

The Sirens of Titan Study Guide

The Sirens of Titan by Kurt Vonnegut

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Plot Summary

Sirens of Titan tells the story of the wide-ranging journey of Malachi Constant, the wealthiest man on Earth, from Earth to Mars to Mercury, back to Earth, and finally to Titan, a moon of Saturn. Along the way, Constant is seemingly manipulated and controlled by Winston Miles Rumfoord, an American aristocrat whose existence has been scattered across time and space after flying into a warped region of the solar system while on a space flight to Mars. Rumfoord builds up a small civilization on Mars and leads it into a suicidal mission to take over Earth as a prelude to introducing a new religion on Earth that teaches that God is completely indifferent to the welfare of humankind. He uses Constant as a symbolic figure in this faith, and humiliates his erstwhile wife, Beatrice, in a grand spectacle during which the two of them are exiled on Titan along with their son, Chrono. Once on Titan, they learn from an extraterrestrial called Salo that even Rumfoord has been manipulated in a much larger scheme with the seemingly small purpose of providing Salo with a missing part for his space ship.

Winston Niles Rumfoord, after having flown his private space ship into something called a chrono-synclastic infandibulum, has had his existence stretched out into a spiral through time and space. This causes him to materialize and dematerialize at different places in the solar system at regular intervals. One of these places is within his large estate in Newport, Rhode Island, where his wife, Beatrice Rumfoord, lives. These materializations are known about by the public, but nobody has ever been allowed to witness one until now. The wealthiest man in the world, the playboy Malachi Constant, has been invited to meet Rumfoord at Rumfoord's specific request.

Constant's meeting with Rumfoord is disturbing. Rumfoord, who can read minds as well as see into the past and future, tells Constant that he and Beatrice will have a child together on Mars, and that Constant will travel from Mars to Mercury, then back to Earth briefly before ending up on Titan. Rumfoord tells Constant that there are beautiful women on Titan and gives him a photograph of three of them. Constant finds them stunning. These are the sirens of Titan.

Unable to accept Rumfoord's predictions, Beatrice and Constant do everything in their power to prevent them from coming true. It is no use, however. Constant soon loses all his wealth as his previously astoundingly lucky investment strategy fails him. Constant has been following the bizarre method of his father, who founded the company Magnum Opus, which has made Constant so rich. His father, Noel, simply wrote out the letters of the first sentence in the Gideon Bible in pairs, then invested in companies that had the same initials. Upon his death, Constant continues the same method, which works for a time but leads him into ruin. Facing bankruptcy and numerous lawsuits, when two Martian recruiters offer him a position as an officer in the Martian army which is preparing to invade Earth, Constant jumps at the chance.

Beatrice also faces financial ruin and is forced to sell the estate. The two buyers are actually the same Martian recruiters that have convinced Constant to join them. They trick Beatrice onto their ship and leave for Mars. Neither Beatrice nor Constant is aware

the other is on board. Beatrice is kept locked away in her room on the journey and the swaggering Constant is told only that a beautiful woman is in the room. One night, Constant obtains the key to the room and enters it. He rapes Beatrice in the dark, startled to find afterward who she is. Thus the first of Rumfoord's predictions seems to be on its way to coming true.

On Mars, each of them have their memories erased and controlling antennas implanted. Constant is now called Unk, and is a soldier in the Martian Army. He is forced to take part in the execution of another soldier named Stony Stevenson, who, unbeknownst to Constant, is actually his own best friend. He has had his memory erased several times while on Mars because he seems to be able to remember to well. Beatrice, now called Bee, has a child, a boy named Chrono. She becomes a teacher.

As the Martian army is mobilized to invade Earth, Constant runs away to find Bee and Chrono. He does manage to find them, but is soon captured by the military police and taken to the spaceship that is to carry him and another soldier named Boaz to the fighting on Earth. As they are about to take off, Rumfoord reveals himself to them. It is learned that Rumfoord is the mastermind behind the invasion. He tells Constant the story of how he came to be on Mars and the circumstances of Bee's pregnancy and Chrono's birth. Constant, whose memory has been erased, does not realize that the story is about himself.

The Martian invasion is a joke. The forces are scattered over the globe and they are woefully under armed. They are slaughtered by the Earthlings, who begin to feel shameful for what they have done. Into this culture of shame, Rumfoord introduces his new religion.

Meanwhile on Mars, the ship takes off carrying only Boaz and Constant and a large supply of provisions. It has not been programmed to go to Earth, however. Instead it delivers them to the deep caves of Mercury, where they live in isolation for three years until Constant discovers the secret to tricking the ship's navigation system into flying him out of the caves. Boaz chooses to stay behind on Mercury, having found purpose in caring for the simple creatures that live in the caves.

Constant's ship returns him to Earth. He finds that he is expected. While he was in the caves in Mercury, Rumfoord has built up his new religion on Earth, one that teaches that God is indifferent to the fate of humankind, and that luck is not an actual force of nature or the hand of God. The religion also makes a negative example of Malachi Constant as a symbol of someone who imagined he had good luck and did nothing good with his fortune. Rumfoord has prophesied the return of Constant to Earth, calling him the Space Wanderer. Constant lands in a churchyard and is immediately hailed as the promised Space Wanderer. He is carried to the Rumfoord estate just as Rumfoord is about to materialize again.

Rumfoord has prepared a grand spectacle for the Space Wanderer and huge crowds await his arrival. Outside the estate, Bee and Chrono have become souvenir sellers catering to the religious crowd. Rumfoord brings Constant, Bee and Chrono together

before the crowd and humiliates them revealing to all their true identities. He immediately instructs them to enter a spacecraft on a high column at the estate which will exile them, which they do. Before they go, Rumfoord deals one final blow to Constant by telling him the truth about the execution of Stony Stevenson, who Constant had hoped was still alive somewhere. It was Constant himself who killed Stony, Rumfoord tells him.

The three of them are flown in the ship to Titan, an inhabitable moon of Saturn. There they meet Rumfoord again, who is permanently materialized on Titan, where he has built a palace on a large sea. Titan is also inhabited by a creature named Salo, a machine whose ship has been marooned there for 200,000 years. Rumfoord reveals to them that all of human history has been directed by Salo's people on the planet Tralfamadore, who are able to cast their influence across vast distances. The primary purpose of this direction is to produce a single, small metal replacement part for Salo's space ship. This part has now been delivered. It is in the form of Chrono's good luck piece, a smooth scrap of metal he picked up as a child on Mars.

Rumfoord then disappears, the center of his existence having moved on to a different place in the universe. Salo, who has come to love Rumfoord, dismantles himself in sorrow. Beatrice moves into the palace, spending her last days writing. Chrono takes to the woods of Titan, going to live with the giant Titanic bluebirds that soar in the skies. There are no other humans on Titan. The beautiful women in the picture Rumfoord gave Constant at the beginning of the story turn out to be sculptures made by Salo as he whiled away the millennia waiting for the replacement part.

Constant lives peacefully on the land, occasionally visiting Beatrice in the palace. He reassembles Salo, who uses the replacement part to repair his ship. When Beatrice finally dies, Salo offers to return Constant to Earth. Constant accepts. Salo takes him to a bus stop in Indianapolis on a cold winter night. Before letting him go, Salo hypnotizes Constant so that when he is about to die he will imagine he is reunited with his friend Stony. Constant sits down in the bus stop and never gets up again. He freezes to death, but before he dies, he sees Stony coming to take him to paradise.

Between Timid and Timbuktu

Between Timid and Timbuktu Summary

Sirens of Titan tells the story of the wide-ranging journey of Malachi Constant, the wealthiest man on Earth, from Earth to Mars to Mercury, back to Earth, and finally to Titan, a moon of Saturn. Along the way, Constant is seemingly manipulated and controlled by Winston Miles Rumfoord, an American aristocrat whose existence has been scattered across time and space after flying into a warped region of the solar system while on a space flight to Mars. Rumfoord builds up a small civilization on Mars and leads it into a suicidal mission to take over Earth as a prelude to introducing a new religion on Earth that teaches that God is completely indifferent to the welfare of humankind. He uses Constant as a symbolic figure in this faith, and humiliates his erstwhile wife, Beatrice, in a grand spectacle during which the two of them are exiled on Titan along with their son, Chrono. Once on Titan, they learn from an extraterrestrial called Salo that even Rumfoord has been manipulated in a much larger scheme with the seemingly small purpose of providing Salo with a missing part for his space ship.

The narrator introduces the story by looking back at the events that he will describe. The time he is describing is said to be the period called the "Nightmare Ages", "between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression" (p. 7).

A crowd has gathered outside the high walls surrounding the Rumfoord Estate in Newport, Rhode Island. They have gathered because there is to be a "materialization".

The materializations have been taking place for nine years, on a precise schedule. Winston Niles Rumfoord and his dog, Kazak, materialize inside the estate at these intervals, witnessed only by Mrs. Beatrice Rumfoord and her servants. Following each materialization, Mrs. Rumfoord posts a notice outside the high walls affirming that the materialization took place, but giving no details. Despite numerous entreaties, nobody has ever been allowed to enter the estate to witness one of these materializations.

A few minutes before the materialization is to take place, the police guarding the walls tell the crowd that it already has taken place outside the walls and a few blocks away. This sends the crowd running off, and is meant to clear the way for a limousine, which is approaching the tiny single door in the wall.

The limousine pulls up and Malachi Constant, the richest man in the country, steps out, wearing a disguise. He has been invited, at the express wish of Winston Rumfoord, to witness the materialization.

Here the narrator inserts a short account of the cause of these materializations. While flying his personal spaceship to Mars, Rumfoord, along with his dog, flew his craft into something called a chrono-synclastic infundibulum, a type of warp region of space. It scattered their existence across both time and space. Ever since, Rumfoord and his dog



have materialized in different parts of the solar system at regular intervals. Existing outside of time and space, Rumfoord can now see into the past and the future and can read minds.

Constant lets himself into the estate using the key furnished with his invitation. The invitation, sent by Beatrice, had said that Rumfoord knew Constant well, having met him on Titan. Constant has never been to Titan or met Rumfoord before.

He finds the grounds overgrown, with just one mown path toward the large house. He follows the path until it forks to go around a large, dry fountain. Rather than choose a path, Constant climbs over the fountain itself.

He is let into the house by an elderly butler and is greeted by Rumfoord. Constant, who up to now has always felt superior to anyone he has met, for the first time feels inferior to someone. He begins to feel panicky and tries to assure himself of his own greatness. Rumfoord informs him that he can read his mind.

Rumfoord leads Constant through the house. They pass a large portrait of a girl dressed in white standing with a white pony. Rumfoord explains it is a portrait of his wife as a girl. Rumfoord takes him to a tiny sitting room with just two chairs. They are seated.

