

A Scanner Darkly Study Guide

A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick

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Plot Summary

A Scanner Darkly is a story about drug abuse in Orange County, California. The novel begins with an account of one addict's strange belief that he is infected with biting bugs. Jerry Fabin's delusion soon spreads to his friends, who are also druggies. When another druggie, Charles Freck, visits Fabin, Freck ends up collecting bugs in jars with his delusional friend. After leaving Fabin's house, Freck runs into Donna Hawthorne, a drug dealer, at the mall. He recognizes Donna and arranges to buy some Substance D from her. Substance D, also known as slow death, is a popular yet deadly drug that is believed to be created synthetically in labs.

Freck knows Donna as the girlfriend of Bob Arctor. What Freck does not realize is that Arctor is an undercover narcotics agent. When the reader is first introduced to Arctor, he is giving a speech to a local Lions Club. Arctor is wearing the disguise of a scramble suit to hide his identity. A scramble suit is a new invention that projects a different identity each nanosecond. Arctor is giving a speech about the dangerous world of illegal drugs. He departs from his memorized speech, in an effort to inspire sympathy for addicts. Arctor gets summoned to a meeting at police headquarters. Before he goes to headquarters, he calls Donna to make a drug buy. Donna says that Arctor's roommates told her that his cephalochromosome, a device used for relaxation, is broken and appears to have been sabotaged.

One of Arctor's two roommates, Jim Barris, shows Charles Freck how to extract cocaine from sunburn lotion. Barris has a home drug lab and plans to write a book on how to make drugs legally at home. Barris says that Freck can use the cocaine to seduce Donna, who is a known coke fiend. Meanwhile, Bob Arctor gets assigned to look for a certain drug dealer in New-Path, a rehab clinic. The New-Path staff hurls insults at Arctor, which is apparently part of the standard rehab treatment. Arctor leaves feeling shaken, without having determined whether the drug dealer is hiding there.

When Arctor's true identity is hidden, he is known as Special Agent Fred. At his regular meeting with Hank, another drug agent in disguise, Fred learns that someone has been making anonymous calls alerting the police to the fact that Bob Arctor is a suspicious character. Hank and Fred always wear scramble suits when they meet, so Hank does not know that Fred is really Arctor. He assigns Arctor to spy on himself.

Arctor must keep his two roommates, Barris and Ernie Luckman, out of the house one afternoon so that the police department can send a squad into his house to set up surveillance equipment. The three men set off to look at a rental cephalochromosome. Arctor ditches his roommates and visits Kimberly Hawkins, a young junkie who lives in the projects. Arctor gets involved in a domestic dispute that Kimberly is having with her boyfriend Dan. On the way home, Arctor's car goes out of control. It appears to have been sabotaged. When he has a bad reaction to some drugs that Barris supplies, Arctor starts to feel that Barris is out to get him.



Arctor gets summoned to Room 203 at police headquarters. Two medical officers explain that Arctor shows signs of split-brain dementia, caused by overuse of Substance D. They do some psychological tests on Arctor.

From a police-commandeered apartment a few blocks from his home, Arctor begins watching the holo-scans produced by the surveillance equipment in his home. Whenever he goes to the safe apartment, he wears his scramble suit and takes on the identity of Secret Agent Fred. While watching a live feed, Fred sees Barris passively observe as Luckam almost chokes to death on some food. Arctor grows more suspicious and fearful about Barris's personality.

Arctor goes to Donna's apartment, where the two smoke hash and make plans to see a movie at a drive-in theater. Arctor tells Donna that he loves her, but when tries to hug her she refuses and tells him that he is ugly. Feeling angry, Arctor gets up to leave. Donna apologizes and explains that he is not a person she could see herself marrying. Later that night, Arctor brings home a little needle-freak named Connie for sex. In the darkness, he imagines that she transforms into Donna.

Watching holo-scans the next day, Arctor watches the tape of Connie sleeping and sees her face appear to morph into Donna's. He begins to wonder whether he is losing his mind. The holo-scans also reveal that Barris is setting Arctor up for nonpayment of a bounced check. Barris pretends to be Arctor when a creditor calls and refuses to pay the money owed.

Arctor learns the name of the creditor, a locksmith, and tracks down the locksmith's shop to pay the money owed and keep him out of legal trouble. He is surprised by how precise Barris's forgery of his signature is on the check. Then, Arctor remembers that he himself actually wrote the check, for a copied key during a night of heavy partying.

At this point in the novel, Arctor begins reciting German poetry at odd moments. He is not aware of the times that he speaks in German. The German is presumably stored in his memory from childhood, when Arctor lived with an elderly relative who often read German books aloud.

Charles Freck decides to kill himself, because he is depressed about his drug addiction. However, his plans go wrong when he takes the wrong kind of drugs. He realizes that he has overdosed on psychedelics rather than barbiturates. A creature from another dimension appears and reads Charles's sins from a long scroll. The reading will take one thousand years.

Arctor and Fred are now two distinct identities. As Fred watches the holo-scans, he feels disgusted by the mindless blather he must listen to. In Room 203, Fred is subjected to further psychological testing and is found to have a split brain. In a normal brain, the left hemisphere dominates and the right hemisphere provides assistance. In Arctor's brain, however, the left hemisphere has become damaged and the right hemisphere is trying to take over. His situation is probably hopeless.



In Hank's office, Fred finds Barris. Barris has come forward as the anonymous caller who alerted the police to Arctor. Barris plays forged tapes of Arctor and Donna plotting to steal weapons from the United States military. Hank orders Barris to be arrested for giving the police false information. Then Hank tells Fred that he is being discharged of his duties and fined for developing a drug addiction.

Donna picks Arctor up and drives him to New-Path. Along the way, they stop at the side of the road to smoke some hash. A police officer pulls up and Donna shows him her badge to get him to leave. According to her identification, Donna is an undercover agent for the federal government.

At New-Path, Arctor is called Bruce, because he cannot remember his real name. A counselor named Mike Westaway befriends him. One day Mike leaves New-Path on an errand and meets with Donna to discuss their plans for Arctor. They want Arctor to find out New-Path's role in the creation of Substance D. Both Donna and Mike feel bad for their role in setting Arctor up to become an unwitting spy. Mike gets Arctor reassigned to work on a Napa Valley farm that is run by New-Path. On the farm, Arctor sees blue flowers hidden among the corn crops. He realizes that the flowers are Substance D, and he hides one in his shoe to show Mike when he will see him again, on Thanksgiving.



Chapter 1 (pages 1-20)

Chapter 1 (pages 1-20) Summary

A Scanner Darkly is a story about drug abuse in Orange County, California. The novel begins with an account of one addict's strange belief that he is infected with biting bugs. Jerry Fabin's delusion soon spreads to his friends, who are also druggies. When another druggie, Charles Freck, visits Fabin, Freck ends up collecting bugs in jars with his delusional friend. After leaving Fabin's house, Freck runs into Donna Hawthorne, a drug dealer, at the mall. He recognizes Donna and arranges to buy some Substance D from her. Substance D, also known as slow death, is a popular yet deadly drug that is believed to be created synthetically in labs.

Jerry Fabin believes that bugs are plaguing him, even though a doctor tells Jerry that there are no bugs. He researches bugs in the *Britannica* and decides that his are aphids. People tell him that aphids don't bite, but Jerry holds firm in his belief. Jerry frequently sprays himself with bug spray, and he spends hour after hour standing in a hot shower, trying to rid himself of the bugs. He forces his dog to shower also. Jerry believes that other people unknowingly distribute the bugs.

It is 1994. Jerry is employed as a brake repairman at Handy Brake and Tire. He lives in a cheap plastic house in California. Jerry has covered all the windows on his house with spray paint so that inside there is no difference between day and night.

One day, Jerry's friend Charles Freck goes to Jerry's house to visit Jerry. Jerry explains that aphids have infected his hair, skin and lungs. Charles asks why he can't see the bugs, and Jerry shows him one. Then Charles helps Jerry collect the aphids in old jars.

Jerry leaves Charles alone in the living room, saying that he needs to take a leak. Charles says that he feels scared being left alone with the bugs. Jerry hops in the shower. Jerry ignores the scared cries of Charles, because he is consumed by his own need to wash.

Charles uses a pay phone to phone someone who may be able to supply him with drugs, but learns that there is a shortage of slow death, the street term for the dangerously addictive drug Substance D. Disappointed, he returns to his Chevy. Charles imagines that the Thrifty pharmacy has a big bag of slow death under the counter. He realizes that he has only a week's supply of the drug left.

Scared by the presence of a cop car on the road, Charles pulls over into a mall parking lot. He does not go into the mall, because he has no credit card. He imagines that the straight, non-druggies with credit cards enjoy shopping there. Charles watches girls as they window shop, evaluating how attractive each one is. He notices a woman whom he recognizes as Bob Arctor's girl, Donna. Charles chases her down and starts a



conversation. He remembers seeing her deal drugs at a party. She was the only person at that party who had stayed sober.

Donna is leery of Charles. She says that he will try to bang her, as most men try to do. Nevertheless, she gets into Charles's car. Donna says that she can probably get him one hundred tablets for sixty dollars by the day after tomorrow. Charles refuses to pay up front, because he figures he might find a better price elsewhere. Donna says that she will call him when she has the drugs. He gives her the phone number of a straight friend, whose phone he uses for messages like this. Charles notices that it takes Donna a long time to write down his name and number, a fact that he attributes to poor education.

