

Sleeping Beauty Study Guide

Sleeping Beauty by Ross Macdonald

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Plot Summary

Lew Archer is a private detective who inadvertently becomes involved in the disappearance of a member of a very prominent family. A chance encounter with Laurel Russo, daughter of Jack Lennox who runs the wealthy Lennox oil company, leads to Laurel's disappearance and the resulting investigation uncovers a web of lies and cover-ups. Archer's involvement with the Lennox family becomes more than just that of private detective working an investigation. By the end of the book it appears that Archer has become just as enmeshed in the Lennox family problems as if he were an actual Lennox.

Lew Archer returns home from another job to see that the coast of his town is covered by an oil spill. When he walks down to the beach to view the spill closer he meets a distraught woman trying to clean up an oil-covered bird. Lew also sees two suspicious looking men at a nearby restaurant and makes a mental note of them. Another walk down the beach brings Archer back to the woman who has failed to save the oil-covered bird. A brief conversation results and Archer ends up taking the woman back to his apartment with him. The act seems innocent enough since she just wants to use the phone to contact her husband but when the woman abruptly leaves Archer's apartment he becomes suspicious.

Archer discovers that the woman, whose name is Laurel Russo, took a vial of Nembutal sleeping tablets from his medicine cabinet. The private detective becomes concerned about Laurel's welfare and goes after her but she has disappeared. There is nothing stating that Archer should become involved in the search for the woman or suspect that she did anything besides catch a cab and return home, but the private detective cannot let the matter go. Archer begins to investigate the woman's disappearance and becomes embroiled in a situation that even he would not have suspected.

Laurel Russo is the daughter of Jack Lennox who stands to inherit the Lennox oil company and become one of the wealthiest men in California. As Archer investigates Laurel's possible whereabouts he discovers that the Lennox family is hiding a series of family secrets. Jack Lennox is behind his daughter's disappearance. Jack is trying to keep Harold Sherry from divulging personal information and uses his daughter's disappearance as a means of furthering his own cause. Jack offers Harold Sherry a hundred thousand dollars to keep quiet but tries to kill Harold at the scheduled ransom drop. Harold manages to make off with the money and it still appears that he is responsible for Laurel's kidnapping.

Jack is unable to keep his personal information hidden from public knowledge. Archer learns that Jack's wife, Marian, killed Laurel Russo's mother-in-law twenty-five years ago because Jack was having an affair with the woman. Archer also uncovers the truth about a fire on board the ship, *Canaan Sound*. Jack tries to kill Nelson Bagley who saw Marian shoot Allison Russo but instead a spark from the gun ignites a gas leak and burns the whole ship. As it turns out Allison Russo used to baby-sit Laurel and that is how Allison's son, Tom, first met his future wife. The entire situation is a complicated



and disgusting mess. In the end Marian kills herself, Jack inherits the family business, and Laurel returns safely to her parents home. After the lengthy build up of interconnected family secrets, the reader is left with a quick and unfulfilling resolution. Over the course of the book the reader notices that Archer becomes personally involved and feels that this involvement may have affected the final outcome of Laurel's investigation.



Chapter 1-3

Chapter 1-3 Summary

A man sits on a plane looking out the window at the Pacific Ocean covered in an oil spill off the coast of Los Angeles. At the airport the man buys a paper with news of the oil spill splashed across the front page. The man drives towards Pacific Point and the center of the oil spill. Once there he meets a young woman on the beach who has rescued an oil-covered grebe with the intentions of cleaning it off. The man follows the woman for a short time before stopping at a restaurant along the wharf.

At the restaurant the man meets a worker from the busted oilrig and asks him what happened. The worker at first seems a little reluctant to discuss the situation but eventually lets it slip that the Lennox company owns the oilrig. Inside the restaurant the man watches a suspicious looking pair finish their dinner and leave the restaurant. A young man casually dressed escorts an older man whose head is covered with scars. The man asks the restaurant owner about the pair but she knows nothing. The man orders his dinner and a bourbon and leaves his plate half eaten because the fish tastes like oil.

After his dinner the man decides to take a walk along the beach and eventually comes to an outcropping of rocks. On top of the rocks sits a woman crying and the man realizes that it is the same woman who attempted to save the oil-covered grebe. The man tries to comfort the woman but she refuses to listen to him. He offers to take her home and she readily agrees to go with him.

After climbing down off the rocks the woman says that her name is Laurel Russo and that her husband's name is Tom. The man reveals that his name is Lew Archer but does not disclose that he is a private detective. As they walk along Laurel grabs Lew's hand and drags him away from the young man Lew saw in the restaurant. Laurel insists she does not know the man but Lew suspects that she is not telling the truth.

When they pull off the freeway Laurel asks where Lew lives and wants to know if she can contact her husband from Lew's apartment. Against his better judgment Lew takes her back to his house and lets her use the phone. When Laurel's husband refuses to take her phone call, Lew offers her accommodations for the night at his apartment. Laurel takes the suggestion as a come-on and for a brief moment Lew considers the woman's attractive body and compromised circumstances, but he assures Mrs. Russo that he wants nothing from her and she will be safe at his apartment.

Laurel then begins to cry. She bewails the tragedy of her situation and the fact that no one seems to want her. Laurel then quickly recovers herself and asks for a place to wash up. Lew shows her to the bathroom. After a long moment Laurel comes out of the bathroom and announces that she will be on her way. She abruptly leaves the apartment and Lew ignores his instinct to follow after her. As Lew sorts through his mail,



he senses that something is not right and goes into the bathroom. His medicine cabinet is partly open and a bottle of sleeping pills is missing.

Chapter 1-3 Analysis

Lew Archer is a private detective who inadvertently becomes involved in the disappearance of a member of a very prominent family. A chance encounter with Laurel Russo, daughter of Jack Lennox who runs the wealthy Lennox oil company, leads to Laurel's disappearance and the resulting investigation uncovers a web of lies and cover-ups. Archer's involvement with the Lennox family becomes more than just that of private detective working an investigation. By the end of the book it appears that Archer has become just as enmeshed in the Lennox family problems as if he were an actual Lennox.

At this early stage it seems odd that Archer spends as much time noticing so many small details as he does. However, Archer is a private detective and it is in his nature to notice the things happening around him. At the same time the numerous things that Archer makes mental notes of do seem out of the ordinary when seen through Archer's eyes and prompts the reader to be more aware of the details himself.

Archer's encounter with Laurel Russo is very odd. Out of the blue Lew offers to give a ride to a strange woman who has no compunctions about accepting such an offer. She is a desperate woman who obviously needs help but Archer's choice of taking Laurel to his own apartment instead of her house portends eventual trouble. Laurel also continues to act oddly as she and Archer walk towards his car. Her behavior signals that something is definitely not right with the woman and that she should possibly be taken to a hospital to be examined. However, Archer appears to be enamored with the woman and seems reluctant to give her up so quickly.

Laurel's actions continue to be erratic when she arrives at Archer's apartment. She vacillates between assuming that Archer wants something inappropriate from her and then acting insulted when he insists that he desires nothing of the sort from her. Archer also acts suspiciously calm as Laurel rants about his apartment hysterically. Perhaps Archer hopes that his own self-control will prompt Laurel to become more composed but his ambivalence only seems to fuel Laurel's angry fire. The reader may suspect that Archer comes to recognize his small part in driving the woman away and that is why he becomes so involved in locating her.



Chapter 4-5

Chapter 4-5 Summary

It has been almost a quarter of an hour since Laurel left Lew's apartment but he hurries to the street and gets in his car to see if he can find the distraught woman. After a brief search Lew returns to his apartment and looks up Laurel's husband, Tom in the phone book. Tom does not seem surprised that Laurel stole the pills from Lew. Tom is a pharmacist.

Tom begins to tell Lew about the status of his marriage and agrees to meet with Lew. Lew drives towards Lew's business while looking for Laurel along the way. Tom tells Lew that he placed calls to the local hospitals just in case Laurel attempts suicide because he feels that there is a slight possibility that she would try to take her own life. Tom also explains that the woman who answered the phone when Laurel called was his cousin who cleans for him and not a lover. Tom further explains that Laurel often runs out on him whenever they have a fight and that she has used barbiturates in the past. Lew looks over the list of names Tom gives him and recognizes the addresses as those of upper crust society. Tom says that Laurel is part of the Lennox family - the same family whose oilrig is responsible for the oil spill at Pacific Point.

Their conversation is interrupted by a woman with a prescription and a phone call. Lew agrees to go talk to Laurel's family on Tom's behalf and takes fifty dollars from Mr. Russo as partial payment for his services. As Lew drives towards Laurel's parents' home, he tries to discover the reason he is so concerned for the woman's welfare. Unable to find a concrete answer Lew tries to concentrate on the investigation.

Lew Archer arrives at Tom Russo's residence to meet Laurel's parents: Mr. and Mrs. Jack Lennox. It is apparent from Mr. Lennox's tone that there is no love between him and his son-in-law. Jack is also suspicious of Archer and why Laurel was in the private detective's apartment. Inside the Russo's house Lew is introduced to Mrs. Lennox and Gloria Flaherty who is Tom's cousin and housekeeper.

Mr. and Mrs. Lennox do not try to hide their disdain for Tom Russo or anything connected to him. Gloria excuses herself to the kitchen and Lew tries to pump Laurel's parents for information. Mr. and Mrs. Lennox are hardly cooperative and the reader learns more about their dysfunctional family than about Laurel. Mrs. Lennox lets it slip that if her father-in-law hears about the trouble with Laurel then she and her husband stand to lose their share of the oil tycoon's estate. Mr. Lennox becomes outraged by his wife's indiscreet manner and never-revealed secrets and slaps Mrs. Lennox. After putting his wife in their car, Mr. Lennox asks Lew to be cautious in what he reveals and to whom. Archer says he will try but makes no promises.



Chapter 4-5 Analysis

Archer immediately switches in to private detective mode once he realizes that Laurel has absconded from his apartment with a vial of sleeping pills. The situation has just become personal since he could be held responsible if anything happens to the woman and the bottle bearing his name is discovered in her possession. Since Laurel told Archer her husband's name he begins his search there. What he finds is a husband who is distraught but also not surprised that Laurel has disappeared. The reader soon realizes that Laurel suffers from greater problems than being upset over the death of an oil-covered bird. The revelation that Laurel is the granddaughter of oil tycoon William Lennox also alerts the reader to the fact that there is something more sinister happening than a simple disappearance or possible suicide.

For parents whose daughter has just been reported missing and is suspected to be dead, Jack and Marian Lennox are disbelievably more concerned with their own personal problems than with their daughters well being. Jack is only concerned with keeping the incident from his father in order to preserve his inheritance. The reader begins to realize that if Laurel has chosen to kill herself it may well be the result of coming from such an uncaring family rather than a fight with her husband. The reader begins to feel sorry for Laurel and to almost wish that she does turn up dead so that her family might finally learn to care about something besides money and business.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

After Mr. and Mrs. Lennox leave, Archer goes into the Russo's kitchen to talk with Gloria. Now that the Lennox's have left, Gloria is only too happy to talk to the private detective. Gloria tells Lew that Tom is a cautious man who doesn't trust many people. Tom lost his mother at a very young age and has never really recovered from her death. Gloria catches herself before revealing the details of Tom's mother's death but gladly tells Archer about how Tom and Laurel met.

Laurel walked into the drugstore where Tom was working one day and he immediately fell for her. Gloria says that the relationship between Tom and Laurel seems odd but that it's obvious they are in love. Even her fiancée, Harry, says that he can see the two love one another. When Lew asks if Harry knows Laurel, Gloria says yes but catches herself before saying much more. Gloria acknowledges that Tom and Laurel often have small arguments where Laurel leaves but she always returns. Gloria is confident that Laurel will return this time too. Archer thanks Gloria and leaves Russo's house.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Archer only receives more unsettling information from Tom's cousin Gloria. Gloria appears to be a pleasant young woman eager to be of help to the private detective. However, she is also a little too chatty and divulges more information than she should to Archer. Gloria's revelation that Tom lost his mother at a very young age makes the reader feel sorry for him as well. Laurel and Tom appear to be two lost souls who have been unable to recover from their separate difficult pasts in order to forge a new future together. The reader also begins to wonder what sort of family Tom Russo comes from when Gloria says that Tom used to "date" Gloria as a sort of practice for when he met an actual girlfriend. Tom is portrayed as a sort of backwards acting guy who never dated anyone except his own cousin until he met Laurel. There seems to be much more to the story of Tom's mother's death and his courting of Laurel but Gloria realizes that she has already said too much and shuts up before she says anything more.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Lew Archer's next stop is the home of Joyce Hampshire, one of Laurel's old friends whom she sometimes stays with when fighting with Tom. As Lew enters the courtyard of Greenhouse Manor where Joyce lives, he passes a thin man dressed in a trench coat who turns quickly away from Archer. When Lew rings Joyce's doorbell, she immediately answers the door as if waiting for someone. Archer finds Joyce to be a nice-looking woman who appears to be missing something in her life.

Joyce tells Lew that Laurel was staying with her but that she left about a week ago and Joyce hasn't heard from her. Joyce suggests that Archer contact Laurel's grandmother, Sylvia Lennox. According to Joyce Laurel preferred to stay with her grandmother over her parents even though their houses are not far apart on Pacific Point. Lew asks Joyce about Laurel since they seem to have known each other for a long time. Joyce says that the girls were classmates at River Valley, a private school in El Rancho. Joyce describes Laurel as not exactly happy and the kind of girl who ends up getting blamed for a lot of things even when they weren't her fault. Laurel didn't like school very much and often played hooky. Joyce says that she didn't see much of Laurel following her marriage to Tom Russo and that she got the feeling that Tom liked to keep Laurel close. Joyce tells Archer that she thinks Laurel left Tom because of Laurel. Joyce confides that Laurel finds it difficult to stay with anyone for a long period of time because she lacks self-confidence.