Rumfoord tells Constant that his wife has not been to see him since the first time he materialized. After he had told her something about the future, she had become very upset. Rumfoord says she became upset when he told her that she and Constant were going to be married on Mars and have a child. Constant has never met Mrs. Rumfoord and has never been to Mars.

The narration pauses here for a further description of the aristocratic Rumfoord compared with the similarly wealthy but relatively classless Constant.

Constant is unsure how to respond to Rumfoord's announcement about his future. Rumfoord continues, saying that Mars is not the only place he will visit. He will visit Mars, Mercury, and then Earth again before eventually ending up on Titan.

Again, the narration digresses and describes the status of space flight at the time of the events. Once the chrono-synclastic infundibula were discovered, attempts to send men into space had stopped abruptly. The last spacecraft built was one called The Whale, built by a company owned by Constant.

The discovery of the chrono-synclastic infundibula has given rise to a series of religious movements that imagine them as God's way of humbling humankind, comparing the grasping for space to the story of the tower of Babel.

Returning to the conversation between the two men, Constant asks why he will be traveling to all these places in order to get to Titan. Rumfoord does not answer him directly, but assures him he will be going. He tells Constant that the most beautiful women in the world live on Titan. He gives Constant a photograph of three extremely

beautiful women. Constant is stunned. Rumfoord continues and tells Constance that he and Beatrice will have a son, named Chrono.

Constant is confused and unsure. Finally, Rumfoord tells him that his son, Chrono, will pick up a small piece of metal on Mars and keep it as a good luck piece. This piece of metal is very important, Rumfoord tells him. As he is talking, Rumfoord begins to gradually vanish, starting at his fingertips and ending at his grin. "See you on Titan," the grin says to Constant (p. 39).

After Rumfoord disappears, Constant meets Beatrice Rumfoord on his way out, although she tries to avoid him. She informs Rumfoord that her husband's visits make her "ill", and that she considers him to be insane because of his improbable predictions. Constant mentions that it is perhaps not so improbable to predict that he would travel through space, since he owns a large spacecraft. Beatrice is startled by this news.

Constant puts his disguise back on and leaves the estate. Outside, people wanting to know what he has seen and what Rumfoord has told him mob his limousine. The limousine moves through the crowd and rushes off.

Between Timid and Timbuktu Analysis

Vonnegut begins the book with a rather long chapter that provides a great deal of information about the upcoming story. Indeed, Rumfoord reveals nearly the entire plot to Constant in the form of a prediction. Vonnegut sets up a central theme of irony that will run through the entire book by indicating that the characters of Beatrice and Constant will be trying hard to avoid living out the plot that Rumfoord has revealed to them. They will, of course, eventually have the exact experiences that Rumfoord describes.

Vonnegut refers to the traditional meaning of Constant's first name, Malachi. The name means "faithful messenger", and it is suggested that Constant will fulfill this namesake in some way. When he mentions his name's meaning to Rumfoord, Rumfoord is astonished to hear him refer to a message and quizzes him on it briefly. Rumfoord is undoubtedly thinking of the message carried by Salo, the extraterrestrial introduced later in the story. Constant's destiny and indeed the history and destiny of all humans are related to this message.

Vonnegut also includes a caricature of organized evangelical religion in the first chapter. Later, Rumfoord will exploit the society's hunger for such religions to manipulate (or fulfill) Constant's destiny.

Cheers in the Wirehouse

Cheers in the Wirehouse Summary

Constant rushes away from the crowd in the limousine to a helicopter. On the way, he recounts to himself the predictions that Rumfoord made. The entire experience, which had seemed like a dream, now hits home and he breaks out in a sweat. To this point, Constant had always held a vague belief that his tremendous luck in growing exceedingly wealthy had been because somebody "up there" was watching out for him. He now begins to actually wonder if his life is being watched and actually controlled by some unseen force.

Fifty-nine days later, Rumfoord and Kazak materialize at the Rumfoord estate again. In the meantime, Beatrice and Constant have done everything they can think of to avoid the outcome predicted by Rumfoord at his previous visit. Constant has sold all his interest in the company that owns The Whale spacecraft and purchased a company called MoonMist Tobacco instead. Beatrice, on the other hand, made a large investment in the company that owns The Whale so that she might have control over its use.

Constant begins sending crude, offensive letters to Beatrice meant to forestall any romantic involvement. Beatrice takes to carrying a cyanide capsule should she ever find herself in close proximity to Constant. The stock market has crashed since Rumfoord's last materialization, wiping out Beatrice's fortune. Constant, a few days after returning to his home in Hollywood following his meeting with Rumfoord, threw an enormous party that is only now ending, over fifty days later.

A man named Koradubian has written a book claiming that he has spoken with Rumfoord and learned the secrets of the future out to the year Ten Million A.D. Rumfoord amused by the hoax book as he reads it in his study at the Rumfoord Estate during his present materialization. Beatrice is with him, and she is furious.

Meanwhile, in California, Constant awakes from a drunken sleep to the sound of a persistently ringing telephone. He sits up and listens as a woman he does not recognize answers the phone. She tells Constant that the caller is Ransom K. Fern, the president of his company, Magnum Opus. Constant tells her to say he will call Fern back, but the woman relays that Fern says he is quitting because Constant is broke.

In Newport, Beatrice is outraged that Rumfoord did not warn her of her impending financial disaster. Rumfoord explains that his not telling her was as much of the fabric of history as the event itself. He does not control the future, he says, he can only see it. It is like a roller coaster that he knows the shape of, but cannot get off. He confirms to her that Constant is part of her destiny.

Beatrice insists on knowing how they will come to be sent to Mars together, hoping to avoid it if possible. Rumfoord tells her that the President of the United States will shortly



announce a new age of space exploration. Beatrice and Constant will both be present at a re-christening of *The Whale*, which will be fired off mistakenly with them aboard. The narrator interjects at this point to say that Rumfoord is lying. Part of what he says is true, however. The President does announce a new age of space exploration. Part of his speech is inserted in the text.

Constant hangs up the phone with Fern and turns to the woman at his home. He does not recognize her. He asks where everyone has gone. He has no recollection of the past several days.

The woman tells him he threw everyone out after a long crying fit during which he had bemoaned his unhappy childhood. He gave every woman at the party an oil well, the woman tells him, then threw everyone out but her. Then they flew to Mexico, got married, and returned home. The woman is alarmed to learn that Constant is now broke, and threatens to have her boyfriend kill him if he doesn't take care of her.

Back in Newport, Beatrice is indignant. She tells Rumfoord she refuses to ride the "roller coaster" he describes. Rumfoord tries to comfort her by telling her that despite her distaste for his predictions, she will actually be quite happy in the end. As he speaks to her, he begins to dematerialize. He asks her to imagine the kind of roller coaster he himself is on, and promises to explain to her on Titan how he has been used and why. Kazak comes running into the house, and as he tries to run across the smooth floor, both he and Rumfoord disappear.

Cheers in the Wirehouse Analysis

Vonnegut's small joke on the reader begins in this chapter as Beatrice and Constant try to outwit their destiny by moving in what they imagine is the opposite direction. Of course their "destiny" is controlled entirely by the author, so the characters truly are, in a way, struggling against an unseen force that controls their fictional lives. The mechanics of Beatrice and Constant's downfalls are set in motion as well, which will ultimately lead to their coming together on their way to Mars.

The events in this chapter take place simultaneously, which Vonnegut indicates using a back-and-forth technique of interspersing the action. Dealing as it does with the nature of time, space, and the connection of seemingly disparate events, that the crucial turns for the characters in the story occur at the same moment in time appear significant. As the story plays out, it becomes clear that the lives of not only Beatrice and Constant are being controlled, but the entirety of humankind is being controlled toward a definite purpose. Rumfoord hints at the existence of this purpose in his final words to Beatrice before disappearing. He also suggests that the purpose is "disgustingly paltry" (p. 64).

United Hotcake Preferred

United Hotcake Preferred Summary

The headquarters of Magnum Opus, Inc in Los Angeles is described. Magnum Opus, founded by Malachi Constant's father, Noel, occupies the top three floors of the thirty-one story building. The others are leased out to companies that it controls. Malachi Constant approaches the heliport on the roof of the building by helicopter.

He has come to meet with Ransom K. Fern, the president of the company. Fern waits in Constant's office at the top of the building. The office has grass for a carpet and levitating furniture. Fern is a very thin man, dressed all in black. He is wearing his coat and hat. He is standing looking out the window when Constant enters. He is surprised by the floating furniture, which Fern tells him is made by a company that Constant told him to buy.

Fern is described as a watchful man who reads two books a day but is none the wiser when it comes to understanding human nature. He had worked for Constant's father as well as for Constant and is described as superior to both of them in every way except one. Both Noel and Malachi Constant seem to have amazing luck. Constant's luck seems to have run out, however.

Looking at the floating furniture, Constant is impressed. He imagines out loud that the furniture should sell well and that the company was a sound investment. Fern responds sarcastically that the furniture is virtually useless, as it is impossible to sit in one of the chairs without falling out, and the floating desk moves around the room.

Acquiring the company is the latest in a string of poor decisions made by Constant that have led to the downfall of his company. Fern informs him that all the employees have been let go, and that he and Constant are the only two left in the building. The company is completely wiped out.

The narrator embarks on a history of the company Magnum Opus. It is started by Noel Constant, a traveling cookware salesman from Massachusetts. One day, while staying in a tiny hotel room in Los Angeles, Noel Constant decides to begin speculating in the stock market. For his initial capital, he has some \$8,000 in an inheritance from his father. Within a year, he has made a fortune of over a million dollars. His investment technique is simple. He takes a copy of the Gideon Bible left in his room and writes out the first sentence in two-letter pairs, such as I.N., T.H., E.B., E.G., I.N., N.I., N.G., and so on. Then he looks for companies with these initials and buys stock in them. The first stock he buys is International Nitrate. Somehow this method results in Noel Constant buying stocks just as they are about to skyrocket. Other investors imagine he must have a network of industrial spies, not imagining that he is simply relying on luck.

Noel Constant seldom leaves his small hotel room. His only visitor is a maid he pays to spend the night with him occasionally. After two years of investing, Noel Constant is very rich. One day he receives a visit from a man from the IRS. It is Ransom K. Fern. Fern announces that he has quit his job with the Internal Revenue Service and intends to work for Constant. Fern ascertains that Constant knows nothing about the companies he buys, but cannot determine how Constant makes such shrewd decisions.

Fern convinces him that he could make even more money taking Fern's advice and building a large corporate bureaucracy that will protect his investments from too much scrutiny. Constant agrees, and allows Fern to build the large Magnum Opus headquarters. He himself refuses to leave the small hotel room.

The narrator refers to two books on the subject of the rise of Magnum Opus. He relates how the maid that Constant paid to stay with him became pregnant, after which Noel married her, gave her a mansion and a million dollars, and asked her to continue to visit him but not to bring the child. The child is Malachi Constant.