Charles asks Donna whether she wants to go with him to visit Jerry at the Number Three Federal Clinic. Jerry has been in the clinic for one day. Donna declines. She says that the last time she saw Jerry he was angry with her for "infecting" him with bugs. Donna thinks that the receptor sites in Jerry's brain have been permanently damaged by a bad hit. Charles tells her that he spent two nights and two days counting bugs and putting them in bottles with Jerry, before he crashed and realized that the bottles were empty.

Suddenly, Charles realizes that he has gone too long without a fix. As he reaches into the glove compartment for his stash, he has a flashback to a time when he and Jerry were roommates. In the memory, a thirteen-year-old kid named Ratass tries to hold up a Pontiac that has a bumper jack slipping beneath it. Jerry, who has just woken up, pushes Ratass out of the way to save him from injury. Charles, who had instinctively reached for the brake, realizes that his own mistake is as bad as the boy's.

Chapter 1 (pages 1-20) Analysis

The novel begins with a vivid scene between two minor characters, Jerry Fabin and Charles Freck. It is curious that Dick has chosen to focus readers' attention to these periphery characters before introducing the novel's protagonist. Perhaps these opening scenes serve to highlight the humanity of the victims of drug abuse. The physical pain that results from Jerry Fabin's bug delusions, for both Jerry and his dog, inspires a sympathetic response from readers. The author's use of first names in this chapter seems to emphasize the fact that these characters are real human beings. In later chapters, as Dick introduces other characters, he will primarily refer to characters either by their full names or by their surnames alone. This formal usage suggests the emotional divide among characters whose only true connection is their addiction to drugs.



Chapter 2 (pages 21-36)

Chapter 2 (pages 21-36) Summary

Special Agent Fred, who is also Bob Arctor, gets called to speak before the Anaheim Lions Club. Fred is an undercover narcotics agent in the Orange County Sheriff's Department. The Lions Club host, wearing a wide plastic yellow tie and fake leather shoes, introduces S. A. Fred. Fred wears a scramble suit, which is a recent invention that projects a different set of physical characteristics each nanosecond. The Lions Club host remarks that Fred looks like a vague blur in his scramble suit. The host explains that the scramble suit is necessary to protect police officers from the forces of dope.

Arctor addresses the crowd, performing an anti-drug speech that he learned in PR class at the academy. The audience enjoys the propaganda. He begins to depart from the prepared text and asks the audience whether they would steal to get money to pay for insulin if they had diabetes. He hears the voice of his superior at headquarters, piped into his scramble suit. The superior chastises Arctor and summons him for a meeting later that day. Arctor adds that the pushers should be killed, and the addicts be helped.

Without his scramble suit, Arctor wanders the streets of Anaheim in an attempt to postpone meeting with his superior at headquarters. He ponders who he really is. He knows that straights think he looks like a hippie dooper. He thinks of himself as "Arctor-Fred-Whatever-Godknew."

Arctor notices that it is now two-thirty, time to make a buy call to Donna. He will score drugs from her, and then the County Drug Abuse lab will analyze and destroy the pills. Donna is a well-known drug dealer, but the cops never arrest her. Instead, Arctor buys from her in an attempt to thread a path upward to her supplier. He buys a larger amount from her each time, in the hope that one day she will refer him directly to her supplier. Substance D is a synthetic drug that is thought to have only one manufacturer, and the police ultimately hope to follow the chain of dealers back to the source.

Arctor calls Donna from a payphone. They both know that the police monitor all payphone calls, but cops don't pursue drug deals unless the callers let on that a lot of drugs will be switching hands. Using code, Fred asks for one thousand packages of Substance D. Donna offers to give him the drugs free.

Donna works at a perfume shop at the mall. She tells Arctor that today she found an interesting old book on wolves at the store. Donna also mentions that Arctor's roommates, Ernie and Barris, came into the shop looking for him. According to Donna, the roommates said that Arctor's cephalochromosome was broken. The cephalochromosome, which cost Arctor nine hundred dollars, appears to have been sabotaged.



Chapter 2 (pages 21-36) Analysis

Arctor's character makes liberal use of sarcasm in this chapter. For instance, Arctor thinks that Substance D cannot destroy the brains of his Lions Club audience, since they don't have brains. Arctor also muses about McDonald's in a sarcastic manner: "They had by now, according to their sign, sold the same original burger fifty billion times. He wondered if it was to the same person." Arctor's sarcasm reflects his negative outlook on the world. He is annoyed by straights—that is, people who do not abuse drugs. Sitting outside the McDonald's in the middle of a workday, Arctor feels annoyed when he sees that he is surrounded by straights on their lunch hours. Arctor's sarcasm shows that he thinks in terms of a hippie drug user, rather than as a straight.



Chapter 3 (pages 37-53)

Chapter 3 (pages 37-53) Summary

Charles Freck thinks that he should go to New-Path for detoxification. He is eating in a diner with Jim Barris. A nametag on the waitress's left breast says "Beth." Charles wonders what the other breast is called. Barris explains in scientific terms how Substance D affects a user's mind and body. Charles tells him that he has a new source for drugs, Donna. Barris says that Donna has not had sex with Bob Arctor, but that she would have sex with someone who could give her cocaine. Barris tells Charles that he will help Charles lay Donna for ninety-eight cents.

Charles and Barris go to the 7-11 and purchase a can of Solarcaine, which is the brand name of a sunburn spray. Barris says that the Solarcaine contains cocaine mixed with oil. They go to the house that Barris shares with Bob Arctor, where Barris empties the can's contents into a plastic bag and mixes the spray with salt. Barris puts the mixture in a glass jar and freezes it for thirty minutes. Barris claims that he has created cocaine. He says that he plans to use his knowledge of cocaine chemistry to write a best-selling book on how to make drugs at home.

Charles watches as Barris works with the wires on Arctor's broken cephalochromosome. Barris says that Arctor has many secrets. He has noticed that Arctor exhibits contradictions in terms of "personality structure and behavior." Barris says that he does not believe Arctor is really employed by the Blue Chip Redemption Stamp Center, as Arctor claims. According to Barris, neither Ernie nor he damaged the cephalochromosome's transmitting unit.

Bob Arctor is assigned to look for a major drug runner in the local New-Path residence center. Drug dealers occasionally hide in rehab, because everyone must leave his identity at the front door. In order to look for the man, whose name is Spade Weeks, Arctor must pretend that he wants to check in to the rehab center. Arctor has been looking for Weeks, a fat black man with an elegant demeanor, for a long time. In the New-Path waiting room, the reception staff berates Arctor for abusing drugs. The verbal abuse is apparently the first step in drug treatment. Arctor asks whether his fat black "friend" is inside. The staff refuses to give him information, so Arctor leaves.

Chapter 3 (pages 37-53) Analysis

Although Arctor's cephalochromosome is an important item in the novel, Dick leaves *cephalochromosome* undefined. The reader learns that it is an expensive piece of equipment that provides enjoyment to its users. The device has a tray at its bottom that contains some wiring. The cephalochromosome is a fixture in Arctor's household, and the roommates think of it almost as a necessity. Sometimes they refer to it by the shorter name *cephscope*.

A parsing of the word *cephalochroscope* yields a rough explanation of what the machine does. "Cepha" means "head", "chromo" means "hues," and "scope" means "viewing instrument." Apparently, a cephalochroscope is an instrument that enables its operator to view his own brain activity as a colorful representation.



Chapter 4 (pages 54-71)

Chapter 4 (pages 54-71) Summary

The agent known as Fred meets the agent known as Hank to share information about drug users and dealers. Both agents wear scramble suits, so they don't know each other's identity. They discuss the case of a teenage girl who has become hooked on drugs after being raped by her drug-dealing brothers. Hank reports that Jerry Fabin says he was terrorized for months by a legless hit man who followed Fabin on a rolling cart.

According to Hank, an anonymous caller has identified Arctor as a suspicious character. Arctor's suspicious activities include leaving the house frequently and having more money than he can possibly earn at the Blue Chip Stamp job. The caller's identity is unknown because he used an electronic grid to disguise himself. Fred supposes that the informant is Jim Barris, who took electronics-repair courses in the Service. Hank assigns Fred to closely monitor Arctor's activities. He writes an order to have Arctor's home and car bugged with a holographic system.

In his back yard, Jim Barris tests an eleven-cent silencer he has created from aluminum and rubber. He shoots his gun and realizes that the "silencer" has amplified the noise. Luckman and Charles Freck are standing outside with Barris. Luckman reminds Barris that he has promised to fix Bob Arctor's cephscope in exchange for the back rent that Barris owns.

Lying in bed, Arctor hears the .22 shot in the backyard and pulls out his .32. He thinks about the wife and daughters he left behind when he became an undercover narcotics agent. One day a bump on the head made him realize one day that he hated his family and the safe existence they shared. He prefers his new, exciting and dangerous life.