The conversation then turns to some of Laurel's past mistakes and Joyce tells Archer about the time when Laurel was fifteen and ran away to Las Vegas with a boy she met at River Valley. The two staged a kidnapping and collected a thousand dollars from Laurel's parents for her safe return. Joyce can only recall that the boy was about eighteen and that his last name was Sherry. Laurel's parents made life very difficult for the young man and he served some jail time. Joyce comments that she thinks Laurel needed someone stable in her life like Tom. Joyce then continues to confirm the story of Laurel and Tom's courtship that Gloria told Archer. When Joyce mentions that Laurel first went into Tom's drugstore for sleeping pills, Archer tells her about the Nembutal that Laurel stole from his medicine cabinet. Joyce then provides Archer with the address of Laurel's uncle, Ben Somerville, in Bel-Air.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The reader begins to feel a little less sorry for poor Laurel Russo after learning what Joyce has to tell Archer. It seems that Laurel is not as innocent as the reader may have thought. Laurel's escapade to Las Vegas with the boy from high school makes the reader think twice about whether or not Laurel could be staging a similar stunt now. This piece of information turns Laurel from an innocent victim into a willing participant. The

reader may also become suspicious of Laurel's relationship with her husband. Perhaps Laurel is having an affair and staged her disappearance so that she could run away with her lover. The possibilities become endless as the reader contemplates his impression of Laurel. The reader will need to hold onto this new information and return to consider it frequently throughout the book.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

When Archer arrives at the Somerville's he is greeted at the door of the darkened house by a black man insisting that no one is home. The man demands identification and then steps outside the door. A bulge in his pocket resembles a gun. The man says that Laurel used to come and stay with her uncle but has not been here recently. Archer inquires about the bullet holes in the mailbox at the end of the driveway and learns that several young men on motor bikes drove by and fired off a few shots. Lew then asks how long the man has worked for Mr. Somerville. The man, who now identifies himself as Smith, says that he has worked for Captain Somerville for over twenty-five years ever since they both retired from the Navy. The two men were stationed in Okinawa when the captain lost his ship and Smith was crippled.

Archer then asks Smith about Laurel as a young girl and learns that she used to hide from her uncle quite a bit. Smith would look for her in the garage, the pool house, and the shed. Smith leads Archer on a tour of these places but their search only turns up a rat in the pool house. Smith shoots the rat with the .38 in his pocket.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The visit to Captain Somerville's home is very odd. Smith refuses to let Archer into the house or to admit that Somerville is home but is more than willing to talk with Archer about Laurel and even help search the grounds for any sign that she has been there. Smith's masterful use of the .38 he carries makes the reader suspicious that he could have possibly done something with Laurel. Perhaps Laurel even enlisted Smith's help in her plan to stage her own kidnapping, after all the man appears to have a soft spot for the young woman. When Smith so accurately shoots the moving rat, the reader's concern that this man is involved in Laurel's disappearance only increases. Smith's secretive behavior and his proficiency with a firearm make him a possible suspect on some level, but there is also something honest and believable about Smith.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The gunshot is followed closely by a phone ringing in the house. After three rings Archer and Smith arrive at the house to hear a muffled voice talking on the phone. Smith slips inside, leaving Archer standing on the deck outside. Archer is becoming increasingly frustrated at the lack of cooperation he's experiencing from Laurel's family and friends. After several minutes Smith comes to the door and says that the Captain will see Archer but Lew is not to take too long because the Captain has not slept well in two days.

Captain Somerville is curt and asks most of the questions. The Captain refuses to answer any of Archer's questions until Lew can provide the name of a reputable reference. Lew gives Somerville the name of John Truttwell and the Captain calls an associate of Truttwell's, Emerson Little. Little vouches for Archer and the Captain begins to open up. Captain Somerville tells Archer that Laurel's parents received a ransom demand for a hundred thousand dollars in cash. Jack Lennox doesn't have that kind of money so he turned to Sylvia Lennox for help. The kidnappers asked for the money tonight but Jack is trying to buy more time. Sylvia is willing to put up the money in order to ensure her granddaughter's safe return. As Archer and Somerville discuss the possible problems surrounding the delivery of money, an attractive blonde woman enters the room.

The woman introduces herself as Elizabeth Somerville and immediately wants to know if Archer can help them recover her niece. Elizabeth Somerville is very controlled and matter of fact. She insists on keeping the matter quiet so that word does not get back to her father. She then asks Lew to drive her to Pacific Point so that she can talk to her brother. Elizabeth tells her husband to go back to bed and prepares to leave with Archer.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The closed ranks of the Lennox family are very evident in this chapter. Smith has done his best to keep Archer out of the house and away from Captain Somerville. However, Smith's momentary concern with the rat in the pool house opens the door a crack for Archer to move a little further into the Lennox clan. Captain Somerville is courteous but upholds an air of position and power by demanding a credible reference to vouch for Lew. The fact that he requests this information in the middle of the night and is not willing to wait till morning to run a background check on the private detective shows that he means business. Captain Somerville apparently knows how to guard himself and his family from unwanted visitors. Elizabeth Somerville maintains the same air of conservative friendliness as her husband but is a little more accommodating in her conversation with Archer, as long as she is in control.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Archer finds Elizabeth very similar to Laurel and feels the same instant attraction to her as he did to Laurel. As they drive Archer and Elizabeth discuss Laurel and the many possibilities surrounding her disappearance. For the first time Archer brings up the idea that Laurel is party to the kidnapping and ransom demand. Elizabeth refuses to believe this assumption and their conversation turns to Laurel's marriage.

As Elizabeth talks, Archer gets the impression that she is speaking as much about her own marriage as she is about Laurel's. The topic quickly turns back to marriages and the possibility that Laurel is a willing participant in her own disappearance. Almost out of the blue Elizabeth mentions that her husband suspects that someone may have planted a bomb on the ocean floor in order to blow up the oilrig. Elizabeth goes on to tell Lew that her husband was the captain of a ship, the *Canaan Sound*, which caught fire in Okinawa. Jack Lennox was also on board and the fire resulted in both men leaving the Navy. The memory of the event leads Elizabeth to divulge more information about the Lennox family that she probably intended to do. She tells Archer that her father took the Captain into the oil business and that's the only thing that saved Mr. Somerville after he left the Navy. She now worries about his career in the oil business even though Lew tries to assure her that the oil spill was just an accident.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Elizabeth and Laurel appear to have a lot in common. Archer can sense the similarities in the two women and finds each of them equally attractive. There is something about these two women that prevents Archer from maintaining a professionally distant relationship with them. He allows himself to feel intimate feelings for them both and even finds himself fantasizing about being with each of them.

Elizabeth is a very controlled woman who does not easily allow her emotions to penetrate her dealings with Archer. However, the close relationship between aunt and niece seems to overwhelm Elizabeth at times and she often appears to be talking more about her own life than of Laurel's. Elizabeth is easy to like and the reader may find himself rooting for Elizabeth to somehow come out victorious in the situation. Possibly Laurel's kidnapping will result in Elizabeth being able to leave Captain Somerville behind and prove herself more than capable of running the Lennox empire.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

When Archer and Elizabeth arrive at Jack Lennox's house, she insists on doing the talking. Archer begrudgingly agrees as Jack comes out of the house carrying a rifle. Jack points the gun at Lew's head and Elizabeth rushes to defuse the situation. Elizabeth manages to get the gun away from Jack and the three walk towards the house where Mrs. Lennox, Marian, is waiting.

Jack makes no attempt to disguise his anger at Archer's presence but Lew tries to ignore the man's open hostility. Archer questions Jack about the call from the kidnapper and whether another call has been received yet. Jack becomes increasingly upset and Elizabeth asks Archer to step outside. For over an hour Archer waits outside before Elizabeth comes out of the house alone. She tells him that the kidnapper called again and Jack spoke with him. Elizabeth does not know many of the details of the call since Jack took the call in his study. She does tell Archer that the money drop has been arranged for the following day at noon but she doesn't know where.

Archer starts the car but before he can back out of the driveway, Marian comes out of the house waving at them. Marian says that Jack had a dizzy spell and is lying down. She apologizes to Archer for her husband's behavior and then asks Elizabeth to make sure that Sylvia Lennox gets the money before noon the next day. Marian goes back into the house and Archer and Elizabeth get back in the car. As they pull out Elizabeth directs Archer towards her mother's house. As they drive Elizabeth tells Archer about her parents divorce and how Laurel is the only grandchild. She also admits that she might believe that Laurel's kidnapping has been staged. Elizabeth says that she felt a weird feeling at her brother's house and is sure that Jack suspects the possibility that his daughter is trying to take him. The conversation turns to an intimate discussion of families. Archer calls Elizabeth by her first name for the first time and she does not reproach him but encourages the use of her given name.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Elizabeth maintains her control when she and Archer arrive at Jack Lennox's house. Jack's temper has been pushed to the extreme and he is in a volatile state. Elizabeth is able to diffuse the situation with her calm voice. Elizabeth appears to be extremely helpful when dealing with her brother even though Archer is often excluded from their conversations and made to wait outside. Elizabeth's open manner about her own marriage seems to make Archer feel sorry for her and therefore trust her to relay information to him.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Archer pull into Sylvia Lennox's driveway and the car is met by a young man who Elizabeth introduces as Tony Lashman, Sylvia's secretary. Elizabeth goes into the house to see her mother and Archer stays outside with Tony. The secretary talks animatedly with Lew about his involvement with Mrs. Lennox and his own plans to return to school to pursue photography. Lew questions Tony about Laurel. Tony says that the two of them used to play tennis when she would come to stay with her grandmother. Elizabeth enters the room as Tony is telling Archer about the Lennox family fortune and quietly tells Archer that Sylvia would like to see him.

Elizabeth leaves Archer alone with her mother and Archer discovers that Sylvia is very much like her daughter and granddaughter. She is a candid woman who takes no nonsense. Their pleasantries turn to Laurel and Archer asks about the money Sylvia has offered to put up for the ransom. Sylvia admits that she can't really afford the ransom but would do anything she could for Laurel's sake. Sylvia offers Archer permission to look in Laurel's room and also states that she thinks her granddaughter is still in love with her husband. Archer asks Sylvia about Laurel's marriage, her mental state, and her use of drugs and receives answers similar to those of other people he's interviewed. Sylvia then asks Archer to accompany Jack when the money drop is made and says that she will tell her son that Archer's presence is a condition of her giving him the money. Archer agrees and then brings up the possibility of Laurel's compliance in the situation. Sylvia refuses to believe it and sinks back into the pillows on her bed in a dismissive gesture.

Chapter 12 Analysis

This chapter introduces two new characters: Tony Lashman and Sylvia Lennox. Tony appears to be a likeable enough person although he acts suspiciously from the word go. However, Tony's odd behavior may just be the result of a flighty and naturally nervous personality. It seems unlikely that Tony Lashman could be responsible for Laurel's disappearance. He seem incapable of pulling together a plan elaborate enough to be convincing or to carry out the plan long enough to avoid detection.

Sylvia Lennox is the matriarch of the family. Although she divorced William Lennox, she still retains her power and wields it effectively. Sylvia appears to care little for what others think of her and is very willing to put up anything to get Laurel back safely. It is possible that Sylvia suspects something regarding Laurel's kidnapping because she is careful to set rules regarding the ransom drop.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Archer finds Elizabeth and tells her about his encounter with her mother. He then asks to be shown the guesthouse where Laurel was staying and Elizabeth leads him outside. The place has been left in a disheveled state and appears as if Laurel left in a hurry without bothering to pack. Archer finds a typewritten letter from Tom to Laurel. In the letter Tom beseeches Laurel to come back to him, promising to do whatever it takes to make their marriage work and to keep her happy. Elizabeth reads the letter too and finds a handwritten reply on the back. Elizabeth becomes emotional while reading Laurel's reply and Archer moves closer to her.

Elizabeth begins to talk about herself and her life. She is full of regret for decisions she has made and for staying in her marriage. Archer is mostly quiet during Elizabeth's speech but gently prompts her with questions whenever she pauses. Elizabeth reveals that she knows her husband had a mistress and that she even met the woman once. The woman came to see Elizabeth with her little boy while Ben was out at sea. The encounter so upsets Elizabeth that she almost burns the house down but decides instead to go live with her parents and let Jack and Marian have her house. She blames herself for the Captains ship catching fire since there was only a month between the time she tried to burn the house down and the time his ship sank. Elizabeth falls silent and Archer puts his hands on her. Elizabeth asks him not to but does not resist his advances.

Chapter 13 Analysis

This chapter becomes very intimate. First Archer finds a letter from Tom to Laurel and the contents make Elizabeth cry. She seems to be extremely affected by Tom's plea to his wife to return to him. Perhaps she is thinking of her own marriage and wishes that Captain Somerville would express his love for her the way Tom has for Laurel. Elizabeth's emotions overwhelm her and make her vulnerable to Archer's physical advances. Her attempt to rebuke him is feeble at best and their night of passion seems to fill a hole within Elizabeth even though the fix is only temporary. Archer's actions should be shocking to the reader. He is working in a professional capacity for Tom Russo and by extension the Lennox family. Under no circumstances should his flirtation with Elizabeth be considered appropriate. The reader may assume that Archer is acting out with Elizabeth what he wished to do with Laurel. Quite possibly this is Archer's way of re-creating the previous night when Laurel was in his apartment and making amends for letting her get away so easily.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The next morning Archer wakes up from a dream that he has spent the night with Laurel only to realize that he spent the night with Elizabeth. Elizabeth sits naked at the window and when she hears Archer moving in the bed she turns to tell him that a man is floating in the ocean. Archer throws a bath towel around his waist and runs outside to fish the man from the cold water. Archer tows the body to the beach where Elizabeth is waiting fully dressed. They wipe the man's face off and Archer realizes that it is the same old man he saw at the diner in Pacific Point the night he first met Laurel. Archer comfortably refers to Elizabeth as Beth, which she does not seem to mind in private, and asks her if she recognizes the dead man. Sylvia comes out of the house towards them and demands to know where the dead body came from. Elizabeth and Sylvia head back toward the house to call the police while Archer searches the body for identification.

