamburgers are the only decent, affordable food for many of the reporters working nearby, so it becomes a popular hangout for these reporters. Paul, Sala, and Yeamon spend a great deal of time at Al's, discussing the drama of the newspaper as well as the trouble they each get into as they spend their days drinking and looking for adventure. Al's is important to the



setting of the novel because it becomes a home away from home for these reporters and it seems to be symbolic of the chaos of their lives while living in San Juan.

## Language and Meaning

The language in this novel is English laced with the occasional Spanish word or phrase. The language is simple and easy to read despite the fact that the main character is a reporter and could tend toward a more complicated language. This helps the reader stay with the narration rather than getting lost in the language. The Spanish words and phrases add to the authenticity of the setting and the narration, reminding the reader of the culture of the city in which this novel takes place. This is important because it is the volatility of the area that adds tension to the plot, propelling the characters toward a violence that will shape their futures.

The language helps the reader become drawn into the novel not only because the Spanish phrases remind the reader of the setting of the novel, but because it also gives the reader insight into the main character. Since the novel is written in the first person point of view, the language comes directly from the main character. The character's use of simple phrases tells the reader that he is educated, but young and informal. It also gives the reader the impression that the novel is a private story, such as a diary, lacking the formality of a newspaper article, which is the main character's profession.

## Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-one chapters with a prologue. The chapters vary in size, some more than fifteen pages long, some as short as four or five. The prologue introduces Al's bar, an important setting to the main character and his fellow reporters. It is at Al's bar that Paul Kemp and his friends spend a great deal of time during the novel, discussing the paper and the possibility that it will fold in the near future. Each chapter thereafter deals with Paul's life in Puerto Rico over the next couple of months, beginning with his flight to San Juan and ending in Al's bar as Paul awaits his flight back to New York.

The book contains one main story line and one subplot. The main story line follows the adventures of Paul Kemp as he works and plays in San Juan. Paul becomes involved with his coworkers and their friends, finding trouble and love. The subplot follows the exploits of the other reporters as well as the drama surrounding the financial trouble of the newspaper where they all work. This subplot moves in and out of Paul's story, framing his story. It is the paper that brings Paul to Puerto Rico and it is the demise of this paper that sends Paul back to New York.





## Quotes

"In the early Fifties, when San Juan first became a tourist town, an ex-jockey named Al Arbonito built a bar in the patio behind his house on Calle O'Leary. He called it Al's Backyard and hung a sign above his doorway on the street, with an arrow pointing between two ramshackle buildings to the patio in back. At first he served nothing but beer, at twenty cents a bottle, and rum, at a dime a shot or fifteen cents with ice. After several months he began serving hamburgers, which he made himself." San Juan, Winter of 1958, p. 1

"At the same time, I shared a dark suspicion that the life we were leading was a lost cause, that we were all actors, kidding ourselves along on a senseless odyssey. It was the tension between these two poles—a restless idealism on one hand and a sense of impending doom on the other—that kept me going." San Juan, Winter of 1958, p. 5

"Arriving half-drunk in a foreign place is hard on the nerves. You have a feeling that something is wrong, that you can't get a grip. I had this feeling, and when I got to the hotel I went straight to bed." Chapter 1, p. 12

"Considering the confusion of The Boom and the grab-bag mortality that was driving it along, I felt for the first time in my life that I might get a chance to affect the course of things instead of merely observing them." Chapter 4, p. 51

"I was still conscious and the knowledge that I was being kicked to death in a Puerto Rican jungle for eleven dollars and fifty cents filled me with such terror that I began to scream like an animal." Chapter 7, p. 83

"We were pushed through the room at high speed and I had no more than a glimpse of Moberg before we were in another hallway. The cops paid no attention to our shouts; apparently they were used to people screaming desperately as they were led away to wherever we were being taken. My only hope was that Moberg had not been too drunk to recognize us."

Chapter 8, p. 87

"Whenever I thought of time in Puerto Rico, I was reminded of those old magnetic clocks that hung on the walls of my classrooms in high school. Every now and then a hand would not move for several minutes—and if I watched it long enough, wondering if it had finally broken down, the sudden click of the hand jumping three or four notches would startle me when it came."

Chapter 9, p. 101

"I sat there a long time, and thought about a lot of things. Foremost among them was the suspicion that my strange and ungovernable instincts might do me in before I had a change to get rich. No matter how much I wanted all those things that I needed money



to buy, there was some devilish current pushing me off in another direction—toward anarchy and poverty and craziness. That maddening delusion that a man can lead a decent life without hiring himself out as a Judas Goat." Chapter 12, p. 134

"The next morning I drove out to Yeamon's. I didn't know exactly what I was going to say to him, so I kept thinking about his bad points so I could like without feeling guilty."

Chapter 17, p. 177

"Sometimes at dusk, when you were trying to relax and not think about the general stagnation, the Garbage God would gather a handful of those choked-off morning hopes and dangle them somewhere just out of reach; they would hang in the breeze and make a sound like delicate glass bells, reminding you of something you never quite got hold of, and never would."

Chapter 19, p. 191

"There was something eerie about the whole business, as if God in a fit of disgust had decided to wipe us all out. Our structure was collapsing; it seemed like just a few hours ago that I was having breakfast with Chenault in the sunny peace of my own home. Then I had ventured into the day, and plunged headlong into an orgy of murder and shrieking and breaking glass."

Chapter 20, p. 201

"Sounds of a San Juan night, drifting across the city through layers of humid air; sounds of life and movement, of people getting ready and people giving up, the sound of hope and the sound of hanging on, and behind them all, the quiet, deadly ticking of a thousand hungry clocks, the lonely sound of time passing in the long Caribbean night."

Chapter 21, p. 204



## Topics for Discussion

Why does the author feel the need to introduce Al's bar with the prologue at the beginning of the novel? Is this bar important to the overall plot? How does this prologue affect the overall novel? What other information does this prologue offer that is helpful to the overall plot development? Would the novel be difficult to read without this prologue?

Why does Paul go to Puerto Rico? What does his new job offer him? How does Paul feel about this new job? How does this affect the reader's understanding of Paul's character? Does Paul take the job seriously? How does this new job compare to Paul's past employers?

Discuss Paul's relationship with Yeamon. What impact does Yeamon have on Paul? Does Yeamon teach Paul anything, or is he simply a part of the story to cause trouble for Paul? Why does Yeamon refuse to pay his bar tab, thus causing Paul and Sala to get arrested? Why does Paul continue to remain friends with Yeamon after this?

Discuss Sala. Why is Sala in San Juan if he is unhappy? Why does Sala continue to work for the paper when he makes so much money doing freelance jobs? What is Sala looking for in San Juan? Does he find it?

Discuss Yeamon and Chenault's relationship. Why does Chenault remain with Yeamon after he hits her? Why does Yeamon give up so easily on Chenault when he believes she has been with other men? Why does Yeamon not regret losing Chenault?

Is Paul in love with Chenault? How does Paul express this emotion to the reader? Why does Paul leave St. Thomas without Chenault? How does this decision affect Paul's feelings for Chenault? Why does Paul hesitate to invite Chenault into his home when she returns to San Juan? If Paul is unhappy with Chenault's presence, why do they become lovers? Why does Chenault leave the island? Does Chenault love Paul?

Why do the reporters attempt to kill Lotterman? Do they think it will help them get their money? Is Yeamon responsible for Lotterman's death? Why does Paul help Yeamon escape the island? Why does Paul not act in this instance? What do Paul's actions and inactions say about his character? Do these things make Paul a sympathetic character? How does this affect the way the reader feel about Paul?