Arctor wonders who sabotaged his cephscope. He decides that it could not have been Jerry Fabin, because Fabin lacks the mental capacity to take the machine apart. Arctor thinks that both Fabin and the cephscope are broken beyond repair. He remembers that before Fabin was sent to New-Path, Luckman made up a comedy routine to explain Fabin's fixation on aphids. According to the routine, Fabin had an older brother, who was an aphid and the favored child in the family. It does not seem funny now, after all of Jerry's friends had to call the police to have him taken to New-Path. At the end, Fabin was planning to flood his house with poison to combat a giant aphid from outer space.

Barris comes into the room and tells Arctor that he thinks Barris himself damaged the cephscope. Barris says that it must have been him, because he has the technical expertise. He says that he thinks he was under hypnosis at the time. Arctor puts a hand on his gun and tells Barris to get lost.



Chapter 4 (pages 54-71) Analysis

Jerry Fabin's psychosis, which opened the novel, continues to play out in the minds of other characters. Bob Arctor, for instance, thinks that if Jerry had managed to pull out the metal plate under his cephscope, aphid eggs would have dropped into it. He remembers how the other drug users used to clean their homes after Fabin visited, sweeping away the aphids. Fabin's illusionary bugs have thus become a shared metaphor for the brain damage inflicted by Substance D on those who have abused the drug.



Chapter 5 (pages 72-85)

Chapter 5 (pages 72-85) Summary

Bob Arctor obligingly takes his two roommates away from the house one day so that the police can bug it. After leaving with Barris and Luckman to look at a loaner cephalochromoscopoe, Arctor calls from a pay phone to report that the house will be clear for several hours. He uses his scramble suit's audio grid to disguise his voice. Arctor ditches his roommates, taking the car with him, to keep them away from the house.

Arctor pays a visit to Kimberly Hawkins, a prostitute and crystal addict who lives in a low-income high-rise. The building is a slum. Kimberly tells Arctor that she has had a big fight with her boyfriend, Dan Mancher, who is a drug dealer. Dan comes back to the apartment. When Kimberly refuses to let him in, he goes out to the parking lot and slashes her car's tires. Kimberly does not have her own phone, so she and Arctor go to her elderly neighbors' apartment to call the police. The neighbors tell Arctor that the building has many noisy fights. Even worse, they say, is the fact that dogs poop on the sidewalk.

A police officer shows up to take Kimberly's statement. She complains that her boyfriend took a pair of cowboy boots that she bought for him. The cop tells her to call the police if Dan shows up again. Arctor shakes his head, knowing that she cannot call the police without leaving her apartment. He offers to drive her to a friend's house for safety, but Kimberly screams at him to get out.

As Arctor drives Barris and Luckman back north, his car goes out of control. It speeds up to one hundred miles an hour, and the brake pedal proves useless. Arctor almost hits other cars before his car settles on the side of the freeway. The three men realize that someone must have sabotaged the car.

Barris takes out his snuffbox, and Arctor, Barris and Luckman swallow tablets of Substance D mixed with meth. Arctor says he smells dog shit, but the other two laugh at him. He looks into his car's engine and sees feces covering the surfaces. Even as he wipes it away, however, he knows that the excrement is not there. Arctor accuses Barris of messing with both his cephalochromoscopoe and his car, and of poisoning him with bad drugs.

Chapter 5 (pages 72-85) Analysis

In Chapter 5, Dick focuses on the art of characterization. The scene with Kimberly does little to serve the plot in *A Scanner Darkly*. It does, however, expand the reader's sense of who Bob Arctor is. Through implicit characterization—that is, through Arctor's thoughts, words, and actions—we learn that Arctor has a noble heart and a conscience. As an undercover narcotics agent, he is not obligated to involve himself in a domestic

dispute. Yet, Arctor works hard to ensure Kimberly's safety when her boyfriend threatens her. When Arctor laughs with disgust at the neighbors' complaint about dog poop in the courtyard, the reader sees that he, at least, is able to put the sad state of an abused junkie's life in proper perspective.



Chapter 6 (pages 86-102)

Chapter 6 (pages 86-102) Summary

A Union station mechanic has fixed Bob Arctor's car for thirty dollars. As Arctor drives, he thinks that the way for a drug dealer to exact revenge on a nark like him would be to poison him with a bad batch of drugs. He ruminates about the relationships between dealers and narcotics agents. Some narcs become so rich as drug dealers that drug dealing becomes their real job, and some drug dealers become narcs to burn their enemies.

Arctor wonders whether his car broke down on its own, or whether someone tampered with it. He thinks that the best way to harm one's enemies is to foul up workflow with seemingly careless mistakes. For instance, a wad of gum left in a Xerox machine could effectively destroy a top-secret document. Similarly, his ex-wife would stage such mishaps as a lost object or a burned hand when he was trying to do his insurance work in the evenings. Arctor's wife had wanted him to spend time thrilling at the very sight of her rather than working at home.

Arctor feels uneasy, knowing that Jim Barris and his gun are located behind Arctor in the car's back seat. Luckman says that whoever is out to get Arctor may have burned down the house while the three men have been gone. Barris says not to worry, because he has rigged a tape recorder under the couch to start recording if someone enters. In fact, he has left the front door open with a note ostensibly meant for Donna, to encourage an intruder to enter the house. Arctor wonders how the electronics surveillance crew has dealt with Barris's trap.

Luckman expresses worry that the intruder could harm their pets. He reminds the other men of a time when they helped Thelma Kornford, a straight who had large breasts, with a bug problem. She had wanted them to kill a mosquito hawk in her apartment, but they tried to talk her out of it because it would kill mosquitoes for her. "If I had known it was harmless I would have killed it myself," Thelma said. This quote has become a motto for the men, a reminder of how straights are their foes. Drug addicts, Arctor reflects, are the people least likely to kill animals.

When they get home, the men find a hot roach in the ashtray. The recently smoked joint leads Barris and Luckman to assume that their unknown foe has been in the house. Barris assumes that dope has been planted in a thousand places all over the house, and he thinks that their enemy will soon call the police to bust the men for possession. The men decide that Bob Arctor has no choice but to put his house on the market. They are unsure of what price to ask, however, because they don't know the value of the dope that has been hidden inside the house.

Donna walks out of the bedroom. She says that she came in after seeing the note on the front door. She smoked marijuana to soothe her before taking a nap. Arctor realizes



that he has bought into the paranoia along with Barris and Luckman, even though he knew that the only intruders in his house would be the ones he was expecting.

Chapter 6 (pages 86-102) Analysis

Chapter 6 contains one of the funniest passages in *A Scanner Darkly*. Much of the humor in this section is character-driven. By this point in the novel, the reader knows the characters' tendency to engage in long, rambling discussions that seem removed from reality. These lively conversations are due to the characters' drug-induced dementia. The characters' dementia results in an inability to solve problems mentally. Therefore, when confronted with the idea that their house is filled with clandestine stashes of narcotics, they initially worry that the authorities will discover the drugs. This worry is ironic because the three men are, in fact, heavy drug users who keep large quantities of drugs in the house already. Another source of humorous irony is the fact that they plan to publicize the drug stashes in a real estate ad, in order to avoid having the authorities learn that the drugs are there. The final element of humor in this scene is the surprise factor. Even though Donna was invited to enter the house, neither the roommates nor the reader expects her to walk out of Arctor's bedroom.



Chapter 7 (pages 103-121)

Chapter 7 (pages 103-121) Summary

In his scramble suit, Fred meets with Hank. Hank explains that surveillance equipment has been placed in Bob Arctor's house. He says that every few days Fred should go to an apartment down the street to review the tapes. The department has recently taken possession of the apartment after arresting its inhabitants for drug possession.

Hank says that he knows Fred must be Jim Barris, Ernie Luckman, Charles Freck, Donna Hawthorne, or Bob Arctor. Fred will have to service the scanners in Arctor's house on occasion, and after he does so, he will need to edit himself out of the tapes so that his identity remains unknown. Hank says that the department is looking forward to commandeering Arctor's house and using it as a police center once Fred has collected enough material on Arctor for a conviction.

Following his meeting with Hank, Fred is summoned to Room 203. There he meets with two sheriff's deputies whose uniforms bear the stripes of medical personnel. Arctor asks whether his Lions Club speech prompted this meeting. The medical deputies say no, that this is a routine examination to see whether there has been a split between his right and left hemispheres, resulting in two distinct minds.

The medical deputies explain that an individual who has damaged his left hemisphere by abusing drugs may have the right hemisphere take control of linguistic faculties. This results in set-background discrimination impairment. The deputies ask Fred to find an image hidden in a drawing. They explain that there is only right answer. Fred says that he sees a sheep, when in fact there is a greyhound hidden in the picture.

Fred asks what tipped the men off to the fact that he might have a hemisphere split. They say that he said something curious recently in a meeting with Hank. Fred said that perhaps a certain seven-speed bike might have lost three gears on the floor of the garage where it was stored. Fred recalls that he and his dooper friends eventually asked a young, black man why the bike only had seven gears, and he explained that to determine how many speeds a bike has one needs to multiply, rather than add, the number of gears on the front tire by the number on the back tire. The medical officers note that even a young, uneducated person was able to understand the problem-solving mistake that Arctor and his roommates had made.