A label sewn into the suit states: the suit was made for Ralph P. Mungan by Joseph Sperling. Tony Lashman comes out of the house and leans over the dead man. Tony stumbles over himself as Archer questions him about the body. Tony then abruptly asks what kind of money Archer makes as a private detective and says that he's often thought of getting into the business himself. When the police arrive Archer doesn't bother to tell them about the label in the jacket and goes into the guesthouse to shower. Archer is bothered by the man's death and the possible connection to Laurel's disappearance.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The assumption that Archer was trying to recreate a missed intimate moment with Laurel appears to be true since Archer wakes up from a dream that he had actually spent the night with Laurel. In a way Archer is just another man who has disappointed Elizabeth. She must act as a substitute for the woman Archer really desires. Unfortunately, being second best is nothing new to Elizabeth Somerville.

The discovery of the dead man in the tweed suit pulls Archer back to reality and the investigation. There is no time for him to discuss the previous night's events with Elizabeth because he must immediately begin to search for the dead man's identity. Elizabeth does not appear to want to discuss their intimate night and quickly returns to her composed and controlled self as Archer retrieves the body from the ocean.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Archer heads for the freeway and Santa Monica but first tops off at the restaurant on the pier near where he first saw Laurel. The restaurant is closed but a cook in the back tells Archer that the owner, Blanche, doesn't come in until ten. As Archer leaves the restaurant he sees Captain Somerville and several other men in suits heading towards an unloading dock. The morning news says that Lennox Oil is planning a major clean up of the spill.

In Santa Monica Archer heads for Joseph Sperling's tailor shop to investigate the origin of the dead man's tweed suit. The area is rundown and almost abandoned looking. Joseph Sperling is a small man with wire-rimmed glasses and curly gray hair. Mr. Sperling does remember Ralph Mungan and is sorry to hear about his death. Joseph tells Archer about how he met Ralph and his wife, Martha, many years ago and rented out the building next door to them. As far as Joseph knows Ralph and Martha separated several years ago but he offers to look up their addresses. Joseph returns with only Ralph's address and Archer is surprised to see that the dead man's address is in Beverly Hills. Archer is concerned that the dead body is not actually Ralph Mungan and asks Joseph to describe the Ralph Mungan he knew. Mr. Sperling reports that the last time he saw Ralph he had put on weight and would not fit in the suit anymore. Joseph also does not remember Ralph having lost his hair or having burns on his head.

Archer uses Joseph's phone to call the Mungan residence and speaks with Ralph himself. Ralph agrees to speak with Archer and reluctantly invites the private detective over to meet him.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Since the tweed suit had a label sewn into it identifying the maker and the recipient it seems that Archer should have no trouble finding information about the drowned man. However, the plot only thickens when he learns that the suit's owner, Ralph Mungan, is still believed to be alive and well. He also carries no resemblance to the scarred, bald man that Archer took out of the water that morning.

Captain Somerville's presence at the pier that morning shows where the family's concern lies. While the family is doing all they can to maintain appearances so that the public does not find out about Laurel's disappearance, it seems callous that Somerville continues to conduct business while his niece's whereabouts are unknown. The Lennox family is an interesting bunch of characters and the reader should be well aware by now that there is more lying below the surface of this family than it seems.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Ralph Mungan lives in a nice looking house with manicured lawns. Mr. Mungan answers the door with a full head of hair and appearing much too heavy to fit in the suit worn by the dead man. Mrs. Mungan's figure doesn't appear to be all-natural and the alterations make her appear older than her husband. Archer tells them about the dead man but Ralph denies ever owning a suit like the one in question. Mrs. Mungan is intrigued in her husband's past and begins to question Ralph about the dead man. Ralph tries to joke with her but Mrs. Mungan refuses to be put off so easily. The tone of their conversation and the physical distance between them leads Archer to suspect that their marriage is not as happy as they try to pretend.

After awhile Ralph confesses that he did indeed have a suit gray tweed suit but says that he must have given it away to the Salvation Army before he got remarried. Archer seems frustrated with the uncooperative couple and prepares to leave. Ralph walks Archer outside and says that he does have something to tell the private detective as long as Archer promises that it won't get back to his wife. The two men take a ride around the block and Ralph tells Archer about his first wife. The current Mrs. Mungan does not know about his previous marriage. Ralph says that he left the suit with his ex-wife and that the last he knew she was a manager at the Excalibur Arms. Ralph further reveals that his divorce from Martha wasn't completely legal and neither woman knows about the other. Archer drops Ralph off at his house where the current Mrs. Mungan is waiting on the front porch.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Archer's visit to Ralph Mungan does little to aide his investigation. In many ways the trip to Ralph's fancy mansion only serves to detour the private detective from his investigation. Ralph is offers little help because he is too skittish and concerned about his own affairs to want to tell the truth. There is obviously tension between Ralph and his second wife but that is of no concern to Archer or the reader. The only useful thing that Ralph tells Archer is that he left the suit with his ex-wife who manages a hotel known as the Excalibur Arms.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Archer arrives at the Excalibur Arms. The hotel is a dilapidated building not far from his own office. A middle-aged man answers the manager's door and says that Mrs. Mungan no longer works there. After hollering at an unseen woman in the apartment the man gives Archer the address for Topanga Court and says that he thinks this is where Mrs. Mungan is living now.

Before heading to Topanga Court Archer stops by his office to check the mail. He also takes a minute to call Tom Russo. Gloria answers the phone and says that Tom is sleeping and she hates to wake him. Archer decides to pay Mr. Russo a personal visit and heads for his house. When he arrives Gloria shows Archer to Tom's bedroom. Archer surveys Tom carefully and Gloria says that she hasn't slept with him but that she did stay in the spare room last night. Tom begins to wake up but is still caught in the lingering remnants of a dream.

Archer asks Gloria to leave them alone and then begins to question Tom as the sleeping man wakes up. Tom mumbles about his Mother being cold and Archer asks what happened to his Mother. Tom replies that he pushed her and she fell down. Tom didn't mean to push her but he said that the back of her head was sticky. Archer says that people don't turn cold as soon as they die but Tom insists that his mother did. Tom goes on to say that his mother wouldn't let him in bed with them and that the man told her to get rid of Tom. Tom can't remember what the man in bed was like but does remember that the man said if Tom ever told on him he'd come back to fix the little boy. This last statement seems to bring Tom out of his dream and Mr. Russo recognizes Archer.

Archer brings Mr. Russo up-to-date on the situation with Laurel. Archer leaves Tom who looks tired and hopeless and moves into the hallway where Gloria is waiting. Archer asks Gloria about how Tom's mother was killed and she says that she was shot. It happened over twenty-five years ago but the killer was never found and Tom suffers nightmares whenever something bad happens to him. Gloria refuses to divulge more information or put Archer in contact with her mother - Tom's mother's sister. Archer realizes that he has a lot of ground to cover before noon when he is due back at Seahorse Lane for the money exchange.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Archer's side trip to Tom Russo's trip proves to be more profitable than his visit with Ralph Mungan. Tom's nightmarish rants tell Archer more information than he could have learned from questioning Russo. There is a dark secret surrounding the death of Tom's mother. It is difficult for the reader to place a value on the information reveals in his dreamlike state. While it is certainly interesting that something sinister happened to

Tom's mother, there seems to be little connection between that event and the current situation. Archer also appears to have trouble deciding how far he should pursue this vein of the investigation. He tries to pressure Gloria to give up some more information but when she refuses to crack, he leaves Tom to his nightmares and moves forward with Laurel's investigation.



Chapter 18-19

Chapter 18-19 Summary

Archer arrives at Topanga Court that is in even worse condition than the Excalibur Arms. A woman answers Archer's hello from a backroom. The owner of the voice is a middle-aged man wearing a bright red wig and a kimono. She is surprised to realize that the man in her waiting room is not Joe Sperling but is interested in Joe's well-being once Archer identifies himself. Mrs. Mungan is interested in the man Archer found floating in the ocean. She remembers giving the old man Ralph's suit one day when he came to her door looking for some warm clothes. Archer is suspicious of Mrs. Mungan's story but leaves the Topanga Court intending to pay her another visit.

Archer returns to Pacific Point and the restaurant on the pier. Blanche greets him at the door and asks if any of the picketers who've gathered out front threatened him. She seems disappointed when Archer says no but is cooperative when he asks her about the two men he saw in the restaurant the previous night. Blanche remembers that they wanted to know how to get to Seahorse Lane. Archer leaves the restaurant and is greeted outside by a local newspaper reporter named Wilbur Cox. Wilbur asks Archer about the dead body but Archer artfully dodges the reporter's questions.

Archer walks away from the reporter and quickly finds himself in the middle of a confrontation between a semi-truck driver and the picketers. Archer manages to deflate the situation with the truck driver as Captain Somerville arrives. The Captain tries to placate the demonstrators but the crowd quickly becomes angrier. Archer moves to Somerville and asks the Captain to get back in his car and follow him. Somerville agrees to follow Archer and the two cars move away from the wharf in the direction of Sylvia Lennox's house on Seahorse Lane.

Chapter 18-19 Analysis

The first Mrs. Mungan is even less helpful than her ex-husband. Archer's meeting with her is short but he senses there is more to learn from her in the future. Mrs. Mungan's story that the dead man randomly showed up at her house wanting clothing does not sit well with Archer. Indeed it is pretty far fetched to think of a homeless man just wandering up to a stranger, especially a single woman, to ask for men's clothing.

Archer's personal involvement with the Lennox family is increasing. When he encounters Captain Somerville at the pier Archer rescues the man and his lackey by creating a diversion to escape the swarming mob of protestors. The reader wonders if Archer becomes this involved with all of his cases or if there really is a special connection between Laurel and Archer. At times Archer's level of personal contact with the Lennox family makes the reader wonder if he does not have some undisclosed connection with them prior to meeting Laurel.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Archer arrives at Sylvia Lennox's house with Captain Somerville right behind him. Somerville introduces the man with him as Leroy Ellis who handles public relations and was a shipmate of Somerville's in Okinawa. The two men move into the house where a crowd has gathered while Archer stays outside for a minute. Tony Lashman comes out of the garage and asks Archer to bring him information from inside the house. Tony is even willing to pay Archer for his time, but when Archer asks where the money will come from Tony gets mad and walks away.

Sylvia Lennox's lawyer, Emerson Little, meets Archer at the door and informs the private detective that he's late. The family has had a difficult time restraining Jack Lennox from leaving but when Archer walks into the room Sylvia insists on speaking with Archer before the men leave. Sylvia has had to involve her ex-husband in the situation in order to raise the hundred thousand dollars and now he wants to meet with Jack and Archer following the money drop. Archer asks Sylvia if the man in the tweed suit was at her house last night but she was out to dinner and only Tony Lashman would know if the man stopped. Sylvia says that she has had to put Tony in his place for becoming too inquisitive. Jack Lennox becomes impatient and demands that the men are allowed to leave.

Jack grabs the box of money and leaves the house. He is wearing a gun beneath his jacket and barks order impatiently to Archer. Once on the road Jack reveals that they are headed for Sandhill Lake and an old hunting club located there. When Jack states that his father used to be a member at the club Archer wants to know who picked the drop point. Archer finds it a coincidence that the kidnapper picked a place familiar to the Lennox family. Archer continues to question Jack as they drive. Jack has little information to offer though. He did not recognize the man's voice on the phone, he's certain that the kidnapper will immediately turn over Laurel once the money has been exchanged, and he cares little for Archer's presence. Jack pulls the car over and demands that Archer get out. When Archer refuses, Jack points the gun at him until Archer gets out of the vehicle.

Archer follows the road up hill towards where Jack Lennox's Cadillac disappeared until he can see Jack walking along a dirt road carrying the box of money. Jack disappears into a wooden lookout tower and Archer hears shots fired soon after. Jack emerges from the building but falls down and lays still a short distance from the tower. A second man runs out of the tower carrying the moneybox and runs with a limp toward a grove of trees. Archer breaks into a run in an attempt to get a better look at the second man but the man disappears into the trees. A small green car shoots out of the trees and down the highway in the opposite direction from Archer.



Chapter 20 Analysis

Finally the moment of resolution appears to be at hand. The money has been gathered and Jack Lennox is anxious to make the exchange. Although one minor detail has yet to be determined: will Laurel actually be at the ransom drop or is she dead? This detail does not seem to concern Jack and the rest of the family stupidly believes that once they give the kidnapper what he wants Laurel will be safely returned. Only Archer thinks to voice his concern about the arrangement but he is quickly rebuffed by Jack.

Jack is already in a rage because Sylvia has demanded that Archer accompany him to Sandhill Lake for the drop. Therefore, it seems entirely plausible that he would force Archer out of the car long before they reach the actual meeting place. However, the reader may also suspect that Jack had this course of action planned all along and begin to wonder why he is so against Archer being present. Either Jack is really that angry of a person or he is somehow involved with Laurel's disappearance and fears that Archer will figure it out if allowed near the money drop.



Chapter 21-22

Chapter 21-22 Summary

Archer finds Jack lying unconscious in the middle of the road. He has been hit in the side of his head and the upper tip of his left ear is missing. Archer uses the phone in Lennox's car to call for help and then goes to explore the lookout tower. Afraid to touch anything Archer goes back outside to wait for the ambulance. The ambulance takes Lennox away and two officers remain behind to question Archer. He tells them what he saw and the three of them walk around the crime scene. The men discover that the second man was shot too. Captain Dolan questions Archer but Archer refuses to divulge much information. The only thing that Archer does reveal is that the man who escaped in the green car was probably the same man he saw in Blanche's Restaurant with the now dead man in the tweed suit.

Archer takes Jack's car and heads towards William Lennox's house in El Rancho. Old Mr. Lennox lives in a gated community near River Valley School. As Archer drives along the stone walls surrounding the house he sees a woman outside training a young mare. The woman is Mrs. Hapgood, William's girlfriend, and she asks a series of questions about Jack's condition and what happened. Mrs. Hapgood rides with Archer up to the house where she leaves him standing in an enormous entrance room while she fetches Mr. Lennox.