Noel Constant reveals his investment technique to nobody except Malachi, on the occasion of his twenty-first birthday. Inviting Malachi to his hotel room, he tells him that when he dies and Malachi takes over, he is to look at a chronological list of his recent investments and determine where in the Bible to start up again. Their meeting is awkward, as it is the only time father and son have ever met.

Malachi Constant takes over the business and continues with the same success for five years before the current downfall. Constant is still incredulous that everything is gone. Fern tells him that indeed, everything is gone. Furthermore, MoonMist Cigarettes, one of his recent acquisitions, have been found to cause sterility and Constant is facing the possibility of numerous lawsuits.

Fern tells Constant that he is leaving, but that he has one more duty to perform. He has a letter written by Constant's father that he was instructed to give to Malachi if his luck should ever go bad. He has placed the letter under the pillow of the bed in the small hotel room where his father lived until his death, according to his father's instructions.

The hotel room is in the Wilburhampton Hotel, across the street from the Magnum Opus building. In the lounge of the Wilburhampton two slightly strange people sit at the bar, trying different drinks and checking their watches regularly. They have introduced themselves to the bartender as retired schoolteachers, a man and a woman named George M. Helmholtz and Roberta Wiley. In fact, they are both men in disguise. They are actually Martian army operatives, lying in wait for Constant as their spacecraft hovers high above.

Constant enters the hotel and is noted by the two Martian agents, one of whom presses a button on his watch, starting a timer. The agents have no intention of using force to take him to Mars. They are usually able to convince their recruits into coming with them by explaining that their help is needed in a "government project". They have pressed thousands of people from Earth into service on Mars. Once on Mars, the new recruits'



memories are usually erased and radio antennas installed in their heads to control them. Those who show the right temperament and loyalty to Mars do not have the antennas implanted. The two agents in the bar are two of these types.

Constant makes his way to the small room that had been his father's and finds the letter. In it, his father pleads with him to try to find out if there has been any reason for his incredible luck or if it was actually just as random and "crazy" as it appeared to him. He also gives the advice to Constant that if he is broke and someone comes along with a crazy proposition, that he should take it. It is just as he finishes the letter that Helmholtz and Wiley enter the room. Helmholtz announces that Mars is inhabited and has a large city and army, and that they are offering Constant a position as a lieutenant colonel in the Martian army. The next day, Malachi Constant's helicopter is found crashed in the desert, with no sign of Constant.

A few days later, Beatrice Rumfoord sits in her home in Newport watching on television the ceremonies before the firing of the spacecraft The Whale, which has been re-christened The Rumfoord. She sits smugly, assured that she has proven her husband's prediction wrong. She is also smug because she has come up with a scheme to keep herself afloat financially by selling tickets to her husband's materializations. She sits with two of the mortgage holders of the estate, watching the launch of the spaceship.

The two mortgage holders are actually Helmholtz and Wiley. Helmholtz asks Beatrice to tell them about the outbuildings of the estate, which she begins to do. Helmholtz asks her about the new metal building, which puzzles Beatrice. There is no new metal building, she tells them, but they insist there is. Wiley whispers that to her that it looked like a flying saucer.

United Hotcake Preferred Analysis

The first step in Constant and Beatrice's parallel journey is taken in this chapter when they are captured by the Martians. Beatrice is captured by being fooled, while Constant, after having read the advice of his father, is taking a wild chance, his desperation fueled by his financial downfall.

Noel Constant's unusual investment technique is revealed. By following the letters of the Bible, he becomes amazingly rich. By following the same technique, his son continues to grow wealthy, but then his "luck" changes. When the real purpose of the history of mankind is revealed at the end of the story, it becomes clear that Noel Constant's rise to wealth is part of a larger plan, suggesting that as he suspected, there was more to his success than just luck. The first sentences of the Bible are actually like a program that he was always intended to follow, raising the possibility that the rise of Christianity itself has been nothing more than a lead-up to Constant's fortune.

Vonnegut uses a technique in this chapter that he will return to in following chapters. He has characters reappear without immediately identifying them to the reader. In this case, it is the Martian agents Helmholtz and Wiley, who are first introduced as themselves at

the Wilburhampton Hotel and then later reappear as the "mortgage-holders" of the Rumfoord estate. Vonnegut surprises the reader by revealing that they are the same agents that captured Constant. In the next chapter, Vonnegut introduces the character of Unk, who is soon identified as Constant.

Tent Rentals

Tent Rentals Summary

A division of the Martian Infantry is marching to the sounds of a snare drum broadcast directly into their brains via implanted antennas. One of them is a well-built but slow soldier named Unk. They form a square around a red-haired soldier who has been chained to a stake. They march in unison, come to attention in unison, and stand at ease in unison, all controlled by the antennas in their heads.

The man at the stake is looking for Unk, but cannot see his face in the crowd of soldiers. Unk does not recognize the man, however. He has just come from the hospital where his memory has been erased. He has been retrained and told he is an excellent soldier. His antenna has been explained to him. It will give him a shot of pain whenever he is doing or thinking something wrong. His mind goes blank as the antenna brings him to attention and makes him shoulder his rifle.

Unk begins to think in between these actions. The moon and the sky seem wrong to him, although he cannot think why. Unk's platoon leader, Sergeant Brackman, comes up to Unk and orders him to go up to the man at the stake and strangle him until he is dead. Having been told to always obey a direct order or suffer the extreme pain induced by the antenna, Unk does what he is told.

Unk hesitates as he reaches the man. He feels a small tinge of pain from the antenna and puts his hands to the man's throat. The man is being forced to keep silent by the antenna in his own head, but he willfully manages to say a few words to Unk. "Blue stone," he says. "Barrack twelve . . . letter," he gasps (p. 104).

The pain wells again in Unk's brain, and he strangles the man to death. He then turns about and marches back to his place, to the approval of his sergeant. Then everyone marches away in unison, "like marionettes".

Tent Rentals Analysis

This short but dramatic chapter introduces Constant's new identity, "Unk". How he came to this point will be revealed later in the story. The sinister controlling antennas are first described in this chapter in an ironic twist on the popular notion of Martians with antennas on their heads.

The man at the stake is later learned to be Stony Stevenson, Constant's best friend on Mars. Through mind control and memory erasure, Constant is unaware that he is strangling his friend and later is unaware that he has even killed anyone. This fact is known by Rumfoord, however, who will use it to shock Constant at a key moment.

Letter from an Unknown Hero

Letter from an Unknown Hero Summary

Unk's unit marches back to its barracks. Flying outside the barracks is the US flag. Other nations' flags fly outside other barracks, signifying the countries that each unit will attack and conquer in the upcoming invasion of Earth.

Unk's antenna lets him relax, and he notices the number on his barracks building. The words of the man he has just killed come back to him, about barrack twelve and a blue stone. Once inside his barracks, Unk sets about cleaning his rifle, which he finds he still knows how to do, and which he enjoys. His rifle is a German Mauser, from around the time of the Spanish American War. Unk's squad mates also sit quietly, cleaning their guns. Nobody speaks about the execution.

As he works, Unk daydreams about a warm place with only one slow-moving moon. A vision of three beautiful women enters his mind. One of them is holding a cigarette, and Unk finds he knows the brand of the cigarette: MoonMist. "Sell MoonMist", he says out loud, without knowing why. This attracts the attention of the soldier next to him, Private Boaz. Boaz asks Unk what he had said.

Boaz looks out of place among the other soldiers. Although he is only a private, his uniform is nicer and better tailored than the others. He again asks Unk what he said. Unk repeats himself, still not knowing why. Boaz is persistent and quizzes Unk on what he means. Boaz asks Unk if he can remember him. Unk has a nagging feeling that he might know something about Boaz, but cannot recall it. Boaz informs him that the two of them are friends and training partners. Unk has had this memory erased during his recent visit to the hospital. Boaz encourages him to try to remember everything he can from before the visit. Then Unk's head is filled with splitting pain. He blacks out.

When he awakes, Boaz is wiping his forehead and the other soldiers are looking at him as if he has done something stupid. Sergeant Brackman arrives and asks what has happened. Boaz explains that he was trying to get Unk to remember, and Brackman chastises Unk for it. Then Brackman turns to Boaz. Unk gets the feeling that he should watch their interaction.

Brackman tells Boaz he should not have been teasing Unk that way, and gives him a week's latrine duty. Boaz asks if he really means to give him a full week, and Unk notices a twinge of pain play on Brackman's face. Brackman reduces the punishment to a day, but he shows he has received a pain shock again. He tells Boaz "never mind".

The company commander Captain Burch enters the barracks and Boaz calls attention. The antennas bring all the soldiers to attention except Boaz, who gets up slowly and stands with a slight leer. The captain approaches Boaz to speak to him about it, but as soon as he opens his mouth, he receives a shock of pain. As Boaz watches, the captain

does an about face and marches out of the barracks to the sound of a snare drum in his head.

It is revealed that Boaz is one of the true commanders of the army. He has no antenna in his head, and he carries a small device in his pocket that can control those with antennas. Stony Stevenson, the man strangled by Unk, had been one of the real commanders. Stony had begun to help Unk try to remember and to think and had been executed for it, after being humiliated by having an antenna installed in his own head.

Boaz keeps the other soldiers standing at attention while he gloats to himself about his freedom. He approaches Unk, for whom he seems to have contempt. Boaz tells the blank-minded Unk that he is relying on him to show him how to have a good time once they get to Earth. Boaz does not know all the details of Unk's life as Malachi Constant, but knows enough to imagine that he was once a very powerful man on Earth.

Boaz enjoys his gloating, but soon begins to brood. He is uncertain why he has been given the privilege he has, or who is in command of the real commanders. He returns to his bunk, stands at attention, then pushes a button on the controller and relaxes as the other men relax.

Sergeant Brackman announces a recreation period and the men go outside to play a game called German batball. Unk sneaks off to barrack twelve. It is a Martian Imperial Commando barrack, and it is empty. The commandos have gone off on a mission to the Moon of Earth to make the first strike in the war against the Earth.

Unk finds a blue rock behind the barrack and under it a capsule containing a long handwritten letter. The letter is addressed to Unk. In it are listed several facts that the author has learned about Unk, such as that he is on Mars and is part of the Martian Army which will be used to invade Earth. The antennas are explained, as is the fact that Boaz has a controller that can cause pain. The writer tells Unk not to fear the pain, but to use it to tell when he is thinking or asking important things. There is other information in the letter, various things the author has learned. Unk, having no real memory of his own, devours the information. The letter tells Unk that his best friend is Stony Stevenson, who has helped him regain some of his memories.