Fred starts to treat the psychological test as a joke, and then he asks the deputies how he can truly insinuate himself into Donna's life. They recommend buying her flowers. Fred asks to leave before he has finished the test. The deputies allow him to leave, saying that they can continue the evaluation at another time.



Chapter 7 (pages 103-121) Analysis

In Chapter 7, Bob Arctor begins to exhibit signs of split consciousness, as his mind seems to jump to recitations of a scientific paper without his notice. These interruptions in consciousness take place in the middle of Arctor's thoughts and his spoken words. The scientific paper that Arctor quotes is "The Other Side of the Brain: An Appositional Mind," an actual article written in 1969 by Joseph E. Bogen, M.D. Bogen was a prominent California-based neurophysiologist who specialized in split brain research and focused on theories of consciousness.

Although Arctor remains unaware of his mind's jumps, he is clearly feeling spooked by the test and the possibility of brain damage that it signifies. He attempts to dismiss the test with sarcasm, telling the medical officers that he sees plastic dog shit in one of the pictures. The allusion to dog excrement shows that Arctor is still feeling uneasy about the vision he experienced while looking at his car's engine. At this point, it is clear to everyone in Room 203 that Arctor's brain has problems.



Chapter 8 (pages 122-151)

Chapter 8 (pages 122-151) Summary

This chapter opens with Charles Freck riding in his car. Wanting to make Jim Barris look like a fool, he concocts a joke about owning a Methedrine plant. Freck arrives at Bob Arctor's house and sees Arctor and Barris working on Arctor's car. He tries his joke but Barris does not take the bait. The roommates argue over the car's mechanical issues. Freck feels surprised that the mood at Arctor's house feels stressful rather than mellow, so he leaves. On the way home, Freck thinks about his friends who are junkies and about dead famous people who were junkies, and he cries.

At Bob Arctor's house, the roommates sit around talking about Donna. Luckman tells a story about Donna stealing and reselling postage stamps. Arctor wonders whether he will catch Donna, who seems so kind, stealing from him on the surveillance tapes. He wonders whether he might catch *himself* doing strange things in the middle of the night.

Since Arctor's car does not work, and neither does Luckman's, Arctor asks Barris to borrow his car. Barris has made secret modifications to his automobile. Arctor thinks that Barris has probably set the radio to transmit sounds to the police, a private paramilitary organization, the Syndicate, or extraterrestrials. Arctor's car radio, on the other hand, has genuine law-enforcement features that enable him to send and receive information. Arctor also has special tires for increased speed and acceleration. Arctor knows that Barris will refuse to let him drive the car, so now Arctor has an excuse for walking.

From the safe apartment, Arctor watches a live feed from his house. He sees Luckman choking on food while Barris calmly ignores Luckman's distress. After Luckman has collapsed on the kitchen floor, Barris stands over his body and acts out a scene of mock dismay. Finally, Barris calls 911. While Barris talks with the operator, Luckman gasps and regains consciousness. The scene he has just witnessed horrifies Arctor.

As Arctor walks home, Donna pulls up in her white MG. He gets in the car, and she tells him that she has gotten the thousand tabs of Death he requested. Donna asks Arctor to take him to a rock concert at the stadium next weekend, where she intends to get wasted. Donna takes him back to her place. They discuss the eleventh *Planet of the Apes* movie and Donna's habit of stealing Coke bottles from shipping trucks.

Donna takes a hit from her hash pipe and blows it into Arctor's mouth. He feels that this is her substitute for sexual relations. Arctor tells her that he loves her, and Donna says that she digs his being in love with her.



Chapter 8 (pages 122-151) Analysis

In Chapter 8, Dick focuses on rounding out Donna's character. The author presents clues to Donna's true nature. The reader learns, for instance, that Donna is capable of planning and executing a large revenge operation. After getting sick from a rotten ham sandwich bought from a movie theater vending machine, Donna researches the vending machine company and figures out how to get even. She gets a friend with tools to bend quarters in order to plug many of the company's other machines. This revenge plot foreshadows the larger scheme in which Donna's role will eventually be exposed. After Donna proudly tells the vending machine tale, both Arctor and the reader know that she is a character who ought to be feared.



Chapter 9 (pages 152-160)

Chapter 9 (pages 152-160) Summary

Arctor and Donna are stoned. He asks whether he can hold her. Donna tells him no, and that she thinks he is ugly. Arctor becomes furious. Then Donna says she will not have sex with anyone because she plans to use her vagina to smuggle four pounds of cocaine across the Canadian border someday. Arctor heads out on foot.

Donna follows Arctor to apologize. She explains that she is out of it. Arctor says that her hash is laced with opium. Donna says that someday she hopes to get married and live in Oregon, but Arctor isn't the man she wants to marry. She offers him a ride in her MG. Donna briefly squeezes his hand, and the narrator notes that this touch will linger in his heart forever.

Later that night, Arctor brings home a little needle-freak named Connie. She has sex with him in exchange for drugs. The girl looks unhealthy and mumbles. In the dark night, he imagines that Connie is Donna.

Chapter 9 (pages 152-160) Analysis

Although Dick states in his "Author's Note" that this novel has no moral, he seems to use characters like Kimberly and Connie to show the devastating effects of living the druggie lifestyle. Connie is perhaps the most pitiful character in the whole novel, because she has lost the will to do anything but take drugs. Connie's actions, including having sex with Arctor in whatever way he wants, serve only to get her more of her drug. Signs that she is in an advanced stage of drug addiction include mumbling, skin problems, and her cavalier attitude toward maintaining hygiene and health. Connie is more akin to a zombie than to a living human being. Yet, when she sleeps, Connie speaks of someone she once loved, conjuring up a distant emotional memory. Although Arctor has used Connie for sex, his caring reaction to the girl's sleepy outburst proves that he remains a man with a heart and soul.



Chapter 10 (pages 161-174)

Chapter 10 (pages 161-174) Summary

In the safe apartment, Fred watches holo-scans of Bob Arctor's house. He sees Barris read a book on mushrooms, pick an ugly dried mushroom out of a paper bag, crush the mushroom, and put its pieces into a capsule. Barris calls several people and attempts to sell them drugs made of potent mushrooms. In the safe apartment, one of Fred's fellow agents notes that the mushroom Barris used is likely toxic.

Horrified, Arctor goes into the bathroom to calm himself. He thinks about the day he saw dog excrement after Barris gave him a pill, and he thinks that Barris might have given him poison mushrooms. Arctor thinks that he will never again be able to eat or drink anything in his own house. He thinks that he should kill Barris to save the lives of everyone who comes over to his house. He fears that Donna will end up dead.

Fred returns to the tape and sees Barris dismiss a call from a creditor for a bounced twenty-dollar check. On the phone, Barris identifies himself as Arctor and presents himself as a heavy drug user. The caller says he will report Arctor to the district attorney. Arctor checks the information on the incoming call and sees that it came from a locksmith. He figures that Barris is trying to burn him by getting him in trouble with the law. Arctor assumes that the twenty dollars was a charge for copying a key.

In another holo-scan, Fred watches Arctor in bed with Connie. In the middle of the night, he sees Connie morph into Donna and then change back again. Fred "enters" the holo-scan, which has three dimensions, to take a closer look at the strange morphing.

Chapter 10 (pages 161-174) Analysis

In Chapter 10, Dick provides rising action in the story involving Arctor's conflict with Barris. The holo-tape of Barris's attempts at selling mushroom drugs proves that Barris is a wholly untrustworthy character. Lies roll out of his mouth as easily as the truth. As Arctor realizes that he does not really know Barris, he begins to understand that he simply lacks a capacity to see truth in general. The three-dimensional holo-scan that Fred watches enables him to step into the recorded scene to look at elements of an image up-close. Even when viewing Connie through this life-like projection, Arctor is unable to distinguish her face from Donna's. Ironically, this undercover agent is not very observant. He often sees what he hopes to see, rather than truth as it exists.



Chapter 11 (pages 175-188)

Chapter 11 (pages 175-188) Summary

The next morning, Arctor takes a Yellow Cab to Englesohn Locksmith. He pays the proprietor, an amiable lady, the twenty dollars owed. To explain "his" awful behavior on the phone last night, Arctor makes up a story about the sudden death of his best friend due to choking. The woman says that the man on the phone was Carl, her brother.

After he leaves the locksmith's shop, Arctor looks at the check. It is from his old checking account that has been closed for a while. Arctor is amazed that Barris has forged his signature perfectly. From a payphone, he calls Carl at the shop to find out the address where the key was copied. The locksmith gives him the address of a house where Arctor partied hard six weeks earlier. Arctor realizes that he cannot remember much that happened that night. He must have called the locksmith himself.

Arctor is surprised that he does not remember calling the locksmith to have a key copied, that he used the wrong checkbook to pay the locksmith, and that he failed to pay his debt. He realizes that he has no idea what he has really been up to. No wonder both the authorities and Barris are against him.

Beginning while he is in the locksmith's shop, Arctor occasionally interrupts what he is saying to recite some German poetry. However, he does not seem to be aware of the German outbursts.

Arctor returns home and feels the holo-scanners watching him. He resents being watched. He wonders what the scanners can know of him. He hopes that the scanners will help him see himself more clearly than he sees himself in real life. Acting nonchalant, he takes a random book off the living room shelf. It turns out to be *The Picture Book of Sexual Love*. He begins a speech that starts "Any given man sees only a tiny portion of the total truth." Arctor pretends that he is reading from the book. In the middle of his talk, he recites some poetry in German.