Mr. Lennox asks about what happened to Jack and is obviously upset that the situation fell apart. William does not understand why the police and FBI have been excluded from the situation and Archer is reluctant to discuss the matter in front of Connie Hapgood. William insists that he be told Archer shares his theory that Laurel is a willing accomplice in the kidnapping. William is unwilling to believe that his granddaughter would do such a thing instead of coming to talk to him. Connie says that Laurel was always afraid of her grandfather. William becomes upset and Connie ushers him out of the room with a look to Archer signaling that she'll be right back.

Chapter 21-22 Analysis

Jack's brash actions lead to his being wounded at Sandhill Lake and the kidnapper getting away with the money. Archer is surprisingly nonchalant as he surveys the scene and calls the police. He makes no effort to question Jack about what happened or to try to comfort the wounded man. Archer does his duty by telling the police the briefest amount of what he knows but remains aloof during their questioning.

Now that Jack has been shot Archer must meet yet another member of the Lennox family. The rest of the clan was trying to avoid involving the elder Mr. Lennox but Sylvia contacted her ex-husband when she was unable to raise the entire hundred thousand by herself. Like Captain Somerville's continued business as usual attitude, the family's

decision not to involve Laurel's grandfather seems rather selfish. The family wishes to keep the bad news from William Lennox because they fear that he will become upset and write them out of his will. Once again the greed for money outweighs the concern for family.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Connie is gone for a long time but returns with a book in her hand and tells Archer that she settled William down with a tranquilizer. Connie speaks frankly with Archer telling him about William's humble beginnings in the oil business. She then comments that she thinks that Laurel is a schizoid personality but that the family treats her as being perfectly normal. Archer asks if Connie is a psychiatrist but she says that she isn't one, just someone who has known Laurel for a long time. Connie used to teach at River Valley School and has known Laurel since the girl was eleven years old.

The book Connie has brought to show Archer is the River Valley yearbook and she opens it to the picture of Harold Sherry, the young man Laurel ran off to Las Vegas with when she was fifteen. As Connie tells Archer about Harold Sherry, he realizes that the young man is the same one from Blanche's restaurant and the shooting at Sandhill Lake. Connie realizes that Archer recognizes Harold and wants to know if the young man is involved in Laurel's kidnapping. Connie tells Archer where Harold's mother lives and he goes outside to find William Lennox behind the wheel of Jack's car. William demands that Archer drive him into town and becomes agitated when Archer refuses. Connie comes to Archer's rescue and coaxes William back into the house. Archer departs the Lennox compound for Harold Sherry's family home.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Everyone in the Lennox family, with the exception of Sylvia, fears Connie Hapgood. Their fear is motivated not because she is a particularly dangerous person but because William Lennox's relationship with her poses a possible threat to their inheritance of Lennox Oil. Archer finds nothing intimidating about the woman and instead Connie proves to be one of the best sources of information that he has encounter yet. Out of all the people Archer has questioned thus far, it is Connie who is able to offer up the identity of the man who shot Jack and who was last seen with the dead man in the tweed suit. Connie's concern for Laurel, and especially for William, appears to be genuine. The reader fails to see Mrs. Hapgood as the evil money chaser that the Lennox family makes her out to be.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Archer arrives at a rundown pink house on Lorenzo Drive hoping to find Harold Sherry but is greeted at the door instead by a tired looking woman. The woman is Harold's mother and she immediately assumes that Archer has come about her son but is hesitant to talk to the private detective until he tells her that Harold has been wounded. Mrs. Sherry lets Archer in and he asks to see a recent picture of Harold to confirm whether he is indeed the one who shot Jack Lennox. Mrs. Sherry becomes pale and agitated when Archer tells her that Harold is the man who was shot and that he in turn shot Jack Lennox. She goes on to tell Archer about the Las Vegas episode and how Jack Lennox ruined Harold's life after that.

Archer continues to fill Mrs. Sherry in on recent events including Laurel's involvement and Harold's collection of the money. As their conversation evolves Archer learns that Harold has been in fairly continuous contact with his mother recently. He called to borrow her car and a few weeks before that he called asking for money. Harold also mentioned to his mother that he had recently run into Laurel and been invited to her house. Mrs. Sherry gives Archer the name of Harold's personal physician, Dr. Lawrence Brokaw, and the doctor's address. Before he leaves Archer asks about Harold's father. Mrs. Sherry says that her ex-husband, Roger, abandoned Harold after the Las Vegas incident and the last she knew he was living in Texas with another woman. She describes him as a big man with lots of hair when Archer questions her about the dead body in the tweed suit. Archer leaves Mrs. Sherry's home with Harold's picture in hand.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Mrs. Sherry's answers to Archer's questions create a very sad picture of Harold Sherry. At this point it seems unlikely that he is not responsible for Laurel's disappearance. Harold has plenty of motive and his mother makes him sound like the type of person who is unable to forget past wrongs. At the same time the reader cannot feel sympathy for a character like Harold because he seems to bring a lot of trouble on himself. Harold's inability to learn from past mistakes has only led him to the current situation; one that bodes more trouble than just being run out of River Valley School by Jack Lennox.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Archer leaves Mrs. Sherry's house and heads back to Sylvia Lennox's home. On the way he passes Sandhill Lane, which is swarming with police, but he does not stop because he would have to tell them about Harold. At Sylvia's the only one home appears to be Elizabeth. Elizabeth says that her mother is upset over Jack's shooting and Tony Lashman has disappeared. Elizabeth begins to blame Archer for Jack's wounds and he tries to explain what happened. Archer pulls out the picture of Harold who Elizabeth immediately recognizes. She says she is not surprised that Harold is involved since he showed up at her house about a week ago asking about family secrets. Harold also tried to convince Elizabeth that he and Laurel had reconciled. Their conversation seems to lead nowhere so Archer uses the phone to contact Dr. Brokaw.

Sylvia Lennox appears and asks for an explanation about what happened at Sandhill Lane. Archer tells her how Jack forced him out of the car and about what he saw when he reached the top of the hill. Sylvia appears worn and tired and stumbles back to her room saying that the men can handle this mess since they're the ones who started it. Elizabeth begins to speak personally about her own guilt and her marriage to Captain Somerville. A phone call from Dr. Brokaw interrupts the intimate moment. The doctor offers to speak with Archer if he can come by his office. As Archer prepares to leave Elizabeth once again tries to place the blame for Jack's shooting on the private detective but he refuses to accept responsibility. As the two of them move toward the garage Elizabeth tries a door and finds it locked. Archer uses a credit card to open the door of Tony Lashman's room and finds an unmade bed, a black wet suit, and an alarm clock that stopped short of either midnight or noon inside, but no Tony.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Archer's familiarity with the Lennox family is now turning back on him. He has tried to help the family locating one of their members and he was only following Sylvia's orders to accompany Jack to Sandhill Lake, but now that Jack has been shot the family descends on him as if he is to blame. Jack's shooting causes the family to close ranks around one of their own and turn barred teeth to the enemy. The only thing that saves Archer from being completely torn apart by the Lennox family is his explanation that Jack forced him out of the car at gunpoint. Since this type of action is characteristic of Jack, it is easy for the family to believe and they relax their attack stance slightly.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Archer heads for the hospital where Jack Lennox was taken. He finds Sergeant Shantz, one of the officers first on the scene at Sandhill, guarding the door. Shantz leaves to make a phone call as Archer moves into the room. Jack Lennox does not remember much of what happened at Sandhill and seems not to understand when Archer says that Harold Sherry is the man who shot him. Jack's wife Marian, however, instantly recognizes the name. Marian asks to speak with Archer in the hall where she asks about Laurel. Archer has nothing to tell her about Laurel but reassures her that he is still working to find her daughter. Archer says that he is meeting with Harold's doctor but refuses to reveal the doctor's name just yet.

Archer asks Marian about Jack's relationship with Laurel. She says that Jack has always had a temper and that even recently he and Laurel have not been getting along because Jack does not approve of Laurel's marriage to Tom Russo. Archer asks if Laurel could have cooperated voluntarily with Harold but Marian refuses to believe that possibility. She does concede that if Laurel did collaborate with Harold in this recent kidnapping scheme that she would like to know about it before the police do.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Marian Lennox appears to be the concerned wife and mother. She is dutifully by her husband's side at the hospital and she is often the only Lennox to consistently ask about Laurel's whereabouts. Out of all the family members that Archer has dealt with only Marian appears normal. She does not seem concerned about the fate of the family fortune and so far she appears to be a relatively easy person to deal with during the investigation.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Archer sits down in the hallway to wait for Sergeant Shantz who soon steps out of the elevator to announce that there has been another death at the beach. Shantz directs Archer to the pathology department where Captain Dolan and the Sheriff are waiting with the body. When Archer arrives at pathology he immediately recognizes the dead body as Tony Lashman. Dolan tells Archer that the body was found just down the beach from Sylvia's and that the back of his head has been bashed by a rock. Dolan and the Sheriff question Archer about what he knows regarding Tony's death and the deal at Sandhill Lake. Archer reveals just enough to satisfy both men but does not divulge much of the information that he has gathered. Conscious of the time, Archer tries to make his getaway but is stopped in the hallway by Dolan. Dolan tells him that a man is on his way down who says he can identify the man in the tweed suit.

The man who arrives is Captain Somerville's public relations assistant, Leroy Ellis. Ellis has been drinking but insists that the old man in the tweed suit was on Somerville's boat in Okinawa and died in the ship's explosion twenty-five years ago. Ellis identifies the man as Nelson but cannot remember if that was his first or last name. Ellis says that Nelson was the ship's communications messenger. As Ellis continues to blubber on about the man's death twenty-five years ago a woman comes down the hallway and berates Ellis for coming to the hospital. She says that she is Ellis' wife and that her husband is overly sensitive. As she talks Ellis seems to disintegrate into a broken man who is only fearful of losing his job.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Tony Lashman's mysterious disappearance is made more confusing by the appearance of his dead body in the morgue. Tony's death forces the reader to scramble for a reason why. Certainly the man was shady and a little unnerving but that hardly seems like enough motive for killing him. At the same time the fact that he is dead cannot be ignored and the reader wonders if perhaps Tony was somehow involved with the kidnapping. Perhaps he was partnered with someone else who decided to dispose of Tony now that the money had been turned over. The reader cannot spend too much time on the possibilities of Tony's death because immediately after this news comes Leroy Ellis. The little lackey of Captain Somerville is obviously drunk and spewing a crazy story that the dead man in the tweed suit has been floating in the ocean for twenty-five years. As preposterous as the notion sounds the reader almost believes Ellis' story. The identification of the man as Nelson, a man on board the *Canaan Sound*, certainly confuses the reader and makes him wonder how a fragile man like the one in the tweed suit could be involved in Laurel's disappearance.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

It is after five-thirty when Archer parks in front of Dr. Brokaw's office. A woman with dyed red hair tells Archer that Dr. Brokaw just left on an emergency call and probably won't be back to the office. When Archer asks about Harold Sherry the woman begins to say something but stops herself short and hurries off to do some work. Archer quietly investigates the contents of a nearby file cabinet until he locates Harold's file. He memorizes the last address in the file and leaves Brokaw's office. Archer walks to the nearby cafe listed as Harold's last known address and learns that Harold no longer works there. The manager checks with one of the serving girls named Charlene about Harold's whereabouts. Charlene is interested in Harold's recent increase in wealth and tells Archer that the last time she saw Harold was in a nearby liquor store with someone named Ramona.

Archer goes to Tom and Jerry's, the liquor store, to inquire about Ramona. Taking some beer to soothe the situation, Archer follows the storeowner's directions to Ramona's apartment. The woman who answers the door is a heavier set woman with dark hair and eyes. She invites Archer in and quickly pops open a beer. Ramona says that Harold doesn't live with her anymore since he got himself a new girlfriend. Ramona says that Harold came by with his new girl a few days ago in a little green car. Harold wouldn't let Ramona meet the new girl and so she did not get a good look at the woman. She also says that Harold told her he had a plan for making a fortune and getting back at some of the people in his life. Archer tries to get more information out of Ramona but all she can manage is that Harold did once mention a Laurel but that she's pretty sure this woman wasn't her.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Archer now embarks on a wild goose chase that costs more time than the information he receives seems worth. Harold's doctor turns out to be a useless source since he has conveniently left the office prior to Archer's arrival. Ramona proves to be an interesting character to talk to but her drunken stupor makes her an unreliable informant at best. The most pertinent information Ramona offers is to confirm Archer's suspicion that Harold is driving an older model green car, like a Falcon. Overall this chapter does little to further the investigation. Instead it seems to act as more of a stall tactic planted on purpose by the Lennox family because Archer is getting too close to the truth.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

When Archer returns to his car parked in front of Dr. Brokaw's office he notices a light on upstairs. Archer takes the elevator upstairs and knocks on the doctor's outer door. Dr. Brokaw lets Archer in and leads him to his private office. Archer tries to get the doctor to admit that the emergency patient he saw that night was actually Harold Sherry. The conversation between the two men is tense and accusatory. Each man appears to be sizing the other one up and attempting to gain control of the meeting. Archer begins to discuss why he is looking for Harold, including Laurel's disappearance and the ransom money. Dr. Brokaw says that Laurel was not kidnapped but is with Harold of her own free will. The doctor saw the woman tonight with Harold at a motel. When Brokaw refuses to say more, Archer tries to guilt the doctor into cooperating. Archer says that if Brokaw does not want to say anymore but the dead man might not be so appreciative. Since Brokaw has treated Harold for a gunshot wound he is legally bound to report it to the police. Archer says that he will be more lenient on Harold than the police will but only if he gets to Harold first.