The letter also informs Unk that the real person in charge of Mars is a "big, genial, smiling, yodeling man who always had a big dog with him" (p. 129). This man appears about every one hundred days to speak with the real commanders. Finally, the letter says that Unk has a mate and a child. The mate's name is Bee, and she lives on Mars in the city of Phoebe, where she is a teacher. His child is named Chrono, and he is in school in Phoebe.

Reaching the end of the letter, Unk turns the page to look at the signature. The letter is signed in large letters "UNK".

Unk is not aware that the man he has killed is Stony. He returns to the barracks and finds the other soldiers sharpening their knives and bayonets. The order has come that

they will soon depart for the invasion of Earth. The commando force has already started giving the cities of Earth a "taste of hell".

Letter from an Unknown Hero Analysis

The nature of the mind-controlled Martian Army is described in this chapter. It is revealed further that the ruler of the army and probably of Mars itself is Winston Rumfoord, who appears on the planet every 111 days.

Boaz, who will play a critical role in the next chapters, is introduced in this chapter. Boaz has the closest thing to freedom that a person on Mars can attain, it seems, yet he is still dependent on Unk in a way, who, it will be shown, is perhaps the most important person on the planet to Rumfoord.

Unk battles against the mind control of the pain-inflicting antenna in his head as random memories pop into his mind, including the image that Rumfoord gave him on Earth of the three beautiful women. This image seems to be a touchstone for Unk, drawing him back into his true memories and guiding him forward.

Rumfoord's prediction would seem to have come true in part when Unk learns from his self-addressed letter that he has a wife and child, although Unk has forgotten the prediction after having his memory erased. Beatrice, or Bee as she is called on Mars, will also have forgotten the prediction, explaining perhaps why Rumfoord told them his prediction in the first place.

The Martian invasion will end up in catastrophe in a darkly humorous fashion when the poorly organized and under-armed forces try to take over the Earth. This is by Rumfoord's design, and a hint at this plan is given when Vonnegut describes the types of weapons the soldiers are preparing to use. They have knives, bayonets, and rifles from the turn of the nineteenth century. They will be battling against the nuclear weapons of Earth.

A Deserter in Time of War

A Deserter in Time of War Summary

Unk's company begins its six-mile march to the place where the invasion fleet of spaceships will depart. Along the way, they pass through Phoebe, the sole city on Mars, which exists solely to provide materials for the invasion. Unk is carrying a large mortar weapon with Boaz, who marches behind him. Boaz tells Unk that he has arranged for them to fly on a two-man non-combat mother ship loaded with provisions like candy, soft drinks, games, and other items. He asks Unk if he doesn't agree that it is a lucky assignment. Unk agrees that it is lucky as he casually drops a live grenade into a sewer as they pass.

The grenade explodes, sending all the soldiers flying to the ground. Boaz lifts his head and sees that all is clear, and uses his control to make the other soldiers in his company stand up again. He discovers that Unk has disappeared. He has run off to find his wife and son.

Here the narration exposit on several aspects of the story that will support the following events. Chrono, it is explained, is eight years old. He is named after the name of the Martian month in which he was born. There are twenty-one months in the Martian calendar, twelve the same as those on Earth, with the months Winston, Niles, Rumfoord, Kazak, Newport, Chrono, Synclastic, Infundibulum and Salo added.

The month of Salo, it is explained, is named after a creature from another galaxy that Rumfoord knew from Titan. Salo had been forced to land on Titan while carrying a message from his home planet and was waiting for a replacement part. He has been waiting for the part for two hundred thousand years. Salo's spaceship, the narrator says, is powered by something called the Universal Will To Become, or UWTB for short. This is also the force powering the industry on Mars. This force can create being from nothingness.

Unk's son, Chrono, is an excellent German batball player. The game is something like baseball, and a great importance is placed on the game. Chrono is called to bat at his school playground as Unk watches, crouched behind a large boulder. The children and teachers appear terrified of Chrono as he prepares to strike the ball.

Chrono hits the ball into the field. The other children make a show of running after it and trying to get him out, but they do not really try. They are bedazzled by Chrono, and find glory themselves in glorifying him. Chrono slides into home plate and kisses his good luck piece.

The good luck piece is a small piece of metal strap with two holes in it. Chrono picked it up from a factory floor on a field trip the children took. He keeps it with him constantly.



Unk pulls all his insignia off his uniform and walks with authority into the schoolyard. Marching up to the teacher, he tells her he must interview Chrono on official business. The teacher is fooled, and allows him to use her own office.

Chrono is resistant and hostile. Unk tells him he is his father, but Chrono is unmoved. Unk tells him he intends to take him away with him, away from Mars. Chrono tells him to "go to hell".

This hurts Unk. He is troubled by memories of his own childhood imagining his absent father. He begins to cry, and Chrono runs out of the room.

Bee is an instructor in something called Schliemann Breathing. This is a technique for surviving in poisonous atmospheres. Inhabitants must take a kind of pill, popularly called a "goofball", and also plug their noses and ears and keep their mouths shut. Bee has been to the hospital recently after showing her supervisor a poem she had written. She has had her memory erased.

Bee is instructing a group of new recruits in the breathing technique when Unk knocks at the door of her classroom. He says he has a message for her. He whispers the message to her, that he is the father of Chrono, and that he intends to find a way for the three of them and his friend to escape from Mars.

Voices are heard from the hallway of people looking for Unk. Handing Bee a grenade, Unk asks her to hide it for him, then takes his place among the recruits, pretending to be another student. Bee calmly returns to her desk. She looks at Unk as he turns blue green from holding his breath. She does not doubt that he is Chrono's father, but finds no significance in the fact. She daydreams about a little girl dressed all in white. She wonders who the little girl is. Unk collapses.

Unk wakes up in a bunk on a space ship. The door to the ship is open, and he sees he is still on the ground. Outside, he sees rows and rows of other ships taking off in waves. Unk hears a dog barking. The large dog runs up to the open door and growls at Unk. It is Kazak. Rumfoord approaches behind the dog.

Rumfoord asks in a friendly voice if Unk recognizes him. Unk guesses that the friendly man might be Stony. Rumfoord laughs at this and says he wishes he were. The rest of Unk's regiment takes off in their ships, leaving him behind. Unk asks the man's name, but Rumfoord tells him that names do not matter.

Rumfoord tells Unk a story. He says it is a sad love story. It is about a man who volunteers for the Army of Mars and is on his way to the planet in a spaceship. He has been given a command position, and is enjoying himself bossing the other recruits around. He has the run of the ship except for one locked room, which he is told holds the most beautiful woman ever to be brought to Mars. Any man who sees her is sure to fall in love with her, he is told, which would be unsuitable for an officer in the army. The man tries to impress the others by bragging about his romantic conquests, but this causes them to lose respect for him. He decides to regain their respect by conquering the woman in the locked room.

One night during a drinking party, someone slips the man the key to the room. Drunk, he enters and has sex with the terrified and partly sedated woman in the darkness. Afterward, he feels terrible, Rumfoord says. He turns on the light and discovers it is a woman he knows, a woman that someone once told him he would have a child with.

Once on Mars, the man learns that he is about to have his memory erased. In preparation, he writes himself a letter about all the things he does not want to forget. He writes about the woman, Rumfoord tells him. Afterward, he tries to win her love, but she has no recollection of him. He tries several times, but is constantly taken back to have his memory erased, as is the woman. Rumfoord tells him that this man is the only man on Mars to ever write a philosophy, and the woman is the only one to ever write a poem.

Boaz approaches the ship. He has been out looking for Unk and is concerned that the rest of the regiment has already gone. Rumfoord directs him to get into the ship and points out the single "ON" button that will start its journey. Just before shutting the door of the craft, Rumfoord adds an epilogue to the story he has told Unk. He tells him that the woman on the space ship had been married for many years, but that she was still a virgin. He asks Unk if he doesn't agree that it was a pretty good joke on her husband.

A Deserter in Time of War Analysis

The characters of Bee, who is actually Beatrice Rumfoord, and Chrono, her son with Constant, are introduced in this chapter. Constant displays the apparent independence that has made him a discipline problem. Of course once it is learned later in the story that all of the actions of not only Constant but also Rumfoord and every other person in history have been dictated toward a specific purpose, the question of Constant's independence becomes problematic.

In a scene that parallels Constant's first meeting with his own father, Constant meets with his son, Chrono, for the first time. The roles are reversed, however, as it is now the son who wants little to do with the father, and the father who yearns to connect.

Rumfoord fills the gap in Constant's memory for the reader, but Constant is still seemingly unaware that the story Rumfoord tells him is about himself. Rumfoord lets slip a remark that the Martian Army is about to be the first ever to die for a good cause. The remark catches Boaz's attention, but he does not know what to make of it. It is another foreshadowing of the intentionally disastrous invasion scheme. Vonnegut's ironic humor is displayed in the image of a complicated interplanetary "flying saucer" that has only one large "ON" button.

Victory

Victory Summary

For the description of the Martian invasion of Earth, the narrator now refers to the imaginary Pocket History of Mars by Winston Niles Rumfoord.

The severely under-armed Martian Army is massacred when it tries to take over Earth. Fighting with conventional small weapons against tanks, aircraft, and nuclear weapons, every single Martian is eventually found to be dead, captured, or missing. The automatic navigation systems of their spacecraft scatter them all over the globe, and the soldiers only fight as long as the real commanders have control of them. Once the real commanders are killed, they stop.

The Earth had begun bombarding the advance commando force that landed on the moon, which had started sending feeble bombs down thirty days prior to the main invasion. With such ample warning, the Earth is well prepared when the Martians land. Wave after wave of the invaders are easily overcome. The final wave of Martians is made up of elderly men, women, and children.

Rumfoord is the architect of the suicidal attack. The Martian army is funded by wise investments made by Rumfoord using his ability to see into the future. These investments are handled on Earth by his butler, Earl Moncrief.

The technology used by Rumfoord had come from Salo on Titan. Salo had provided Rumfoord with the expertise to build the space ships that carry the Martians to Earth, and also had given him some of his supply of UWTB for power. The parts for the space ships were built on Earth, without the manufacturers knowing exactly the intended purpose of each part. Under the direction of Moncrief, the first few ships had been assembled on Earth and used to fly the first recruits and machines to Mars to found the city of Phoebe, which was powered by UWTB.

The entire Martian suicide has been orchestrated by Rumfoord to produce a feeling of shame among the people of the Earth for having slaughtered the invaders. Into this culture of repentance, he intends to introduce a new religion.

Bee and Chrono are among the final wave of women and children to land on Earth. They crash land in the Amazon jungle in Brazil and are the only survivors from their ship. As they emerge from the wreckage, Chrono kisses his good luck piece.

Unk and Boaz also survive the invasion because their ship does not go to Earth at all. It is programmed instead to fly to Mercury. Rumfoord's scheme is to have Unk out of the way for a time while he spreads his new religion on Earth, then have Unk arrive on Earth as if by a miracle.