Charles Freck feels ever more depressed about the lives his friends lead. He decides to commit suicide. He thinks about what artifacts to leave behind and decides to be found lying on his bed reading Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* with an unfinished letter to Exxon protesting the cancellation of his gas credit card. He purposefully overdoses on reds swallowed down with wine. Before taking the pills, he spends a few minutes looking at his favorite photo in an illustrated sex manual.

After taking the reds, Charles Freck realizes that he has been sold psychedelics rather than barbiturates. He knows that he is in for a massive hallucination. A creature from another dimension appears and begins reading Charles's sins from a long scroll. It takes the creature a thousand years to cover the sins from Charles Freck's first six years.



Chapter 11 (pages 175-188) Analysis

The German poetry that Arctor unwittingly quotes in Chapter 11 comes from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*. Faust is the story of a man who trades his soul to the devil in order to experience ultimate happiness. It is fitting that the suicide attempt of Charles Freck should also appear in this Chapter. Freck's experience parallels that of Faust's. Like Faust, Freck has searched for ultimate happiness. Freck's search, however, has ended with deep misery resulting from his drug addiction. Whereas Faust was haunted by the demon Mephistopheles, Freck is tormented by an enormous creature from another dimension.



Chapter 12 (pages 189-208)

Chapter 12 (pages 189-208) Summary

Two days later, Fred watches his surveillance subject Bob Arctor pull out a book and quite obviously pretend to read from it. At this point in the novel, Fred seems to have lost sight of the fact that he is Arctor in disguise. Fred finds Arctor's speech, including a portion in German, mystifying. He decides that Arctor is nuts. Alternatively, perhaps Arctor knows that he is being monitored and is therefore playing mind games with his observers.

On the holo-scan, Luckman leaves his bedroom and sits with Arctor in the living room. Arctor tells Luckman that he drove by the Maylar Microdot Corporation Building and saw a large number of people searching for missing microdots with tweezers. He describes the tiny building to Luckman. Then the two men discuss Barris's idea to smuggle hash across the border by building a mannequin made of hash that contains a tape recorder which says "No, I don't" when the customs official asks if it has anything to declare. Acting on hunches, Fred occasionally fasts forward the holo-scan, missing no important portions of conversation.

A phone rings in the safe apartment. A voice reminds Fred that he was supposed to return to Room 203 for further testing. Fred seems to have no memory of his earlier testing. He agrees to go to Room 203 the following day.

As the holo-scan continues to play, Fred grows disgusted by the babbling druggies onscreen. Arctor and Luckman discuss a woman who had a hysterical pregnancy. When she takes her screaming son to the doctor, the doctor says that the child is hysterical. Luckman tells Arctor about a man who became wealthy while impersonating a world-famous imposter. The man thought it would be easier to pretend to be the imposter than it would be to pretend to be a large number of people, as the imposter had done.

In a later holo-scan, the conversation turns to the topic of narks. The roommates ruminate about what kinds of lives undercover agents might live. Arctor asks how a guy could pose as a nark, although he means to say how a nark could pose as a regular guy. The roommates react with shock. Fred has no idea what Arctor might have meant by that comment, but he thinks it is proof that Arctor is up to no good.

Fred thinks to himself a few lines in verse: "I resemble that worm which crawls through dust,/Lives in the dust, eats dust/Until a passerby's foot crushes it." Fred cannot remember how he knows the poetry, but he thinks that it captures the experience of a nark, an underground imposter.

Fred commiserates with the other scramble-suited agents about the tedium of watching the tapes. He thinks that his subjects live a life of endless nothing. He thinks that their



lives reflect the murkiness of their minds. To calm himself, Fred goes into the bathroom and takes some death tabs.

The next day, Fred sees two medical officers for further testing. At first, he does not recognize them as the same two medical officers from his last evaluation. After completing some psychological tests, Fred is asked to give a blood sample. Then he goes upstairs for an unrelated meeting with Hank.

In Hank's office, Fred finds Jim Barris sitting with Hank. Hank identifies Barris as the informant who reported Bob Arctor as a suspicious person. Hank explains that during his last anonymous call, Barris was told that he must step forward and identify himself. Barris says that he has evidence that Arctor is part of a large secret organization that is plotting against the United States. Barris says that Arctor's behavior has become unpredictable, because his brain has clearly been damaged by Substance D. He says that he has come forward because he is afraid Arctor will kill him. Hank tells Barris that the department doesn't care why Barris is there.

Chapter 12 (pages 189-208) Analysis

In this chapter, Barris is revealed to be Arctor's informant. Yet Barris is as afraid of Arctor as Arctor is of him, proving that Barris is hardly an imposing foe. He acts more like Arctor's foil than his enemy. Dick uses the Barris character to highlight Arctor's innate goodness. Barris and Arctor bear many similarities, including rejection of the straight lifestyle and a secretive nature. However, Barris's lawless attitude serves to contrast Arctor's decency. Whereas Barris lies as easily as telling the truth, Arctor must remind himself to lie to his friends to maintain his police cover. Arctor works for the public good, while Barris struggles to undermine the system. When Arctor sees a fellow human in need, he tries to help. Barris, on the other hand, lets a friend choke before his eyes.



Chapter 13 (pages 209-238)

Chapter 13 (pages 209-238) Summary

In Room 203, the two men explain to Fred that the hemispheres in his brain are competing with each other. In a normal brain, the left hemisphere is dominant and the right hemisphere provides backup. In someone with Arctor's condition, the left hemisphere has become damaged and the right hemisphere is trying to take over primary function. The medical officers tell Fred that his brain may never recover.

The medical officers say that the hemispheres are similar to the hands, because a person's two hands are mirror images of each other. It is as if one-half of Arctor's brain perceives the world through a mirror. Fred thinks that he understands what St. Paul by the biblical phrase "through a mirror darkly." A mirror reflection does not show a person what he really looks like, because the image is backward. Fred thinks that he has seen himself, and the whole world, backward. He wonders how the department will compensate him during his rehabilitation.

Fred has an hour to wait before meeting again with Hank, so he goes to the cafeteria. Still in his scramble suit, he begins to flirt in the food line with a woman wearing a tight blue sweater and a short skirt. She believes that Fred is a coworker named Pete Wickam. As he eats a sandwich, Fred thinks that he will be sent to rehab and someone else will be assigned to spy on Arctor.

A friend of the woman in the blue sweater approaches Fred's lunch table and tells him that her friend, Ellen, suggests he start using mouthwash. Fred wonders whether Ellen and the other woman are trying to be kind to Pete, or malicious. He wonders whether St. Paul had bad breath and thinks that perhaps, that is the reason Paul was locked in jail so often in his later years. He wishes that there were a drugstore in the building, so he could get some mouthwash and meet Hank feeling more confident.

Fred realizes that he may never see his hippie friends again. He thinks sadly of Donna and is reminded of a German song his great-uncle used to sing about a comforting woman who looked like an angel. He also remembers that his German-born great-uncle often would read poetry aloud.

Arctor enters Hank's office. Hank and Jim Barris listen to Barris's recordings as Hank looks over the file containing Fred's mental health report. On Barris's tape, it sounds as though Donna Hawthorne and Bob Arctor discuss a plot to steal weapons from an Air Force arsenal. Hank orders a cop to arrest Barris, who will be charged for giving false information to the authorities. He tells Barris that the arrest is just a formality, to keep him on the premises. Hank then calls the lab to have them determine how much of Barris's surveillance materials are forged.



Hank tells Fred that, according to the report, Fred is completely cuckoo. Probably only two brain cells still light up. Fred says that he does not want to go to a federal clinic. He wants to sit near a lake in the mountains instead. Hank says that Fred's next payment will be three thousand dollars smaller than usual. There is a little known law that states an officer who becomes a drug addict and does not immediately report the addiction must pay a fine.

Hank advises Fred to have Donna drive him up to the mountains. He says that he has known for a while that Fred is Bob Arctor, and that Arctor and Donna are close. Fred finds it hard to believe that he is Bob Arctor. Hank calls Donna, pretending to be a friend of Arctor's. He adopts hippie slang and says that Bob needs her help. Fred begins to believe that Hank is actually one of his druggie friends.

Hank explains to Arctor that the surveillance was designed to monitor Jim Barris all along. The department hoped to draw Barris into headquarters to present his fake tapes. It was important to trap Barris, Hank says, because Barris is into something heavy and sick that involves guns.

Donna drives Bob Arctor to New-Path. Along the way, she pulls over and gives him a hit from her hash pipe. He is already going through withdrawal and feeling sick. She tells Arctor about Tony Amsterdam, a guy she knew once. Tony had seen God in an acid trip brought on by a large dose of water-soluble vitamins. He felt good for a year, but then felt worse than ever because he knew that nothing else in his life would ever compare to his vision of God. Tony later regretted not walking through a doorway he had seen in his vision.

As Arctor convulses and shudders, Donna holds him and says that he is a good man who does not deserve to have this happen to him. Suddenly a cop appears. She shows him her identification, which proves that she is undercover for the federal people. Donna tells the cop to keep quiet so that Arctor will not know her secret identity.