Archer then tells Brokaw about the man in the tweed suit and the doctor's demeanor changes. Harold brought the man by the previous day for treatment. Brokaw had the impression that Harold was using the man for something and after getting tranquilizers from the doctor, Harold and the man abruptly left. When Archer says that the man is dead now, the doctor slips and says that Harold told him tonight that he had placed the old man in a hospital. Brokaw's reserve breaks down and he gives Archer the name of the hotel where he met Harold. Brokaw refuses to go with Archer but agrees to call area veterans' hospitals in an attempt to learn more about the dead man named Nelson.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Dr. Brokaw at first seems like an excellent source of information and someone that could be vital to Archer's investigation. However, Brokaw suffers from the same problem that Archer is forming: he is too involved with his patient to step back and see the full reality of his actions. Brokaw has formed a special attachment to Harold Sherry in much the same way that Archer has more personal feelings for Laurel Russo. The relationship runs so strongly that Brokaw is not even intimidated by the threat of police presence. The only thing that is able to shake him out of his firm stance is the revelation that Harold has lied to him. Dr. Brokaw apparently thought that Harold held him in an equivalent state of respect and the knowledge that Harold is merely using the doctor for what he can get finally breaks down enough of Brokaw's resolve so as to be helpful.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

The clerk behind the motel's check-in counter says that no one named Harold Sherry is registered as a guest. Archer then suggests that he is registered under a woman's name and describes the woman Brokaw saw with Harold. The clerk recognizes the description and says that Mrs. Sebastian and her husband are staying in Number 8. The clerk also says that they are driving a green Falcon car and he hasn't seen the husband because he's under the weather. Archer asks to see the check-in card and recognizes the address as Tom Russo's but the handwriting is not Laurel's. The clerk then shows Archer to Number 8 but the room is empty. Archer phones Captain Dolan to give him the address of the hotel and the license plate number to the Falcon. Archer then calls Tom Russo's house hoping to reach Gloria but a strange man answers the phone and hangs up after quickly telling Archer that Mr. Russo is not home. Archer places a third call to the drugstore where Tom works and learns that Tom had been earlier to pick up bandages for a friend. A final call to Dr. Brokaw reveals that a hospital in West Los Angeles has reported a patient named Nelson Bagley as missing. Brokaw agrees to meet Archer at the hospital.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Even though Dr. Brokaw finally broke down and proved useful to Archer, the reader cannot help but suspect that he also decided to help Harold out more. It seems too convenient that Harold and his mystery companion would leave the hotel just before Archer arrives. In a sense it seems that Brokaw's successful location of information about Nelson Bagley is a way to make up for his earlier uncooperative nature. Perhaps the doctor feels more than a little responsible for Nelson's death and is trying to make amends even though it is too late.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

When Archer arrives at the hospital he finds Brokaw waiting at a reception desk talking to a nurse. The nurse, Miss Shell, remembers discharging Nelson the night before last and that she was opposed to the idea but Nelson's doctor, Dr. Lampson, approved the leave. Miss Shell says that she did not trust the young man who signed Nelson out but before she can say anything more Dr. Lampson appears.

Brokaw and Lampson have a brief conversation about Harold Sherry before Archer asks how Harold contacted Nelson. Lampson replies that a young woman brought Harold to visit Nelson about a week ago. The doctor describes Gloria and acknowledges that that is the woman's name. Lampson suspected that there was some sort of family connection between Gloria and Nelson but he never found out exactly what it was. Dr. Lampson says he thought Gloria was a nice girl and Brokaw lets it slip that he just saw her that night. After his indiscretion, Brokaw silently gets up and leaves the hospital.

Archer tells Dr. Lampson about the kidnapping but omits Laurel's name. He also tells him about Ellis and the press secretary's assumption that Nelson had died twenty-five years ago and only just now floated to shore. Dr. Lampson asks how Ellis explained the explosion of Captain Somerville's ship. He tells Archer that Nelson told him the same thing just a few weeks ago. Dr. Lampson goes on to say that Nelson had recently begun to come out of his stupor and that the source of his recovery seemed to be Gloria. Dr. Lampson feels a certain connection with Nelson and reveals more of his conversations with the dead man. Nelson apparently feels responsible for the death of a woman many years ago. As Archer questions Dr. Lampson about the woman he comes to realize that Nelson may have been the man who shot Tom Russo's mother. Dr. Lampson is not certain that Nelson actually fired the fatal shot but that he somehow was a party to her death.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Dr. Brokaw continues to be an unreliable aide when he and Archer arrive at the hospital. Brokaw is too broken up about the role he may have played in Nelson's death and too caught up in feeling sorry for himself about his false relationship with Harold Sherry to be of any substantial assistance. Brokaw seems to recognize that he is incapable of handling the situation and leaves Archer with a more cooperative informant. Dr. Lampson has no ties to Harold Sherry and so cannot suffer from the same disappointment in his client that Dr. Brokaw does.

Dr. Lampson does have a certain affinity for Nelson Bagley and the news of his death causes him to be a wealth of information. Finally some of the various pieces are coming together to make some sense. The reader is able to see how conniving Harold Sherry

really is and how he has used both Gloria and Nelson for his own means. The reader cannot help but feel sorry for Gloria and Nelson. It seems almost certain at this point that Harold is responsible for both Laurel's disappearance and Nelson's death. He appears to have been plotting revenge on the Lennox family since the Las Vegas incident.



Chapter 32-33

Chapter 32-33 Summary

When Archer arrives at Tom Russo's home he finds Tom's father instead of Tom. Tom's father invites Archer in to wait for Tom's return and tells Archer that Tom took Gloria to Redondo Beach. While the two men wait they discuss Laurel's disappearance and the death of Allie Russo. When the elder Mr. Russo was younger the family moved to Bremerton, Washington, but Allie did not like living away from home and moved herself and Tom back to California. Mr. Russo explains that Allie was seeing another man and that he's pretty sure that other man was Nelson Bagley. Mr. Russo is also certain that it was Nelson who shot Allie. Archer tells Mr. Russo about Nelson's murder and the possibility that Gloria is involved. As Mr. Russo talks to Archer he becomes increasingly depressed and finally states that the house is "a bad house for marriages."

Tom returns and says that he dropped Gloria off and then stopped to see Laurel's parents. Archer explains that Jack Lennox was shot by Harold Sherry during the money exchange. Tom is slow to remember their conversation from early that morning and also reluctant to admit that he has given aide to Harold Sherry. Tom tells Archer that Gloria and Harold met at his own home when Laurel invited Harold to dinner. Laurel told Tom that Harold was an old high school friend but that Laurel's attitude changed whenever Harold was around. It was shortly after Tom asked Harold not to come back to the house that Laurel left.

When Archer asks if Laurel could be a cooperative participant in the whole scheme, Tom becomes quiet and suggests he take his father home. A heated exchange takes place between Tom and his dad about Allie Russo's death. The argument quickly escalates to a brawl and Archer is forced to drag Tom away from his father. The situation diffuses as quickly as it began and Archer moves to leave. He stops at the door and asks Tom if Harold was interested in Laurel's car. Tom replies that Harold did want to borrow Laurel's car in order to take someone from dinner. As Tom continues to talk he realizes that Gloria wanted to take Nelson Bagley for dinner at her mother's house. Archer also realizes that Martha Mungan lied about the tweed suit found on Nelson Bagley's body.

Chapter 32-33 Analysis

A new character reveals more information. Mr. Russo, like Dr. Lampson, proves to be a valuable source of information. It seems that those characters who are most removed from the story are actually the most helpful. Although Mr. Russo is intimately connected to Tom as his father, there is little love there. Mr. Russo is more concerned with being honest than with protecting anybody and the opportunity to tell Archer about his wife's murder only serves as another opportunity to clear his own name.



The pieces are falling more quickly into place now. Tom reveals a large amount of information that would have been extremely useful to know at the beginning of the investigation. The reader finally learns how Harold and Laurel came to see one another again. Tom's comment that Laurel acted differently around Harold seems to positively implicate her as a suspect in her own disappearance. The reader may be starting to piece together parts of the puzzle about Laurel's kidnapping but the mystery surrounding Laurel herself only deepens the more the reader learns about her.



Chapter 34-35

Chapter 34-35 Summary

Archer arrives at Topanga Court to pay Mrs. Mungan another visit. At first the woman does not recognize Archer but as realization dawns on her she is less than hospitable. Mrs. Mungan has not seen Gloria or Harold recently but she has been expecting her daughter to show up anytime. Mrs. Mungan is slightly surprised but not completely shocked to hear that Harold has kidnapped Laurel.

The two move into Mrs. Mungan's backroom and talk about Allie Russo's death. Martha tells Archer that Nelson Bagley wanted to be Allie's lover but that Allie had no interest in him. Martha is of little help to Archer because she drank through most of the evening that Bagley was at her house and remembers very little about her conversation with him. She does tell Archer that Harold wanted Bagley to see Captain Somerville on TV but she is not sure why. Mrs. Mungan cannot remember how Bagley reacted to Somerville's image though. When Martha gets up to pour herself a drink, Archer remembers Elizabeth Somerville's confession about a woman and a little boy who visited her in Bel-Air. He realizes that the little boy would be about thirty and the woman would be in her fifties, or dead.

Elizabeth is home alone when Archer arrives at the Somerville house. Archer shows Elizabeth a picture of Allie Russo that he took from Martha but Elizabeth denies knowing the woman. Elizabeth continues to deny knowing the woman as Archer questions her. He tells her about Nelson Bagley but Elizabeth does not know him either. In an attempt to prove that her husband did not kill Allie Russo, Elizabeth fetches a diary she kept during her first year of marriage. After reading the passage for the night Allie was killed Archer turns to the entry for the day the mysterious woman visited Elizabeth. The entry reveals that Elizabeth recorded the little boy's name: Thomas. Archer asks Elizabeth if she would like to look at Allie's picture again but she says it is not necessary because she recognized the woman the first time she saw the photo. Elizabeth takes the diary and leaves the room.

Chapter 34-35 Analysis

The revelation that Mrs. Mungan is Gloria's mother suddenly seems so obvious to the reader that it is almost unbelievable. That one piece of information solves so many questions all at once. Likewise, when Archer remembers Elizabeth telling him about a woman with a little boy visiting her when Captain Somerville was not home, the reader smacks his forehead. The moment is an "aha, of course" moment when the reader thinks he has begun to figure out the entire situation.

The confidence the reader felt at the end of the previous chapter only increases when Elizabeth Somerville herself confirms his suspicions. There seems to be little doubt that



Elizabeth is responsible for Allie's death. Elizabeth has the perfect motive for murder and her controlled nature would allow her to perform such an act while recovering quickly enough to avoid detection. The reader wonders when Archer will piece together what has already been figured out or if Archer's relationship with Elizabeth will prevent him from seeing the obvious truth.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Captain Somerville arrives home shortly after Elizabeth walks out on Archer. Archer says that he is here about a series of murders: Allie Russo, Nelson Bagley, and Tony Lashman. At the mention of Allie Russo Somerville's face drains of color. Archer says that he believes the murders are connected and if he does not find out how soon then Laurel may be the fourth victim. At the mention of Laurel's name, Marian Lennox bursts into the room anxious for news of her daughter. Captain Somerville gently escorts his sister-in-law out of the room and sends her off to bed.

When the two men are alone again Archer begins to question the Captain about his relationship with Allie. Ben confirms the truth of his wife's diary entry and says that he did not know that Allie had been killed until after his ship set sail for Okinawa. Ben was introduced to Allie by Nelson Bagley who asked the Captain to help Allie and her little boy out back in Bremerton. According to Ben Bagley tried to commit suicide on board the ship and that the flash from his gun ignited the gas that set fire to the ship. Ben figures that Nelson was told of Allie's death and was afraid he would get caught as her murderer, so he tried to take his own life.

Archer tells Ben that Harold took Nelson out of the hospital and arranged for him to watch the Captain's appearance on television. Archer figures that Harold was trying to dig up something on the Lennox family by having Nelson recognize Somerville as Allie's killer. Ben is shocked by Archer's suggestion that he killed Allie.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Compared to the first time Archer came to interview Captain Somerville, Ben is much more cooperative this time around. Perhaps Archer's personal touch with the family is helping rather than hurting his investigation after all. Archer is now able to confront Ben with more concrete details that require honest answers. Ben's story that Nelson tried to kill himself on board the ship seems completely believable. Nelson's love for Allison Russo has been substantiated by several people and he seems by all accounts to be the type of person who would take her death personally whether he was the one who shot her or not. The reader also has no reason at this point to suspect that Ben would be covering up anything for Jack. There seems to be little love between the brothers-in-law. However, the reader may remember that Ben was rescued from personal ruin by William Lennox and Jack is the sort of person to lord that bit of information over Ben's head.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Captain Somerville escorts Archer to the door. Outside in the garage Archer runs into Smith who shows the private detective an empty prescription bottle. The bottle is the one Laurel took from Archer's apartment and Smith discovered it in the trash can of a bathroom off the garage. After searching the bathroom and questioning Smith, Archer determines that Laurel was probably in the house sometime in the last twenty-four hours.

Smith and Archer go into the house where they are met by Elizabeth. Archer tells Elizabeth about the empty bottle and the three of them search the grounds for any other signs of Laurel. When their search turns up nothing, Archer asks Smith about the explosion on Captain Somerville's ship. Smith has little information to offer and the three of them head back to the house. Marian Lennox meets them at the front door. When Archer tells her about the pill bottle, Marian demands to go back home in case Laurel tries to contact them there. Elizabeth offers to drive Marian home and Archer heads for his apartment.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Since Laurel's abrupt exit from Archer's apartment no real information about her has been found. All of the leads that Archer has been following are leading farther away from Laurel's whereabouts and deeper into the web of Lennox family secrets. Now suddenly the vial of Nembutal is found empty in the Somerville's garage. The reader immediately adds this bit of information to the recent revelations of Somerville's affair with Allison Russo and Mrs. Russo's visit to the Somerville house with her little boy in tow. Elizabeth has been able to remain so controlled because all this time she has known Laurel's whereabouts. Her open concern has been a front for the source of her true concern: being discovered as a killer and kidnapper. Apparently the aunt-niece bond that Elizabeth spoke about to Archer is not as pure as originally thought.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Only thirty hours have passed since Archer brought Laurel back to his apartment. As he stands and looks around Archer realizes that the change he sees in the apartment has occurred within him and not the building. Archer lies down on his couch and tries to sleep but the phone wakes him. His answering service tells him that a woman is trying to contact him about her daughter coming home. Archer hangs up the phone, changes his shirt, and heads for Topanga Court.