In their spaceship, Unk and Boaz wonder where the rest of their fellow soldiers are, unaware that most of them are dead on Earth. Boaz asks Unk where he thinks the other ships have gone. Unk replies that he does not care, that he does not care about anything, even the control box that Boaz has in his pocket. Boaz pushes a button on the box, but nothing happens to Unk. While Boaz was sleeping the night before, Unk had taken the box from Boaz's pocket and replaced the workings with toilet paper.

Back on Earth, Rumfoord and Kazak continue to materialize in the estate in Newport on schedule. The house has been taken over by a man named Marlin T. Lapp, who begins to sell tickets to the materializations. As people file past Rumfoord sitting in his small study, he talks to nobody except Moncrief, to whom he whispers instructions. Rumfoord materializes on the final day of the Martian invasion, and with a large crowd assembled finally speaks.

He introduces his new religion, called "The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent". The religion has two main tenets, Rumfoord says, "Puny man can do nothing at all to help or please God Almighty, and Luck is not the hand of God" (p. 180). To give weight to his pronouncement, Rumfoord begins to make detailed predictions, all of which eventually come true.

Rumfoord tells the crowd a parable about Constant to illustrate the nature of luck. While Constant was born the richest child on Earth, that same day several other seemingly unlucky things happened to others. Rumfoord announces that on his next visit he will tell more about the new religion, and will bring a revised Bible and a history of the people of Mars.

Back in the spacecraft, Unk has fallen asleep, while Boaz has stayed awake. Unable to control Unk any longer, Boaz considers killing him in his sleep. He decides that having a real friend is more important than being able to control people, however. He begins to question why he had wanted to control anyone in the first place. Boaz begins to laugh at his predicament. He asks himself out loud how he managed to get where he is now, and who is controlling his destiny. Unk awakes and Boaz takes the control box out of his pocket. He throws it to the ground, announcing, "I don't want none of this crap!" (p. 183).

Victory Analysis

The description of the failed invasion of Earth is darkly comical, as the nuclear-powered forces of Earth crush the relatively weak Martian forces. The entire farce has been orchestrated by Rumfoord to set the stage for his new religion. In his announcement of the teachings of this new faith, Rumfoord invokes a parable about Malachi Constant, foreshadowing the central role that Constant is to play in the religion.

Bee and Chrono appear to be the recipients of some good luck, as the only two survivors of the crash of their space ship. It is implied that this is not purely luck, however, by Rumfoord's pronouncement introducing his new religion. Also implied is

that Chrono's "good luck" piece is perhaps somehow the reason for their survival. Chrono seems to be living a charmed life, as did his father and grandfather.

The interplay between Boaz and Constant changes as Boaz loses his ability to hurt and control Constant. Finding himself powerless, Boaz finds a kind of freedom, the freedom to question his role in the outcome of his own life. This revelation of Boaz's will be further explored as the two men become trapped on Mercury in the following chapters.

In a Hollywood Nightclub

In a Hollywood Nightclub Summary

A description of Mercury is provided. Mercury is white hot on the side that always faces the Sun, and covered in giant crystals on its dark side. The tension between the hot and cold, light and dark sides of the planet cause it to vibrate, or "sing".

There are deep caves on Mercury, inhabited by simple, flat creatures called harmoniums. These creatures feed on the vibrations of the planet and cling to the phosphorescent walls of the caves. Harmoniums are like "small and spineless kites" (p. 185) and they reproduce by flaking off pieces that begin to grow. For an unknown reason, the creatures often arrange themselves in regular patterns on the walls, glowing aquamarine where the yellow light from the walls passes through their bodies.

Unk and Boaz's ship approaches the dark side of Mercury, although they still imagine they are landing on Earth. Seeing the large crystals, Unk believes them to be large skyscrapers. He weeps as he looks out the window of the ship, recalling the names of the people he knows. He recalls the name Malachi Constant, but does not recognize it. The memory of climbing the fountain at the Rumfoord Estate enters his mind, but again he does not recognize it.

The spacecraft has been programmed to find the deepest possible place in one of the caves. It moves continually downward, stopping at times, but then moving on to a deeper place. Finally, the ship lands and turns itself off. Thinking they are in the safe atmosphere of Earth, Boaz rushes to open the door. The vacuum outside causes an explosion as the air from the ship rushes out. The ship's emergency system quickly brings the pressure back up to normal. They realize they are not on Earth.

They take some goofballs and recover from the shock of the explosion, then plug their ears and nose and set out to look at their surroundings. They find them nearly unbelievable. They return to the ship and decide they must return to the surface and find people. Unk pushes the "ON" button, and the ship begins to warm up.

The ship has been designed to take off from an open field, however, and is unable to fly upward through the cave passages without knocking against the rocks. It becomes wedged in stone. They try again and again, with no success. Unk and Boaz are devastated. Looking out a porthole, Unk sees several harmoniums forming what looks like a letter "T" on the cave wall. Gradually he realizes that there are more letters formed on the wall. They form a sentence, "IT'S AN INTELLIGENCE TEST!" (p. 195).

In a Hollywood Nightclub Analysis

This brief chapter sets the stage for Boaz and Unk's exile on Mercury. Here, Vonnegut enters into more traditional science-fiction imagery of strange creatures inhabiting a

distant planet. The simple harmoniums will play an important role in Boaz's self-discovery.

Constant begins to have glimmerings of memories from his life on Earth, but as yet cannot make sense of them. The image of the fountain reappears, inviting the reader to interpret its meaning.

The seemingly intelligent message from the harmoniums ends the chapter with the question of who is controlling the situation.

A Puzzle Solved

A Puzzle Solved Summary

The narrator briefly steps outside the events of the story and into his own time at the beginning of the chapter. He refers to several supposedly well-known books that have been written about Unk and Boaz's time in the caves of Mercury, including a popular children's book. Addressing the reader, the narrator says that of course the message on the wall of the cave was written by Rumfoord, who materializes in the caves every fourteen days.

After three years on Mercury, Unk finds the footprints of a large dog in the dust on the cave floor. Before that time, Unk and Boaz had long since gone separate ways, no longer living in the space ship, but using it to store their large supply of provisions. Boaz had set up a permanent place to live not far from the ship, while Unk wandered the caves with no regular home. Messages continue to appear written on the walls using harmoniums, encouraging the men to try to find a way out of the caves.

Unk is not excited when he finds the dog tracks, or when he finds the human footprints alongside them. He has been beaten down too much by his environment to get too excited. Unk has lost weight and stopped shaving. His hair is chopped and ragged. He decides to simply follow the tracks to see where they lead.

Boaz, in contrast, has gained weight while on Mercury. He shaves every day and is quite happy. He lives in a vault in the stone furnished with items from the ship, including a tape player and a large selection of recorded music. His home can be closed off by a large boulder, which is necessary because the harmoniums love Boaz and are attracted by his pulse. Should he leave his door open while he is asleep, they would smother him.

Boaz sits inside his home with the door closed, shining his shoes. He has four harmoniums attached to his arms, leg and wrist, feeding on his pulse. Boaz has found a purpose in caring for the harmoniums, and is puzzled that Unk prefers to live a detached life. He muses on his philosophy of life, which is that someone much smarter is somehow testing him and that all he can do is try to be happy until it is all over.

Boaz recalls the image of Unk strangling Stony Stevenson. He has withheld this information from Unk, who is still unaware of what he did. Although he has been tempted at times to reveal the truth to Unk, he has not. Boaz imagines that one of the harmoniums is asking him for a "concert". He holds imaginary conversations with the other three, as well, imagining they ask him to play his tape recorder so they might feed on the vibrations.

Boaz carries his tape recorder and several tapes to a central spot in the cave. He creates a scaffold from a stretcher placed between two ironing boards with padded feet. The purpose of the stretcher is to deaden the vibrations from the music so as not to give

the harmoniums a fatal amount of music. Boaz stands watch over the recorder, moving any creatures that try to get too close to it.

Meanwhile, Unk, wandering through the caves, lies down to sleep. He dreams that his friend Stony is waiting for him somewhere in the caves. He imagines that he is being imprisoned by the people in the skyscrapers up above him, not knowing that what he thinks are buildings are actually just large stones.

Awake, now, Unk begins to feel hatred for his imagined captors. He also feels enraged at the harmoniums. Taking one off the wall, he tears it in two and throws the pieces toward the ceiling of the cave. As he does, he sees another message on the ceiling. The message gives him the solution to the puzzle of how to get out of the caves.

He rushes toward the ship, where Boaz is giving the concert to the harmoniums. He takes Boaz to the ship, where they can hear one another speak. He tells Boaz what he has discovered. Boaz reacts "numbly". He tells Unk that he has also seen a message, one reading "BOAZ, DON'T GO!" and another saying, "BOAZ, WE LOVE YOU!" (p. 209).

Unk tells Boaz that the message Boaz saw was a trick to keep them from leaving. Boaz archly insists that Unk not shatter his interpretation of the messages, wanting to believe what he will. Boaz suddenly remembers the tape recorder and rushes out, worried that nobody is keeping the harmoniums away.

Meanwhile, Unk sets about turning the ship upside down. This is what the message has told him to do to get out of the caves. With its sensors on the bottom now pointing upwards, the ship should be able to find its way out of the cave just as it found its way in.

As Unk has the ship turned over, Boaz returns with several dead harmoniums. He is crying. He places them in an empty box. He asks Unk to divide the stores, half to leave with him. Unk is astounded that Boaz intends to stay behind.

Boaz explains that the idea of being free excited him at first, but that now he cannot imagine what it would be like. On Mercury, he has the harmoniums relying on him to make them happy, and that makes him happy. "I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm," he tells Unk. (pp. 213-214)

A Puzzle Solved Analysis

Vonnegut includes more of the fictional framework around the story by referring to several fictional books about it. This provides an entertaining aside, but it also casts the story in a new light. It is now known that Rumfoord plans to build up some kind of religion on Earth, and the references the narrator makes to Rumfoord's writing and the wide popularity of the story of Unk and Boaz in the caves shows that what is being described somehow enters the culture and religion of the future.

Since Boaz presumably dies alone on Mercury, and the two men spend much of their time apart from each other, the question is raised how this story ever survives to be told. Of course there is another person present in the caves, Winston Rumfoord. This implies that Rumfoord himself is the one who brings the story back to Earth. It also raises the possibility that Rumfoord is the narrator.

Constant's memories continue to seep into his consciousness without him recognizing them. He undergoes a physical transformation while on Mercury, becoming lean and wiry as he lives meagerly and on the move. It is Boaz who undergoes a more dramatic transformation, finding purpose tending for the simple creatures in the cave. Vonnegut mentions more than once that the lack of an atmosphere means that sound cannot travel in the caves except in the air-filled space ship. What is implied is that Boaz's concerts for the harmoniums where he plays the tape recorder are unheard by him. Only the harmoniums enjoy them for the vibrations. He is not able to enjoy the music itself, only the act of providing it for the creatures.