Donna drops Arctor off at New-Path and gets onto the freeway. She listens to Carole King's *Tapestry* while tailgating a Coca-Cola truck and shooting its Coke bottles. She rams into the truck, causing significant damage to her car. Donna leaves the car behind and walks.

Chapter 13 (pages 209-238) Analysis

Chapter 13 is rich with irony. Each piece of Fred and Hank's conversation about money yields unexpected information. Fred thinks he will get a reward for losing his mind in the line of duty, but instead he is fined for the drug addiction that his work required. In addition, it is ironic that Arctor feels upset about the loss of three thousand dollars when he has no idea what is standard salary is. Ironically, the fact that Arctor will never make it back to the payment machine to pick up his wages makes the whole conversation pointless.

The quote on page 214 comes from *Fidelio*, an opera by Ludwig van Beethoven. In the opera a woman named Leonore, disguised as a prison guard, rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison. It appears that Arctor's mind is drawing an analogy between Leonore and Donna. A part of Arctor still hopes that Donna will save him from his troubles.



Chapter 14 (pages 239-263)

Chapter 14 (pages 239-263) Summary

At New-Path, a staff member named George instructs Arctor on how to clean the bathrooms. George calls Arctor Bruce, and Bruce does not correct him. George asks Bruce whether he likes animals, and he suggests that Bruce may be transferred to a farm. Later, Bruce sits in the lounge drinking coffee while other residents discuss what it would feel like to be dead but still have sight.

During Concept Time, the New-Path residents discuss concepts put forth by staff members. The concepts include *Living and unloving things are exchanging properties*, *The drive of unloving things is stronger than the drive of living things*, *Activity does not necessarily mean life*, and *Motion that is circular is the deadest form of the universe*.

Bruce is still going through withdrawal. He asks for cold medication, but there are no chemicals allowed at New-Path. He meets with Mike, a thirty-five-year-old counselor who has been living at New-Path since his own rehabilitation a year and a half ago. Mike advises Bruce that he should stay at New-Path the rest of his life.

At New-Path, the residents are taught to play the Game. In the Game, New-Path's Executive Director and other staff members yell sexual obscenities at Bruce. The purpose of the Game is unclear. Bruce begins to feel numb.

Bruce is assigned to kitchen cleaning duty. Two old men feed small children in the kitchen. Bruce is allowed to sit and eat with them. A little girl named Thelma asks him his name, but he cannot remember it. He is warmed by the girl's presence.

One day Mike manages to leave New-Path on an errand. He calls Donna Hawthorne from a payphone and meets her at a McDonald's. They discuss plans to send Bob Arctor on a spying mission to see the source of Substance D on behalf of the government. Mike tells Donna that Bruce will not be able to get the information they seek until winter. It is clear that Donna has been priming Arctor for this mission all along.

Donna expresses sorrow at what has become of her friend. She thinks that it is a terrible thing for a person to have sacrificed himself without knowing he made a sacrifice. Donna tells Mike that they have created bad karma by setting up Arctor. Although Mike sees her as a warm, kind person, she says that the truth is she is cold inside. Then she vanishes.

One day Thelma asks Bruce to tell her a story. He tells her about a great springing wolf who jumped from a tree and was shot by a farmer and his sons. According to Bruce, the farmer saved the wolf's hide and people mourned for him for generations. After he tells the story, Thelma pretends she is the wolf, and he sees in her clumsy movements that she is impaired. He feels sadness, and his thoughts are interrupted by some German verse.



Bruce is told to vacuum the children's playroom. As he searches for the vacuum cleaner, he discovers an old woman unsuccessfully trying to juggle rubber balls. Someone calls the woman "Donna," which confuses Bruce.

Chapter 14 (pages 239-263) Analysis

Even though Arctor has lost his memory of who he is, he remains a kind-hearted person who cares about the pain of others. When he sees that Thelma cannot function normally, he mentally recites some German text. The words come from "Atlas," a poem by Heinrich Heine. In English, the poem reads, "I, unblessed Atlas!/I carry a world, the entire world of pain,/I bear the unbearable/And the heart within me wants to break."

The wolf story that Arctor tells in chapter 14 is vastly different from the summary that Donna gives of a book about wolves in Chapter 2. Donna notes that wolves pee on each other to mark their territory, in an anecdote that emphasizes the violent nature of wolves. Arctor's story, however, presents a wolf as a noble character that is the victim of violence. This story seems to suggest the way that he would like others to think of him. Arctor's wolf is remembered for years for his goodness. Arctor, though noble, probably will remain anonymous. Even he cannot remember his own name.



Chapters 15-17 (pages 264-275)

Chapters 15-17 (pages 264-275) Summary

Bruce wants to work with animals, but Mike assigns him to plant work on a farm. As Mike drives Bruce to the farm, he wonders whether New-Path destroyed Arctor-Fred-Bruce like this, so that they could ultimately receive him back. Mike remembers that the Executive Director told him that New-Path's goals have nothing to do with drug rehabilitation. Mike thinks that the money may be coming from Substance D sales. As a government agent, Mike knows that, contrary to public opinion, Substance D is not the product of a lab.

Bruce and his fellow Samarkand House residents have trouble remembering reality. They tell each other ludicrous stories. In one story, a man goes to find his friend and is told that his friend has died. The man says he will come back to look for his friend again on Thursday. Another story is about a community of people dying out, after they are put to death for their crimes. Bruce says, "Well, we'll come back on Thursday," which becomes a funny tag line for the New-Path residents. They credit him with bringing humor to the rehab center.

Following Michael Westaway's suggestion, Donald Abrahams orders Bruce to be transferred to a farm facility in the Napa Valley. Bruce asks the farm manager whether he will see his friends from Samarkand House again, and the manager explains that Bruce will only go back for gatherings at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The manager tells Bruce about the different vegetables grown at the farm. He thinks to himself that Bruce is just one more vegetable.

Bruce steps into a cornfield. There, hidden below the tall stalks, he sees tiny blue flowers. Donald tells him that these flowers are the future, but not Bruce's future because he has already had too much of a good thing. Bruce understands that these flowers are Substance D. As the farm manager and the Executive Director walk away, Bruce bends down and saves one of the plants in his shoe. He thinks that he will give it to his Samarkand House friends as a present on Thanksgiving.

Chapters 15-17 (pages 264-275) Analysis

Like many great works of fiction, *A Scanner Darkly* leaves its readers with questions to ponder. One large question is; How does Arctor know that the blue flowers are the source of Substance D? Flowers are mentioned several times in the novel's earlier sections. The first mention of flowers occurs during Arctor's initial psychological testing session, in Chapter 7. One of the medical officers suggests that Arctor try to woo Donna with flowers. It is unclear whether that officer, or any of the other police department personnel, is involved in the federal government's plot to set up Arctor for spying in New-Path.



Characters

Robert Arctor

Special Agent Fred, who is also Bob Arctor, serves as an undercover narcotics agent. Fred wears a scramble suit. When he is undercover, Arctor dresses, talks, and feels like a hippie. He tells his friends that he works at the Blue Chip Redemption Stamp Center in Placentia.

Arctor owns a three-bedroom ranch house that he shares with two roommates, Ernie Luckman and Jim Barris. Arctor's house is messy and falling apart, but he does not seem to notice the deterioration of his home environment until other characters point it out to him. Arctor formerly had a wife and two young daughters and a clean house, but he left that life behind when he realized that he hated his house and family. Before becoming a cop, Arctor served as an insurance claims investigator.

Arctor is unlucky in love. Other characters describe him as having an ugly appearance. He remembers his wife for being emotionally needy, resenting the fact that he brought his insurance work home. Arctor and his buddies consider Donna Hawthorne to be Arctor's girlfriend, but the truth is that the two have a platonic relationship. Arctor loves Donna and tries to get closer to her, but she rebuffs Arctor's romantic overtures.

As an undercover narcotics officer, Arctor's main target is Donna Hawthorne, a drug dealer. He buys a larger quantity of drugs from her with each deal, in the hope that eventually she will be unable to meet his demand and will connect him directly to her supplier. Arctor feels emotionally torn by the conflict between spying on Donna for his job and caring about her as an individual.

Arctor is a drug addict. He has become hooked on Substance D while impersonating a drug user in his undercover work. Arctor's brain has suffered damage because of his heavy drug use. The two hemispheres of his brain have lost their ability to communicate with each other. As a result, Arctor begins to develop two distinct personalities. Fred, the cop, and Bob Arctor, the druggie, sever into two conflicting identities.

Arctor becomes an unwitting spy for the federal government when he loses his mental faculties. After suffering a severe mental breakdown, Arctor is sent to New-Path, a drug rehabilitation center. There he is given a new name, Bruce. Arctor does not object to the new name, because his brain is so frazzled that he has forgotten his real name. While undergoing rehabilitation, Arctor performs house-cleaning duties. Later, he is assigned to work on a farm. While working on a farm, Arctor sees the origin of Substance D. What little remains of his brain is able to comprehend what he has seen. He plans to share this knowledge with others.