Gloria's green Falcon is parked in front of Mrs. Mungan's home. Martha comes to the door and tells Archer that Gloria is here but scared. Archer and Gloria talk in private. Gloria says that Harold has told her more about her Aunt Allie's death. She says that Harold did not kidnap Laurel or shoot Jack Lennox. Gloria refuses to tell Archer where Harold is or tell him everything Harold told her. Archer tells Gloria about the love triangle between Somerville, Neslon Bagley, and Allie Russo. Gloria then says that Jack Lennox tried to kill Harold because Jack has always hated Harold. Harold also told Gloria that he cashed in his securities and that's how he got the box of money. Archer becomes frustrated with Gloria's refusal to be completely honest with him and asks where Harold is now. Gloria says that an older woman driving a Mercedes picked Harold up and left her.

Gloria begins to lament her bad luck with men and reveals that Tom has known Laurel since he was a young boy. Laurel and Tom used to play together as young children but Gloria does not know how they came to know each other. Gloria calls Martha into the room and Archer counsels Gloria to go to the police with the truth in order to avoid severe charges. Martha tells him about Allie's relationship with Captain Somerville. Martha is the one who told Allie to seek help from Somerville when she was struggling after returning from Bremerton. The first time Allie went to Captain Somerville's house is when she talked to Elizabeth. However, she went a second time and talked to Jack who offered Allie a position babysitting Laurel.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Gloria's "poor me" attitude is extremely annoying to both the reader and Archer. It is plainly obvious to everyone around her that Harold is responsible for Laurel's disappearance but Gloria is too self-obsessed to notice. At the same time the reader cannot help but feel a bit sorry for Gloria. She has proved to be a nice enough woman, albeit with an odd fixation on her cousin, but she does not deserve to be treated so rudely by the men in her life. Her low self-esteem make her an easy target for men like Harold. What is sad about Gloria is that instead of taking advantage of her chance to fight back against men like Harold she continues to blame herself and wallow in self-pity.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Archer heads south to Pacific Point. He has the security guard contact William Lennox's house and learns from Connie Hapgood that Mr. Lennox has been missing for about an hour. Archer promises to come visit Connie as soon as he can but first he heads for Mrs. Sherry's house where he's pretty certain Harold is hiding. Archer approaches the house carefully since Gloria told him that he still had a gun. Mrs. Sherry comes out of the back of the house but denies that Harold is inside. After a few minutes of questioning Mrs. Sherry says that Harold is inside and feverish. She has taken away his gun and hidden it after unloading it. Archer insists on talking with Harold but Mrs. Sherry is reluctant to let him into the house. Harold overhears them talking and opens the door. Archer pushes Harold down onto the bed and suggests that Mrs. Sherry give them a moment alone. He also asks where the money is and she says that she hid it too. Archer begins to question Harold but Harold denies taking Laurel and has no knowledge about where she is.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Archer is now hot on the trail of Harold Sherry and the reader is on the edge of his seat waiting for the climactic moment where Harold breaks down and confesses. First, Archer must get past Harold's simpering mother. It is no wonder that Harold has turned out to be the bullying hooligan that he is. Abandoned by his father and left to be raised by his mouse-like mother, Harold has been at once the baby and the dominant figure. Mrs. Sherry is very much like Gloria and unable to recognize that her concern for her son is only helping not hurting him. She is like a gnat that continually buzzes annoyingly in Archer's ear and he is almost forced to swat her in order to get her to go away.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Archer is having trouble controlling his temper and becomes verbally forceful with Mrs. Sherry. When she finally leaves, Harold tells Archer that if he wants to know where Laurel is he should talk to her father. Harold says that the money was hush money from Jack Lennox. Harold discovered the relationship between Captain Somerville and Allie Russo and he also knows that William Lennox helped to hush up the truth about the fire in Okinawa. According to Harold Jack Lennox was with Allie the night she was shot since Captain Somerville was at sea. Harold also says that Jack shot Nelson Bagley on board the *Canaan Sound* and that the spark from the shot is what started the fire. The reason that Harold had Nelson view the interview on TV was so that Nelson could correctly identify the man with Allie.

Harold took Nelson to Jack Lennox's house and Jack shoved Nelson over the cliff. That was when Jack offered Harold money to keep quiet and suggested that they make the whole thing appear to be a kidnapping. Archer is having some difficulty believing Harold's story especially since Tony Lashman's death still has not been explained. Harold is not surprised to hear that Tony has been killed and figures that Jack killed the secretary too. Mrs. Sherry comes into the room and says that the doctor has been called to William Lennox's house because it appears that William had a heart attack and fell off a tractor.

Archer asks Mrs. Sherry for Harold's gun and the box of money. When she brings it, he tells her to call the sheriff's department and speak to Captain Dolan. Mrs. Sherry is on the phone when the doorbell rings. Doctor Langdale has come to see Harold and he reports that William Lennox is dead. Apparently Mr. Lennox was using a bulldozer to try to clean the oil from his beach when he had a heart attack.

Chapter 40 Analysis

The reader is blown away to discover that Harold Sherry was an almost innocent bystander in Laurel's disappearance. However, if the reader takes a moment to think back on all he knows about Harold the revelation is really not so surprising. Harold may have had deep seeded revenge plotted against the Lennox family but in truth he is not smart enough to concoct such an elaborate plan and carry it through to fruition. Harold merely got lucky in a sense that Jack was looking to keep the family secrets quiet. Unfortunately for both of them their plan failed miserably. Harold's hatred of the Lennox clan will only continue to fester as he sits in jail while Jack Lennox roams free. It is easy to assume that Jack will use his position and power to avoid a lengthy jail sentence.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Archer heads for the hospital where Jack Lennox is receiving treatment. He wastes no time telling Jack that Harold Sherry has been arrested, the money recovered, and that Harold made a complete statement. Jack says that Harold is a psychopathic liar who would say anything to blacken the Lennox name. Archer tells Jack that Harold has accused him of killing Allie Russo and Tony Lashman and shooting Nelson Bagley. Jack is uncooperative with Archer's questions and the private detective suspects that Jack is covering up for someone.

Jack receives a phone call telling him about his father's death. Instead of appearing upset, Jack is excited that he is now the head of the Lennox company. Jack then offers Archer a hundred thousand dollars to keep quiet. Archer says it is too late to make a deal. Jack then asks if Archer would be willing to do him a favor and look after Laurel. Archer wants to know where she is and Jack says that she came home last night. Jack admits that he suggested the kidnapping ploy. Laurel is at home where Marian has her sedated. Laurel apparently became upset when she saw Nelson Bagley and pushed him over the cliff. Archer is confused about why Laurel would push Nelson over the cliff but Jack has no good explanation. Jack tells Archer that Marian thinks Laurel remembered Nelson from when Allie Russo babysat her. Archer asks if Laurel was at the house the night Allie was killed. Jack can't remember but does not deny being with Allie that night. Jack admits to confronting Nelson on board the *Canaan Sound* and firing a shot at him that started the fire on ship. Jack says he does not know who sent the clippings of Allie's death to him and Somerville on board ship but goes so far as to suggest that Laurel or Tom could have done it.

Jack then goes back to his request for Archer to look after Laurel. He asks Archer to take her out of the country to Central America. Archer says it really is not a good idea for Laurel to leave the country especially if she killed Nelson. Jack agrees but continues to insist that Archer lookout for Laurel especially since she and Marian have not been getting along lately.

Chapter 41 Analysis

The reader may want to crawl into the pages and smack Jack Lennox. His smug acceptance of what has happened is chilling. The reader is struck by how completely unfeeling Jack truly is, not only has his father just died but he seems to sense that his wife's death is also imminent. Instead of being concerned about the welfare of his daughter, Jack pawns the responsibility off onto Archer. Jack has gotten away with his plot to cover for his wife. Now that his duty is over, he is concerned only with his control of Lennox Oil and money.



Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

Archer heads for Jack Lennox's house. He loads Harold's gun and takes it with him. Archer approaches the house cautiously. He sees the dead bird that Laurel tried to clean up lying on the patio. Marian Lennox tells him to go away and tries to deny that Laurel is in the house. Archer tells her that Jack sent him and moves into the house to remove Jack's gun from the corner. Marian says that Laurel flushed the Nembutal pills down the toilet at Captain Somerville's house before coming home. She also tells Archer about how Laurel pushed Nelson over the cliff. Marian does not have any better suggestion for why Laurel killed Nelson than her husband did.

When Marian mentions Laurel remembering Nelson from Allie Russo's house, Archer asks her how she knows about that. Marian says that she went to pick Laurel up from Allie's house the night she was killed. She is unable to remember if Allie was dead when she went in and tries to express remorse for not checking on young Tom before she left. Marian calls Allie a "filthy woman" and says that she found Jack drunk in Allie's bed that night. Marian admits to sending the newspaper clippings to Jack and Captain Somerville on board the ship. As she continues to talk, Marian becomes more and more upset and begins blaming men for everything that has gone wrong in her life.

Marian tells Archer that Nelson was the one who called and told her that Jack was with Allie. She also says that Laurel saw her push Nelson over the cliff and that's why she ran off. When Laurel came back she told her mother to confess to the police but Marian is afraid of what will happen to her since she killed three people. Archer says he knows why she killed Allie Russo and Nelson Bagley but does not understand why Tony Lashman was killed. Marian says that Tony knew about Nelson Bagley and tried to get money from Marian so she killed him. Marian takes Archer to Laurel's room where Archer gently kisses the sleeping woman's forehead. Archer turns around in time to see Marian crawling over the balcony railing and jump off to fall on the boulders below.

Chapter 42 Analysis

This final chapter of the book is anti-climactic and unfulfilling for the reader. Finally the identity of the real murderer is revealed and Laurel is found safe and sound. There is a surprise element to the revelation that mouse-like Marian Lennox was the one who committed the murders but somehow her argument falls short. It is difficult to believe that such a meek appearing woman could commit such heinous crimes. The reader can believe that she is deeply troubled and in need of extensive therapy but Macdonald seems to be trying to stretch the reader's trust by asking him to believe that Marian could be so evil.



Also dissatisfying are all the unresolved issues surrounding the rest of the Lennox family and Laurel's marriage. No mention is made about what happens to Jack for his extortion attempt, or what becomes of Elizabeth and Captain Somerville's marriage. In fact the reader wonders what will become of Connie Hapgood now that Jack controls the oil company. Archer's kiss to Laurel's forehead is more the act of one finding a lost lover, not of a professional detective finally solving the case of a missing married woman. Macdonald has invested so much of the reader's energy into getting to know the Lennox family personally that the reader is seriously disappointed that the author now does not trust him to know the complete ending of the story. The prince has rescued the princess and that is all that is important. The Lennox family will probably continue on in their stalwart, closed-ranks fashion but the reader hoped that there would have been a more lasting change made on the family.



Characters

Lew Archer

Lew Archer is the main character of the story. He is a private detective who inadvertently gets involved with a very prominent local family when the girl he picks up at the beach goes missing with a bottle of Nembutal pills from his apartment. Since the book is about the search for Laurel Russo and the dark secrets of the Lennox family, the reader does not get the opportunity to find out much about Lew Archer personally. The attentive reader will pick up on the fact that Archer is divorced but other than that there is little personal information available.

Because of the lack of information about Archer it is difficult for the reader to categorize him and think about him in the same ways he thinks about the other characters. The most notable thing about Archer is his sometimes-unprofessional attitude towards his current clients. When he first brings Laurel to his apartment so she can use the phone he entertains the thought of spending the night with her even though he knows she is married. Archer later lives out this fantasy in a round about way when he sleeps with Laurel's aunt, Elizabeth. Archer's intimacy with the Lennox family crosses a professional line and endangers his investigation. By the end of the story it seems that Archer is searching for Laurel out of his own desire to have her back rather than out of a sense of duty to her family. At the beginning of the story Archer takes one hundred dollars from Tom as partial payment for his services, but as the story progresses no other mention is made of Archer asking for additional payments. It seems that Archer has forgotten all about his professional duty when he finally sees Laurel sleeping at her parents' house. He bends down and kisses her as the story ends. The ending leaves the reader wondering if there is a future together for Archer and Laurel. The reader also wonders if the entire search was not motivated out of a desire to possess Laurel for himself.

Laurel Russo

Laurel Russo's physical presence is contained to a few paragraphs at the beginning and the end of the book. However, she is one of the main characters in the novel because the entire plot revolves around her sudden disappearance. Laurel is the daughter of Jack and Marian Lennox and the wife of Tom Russo. She appears to love her husband very much but suffers from occasional bouts of depression and anxiety. During these times she often leaves home to stay with friends or family for several days. Laurel has also been known to use sedatives and when she disappears from Archer's apartment with a bottle of sleeping pills the assumption becomes that she has decided to take her own life.

The reader learns a lot about Laurel over the course of the book. As Archer interviews person after person he gains a more complete picture of Laurel from the time she was a young girl. Laurel is an only child and her childhood seems to have been a very lonely



one. She spent time shuffled between relatives without any real playmates her own age. The reader gets the impression that Laurel's father was too busy with the oil business to pay much attention to his daughter - a condition that persists throughout Laurel's adult life. Marian has numerous emotional problems of her own and appears unable to handle the care of young Laurel. Laurel had several boyfriends as a teenager but her female friends are few in number.

Jack Lennox

Jack Lennox is the son of William and Sylvia Lennox, the brother of Elizabeth Somerville, the husband of Marian Lennox, and the father of Laurel Russo. Jack is a very hard and unfeeling man. His only concern seems to be for money and taking over the family business. Jack is prone to flashes of anger and he spends most of the book threatening people with guns or violence.

Jack is so disconnected from his family that he uses his own daughter's disappearance as a cover-up for his own indiscretions. It is not completely clear whether Jack knows that his wife is the one who shot Allison Russo but it is likely since he was with Allison the night Marian shot her. However, his motive for paying off Harold Sherry seems not to cover up his wife's deeds but his own. He does not want it known to the rest of his family, particularly his father, that he had an affair or attempted to shoot Nelson Bagley. Jack gets some retribution from the fates when he is shot by Harold Sherry during the ransom drop. The reader can be reasonably assured that Jack will not face as severe a punishment as Harold Sherry since Jack has both influence and money to make the situation go away.