An Age of Miracles

An Age of Miracles Summary

Unk's spacecraft lands in a churchyard in Massachusetts. It is raining. He looks like a wild man, hair tangled and nearly naked. One thing drives him on, the desire to find Bee, Chrono, and Stony.

The Reverend C. Horner Redwine is alone in the nearby church. The church is the Barnstable First Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, and is also known as The Church of the Weary Space Wanderer. It has been predicted that the church will be site of a miracle, and in readiness for it, a special suit of clothes hangs on a spike behind the pulpit. It is designed to fit only one person, and is stitched with large question marks to signify that this person will not know who he is. Only the leader of the faith, Winston Rumfoord, will know the wanderer's name, which he will reveal when he comes. Plans are made to ring the church bell wildly on the day the wanderer arrives, bringing all the people of the town to see. The fire department plans to bring the fire engine to carry the wanderer when the signal comes, to carry him in.

In the steeple of the church, rain seeps in and runs down the bell and the bell rope. At the bottom of the rope, hanging by its neck, is a doll called a "Malachi". It is an emblem of the church. It hangs from a hangman's noose.

Redwine stands in the pulpit, enjoying the sound of the rain. Hanging around his body are several bags of heavy shot and iron slabs on his back and chest. They are his handicaps, with all members of his faith carry according to their strength. Redwine moves down the aisle of the church to the archway at the front. Through the arch he sees the space ship and the bedraggled Unk. Overcome with joy, he begins to ring the bell wildly.

The bell frightens Unk, and he runs back to his ship. Soon sirens join the ringing. He imagines the war is still underway, and he presses the "ON" button on his ship to escape, but his ship shuts down. He presses and holds the button, causing the ship to begin to smoke. The navigation system dies.

Unk looks out a porthole and sees the fire engine, along with several excited people, approaching the ship. At the front of the crowd is Redwine, carrying the suit and a handful of flowers. All of the people are wearing or displaying self-handicaps of one sort or another, as do followers of the faith over the whole world.

The fire engine points its hose to the sky in celebration and delivers a fountain of water that falls down on the spaceship and the crowd. Combined with the rain, everyone is wet, which adds to the celebration. Redwine moves to the porthole and looks at Unk's face, looking out. Unk decides he is not afraid, and unlocks the doors to let Redwine in.

The suit fits Unk perfectly. Redwine tells Unk he is on Earth. Unk exclaims, "Thank God", which puzzles Redwine, who informs Unk that when he speaks to the crowd of people outside he should not thank God in any way. As part of the faith, Redwine professes, as founded by Rumfoord, God is indifferent to the fate of humans and luck is not something to be thankful for.

Unk asks what he should say instead, and Redwine informs him that what he says has already been prophesied what he will say. He will be asked two questions, Redwine tells him, and he is simply to answer as best he can. He leads Unk outside, and the crowd gathers around him.

They ask him who he is. He responds that he does not know his real name, but that he is called Unk. Then they ask what happened to him. Unk thinks for a moment, but cannot find a way to express all that has happened to him. Almost apologetically, he shrugs and says, "I was a victim of a series of accidents, as are we all" (p. 229).

The crowd begins to cheer. Redwine shows Unk a carved scroll above the door to the church on which these exact words have been written.

Unk is carried on the fire engine to Newport, where a materialization is about to take place. Along the way, people come out to see him and shower him with flowers. A special plastic "Malachi" hangs from the fire engine bell, a kind that can only be bought in Newport. Unk is happy to back on Earth and to have everyone apparently love him so much.

At the Rumfoord estate, the grounds inside the walls are packed solid and a huge crowd surrounds it. They eagerly await Rumfoord's voice from several loudspeakers mounted around the place.

Bee and Chrono are at the estate. They are working in a souvenir booth outside the estate, selling plastic Malachis to the faithful pilgrims. Chrono is now eleven and is a juvenile delinquent. He has been spared being placed in an institution because at Rumfoord's direction, the legal staff of his church has defended him against all charges.

Bee and Chrono had wandered through the Amazon jungle for a year after crashing there on their trip from Mars. They were taken in by a jungle tribe and eventually rescued by a helicopter sent by Rumfoord. They were brought back to Newport and given the booth outside the estate to sell Malachis.

Next to Bee and Chrono's booth is Harry Brackman, who was Unk's platoon sergeant on Mars. Brackman is the only survivor of his unit's attack on Earth. He sells plastic models of the fountain inside the estate. He also sells toy flying saucers, models of the real saucer that is mounted on a hundred-foot-high column inside the walls of the estate.

A steam whistle blows inside the estate, the signal that the materialization will occur in five minutes. The booths shut up at this signal. Chrono lays on a case and cleans his nails with his good luck piece. None of the souvenir sellers in the booths, who are all

Martian survivors of the war, show much interest in the ceremony or in seeing the Space Wanderer, although they are tempted to look.

The fire engine arrives. As Unk, the Space Wanderer, passes through the tiny door in the wall, Rumfoord and Kazak materialize. Brackman comments that the Space Wanderer is probably a fake, an actor. None of the souvenir sellers really believe this, however. They know that Rumfoord insists that things be real.

The narrator addresses the reader directly here to describe Rumfoord and his tendency to create great spectacles such as the one that is about to take place. He never claims to be a God, however, the narrator explains, or to be speaking for God.

Bee and Brackman talk in their adjacent booths. Most of their fellow Martians have had their original Earth identities discovered, but no information has ever been found about Bee. Brackman suggests tentatively that they might go see the Space Wanderer. Bee responds that she hates Rumfoord for having used her and the others until they were "all used up" (p. 242).

Rumfoord's voice is heard over the loudspeakers welcoming the Space Wanderer. He asks Unk if Unk sees anything that he recognizes. Unk responds that he remembers the fountain, except that it was dry whenever it was he first saw it. Rumfoord asks if he recalls anything else. Unk replies that he remembers Rumfoord from Mars who was there just before he took off.

Rumfoord asks if Unk would recognize his mate and child. Unk replies that he does not know. Rumfoord calls for Bee and Chrono to be brought in from the booth outside.

Rumfoord, Unk and Kazak stand on a scaffold that is part of a system of catwalks and ramps that run around the grounds of the estate. The walkways are lit and wired for television cameras and sound. Rumfoord look uneasy, his smile forced. He speaks to Unk directly, without the microphone. He sarcastically mentions that the crowd seems to love him and asks if Unk loves the crowd. Unk is unable to sense the sarcasm, and says that the crowd has been "wonderful."

Unk, uncertain about the ceremony, decides to keep quiet. Bee and Chrono are placed on one of the catwalks and Rumfoord calls them to him. Unk begins to feel elated that he may look forward to a happy life on Earth with Bee and Chrono. All he is missing, he feels is his friend, Stony. He feels that Stony must be somewhere nearby, waiting to make his appearance.

As Bee and Chrono approach Unk, Rumfoord moves away from them. He follows some of the complicated walkway structure to a tree with rungs that run up its side. He climbs up into the tree, out of sight. Unk, Bee and Chrono are uncomfortable with one another. Chrono kisses his good luck piece and wishes for Unk to drop dead. Bee's and Unk's eyes meet accidentally. They greet each other formally, then both look up at the tree to where Rumfoord has disappeared.



Rumfoord addresses the crowd. He tells them to be thankful they are not like Malachi Constant. Unk notices for the first time a long walkway nearby that ends in a long ladder leading up to the space ship on the high column. He wonders who would be brave enough to climb such a high ladder. He looks at the crowd. He waits for Stony to appear.

An Age of Miracles Analysis

Rumfoord's scheme begins to unfold as Constant find his way back to Earth as Rumfoord has prophesied. Constant is blissfully unaware of the impending humiliation that Rumfoord has planned for him, imagining that finally he is to enjoy a happy life. The role that Constant is to play in Rumfoord's religious spectacle is suggested by the description of the "Malachis" which are hung in effigy everywhere. It is ironic that Bee herself is a seller of souvenir Malachis.

The image of the fountain recurs several times in this chapter, beginning with the wet conditions at Constant's first landing, including the spray of the fire hose. When Constant returns to the Rumfoord estate, he finds that he recognizes the fountain from his first visit, although he does not remember the visit itself.

The chapter ends on an extremely sad note as Constant imagines that his friend Stony will appear at any time. Rumfoord's plan to humiliate Constant in front of the crowd seems likely to include revealing the truth to Constant about Stony.

We Hate Malachi Constant Because...

We Hate Malachi Constant Because... Summary

Rumfoord delivers a sermon about Malachi Constant. He tells of his decadence and immorality, and his ridiculous belief in his own good luck. He calls on the Space Wanderer and asks him who he is and what his real name is.

Constant answers that he does not know his real name, but that he is called Unk. Rumfoord asks him what has happened to him before returning to Earth, and Constant repeats the phrase he first gave at the church about being the victim of a series of accidents.

Rumfoord asks him of all the accidents that befell him, which is the most significant. Unk begins to think about it, but Rumfoord answers his own question. The most significant accident, he says, was his being born. Rumfoord asks Constant if he would like to know what he has called when he was born, and he answers that he would. Rumfoord tells him that he is Malachi Constant.

The crowd is generally compassionate. They look sadly on Constant. Although they have hung him in effigy for several years, they do not wish to actually see him harmed. Rumfoord addresses Constant again, saying, "You have had the singular accident, Mr. Constant, of becoming a central symbol of wrong-headedness for a perfectly enormous religious sect" (pp. 254-255).

Rumfoord tells Constant that shortly Constant will climb the long ladder to the space ship and fly to Titan, to live in exile. This will be a symbolic act to Rumfoord's followers, who will imagine that Constant is taking all of his wrong ways away with him.

The revelation of his real name means little to Constant, coming so close to the explanation of his horrific exile. He becomes completely focused on the walkway to the ladder, and fears he may stumble. Reading his mind, Rumfoord tells him he will not stumble, and that by doing this thing he will become one of the most meaningful people who ever lived.

Constant turns to Bee and Chrono. Despite their cynicism about the ceremony, he sees that they are not cynical about the brave action he is about to take. He hesitates for a few seconds, then takes a step toward the ladder. As he does so, Rumfoord begins transmitting the sound of a snare drum to his brain through his antenna. As Constant takes hold of the ladder, the sound stops. Constant pauses for a moment.

Rumfoord asks him if has something he wants to say before climbing the ladder. Constant responds that he has not understood anything that has happened to him since returning to Earth. Rumfoord invites him to tell the crowd of one good thing that he has done, so that they may decide if he might be pardoned from exile.