Charles Freck

Charles Freck is a drug addict who feels a deep sadness for the effects that drugs have had on him. He mourns for all of the users like himself who have messed up their lives with drugs. Charles is often delusional. After visiting his friend Jerry Fabin, Charles becomes convinced that biting aphids have infected Jerry's house. While driving his Chevy, Charles sometimes feels that he is being followed by the police. He often has trouble remembering things, including his own name.

Charles thinks that he should go to New-Path for detoxification. In the end, he decides to kill himself. His suicide attempt goes wrong, however, because Charles inadvertently takes an overdose of hallucinatory drugs rather than barbiturates.

Jerry Fabin

After damaging his brain with the drug Substance D, Jerry Fabin starts to believe that bugs are plaguing him. He believes that the bugs that infest his home are biting aphids. Before he is taken to the hospital for detoxification, Jerry spends all his time trying to rid himself of the bugs. He sprays his home and his body with bug spray, and he takes long hot showers with his dog.

In addition to the bug delusion, Fabin secretly believes that a man without legs has been following him and trying to kill him for months. He does not tell anyone about the legless hit man until he is taken to New-Path for drug rehabilitation. Jerry Fabin's druggie friends call the police to have him placed in New-Path after they learn that Fabin intends to fill his home with poison.

Donna Hawthorne

Donna sells drugs. She also works in a perfume store at the mall. Charles Freck notices that Donna writes slowly, and he believes this reflects her lack of education. Donna sells Substance D, but she never uses it herself because she knows that the drug can severely damage the brain. However, Donna uses cocaine and hash.

Donna is a pretty girl with an intelligent face and large breasts. Donna has a slight frame and long dark hair. She says that men are always trying to have sex with her. Donna plans to get married and live in Oregon someday. Until then, she wants to remain abstinent. She says that she is keeping her vagina clean so that she can smuggle cocaine inside it.

For fun, Donna likes to go to a drive-in movie theater. She is a fan of the *Planet of the Apes* series. Donna also remarks that she had fun drinking a cocktail at a Mexican restaurant that served her even though she is not yet old enough to drink legally.



Donna drives a white MG. She is a reckless driver, especially when following a Coca-Cola truck. While tailing Coca-Cola trucks, Donna enjoys stealing Coke bottles and shooting Coke bottles with her gun. At the end of the novel, she rams her car into a Coca-Cola truck.

Frequently acting outside the law, Donna tends to think up complex schemes for moneymaking or revenge. When a stamp machine erroneously emits hundreds of postage stamps, Donna has the machine stolen and sets it up on a street corner to resell the stamps for her own profit. After eating a bad ham sandwich from a vending machine, she sabotages many of the vending company's other machines.

Donna has set up her friend Bob Arctor to become brain damaged and to spy on New-Path from within one of the company's rehab centers. She feels guilty for plotting against Arctor, because he is a nice guy. Donna was raised Catholic and makes occasional references to her belief that she is headed for hell.

Jim Barris

Jim Barris is one of Bob Arctor's roommates and a drug user. Barris has a beard and typically wears leather pants. He has set up a drug lab in his home and claims to make cocaine from suntan lotion. Barris also makes drugs out of dried mushrooms and tries to sell them. He says that he would like to write a how-to guide on making drugs at home.

Barris has taken classes in electronics, and he likes to tinker with machines. In exchange for back rent that he owes Arctor, Barris agrees to try fixing Arctor's cephscope and automobile. Barris's attempts at fixing these machines, however, prove futile. He tries to make a silencer for his gun, but his device amplifies the gun's sound instead.

Barris proves to be untrustworthy in many situations. He gives Arctor drugs that are likely responsible for Arctor's disturbing vision of dog feces, and he impersonates Arctor on the phone in order to make a bounced check situation worse for Arctor. Barris also calmly watches Luckman choke on food and then pretend to make a frantic call to 911.

Near the end of the novel, we discover that Barris has been making anonymous phone calls to the police about Arctor. He tries to set Arctor up with spurious recordings that implicate Arctor and Donna in a plot to steal arms from the U.S. military. The police are not fooled, and Barris is arrested.

Hank

Hank, also known as Mr. F., is a narcotics officer. He meets with Fred at Headquarters, while both men wear scramble suits. Hank does not know that the agent he meets with is really Bob Arctor, so he assigns Arctor to spy on himself. At the end of the novel, Hank reveals that he figured out Fred's identity long ago. Hank seems genuinely concerned about Arctor's health and well-being.



Spade Weeks

Weeks is a drug runner who brings shipments of Substance D from Mexico. His method of drug running involves taping the drugs underneath the car of an unsuspecting straight and then tracking down that person and killing him once the drugs have crossed into the United States. Weeks is a fat black dude in his thirties. Although he hails from the slums of Los Angeles, Weeks has a slow, elegant speech pattern. He dresses in a subdued but classy way, like a doctor or a lawyer.

Kimberly Hawkins

Kimberly is a teenage prostitute and drug addict. She is half-Chicano. She lives in Cromwell Village, a slum-housing area. Kimberly is beaten by her abusive boyfriend, Dan Mancher. Kimberly is angry because Dan took the expensive leather boots she bought him when he left her apartment in a rage. She is not too pretty and speaks in a raspy voice. Bob Arctor tries to help Kimberly, but she tells him to leave her alone.

Dan Mancher

Dan is a drug dealer with a violent temper. He beats his girlfriend, Kimberly Hawkins, and slashes her tires. He has a slight frame and, according to Bob Arctor, looks like a homosexual.

Ernie Luckman

Ernie Luckman is one of Bob Arctor's roommates. Luckman is a drug addict. He wears snazzy shirts, tight jeans, and sunglasses. Luckman is thirty-two years old and has a fit physique. He has studied theology. Luckman almost dies when he chokes on dinner and his roommate, Jim Barris, fails to help him.

Connie

Connie is a cute little needle-freak that has sex with Arctor in exchange for drugs. She is one of the novel's hopeless cases. Connie gets no enjoyment from sex, but she is willing to do whatever Arctor wants. She mumbles and has a bad dream about someone she loved but was forced to give up because he stank.

Ellen

Ellen is the name of the girl that Fred flirts with in the cafeteria at police headquarters. She wears a short skirt and a tight blue sweater. She believes Fred, who is wearing his scramble suit, to be a man named Pete Wickam.



Mike Westaway

Mike is a counselor at New-Path. He is a short, stocky man with curly hair and a pug face. He is a former heroin addict who served ten years in prison. Mike feels that he has to stay in New-Path to avoid getting involved with drugs again. He is engaged to Laura, another New-Path resident.

Mike works with Donna to set Bob Arctor up to spy on New-Path and find the source of Substance D. He feels that Donna is a warm, good person. Like Donna, Mike regrets his role in Arctor's mental demise.

Thelma

Bob Arctor meets Thelma, a little girl who is staying at New-Path with her mother, in the kitchen. She asks him what his name is, but he cannot remember it. The girl has some developmental defects, which may be the result of her mother's drug use.

Donald Abrahams

Donald is the Executive Director of New-Path. Along with other staff members, he taunts Bruce during the Game. He is the only one who knows how New-Path is funded. He tells Mike that the goals of New-Path have nothing to do with drug rehabilitation. When Arctor sees the Substance D plants, Donald laughs and tells him the plants are not for him.



Objects/Places

Yard Guard

Jerry Fabian buys Yard Guard at the 7-11 grocery store. He has found that this is the best brand of bug spray to use against the aphids.

Substance D

Substance D is a highly addictive illegal drug. It is also known as *slow death*.

Cephalochromosome

Bob Arctor's cephalochromosome, which cost nine hundred dollars, is his most treasured possession. He turns it on whenever he is at home. Sometimes characters refer to the cephalochromosome as simply the "cephscope." It is a device that seems to be used for recreation and relaxation.

Fiddler's Three

Fiddler's Three is a coffee shop in Santa Ana, California. Charles Freck and Jim Barris eat a meal there.

New-Path

New-Path is the name of a chain of residence centers where drug users go to kick their habit. Drug dealers occasionally hide in New-Path centers.

Room 203

Room 203 at police headquarters is a psychology-testing lab. It is a sterile white room with steel fixtures. All the furniture is bolted to the floor.

Bob Arctor's house

Bob Arctor owns a three-bedroom ranch house. He shares it with two roommates. Throughout the novel, characters remark on how run-down and messy the house is.



Safe apartment

In the safe apartment, which is located several blocks from Bob Arctor's house; undercover agents sit before monitors and watch surveillance holo-scans.

Englesohn Locksmith

Bob Arctor goes to the Englesohn Locksmith shop to pay a twenty-dollar debt. The shop is dimly lit, reminding Arctor of a junkie's apartment.

Creature from another dimension

When Charles Freck attempts to kill himself with reds and wine, he sees a creature from another dimension. The creature is eight feet tall and has eyes all over its body. The creature reads Freck a long list of Freck's sins.

Mors ontologica

Mors ontologica is the scientific name of the blue flowers that are grown to produce Substance D. The name means "death of the spirit."

The black-and-white wolf

Bruce tells Thelma the story of a black-and-white wolf with amazing strength and size. A farmer and his sons and their friends shoot the wolf out of a tree, but keep the wolf's hide and tell many stories honoring the wolf.

Samarkand House

Samarkand House is the name of the New-Path residence where Bruce lives before he is transferred to the New-Path farm.