Tom Russo

Tom Russo is Laurel Russo's wife. He is a middle-aged pharmacist who has married outside of his station in life. He appears to be deeply in love with Laurel and is desperate for her to return. However, Tom is a nervous type of person and he is not completely clear of being a suspect in Laurel's disappearance. Suspicion around Tom grows as the reader learns that Tom has known Laurel since the two were children. His mother used to baby sit for Laurel and that seems to be when he really fell in love with her. His later pursuit of Laurel that leads to their marriage seems to be an act of a stalker.

Tom has not had an easy life. His parents separated when he was very young after his mother moved to California while his father was working in Bremerton, Washington. Tom's mother was known to have other lovers and her infidelity lead to her murder. Tom was in the house the night his mother was killed and sat with her dead body for several days before going to a neighbors' for food. Tom still has nightmares about his mother's death. It is not surprising that Laurel's frequent disappearances trigger Tom's nightmares since it was Laurel's mother who killed Tom's mother and Laurel's father was one of Allie's lovers. The book does little to resolve Tom's issues and only seems to



compound them when Lew Archer places a kiss on Laurel's forehead at the end of the book.

Sylvia Lennox

Sylvia Lennox is the matriarch of the Lennox family. She is in her eighties but still a formidable woman who does not take orders but gives them. Sylvia left her husband when she discovered that he was running around on her and blames men for most of the problems in her life. Sylvia has a special soft spot for Laurel and is willing to put up the hundred thousand dollars asked for by Laurel's kidnapper.

William Lennox

William Lennox is the founder of the Lennox oil company. His children tiptoe around him with their personal affairs so that he will not deny them a portion of his wealth when he dies. William has been living with a woman almost half his age after leaving his wife for Connie Hapgood. William has health problems that are affected by stress and the family does their best to protect him from matters concerning the oil spill and Laurel's disappearance. Sylvia must contact William to help gather the hundred thousand dollars ransom. William is found dead after suffering a heart attack while driving a bulldozer and trying to clean up the oil on his beach.

Elizabeth Somerville

Elizabeth Somerville is an attractive middle-aged woman. She married Ben Somerville who is several years older than herself and was a Captain in the Navy. Elizabeth is the daughter of William and Sylvia Lennox and Jack Lennox's sister. Elizabeth maintains a very calm and controlled demeanor until she begins to think about her own personal life, particularly her marriage. It is quite obvious that Elizabeth regrets the fact that she and Ben have been able to have children. She is also unhappy in her marriage because she has hidden the fact that Ben had an affair with Allison Russo during their first year of marriage.

Elizabeth and Archer form a close intimate bond and even spend the night together. However, this bond is quickly broken as Elizabeth remembers her place as a member of the Lennox clan. She is cordial and cooperative with Archer's investigation, and for a while it looks as if she could be a suspect in Laurel's disappearance. Elizabeth is not the murderer but her future is left in a cloud of uncertainty.

Captain Ben Somerville

Captain Ben Somerville married into the Lennox family but his marriage does not appear to be a happy one. Ben was the captain of the *Canaan Sound*, a naval ship that caught fire off the coast of Okinawa. Because the cause of the fire was never clearly



determined Ben was held responsible as captain. The incident did not help further his naval career and in order to save his son-in-law's reputation William Lennox brought Ben into the family oil business.

Captain Somerville becomes a suspect in Laurel's disappearance when it is revealed that he had an affair with Allison Russo twenty-five years ago. Somerville readily admits to the affair but refuses to admit that he was the one who murdered Allison the night before the *Canaan Sound* set sail for Okinawa.

Marian Lennox

Marian Lennox is Jack Lennox's wife and Laurel Russo's mother. She is a quiet nervous figure who stays mostly in the background. Marian is portrayed as being frail and unable to handle any situation by herself. The reader thinks little of her throughout the entire book and is probably shocked to learn that Marian is responsible for the deaths of Allie Russo, Nelson Bagley, and Tony Lashman. Marian's quiet demeanor hides a repressed woman tired of being trampled on by men. She jumps from the balcony of her house at the end of the book after confessing her multiple sins to Lew Archer.

Harold Sherry

Harold Sherry is a childhood acquaintance of Laurel Russo's. When he was about eighteen and she was fifteen they took off together to Las Vegas and made a ransom demand of a thousand dollars to Laurel's parents. Because of this previous incident Harold is the prime suspect in Laurel's most recent disappearance.

Harold is a shady type character who seems to create trouble wherever he goes. He appears obsessed with the Lennox family and it is easy to believe that he would do anything he could to dig up dirt on the Lennox's and bring shame to the family. Harold's involvement in Laurel's disappearance is minimal and he acted more as an extortionist in order to get money out of Jack Lennox.

Gloria Flaherty

Gloria Flaherty is Tom Russo's cousin and she works part-time for him as a housekeeper. Her relationship with Tom strikes the reader as very odd when she reveals that they used to "go together" almost as if they were dating. Gloria makes no attempt to conceal that she feels more than a familial bond for her cousin and appears to resent his marriage to Laurel.

Gloria has been dating Harold Sherry. She is ignorant of his connection to Laurel Russo but even after she becomes aware of what is happening around her, refuses to believe that Harold is no the man she thought he was. Gloria's love life has not been a smooth one and she is reluctant to incriminate her most recent boyfriend. Gloria seems to take



after her mother and the reader can imagine that her life will be lonely and filled with disappointment.

Tony Lashman

Tony Lashman is Sylvia Lennox's personal secretary. He is a younger man not much older than a college sophomore or so. He has plans of returning to college to pursue either photography or criminal justice to become a private detective. At first these two interests seem unrelated but as the story unfolds the reader realizes that Tony is a snoop of sorts. Shortly after Sylvia Lennox chastises the young man for becoming too concerned with her affairs, Tony is found floating in the ocean with his head bashed in a short distance from Sylvia's home.

Nelson Bagley

Nelson Bagley may be the character that the reader feels the sorriest for by the time the book ends. Nelson was an officer on Captain Somerville's ship the *Canaan Sound* and presumed dead when the ship caught fire in Okinawa. However, Nelson did not die in the fire but the injuries he sustained from the blaze left him in a coma-like state for most of his life. He had only recently begun to come out of his corpse-like state when he met Gloria Flaherty. She was able to talk to him and coax some life back into him. Nelson was once in love with Allison Russo even though she wanted nothing to do with him. Nelson was also the prime suspect in Allison's murder but the fire and his decreased mental capacity kept him from ever being brought to trial. Harold Sherry brought Nelson to the Lennox house where he was subsequently killed.

Martha Mungan

Martha Mungan is the ex-wife of Ralph Mungan. Ralph is originally believed to be the dead man Archer pulls from the ocean at Sylvia Lennox's house. As the story unfolds the reader learns that Ralph is alive and well although concerned that his current will find out that their marriage is not legal because his Mexican divorce from Martha was never legal. Martha lives in Topanga Court as manager of the hotel complex. She is an aged woman prone to drinking. Martha is Gloria Flaherty's mother and Allison Russo's sister.

Allison Russo

Allison Russo, also known as Allie, is Tom Russo's mother. She was killed when Tom was a young boy but the truth behind her murder is the root of the entire investigation of Laurel's disappearance. She had moved back to California instead of staying in Bremerton, Washington where her husband was working and was romantically involved with both Captain Somerville and Jack Lennox. Nelson Bagley was also in love with her



but she did not care for him. Allison is also the sister to Martha Mungan and Gloria Flaherty's aunt.

Connie Hapgood

Connie Hapgood is the live in girlfriend of William Lennox. She is an attractive looking woman in her forties who used to teach at River Valley School. When Archer meets her for the first time, she does not take any grief from him and is brutally honest in her conversation with him. It is apparent from her interaction with William that they care a great deal for one another but are also careful to maintain a respectful appearance when in the public eye. Most members of the Lennox family do not like her and view her as a threat to their inheritance if she manages to marry William.



Objects/Places

Pacific Point

Pacific Point is the epicenter of action for most of the book. The oil spill occurred just off the coast of Pacific Point and many of the Lennox family lives within a nearby radius. The area is on the upper end of the social scale and contrasts starkly with the numerous rundown buildings Lew Archer must visit during his investigation. However, the landscape provides the perfect cover-up for murders since the cliffs can be dangerous places to walk and the oil adds an extra layer of slippery filth to blame falls on.

Sandhill Lake

Sandhill Lake is the appointed place for the ransom drop. Jack Lennox is familiar with the spot because his father used to be a member of the hunting club located near the lake. The spot becomes part of the investigation when both Jack Lennox and the suspected kidnapper are shot. Lew Archer views the exchange of gunfire from a distance since Jack Lennox made him get out of the car and walk from a few miles away. Jack is wounded and drops to the ground while the other man is able to limp away with a leg wound. When Lew arrives on the scene he sees a green car driving away and assumes that the car belongs to whoever shot Jack.

Lew Archer's Apartment

Shortly after Lew meets Laurel Russo he takes her home to his own apartment so that she can use his phone to contact her husband. Lew offers Laurel a place to stay for the night but she uses his bathroom and then abruptly leaves the apartment. Lew discovers that Laurel took a vial of Nembutal sleeping pills from his medicine cabinet. His conscious prompts him to search for her and when he discovers that she is missing he feels partly responsible and begins an investigation into her whereabouts.

The Russo's Home

Lew makes several visits to Tom and Laurel Russo's house throughout the story. He learns that the house has been in the Russo family for many years and that Tom is buying it from his father who now lives in a home. Lew also discovers that Tom's mother Allie was murdered in the house twenty-five years ago and that Tom was in the house with his mother's body for several days before he ran out of food and sought help from neighbors.

Tom's cousin Gloria works for the Russo's as a housekeeper and sometimes stays at the Russo's home when it is too late to drive home. Lew suspects some uncommon activity between Tom and his cousin but finds no proof. Gloria does make several



comments that further the suggestion that she has more than familial love for Tom but he does not appear to return her feelings.

Green Falcon Automobile

When Lew finally makes it to the top of Sandhill Lake he sees a man limping away towards a stand of trees. Before Lew can reach the area he sees a green car speeding away in the opposite direction. Lew spends a lot of time looking for the owner of the green Falcon car and comes to determine that the automobile belongs to Gloria Flaherty. Harold Sherry has used Gloria in order to have access to her car but that makes her an accessory to Jack Lennox's shooting and implicates her in Laurel's disappearance.

Blanche's Restaurant

The same night that Lew Archer returns to California he walks along the beach near Pacific Point to view the oil spill. After his encounter with Laurel, Lew heads for a nearby restaurant on the pier where he sees an old man in a tweed suit leaving with a younger suspicious looking man. Lew will return to the restaurant several times as he tries to determine the identities of these two men.

River Valley School

River Valley School is where Laurel went to school. This is where she met Harold Russo when she was fifteen and he was eighteen. They ran off to Las Vegas on a pretend kidnapping stunt and ransomed Laurel's parents for one thousand dollars. When Jack Lennox found the pair he beat Harold up and made his life miserable from then on. Connie Hapgood also used to teach at River Valley. She knew Laurel from the time she was a young girl and her association with Laurel possibly led to Connie's relationship with William Lennox.

The Tweed Suit

Lew Archer first sees the old man in a gray tweed suit at the restaurant on the pier. The next morning Lew pulls the same man from the ocean. A tag in the suit states that the owner is Ralph Mungan but as Lew investigates the origins of the tweed suit, he learns that Ralph Mungan is alive and well. Ralph left the suit with his ex-wife, Martha who gave the suit to the dead man a few nights before he was killed. Once the truth of the suit is discovered the investigation widens but also more pieces of the puzzle fall into place.



The Oil Spill

When Lew Archer flies over the California coast at the start of the book he views an oil spill not far from the airport. The spill comes from a busted oilrig owned by the Lennox family. Lew first meets Laurel Russo as he walks along the beach to get a closer look at the oil spill. The oil spill appears to have emotionally affected Laurel and Lew soon learns that she is a member of the Lennox family. As Lew learns more about Laurel and the Lennox family the oil spill becomes a metaphor for his investigation. Just like the oil spill that continues to spread its filth over a larger area, Lew uncovers more and more of the dirty Lennox family secrets.

Canaan Sound

The *Canaan Sound* is the ship that Captain Somerville was in charge of during his Navy career. The ship caught fire off the coast of Okinawa and Captain Somerville lost his position with the Navy as a result. Several other major players in the book were crewmembers of the *Canaan Sound*: Nelson Bagley, Leroy Ellis, Jack Lennox, and Somerville's personal assistant, Smith. Nelson Bagley is believed killed in the ships fire but it is later learned that Jack tried to shoot Bagley and a spark from the gun ignited a gas leak to start the fire. Bagley was severely wounded and spent twenty-five years in various state and mental hospitals.

Social Sensitivity

Like the other Lew Archer books, *Sleeping Beauty* deals with such matters as the intrusion of the past into the present, family guilt and decline, money and sex, the class struggle, and violent death. But it also focuses on an environmental issue as a metaphor for the despoliation which is going on in the human community. The plot is constructed around an oil spill off the California coast. The poetic image Macdonald uses is one of seeing the oil pumping station as a giant knife plunged into the earth with the black blood flowing out around the puncture wound. The natural environment, like the human one, has been attacked and violated, leaving a gaping hole.

Macdonald's use of the natural disaster caused by human error, which in turn was motivated by greed and power, provides a perfect image of a world gone wrong. It also supplies the necessary interconnected structure of events and motivations which characterize Lew Archer's world. Only this time, rather than stopping with the immediate past, Macdonald has metaphorically, at least, delved deeply into a primordial prehistory, a subconscious depth which produces a blackness that oozes over the sea onto the beaches and covers everything with a sticky reminder of human evil and greed.