Constant thinks hard. His main memories are from the caves of Mercury, from which he can find nothing good. He thinks back to Mars and the letter to himself. He remembers Stony, and decides that having a friend is a good thing. He tells the crowd that he had a friend.

Rumfoord asks the friend's name, and Constant replies. Rumfoord proposes that Constant's measure of goodness depends on how good a friend Constant was to Stony, and Constant agrees.

Rumfoord reveals the truth to Constant about Stony. He reminds Constant of the execution that he took part in on Mars, a memory that Constant has nearly blocked. He tells him that the man he killed was his best friend, Stony.

Constant weeps as he climbs the ladder. He feels worthy of being punished. When he reaches the ship, Rumfoord tells him to leave the door open, because Bee and Chrono will be joining him. Constant sits in the doorway and looks sadly out at the wide view from the high column as Rumfoord begins a sermon about Bee. Constant hardly listens.

Rumfoord tells the crowd that Bee was once his wife, and that her name is Beatrice Rumfoord. The crowd is astounded. He condemns the life of Beatrice as one of reluctance and fear and "imagined purity", and asks the crowd to hang her in effigy as they do with their Malachis. He tells Bee that she and Chrono will be joining Constant in the ship, and asks if she has anything to say.

She responds that she and Chrono will climb to the ship, but not because of anything Rumfoord has told her. She will do it to show that she is not afraid of anything, and to show that she is as disgusted with Earth as Earth seems to be with her. She tells Rumfoord that hearing him describe her life as Beatrice Rumfoord, although she does not remember it, has made her love herself more for having rejected him. Rumfoord is "scummy", she says, and quickly walks with Chrono toward the ladder.

They climb up and enter the ship without saying anything to Constant. He follows them inside. They find the ship in shambles, apparently after several parties had been held inside. Bedding and clothing is strewn about and empty bottles and old food litters the floor. Bee and Constant set about pushing the garbage out the open door of the ship. Chrono sits on a bunk, rubbing his good luck piece, and urging them to get underway. Bee takes a bra that was left hanging in the ship and lets it flutter down over the crowd. "Goodbye, all you clean and wise and lovely people", she says.

We Hate Malachi Constant Because... Analysis

The story reaches the height of its action in this chapter. The religion that Rumfoord has spent three years cultivating receives its grand passion play as Malachi Constant learns the truth about his past and his identity and is immediately exiled from Earth as a symbol to the followers of Rumfoord's faith.

This chapter reveals the apparent purpose of Constant's journey from Earth to Mars to Mercury and back to Earth—to act as a religious symbol in Rumfoord's scheme to transform humankind. There is a larger purpose, however, which even Rumfoord serves. This purpose is to be revealed in the final chapters.

Bee is given the opportunity to have the last word, here, in a satisfying farewell speech to Rumfoord. The two characters of Beatrice and Constant have been transformed since their introduction at the beginning of the book. The bombastic and aimless Constant is now humble and focused. The fearful and retiring Beatrice is now brave and bold.

The Gentleman from Tralfamadore

The Gentleman from Tralfamadore Summary

Titan is one of the nine moons of Saturn, and the only moon in the solar system with a breathable oxygen atmosphere. It stays at a constant sixty-seven degree temperature. It is covered with three large seas and many smaller lakes and ponds, all connected by rivers. There are forests and plants.

Rumfoord's waves of materializations coincide with the orbit of Titan around Saturn and the orbit of Saturn around the Sun, so that he and Kazak are permanently materialized on Titan. They live there on an island near the shore of one of the seas, in a house that is a replica of the Taj Mahal.

Before Beatrice, Constant, and Chrono arrive, there is only one other person on Titan, the eleven-million-year-old Salo from the planet Tralfamadore. Salo is orange, with three legs, and stands four and a half feet tall. He has no arms, and has three eyes. His head is round and hangs on gimbals. He speaks five thousand languages.

Salo lives in the open on Titan, near the space ship that brought him there. Nearly half a million years prior, Salo had been chosen by his people to act as an ambassador, carrying a message out into the universe to a distant galaxy, and delivering it. The message itself is sealed in a small tablet of lead two inches square and three-eighths of an inch thick. It hangs from Salo's body on a steel band. Salo has been ordered not to open the message until he reaches the galaxy he is heading to and finds intelligent life. Then he is to learn their language and translate the message for them.

In the year 203,117 B.C., Salo's ship had developed power plant problems and he was forced to land on Titan. A single small part disintegrated, rendering him unable to continue except at relatively low speeds. Salo had sent a message home at the speed of light, which took 150,000 years to reach Tralfamadore.

While waiting, Salo entertains himself by taking up sculpture, breeding daisies, and watching the activities on Earth through a viewer on his space ship. It is while watching the Earthlings that he receives his first response from Tralfamadore. The message is in the form of a circle of rocks placed on a plain in England. It is Stonehenge, which in Tralfamadorian has the meaning "Replacement part being rushed with all possible speed" (p. 271).

Other messages appear to Salo among the structures on Earth. The Great Wall of China, Nero's golden house in Rome, and the Kremlin in Moscow are all actually messages to Salo, updating him on the progress of the delivery of his replacement part. These messages all arrive in much shorter time than they would have taken had they been delivered at the speed of light. The Tralfamadorians are able, through manipulating the force of UWTB, to influence events at far points at about three times

the speed of light. Salo watches as civilizations rise on Earth and begin to build structures that are meant to be messages to him. Sometimes the civilizations die out before completing their message.

Salo never tells Rumfoord about these messages, and his mind is such that Rumfoord cannot read it. He simply tells Rumfoord that he has sent a message home and is expecting the replacement part soon. He is reluctant to tell Rumfoord the whole truth because he loves Rumfoord and thinks he may be offended if he knew how Tralfamadore had been manipulating Earth's development.

Salo watches the approach of Constant, Beatrice, and Chrono in their ship on his viewer. The ship is programmed to land on the shore of one of the seas, amid the two million statues of human beings that Salo has carved while waiting, inspired by the activities of humans on Earth who always seem to be acting as if a "big eye" is watching them from above.

Salo walks on his inflatable feet across the water to Rumfoord's palace. He expects to find Rumfoord sitting in his regular chair by his pool, but the chair is empty. Salo looks down into the pool at three statues of women that he had carved. These are the sirens of Titan, the women in the photo that Rumfoord had given Constant on Earth. Salo calls for Rumfoord, calling him by his boyhood nickname, Skip.

Kazak approaches Salo. He looks ill and moves slowly. He glows with an electrical discharge. Rumfoord appears behind him, also looking ill. He seems to be dematerializing and re-materializing in waves. Salo asks him what is wrong. Rumfoord answers that the problem is sunspots.

Salo asks if he can help in any way, and Rumfoord is short with him. Salo, who is new to the notion of friendship, is deeply hurt by Rumfoord's sharp words. He looks upward and sees two enormous Titanic bluebirds circling and diving in the sky. He sees the trail of the approaching space ship. He addresses Rumfoord again as "Skip", and Rumfoord asks him not to use the name. He only prefers his friends to use the name.

This again hurts Salo, who pleads with Rumfoord to think of him as a friend after all the help he has given him. Rumfoord is cynical, and admits only that the two have been of some use to one another. Salo is despondent and sorry. Rumfoord tells him that Salo did not have to help him, that he could have simply sat and waited for his part to arrive. He tells Salo that the part he needs is indeed arriving on the ship. It is Chrono's good luck piece. He imagines that Salo already knows this. Rumfoord has another spell of dematerialization and electrical discharges and is unable to speak. When he recovers, he asks, with sarcastic politeness, for Salo to continue .

Salo is devastated that Rumfoord seems to have found out how Tralfamadore has been manipulating human history. Rumfoord is resentful that he himself has been used. He insults Salo, calling him a "machine" and implying that Salo cannot grasp the true feelings a living being has. Salo takes a tone that is hurt and indignant as Rumfoord continues to hurl the insult "Machine!" at him. The ship lands nearby.



Salo understands that Rumfoord is expecting him to grovel in repentance. He obliges. He asks what he can do. Rumfoord explains that the center of his time-space spiral is about to be blown out of the solar system, changing the times and places where he will materialize. Salo is horrified at the thought of losing his friend, but Rumfoord tells him not to pity him. Before he goes, he wants Salo to tell him what the primary purpose of "this Solar System episode" is (p. 287). Salo replies that Rumfoord's book on the history of Mars sums it up. Rumfoord answers that his history does not include the fact that all the events were controlled by Tralfamadore.

Rumfoord wants to know what the message is that Salo is carrying. Salo haltingly replies that he does not know, that it is sealed. Rumfoord tells him that he wants Salo to violate his orders and open the message.

Meanwhile, on the shore of the sea, Beatrice, Chrono, and Constant are leaning against some of the statues and having something to eat. Constant announces to the other two that from that point on, he is through acting as a pawn in the schemes of others. The others agree silently, having heard the speech several times on the way to Titan. Constant has grown closer to Beatrice and Chrono during the long trip to Titan, but there is no love between them. The only love is between Chrono and his mother.

Chrono is wary. He opens a switchblade knife, ready to kill if he must. Looking out over the sea toward the palace, he sees the creature Salo rowing a golden rowboat toward them to take them to the palace. Chrono flashes light into the eye of Salo's that is pointed toward them. It is a trick he has learned in the jungle to unsettle an opponent. Beatrice slowly takes hold of a rock and tells him to flash the creature again. She tells him to go for an eye if he has a chance. Constant sees how well the two work together, that they have no need of him.

Salo ties up the boat and walks toward the three, too distraught to imagine he might be frightening them. Chrono continues to flash light in his eye and Beatrice throws the stone. Salo ducks, but instantly Chrono is around his neck, his knife at his chest. Beatrice stands over him, holding another stone. Salo, despondent, invites them to go ahead and kill him. He wishes he were dead. He tells them afterward to go to the palace to see Rumfoord, who is dying and wishes to see them.

At the palace, Constant gapes at the flickering Rumfoord. Kazak is gone, having had his time-space spiral separated from Rumfoord's. Rumfoord greets each of them individually. Salo, who has not been killed, sits in the boat, sulking. Rumfoord explains that he is not dying, merely moving on to a different spiral of time and space.

Rumfoord tells them that there is something they all must know before he leaves. He proceeds to tell them the secret of the influence of Tralfamadore and the ultimate purpose of human history is to produce the small piece of metal in Chrono's pocket. He explains that the piece is for Salo's ship, and tells them of Salo's message, which Salo has refused to share. He hopes, he tells them, since the part has now been delivered, that Tralfamadore will leave the Solar System alone. As he speaks, a spiral of green light surrounds him until he suddenly disappears entirely, never to be seen again.