Themes

A dark reflection

The title of the novel alludes to Chapter 13 of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians in the New Testament of the Bible. This biblical passage focuses on the subject of love, principally the charitable love that one Christian should have for another. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." St. Paul's "glass" connotes a *mirror*. Instead of a mirror, Bob Arctor must look at himself through an undercover police holo-scan.

Through the holo-scans, Arctor gains insight into his character and the environment in which he has chosen to place himself. Although Arctor is working undercover, he feels comfortable in the druggie world. He has left behind the world of straights, where he was an insurance salesman, husband and father, in order to wear jeans, keep a messy home, and party with friends. In spite of the dangers that surround him, Arctor asserts in Chapter 4 that he has made the right lifestyle choice for himself. By Chapter 11, however, he is not sure who he is and what he wants. Dick writes, "I see only murk. Murk outside; murk inside." Arctor hopes that the scanners will help him see himself more clearly, to give him knowledge that will enable him make informed decisions.

The holo-scans, however, fail to provide Arctor the truth that he seeks. One example of this is when he sleeps with Connie and wakes up in the middle of the night and thinks that Donna is beside him in bed instead. Later, when he watches the holo-scan of that night, Fred sees Connie temporarily transform into Donna. He wonders whether someone has altered the scan in order to play with his mind. The most likely explanation, however, is that a video can only show a person what he wants to see in it. Like a mirror, a holo-scan requires its viewer to be able to focus on the image presented.

Humane treatment of animals and children

Dick writes the novel with a great deal of empathy for the plight of his drug-abusing characters. This empathy, as he explains in the Author's Note, is because he was once a druggie himself. To highlight the innocence of his characters, Dick shows them reacting kindly to animals and children. After the druggies try to explain to a straight girl that she should not kill an insect because it is harmless, she says, "If I had known it was harmless I would have killed it myself." This becomes a rallying cry for the druggies to



remind themselves of why they hate straights. Arctor thinks that drug addicts care for sick pets long after most straights would have put the animals "to sleep." He recalls watching two druggies working a stray cat's head free from a broken window for an hour, giving the unknown cat their full attention.

As a straight, Arctor felt nothing but hatred for his two young daughters. As a junkie, however, he shows great tenderness toward children. His fellow addicts share this love for children. In New-Path, one of the most desired job assignments is caring for the child residents. Although he is not allowed to feed the children, Arctor spends time with them in the kitchen as they are fed by others. When he notices that one child, a girl named Thelma, has a defect, Arctor feels overwhelmed by sadness.

Deception

A Scanner Darkly is a novel of deception. Either most characters are shucking someone or being shucked themselves. Barris shucks as a reflex. He is so accustomed to lying that lies flow from his mouth more easily than the truth. Arctor's career as an undercover police agent is built on the lie that he is a drug user. By the end of the novel, Arctor has been self-deceived by his own actions, using so many drugs that his brain has been corroded. The police department has shucked Arctor into thinking that his suffering will be rewarded, but instead he is fined by the department for being an addict. Arctor's primary surveillance target, Donna, turns out to be a federal agent who has been setting *him* up. In the end, Mike, the rehab counselor who could be helping Arctor to recover is instead priming Arctor to remain brain dead so that Arctor is eligible for assignment on the farm, where he will find the Substance D crop. New-Path and its Executive Director, Donald Abrahams, perpetuate the greatest deception of all in the novel. The New-Path rehabilitation centers are not designed to help drug addicts but rather to take their money once they have been hooked on Substance D, a drug produced by New-Path.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from a semi-omniscient third-person point of view. The narrator is at all times aware of what the protagonist, Fred-Bob Arctor-Bruce is thinking and feeling. At times the thoughts of the novel's two other undercover agents, Donna Hawthorne and Michael Westaway, are also conveyed through narration. The narrator also presents Charles Freck's thoughts, which are typically jumbled in a humorous manner.

Setting

The novel takes place in California. Arctor and his druggie friends all live and work in Orange County, where cars are required to get from place to place. Much of the action, therefore, takes place on the freeway.

The novel is set in four drug users' homes, which are typically dark and unkempt. Jerry Fabin's house is made of plastic, and he has covered the windows so that no light gets in. Kimberly Hawkins lives in a low-income housing project, with dog feces and debris outside. Her apartment is small and has no phone. Bob Arctor's three-bedroom ranch house is messy, because none of the three men who live there is willing to clean it. Arctor's house also has a dilapidated roof. Unlike the other druggies, Donna maintains a nice home. When Arctor comes to visit, she makes him walk on newspapers, because her carpet has been recently cleaned.

At the end of the novel, Arctor lives in a New-Path residence. There, addicts are required to clean their environment. The house has a large kitchen, stairs, and many small rooms. Arctor sleeps in a basement bedroom, which he likes because the basement is kept warm. Eventually Arctor is sent out to a farm in Northern California, where the air is fresh and mountains loom overhead. The farm is large and has many crops, including fields of corn where small blue flowers grow under the corn stalks.

Language and Meaning

The language used in narrating *A Scanner Darkly* is alternately humorously ironic and poignantly sombre. Dick employs hippie slang to make the speech and thoughts of drug users seem realistic. Examples of slang usage include "ball" for "have intercourse with"

"shuck" for "con." Dick's prose often reads like poetry, due to vivid word choices and strings of modifiers. One example of poetic language appears on the last page of the novel: "I saw death rising from the earth, from the ground itself, in one blue field, in stubbled color."

Structure

The novel is comprised of 17 untitled chapters. Most of the novel traces the development of Arctor's split-brain disorder. By chapter 12, Bob Arctor and Fred are two distinct characters.



Quotes

"Most of all he felt sorry for his dog, because he could see the bugs landing on and settling all over him, and probably getting into the dog's lungs, as they were in his own."

Chapter 1, pg. 4

"Once a month an undercover narcotics agent of the county was assigned at random to speak before bubblehead gatherings such as this. Today was his turn. Looking at his audience, he realized how much he detested straights." Chapter 2, pg. 24

"'Cocaine is an aphrodisiac,' Barris muttered, half to himself; he was setting up the testing equipment beside Bob Arctor's cephalochromosome, which was Bob's most expensive possession." Chapter 3, pg. 44

"This change in him as Fred was an economy of the passions. Firemen and doctors and morticians did the same trip in their work." Chapter 3, pg. 58

"Her heart, Bob Arctor reflected, was an empty kitchen: floor tile and water pipes and a drainboard with pale scrubbed surfaces, and one abandoned glass on the edge of the sink that nobody cared about." Chapter 6, pg. 94

"I'm sure I'll recognize Bob Arcor, he thought, if by nothing else than by the clothes he wears or by the process of elimination. What isn't Barris or Luckman and lives here must be Bob Arctor. Unless it's one of the dogs or cats." Chapter 8, pg. 134

"In all the years of his life ahead, the long years without her, with never seeing her or hearing from her or knowing anything about her, if she was alive or happy or dead or what, that touch stayed locked within him, sealed in himself, and never went away. That one touch of her hand." Chapter 9, pg. 157

"Does a passive infrared scanner like they used to use or a cube-type holo-scanner like they use these days, the latest thing, see into me—into us—clearly or darkly?" Chapter 10, pg. 185

"'I once had a kid ask me, 'What was it like to see the first automobile?' Shit, man, I was born in 1962.'" Chapter 12, pg. 194

"If I did bang her and she got pregnant, he ruminated, the babies—no faces. Just blurs. He shivered." Chapter 13, pg. 217

'I'm Bob Arctor?' He could not believe it. It made no sense to him. It did not fit anything he had done or thought, it was grotesque." Chapter 13, pg. 228

"Bruce, he thought; that's my name. But there ought to be better names than that, he thought." Chapter 14, pg. 254



"I lied to my friend, I lied to Bob Arctor all the time. I even told him one time not to believe anything I said, and of course he just believed I was kidding; he didn't listen." Chapter 14, pg. 257

"The living, he thought, should never be used to serve the purposes of the dead. But the dead—he glanced at Bruce, the empty shape beside him—should, if possible, serve the purposes of the living." Chapter 15, pg. 266



Topics for Discussion

Jim Barris is a foil character for Robert Arctor. How does Dick use the differences between the two men to convey Arctor's essence?

Typically, a literary hero is someone who embodies the virtues held in esteem by a particular culture. Often, a hero must sacrifice himself for the greater good of society. Does Arctor match these characteristics of a hero? Why or why not?

A Scanner Darkly was written in 1977, but it is supposed to take place in the future of 1994. What elements of the novel seem futuristic? In what ways does the world of the novel reflect America in the 1970s?

Donna discovers in a book on wolves that wolves urinate on each other to mark their territory. Arctor tells Thelma a story about a wolf that becomes legend after being shot by farmers. Explain how the two references to wolves are connected symbolically.

At the beginning of the book, Robert Arctor and Fred are two overlapping identities, yet by the end, each identity has his own consciousness. Explain what makes the two men similar and the ways in which they differ.

Donna Hawthorne worries that her actions have earned her a place in hell. Do you believe that Donna is a good person, or a villain?

One of Dick's strengths as a writer is his ability to capture the intonations of real conversation in dialogue. Analyze some excerpts from the novel and explain how grammar and word choice make the dialogue ring true.