Techniques

Macdonald has written in *Sleeping Beauty* the most metaphorically unified novel of the Lew Archer series. The integration he achieved by using the central symbol of the oil spill both draws the fiction together and expands its meaning outward. The circularity of the plot, actions brought full circle, as well as forward in time, are reflected in the ebb and flow, ever more menacing because of the free floating oil, of the sea which echoes the diurnal regularity of nature. The natural associations of the characters with various elements and the order of birth and death also add to the symbolic associations within the novel. Here there is little quarrel with Macdonald's use of poetic metaphor. It all seems right, in harmony with the larger literary structure of the story. Even the fairy tale suggested in the title adds to the resonance of the book. With a passing nod to Claude Levy-Straus, *Sleeping Beauty*, in concert with most fairy tales, contains a text deeply woven into the psychic fabric of the human unconscious. The novel is a stunning tour de force, one greatly underappreciated and all too much neglected.



Themes

Family Secrets

Every family has buried secrets that they would rather not have aired in a public arena. In the case of the average family the secrets are mild indiscretions like the drunken uncle who misbehaves at family functions or the fifth cousins who married even though most of the family thinks the union should not have happened. These types of family secrets are easier to hide or explain to outsiders. However, not every family is so lucky to have smaller indiscretions to hide. In many instances it seems that the wealthier or more influential the family the bigger their family secrets and the more the family stands to lose if those secrets are ever uncovered and placed in the wrong hands.

This happens to be the case with the Lennox family. They are already a high profile family that has come under fire for the oil spill off Pacific Point. Laurel's disappearance and the assumption that she has been kidnapped is not something that they need made known to the public. The situation is also not a topic Jack or Elizabeth Lennox want told to their own father. William Lennox's children are waiting with baited breath to see what will happen to the family's estate when their father passes away. William's association with Connie Hapgood has put the family fortune in jeopardy and the children are worried that they will be left penniless. Keeping secrets from the public is hard enough but keeping secrets from other family members adds another dimension to hiding skeletons in the closet.

The average family does not have actual skeletons in their closet but the Lennox family does. The reader is not surprised to learn that Jack Lennox and Captain Somerville were both once lovers of Allison Russo. However, what is surprising, and is the ultimate skeleton in the closet, is that Marian Lennox, Jack's wife, is the murderer in the family. Quiet Marian, who has appeared so fragile during the entire story, turns out to be the repressed and disgruntled wife who decides to take matters into her own hands twenty-five years ago by killing Allison Russo. Marian reprises her role as killer when she tries to cover-up her past indiscretions by killing those people who pose a threat to revealing her secrets. What is most disturbing about Marian's role as killer is that Jack appears to be aware of his wife's actions and shows no concern for her welfare. Jack is happy to have his father out of the picture so that he can become the sole owner of the Lennox empire and does nothing to prevent his wife's suicide. Perhaps people like Jack are the ultimate family secret. People like Jack profess to be caring members of a family but are really only interested in serving themselves no matter what the cost to other family members.

Money

Money makes the world go round, or so some people say. However, money does not necessarily buy happiness. The Lennox family has plenty of money, most of which



comes from their oil business, which makes them a target for crime by environmentalist groups and other people who dislike the wealthy. If the Lennox family did not have as much money as they do then quite possibly they would not have so many problems haunting them.

The Lennox family suffers problems on two fronts: the public and the personal. The recent oil spill off of Pacific Point has set off a string of small crimes against the family. The public insists that the Lennox corporation was negligent in its management of the oilrig and that is why the spill happened. Environmentalist groups picket the pier where the oilrig is stationed and proclaim that the Lennox family is money hungry and not concerned with the public good. As Lew Archer investigates the family he discovers that the Lennox family has constantly been accused of using their wealth and influence to cover-up family indiscretions.

All of the Lennox money cannot keep them from suffering internal heartaches. In fact it more than likely may be the cause of many of the family's difficulties. Jack Lennox is so concerned with whether or not he will inherit the family business that he cannot focus on the problems occurring within his own family. Laurel's disappearance does not seem to affect him; rather Jack turns out to be the mastermind behind the kidnapping plot in an attempt to save his own skin. Jack uses money as a means of paying off those who could reveal his deepest secrets and ruin his chances of becoming president of the Lennox oil company. On the opposite end of the spectrum is Jack's mother, Sylvia. She appears to realize that the desire for money has fueled her family down a self-destructive path. Sylvia is willing to give up everything she has in order to bring Laurel safely home and only Sylvia is not worried about offending her ex-husband by telling him the truth of Laurel's kidnapping. The difference in their attitudes about money may come from age and experience. Sylvia has already lost and sacrificed a great deal in her life until she is finally able to recognize that it is her family, not their money that is important. Jack is still filled with greed and selfishness. He is unable to look past his desire for money to the eventual ramifications of his actions for his family.

Love Triangles

One family secret that can be difficult to hide and often bring about a lot of ruin is the existence of love triangles. There are several love triangles that surface during Lew Archer's investigation of Laurel's disappearance. Tom has cared for Laurel since they were children but Tom's cousin, Gloria, has loved Tom since she was a young girl. Tom would never have met Laurel if his mother had not been having affairs with both Captain Somerville and Jack Lennox. Even Lew Archer becomes involved with the Lennox women. He has a one-night stand with Elizabeth Somerville and his investigation of Laurel's disappearance seems to be fueled by a certain intimate feeling for her. When Archer finally sees her again at the end of the book, he kisses her forehead and the reader gets the impression that a relationship will eventually result between these two.

All of these intermingled relationships add up to one seriously complex family situation. Lew's investigation uncovers pretty much all of the Lennox family secrets that have



added up to Laurel's supposed disappearance. What is interesting about these love triangles is that they are never fully resolved. Indeed the ending of the book only serves to compound the issue further. Every implication is given that Laurel will somehow end up with Archer. Archer's role as private detective dissolves as soon as he sees Laurel's sleeping form and his personal feelings for her take over. Even Jack Lennox seems to approve of the match by suggesting that Archer look after Laurel for him. No more mention is made of Tom Russo or what will become of him. The love triangles continue to grow and will become another Lennox family secret.



Style

Point of View

The story is told in the first person. The story comes from Lew Archer's point of view and the reader is able to follow along with the private detective as he follows clues and questions numerous people regarding Laurel's disappearance. The use of the first-person allows the reader to become closely associated with the story and act as a shadow to Archer as he interacts with the Lennox family and all those connected with them. The close association between the reader and Archer allow the reader to form their own opinions about Laurel's disappearance. The reader becomes part of the story and desires to uncover the truth even before Archer. The use of first person makes the story move quickly and keeps the plot interesting for the reader.

Setting

The story takes place along the coast of California. The main place of interest appears to be Pacific Point where the oil spill took place and where Lew Archer first meets Laurel Russo. The Lennox family is all centered nearby in places like Bel Air and Seahorse Lane. Lew Archer continually makes repeated trips between towns as he follows the trail of clues surrounding Laurel's disappearance, so the locations cannot be separated by any great distance.

The setting continually changes from the wealthy homes and haunts of the Lennox family to the rundown and less affluent neighborhoods of the numerous people Archer must contact during his investigation. The difference in settings leads the reader to suspect those of the lower classes as being responsible for Laurel's kidnapping. However, the reader may also come to wonder if the Lennox family is not wholly involved in the situation and those of lesser means are merely a way to cover up more family secrets.

Another place that figures largely into the story is the spreading oil spill. As Archer flies over the Pacific on his return from Mazatlán the spill relatively small but as the story progresses the oil continues to spread along the coast. It covers everything in its path and even coats the windows of nearby houses, including Sylvia Lennox's home. The oil is like Archer's investigation because both continue to affect more and more people and become increasingly difficult to clean up.

Language and Meaning

For the most part the language of the story is straight forward and easily understood. The first few chapters are full of character introductions that the reader must remember and keep straight for the remainder of the book. The reader is overwhelmed with a large amount of background and setup information at the beginning of the book. However, all



of this information is important to the story and aides the reader as he tries to discover the truth about Laurel Russo's disappearance and the Lennox family secrets. As each chapter unfolds throughout the book the reader is reminded of things that happened earlier and able to begin to connect the puzzle pieces along with Lew Archer.

Ross Macdonald is a master craftsman as he slowly constructs his story. Each sentence seems to be carefully considered and placed in just the right spot in order to keep the reader's interest throughout the entire story. Although at times it seems as if Macdonald has put too much complex information into his story, he artfully manages to untangle all the webs he weaves and make sense of all the interconnecting storylines. Macdonald is able to pull the reader immediately into the story and keep the reader's attention page after page. The reader becomes Lew Archer's shadow following along as Archer works to connect the many clues to locate Laurel Russo.

Structure

The story is told in forty-two chapters. Each chapter is denoted by a number but no other identifying marks or titles. Most of the chapters are short, usually about five pages in length. All the chapters, even the longer ones, move very quickly and contain a large amount of information for the reader to process. The plot of the story gains in momentum with each successive chapter even though at times the reader may wonder if a conclusion will ever be reached.

Quotes

"He moved like a man lost in the world, lost in time." Chapter 1, p. 7

"I like it here. I hope the tide comes and gets me." Chapter 2, p. 10

"I caught an oblique glimpse of myself as a middle-aged man on the make." Chapter 3, p. 14

"They were one of those couples who couldn't pull together. The energy of their marriage passed back and forth between them like an alternating current that shocked and paralyzed." Chapter 5, p. 29

"His eyes reflected a facile sympathy, but it soon faded. There seemed to be a restless movement behind them, a constant turning in his head like an occulting light." Chapter 12, p. 66

"She moved back against me. Then she stood very still as if she had frightened herself. I put my hands on her." Chapter 13, p. 78

"There were violent noises somewhere in the back which sounded to my recently sensitized ears like somebody beating somebody else to death." Chapter 15, p. 83

"I didn't mean to make her fall when I pushed her. I didn't mean to die her. But the back of her head was all sticky" Chapter 17, p. 98

"I haven't been sleeping with him, if that's what you think." Chapter 17, p. 98

"The woman was long past her prime, her mind leached out by drinking, her body swollen." Chapter 18, p. 107

"I blame the men for this." Chapter 25, p. 148

"Neither the doctor nor the avgas man had killed Nelson Bagley, but both of them felt guilty in his death." Chapter 31, p. 189

Adaptations

Although Macdonald's Archer has appeared on both television and in the movies, neither medium has proved especially successful in portraying him.

Brian Keith played Archer in the TV series "Archer," and Peter Graves portrayed him in the made-for-TV movie of *The Underground Man*; but neither seemed quite right for the job. Paul Newman played Archer twice on the large screen, in *Harper* (1966) and later in *The Drowning Pool* (1976). Newman's performances probably came closer to capturing the diffident qualities of Macdonald's reluctant hero than did the television projects. Given the popularity of the Macdonald books it is odd that more films were not made.



Key Questions

1. As the title for this book suggests, many of Macdonald's Archer novels deal with dreamscapes and recall Freud's analysis with what he called "dream work." How is this novel especially psychological?
2. Sleeping Beauty also suggests something about awaking or reviving out of sleep as in the fairy tale. How do these ideas work in the fiction as well?
3. Using an oil spill against which to set the story places it in a contemporary world and recalls similar disasters occurring at the time of the novel.

What does the plot say about such events and what does it say about modern life?

4. The events of this novel go back to the previous war and involve a ship which was destroyed by fire. How does this event provide the background against which the current events of the novel play out?
5. Parents and children again form a nexus of the plot in Sleeping Beauty and raise all sorts of questions about loss of innocence and failures within families to safeguard the young from past sins.

Discuss how these ideas shape the narrative.

6. The question of infidelity works on several levels in this novel with friends, family, duty. What is the importance of this theme here?
7. How are women treated in this novel? How are women depicted in the Archer series?
8. Is there any progression or change throughout the Lew Archer series that you can see? Does the central character mature, see life differently from novel to novel?
9. What does the fairy tale reference in the title suggest for the development of the story? Are there other fairy tale elements in the fiction?
10. Why does Lew Archer never seem to become permanently involved with any of the characters in the series?

Is it more than just to keep him free to investigate another case later on?



Topics for Discussion

Why do you think Lew Archer becomes so involved in Laurel Russo's disappearance and refuses to hand the matter over to the police?

What do you make of Gloria Flaherty's description of her relationship with Tom Russo?

Using evidence from the book state whether you think Laurel was a willing accomplice or not to the kidnapping plan.

Is there a possibility that the entire Lennox family is involved in Laurel's abduction? Support your answer with evidence from the book.

How do you think Archer's one night stand with Elizabeth affects his involvement in Laurel's case?

How do you think the relationship between Lew and Laurel will develop now that she has been found? Alternatively, is the hint of a relationship between them only a figment of the reader's imagination?

Who did you think was the murderer throughout most of the book? Back up your suspicion with evidence from the book.

Literary Precedents

Along with John D. MacDonald whose novels are set primarily in South Florida, Ross Macdonald came to feature in his books an ongoing concern for the environment. Like the other MacDonald, Ross watched as a virtual paradise along the southern California coastline became increasingly despoiled by over-development driven by over-population and money which transformed the natural beauty of the state into a sprawling, urban nightmare. Like the "sleeping beauty" of the title of this early seventies Lew Archer tale, the environment perhaps only awaited a passing prince to awaken it to its former grandeur. John D. MacDonald had been railing against a similar destruction in South Florida by similar forces of development and greed. As environmental awareness became more prominent following the various political activities of the 1960s, both Ross and John D. increased their attention to environmental questions.

For Ross Macdonald treating the environment naturally coincided with his ongoing concerns for family histories and the impact of the past on the present. The Edenic qualities of the myth of California, as both the final frontier and the promise land, dovetailed nicely with such questions as ancestral sin being meted out in the present.



Related Titles

For similar treatment of the environment a cursory look at almost any the Travis McGee novels by John D. MacDonald or the more contemporary Florida writer Carl Hiaasen will provide some useful comparisons to the Archer stories. In addition, California has provided the original site for the development of the hard-boiled detective novel particularly those of Dashiell Hammett in Northern California and Raymond Chandler in the L.A. region.

An examination of how these two predecessors of MacDonald treated the same environment would yield valuable insights into how the later writer saw the same landscape. Both Walter Mosely and James Ellroy, among others, have also dealt with L.A. and environs in more recent crime novels.



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