Salo rushes up as Rumfoord disappears. He is crazed. He has torn the message from its band and holds it to the sky, calling for Rumfoord to return, calling that he will reveal the message. He sadly lays the message on Rumfoord's empty chair, saying that although he is a machine, he has transcended this by violating his intended function and opening the message. He has himself been used, Salo says. He offers up the message. It is a single dot. Salo explains that the meaning of the dot in Tralfamadorian is simply, "greetings".

Salo rushes out onto the beach and kills himself by dismantling himself and throwing his pieces all over. Chrono walks among the scattered pieces and throws his good luck piece on the ground among them.

The Gentleman from Tralfamadore Analysis

The true purpose of human history is revealed at last to all the characters. They have all been used in one way or another, without full control of their own destinies. Much of the resolution in the story is found in this next-to-last chapter. It is revealed that Salo helped Rumfoord design the new religion of God the Utterly Indifferent, but it is unclear whether this was also just a part of the larger Tralfamadorian scheme.

This revelation casts earlier elements of the story in a new light. Noel Constant, by using the letters of the Gideon Bible to direct his investment patterns, was no doubt acting under the influence of Tralfamadore, implying that all the events that led up to the writing, translation, and publication of the Bible were also part of the scheme. The possibility is suggested that the unusual twelve-sided headquarters of his company was perhaps a message to Salo.

Resentful that he has been manipulated, Rumfoord tries to manipulate Salo in Rumfoord's final minutes on Titan. His bullying and reproaches do not work, however. Interestingly, Salo has become the most typically human of all the characters, possessing the ability to examine his own motives and emotions.

Epilogue: Reunion with Stony

Epilogue: Reunion with Stony Summary

The story comes to an end with the narrator explaining, "There isn't much more to tell" (p. 302). Both Beatrice and Constant grow old and die within twenty-four hours of one another.

Constant lives in Salo's space ship for decades. He does not try to fix the grounded ship, but does note that Chrono's good luck piece fits perfectly in between two parts in a burned out compartment. To pass the time, Constant tinkers with Salo, trying to put him back together. His initial hope is that Salo will fly Chrono back to Earth. Neither Constant nor Beatrice wants to return to Earth, but they do wish their son to grow up with other people around.

At the age of seventy-four, Constant has not yet fixed Salo. Chrono is now forty-two, so the idea of flying him to Earth is no longer so important. At seventeen, Chrono had run away and gone to live with the Titanic bluebirds. Constant sometimes hears his calls, but never answers them and never sees him. He occasionally comes across the many shrines that Chrono makes from stones, feathers, and twigs. Constant respects his son's religion, and tidies up the shrines when he finds them.

Beatrice lives alone in the palace Rumfoord has built. She sometimes sees Chrono, who visits her for a day at a time on occasion before returning to the forest. These visits upset her. When she is upset, she flies a white sheet from the palace, which is a signal for Constant to come comfort her.

Constant sees the sheet flying. He loads a dugout canoe with fresh food and paddles out to the palace. Beatrice lives off the vast provisions in the palace, and Constant finds pleasure in bringing her fresh food. He also takes a broom and shovel to clean up. Beatrice does no cleaning at all.

Beatrice spends all her time writing a book called *The True Purpose of Life in the Solar System*. It is a refutation of what Rumfoord has told her about the sole purpose of life on Earth being to provide a spare part for Salo's ship. The manuscript is very lengthy. She reads aloud from it whenever Chrono visits.

She is reading to Constant as he drains the algae-choked pool that he cannot seem to keep clean. As the pool drains, the sirens are revealed at the bottom, covered in green goo. Constant has read Rumfoord's books and knows the significance of the sirens in his life, but they mean little to him now.

Constant converses briefly with Beatrice, who is tracking down a thought she wants to include in her manuscript. The thought she expresses is, "The worst thing that could possibly happen to anybody would be to not be used for anything by anybody" (p. 310). She thanks Constant for using her.



Constant shovels the garbage out of Beatrice's courtyard. He listens to the sound of the pool draining. He realizes he can no longer hear Beatrice breathing.

Constant buries Beatrice on the shore of the sea. The sky is filled with bluebirds. Chrono appears, dressed in a feathered cape. He calls thanks to his father and mother for giving him life and disappears. Constant returns to the palace to clean it up, imagining that some day someone will return to it. As he is cleaning he sees Salo coming across the water. Salo thanks him for putting him back together. He tells Constant he intends to continue on his journey to deliver his message.

Constant tells Salo that Beatrice has died, and Salo expresses his sorrow. He offers to take Constant back to Earth. Constant accepts. On the flight back, Salo begins to doubt the wisdom of returning Constant to Earth. Constant insists on being taken to Indianapolis, where he knows no one. Salo is worried that Constant knows nothing about the planet. He decides to help Constant by hypnotizing him. He tells him that when he is about to die, a "wonderful thing" will happen. He then describes this wonderful thing to Constant and awakens him.

The ship lands in the middle of night in the middle of winter outside Indianapolis. It is snowing. Constant gets out of the ship and Salo directs him to a bus stop bench where he says a bus will arrive shortly to take him downtown to a hotel. They say goodbye and Constant sits on the bench. The bus does not come for several hours because of the snow. Constant freezes to death.

As he dies, he sees the vision that Salo has implanted in his mind. He sees Stony Stevenson descending in a space ship from a break in the clouds. Stony has come to take him to paradise.

Epilogue: Reunion with Stony Analysis

The true fulfillment of Rumfoord's earlier prophecy to Beatrice occurs in the final epilogue. She lives like an aristocrat even though there is nobody to impress. She has found true love, albeit of a strange sort. She has transformed from the pure and fearful person she was at the beginning of the story to a fearless writer who keeps a sloppy household. Her philosophy that a life is only meaningful if a person is used by someone is interesting in light of the supposed meaning of human existence, which has been as a tool of a far off force. The implication is that even if what Rumfoord has told her is true, nonetheless humanity has had a valid purpose.

Constant finds a happiness of his own sort being self-sufficient and caring for Beatrice. At the beginning of the story, Constant's self-sufficiency was only as good as his money. He has now found a way to be self reliant without money.

A question arises at the end of the story, when Salo leaves Constant at the snowy bus stop in Indianapolis. Salo seems to have a thorough enough knowledge of Earth to be aware of the Indianapolis public transit system. It seems that he would also know that the buses would not be running on such a cold snowy morning. This suggests that Salo

intentionally left Constant where he would probably die of exposure, although Salo knows he will die happy.

Characters

Malachi Constant

Malachi Constant is the main character throughout the novel, taking on at least four different identities over the course of the story.

Constant is the wealthiest man in the world, owing to the fantastic success of the company he has inherited from his father, called Magnum Opus. He is a playboy, partying his way through life in the wake of his seemingly incredible luck in making money. As his financial fortune crumbles, however, Constant finds that he has nowhere to turn.

This begins the second phase of his character, that of Unk, the disobedient Martian soldier who has had his memory cleared out several times but still manages to recall aspects of his former life. Unk is resourceful, insightful, and intelligent. It is interesting that these qualities do not seem to surface in the character until after he has had most of his memory removed.

Unk's resourcefulness serves him well in the caves of Mercury, where he is stranded for several years before determining how to get out. Once back on Earth, he takes on yet another identity, that of the Space Wanderer. This is an identity that has been created for him by Rumfoord to serve as a sort of messiah in his new religion. Still devoid of much of his memory, the Space Wanderer blithely accepts the adoration of the people of Earth, feeling that it is a wonderful place to be.

Rumfoord then fills in the gaps of Constant's memory and the Space Wanderer is once again Malachi Constant. He is a transformed Constant, however. No longer cavalier, he is humble. No longer the fearful soldier wishing simply to avoid pain, he loudly proclaims his independence. He spends his final days in serving Beatrice in her palace on Titan.

Winston Niles Rumfoord

A genial, wealthy aristocrat from Newport, Rhode Island. While flying his private spacecraft to Mars along with his dog, Kazak, Rumfoord passes through something called a "chrono-synclastic infandibulum" which scatters his existence across time and space. He materializes at different places in the solar system at different times at regular intervals. At the same time, he is constantly materialized on Titan, a moon of Saturn. He can read minds, and can see into both the future and the past.

Rumfoord uses his abilities to amass a fortune on Earth, and with the help of an extraterrestrial named Salo, who is also on Titan, he launches an elaborate scheme to bring a new religion to Earth that teaches that God has nothing to do with the fate of humankind.

Rumfoord manipulates the lives of Beatrice and Constant in service to his scheme. At the same time, however, he gives them the capability to transform themselves.

Rumfoord does not die, but leaves the solar system when the center of the spiral of his space-time existence shifts, sending him outward into the universe.

Beatrice Rumfoord

Beatrice Rumfoord is the attractive wife of Winston Niles Rumfoord. She lives in the large Rumfoord estate, where she tolerates the regular materializations of her husband. She is a poet.

Her fate parallels Constant's. She is taken to Mars and has her memory erased, taking on the identity of Bee, a meek and obedient teacher. She and her son crash land in the Amazon rain forest during the Martian invasion of Earth and have to survive in the wilderness. They are eventually rescued and taken back to Newport, where she becomes a seller of souvenirs outside the Rumfoord estate where she once lived, although she has no recollection of it. The estate has now become the center of Rumfoord's new religion.

Her years in the jungle have given Bee cunning survival skills and made her fearless. Her time in the jungle has also turned her skin brown from eating a certain root for food. This accentuates the transformation of Beatrice, whose girlhood portrait that hangs in the Rumfoord estate shows her dressed all in white next to a white pony.

Like Constant, Bee has her past revealed to her during the religious spectacle led by Rumfoord at the estate, just before she is exiled to Titan. No longer fearful of Rumfoord as she was when she was his wife, she tells him off, calling him "scummy". She lives out her days on Titan, living in Rumfoord's former palace and writing. Having forgotten about her former self-image as a pure white virgin, she absently throws her garbage on the floor to be cleaned up by Constant.

Chrono

Chrono is the son of Beatrice and Constant. He is eight years old when Constant first sees him, or when he first remembers seeing him, on Mars. He is an excellent ball player, striking fear into his opponents. He has jet black hair and is fiercely independent.

Chrono, along with his mother, learns dangerous survival skills along in the jungle of Brazil. Once back in civilization, he becomes a juvenile delinquent, kept out of jail only because of the intervention of Rumfoord.

While a child on Mars, Chrono picks up a small piece of metal that he keeps with him at all times as a good luck piece. This piece turns out to be the replacement part for the stranded space craft of Salo on Titan. Chrono carries the part with him when he accompanies his mother and Constant to Titan.

Chrono lives the rest of his life on Titan among the large eagle-like bluebirds that inhabit the forests.

Ransom K. Fern

Ransom K. Fern is the president of Magnum Opus, the company founded by Noel Constant and handed down to Malachi Constant. He is a very thin man with a biting, dry sense of humor.

Salo

A messenger from the planet Tralfamadore, Salo is stranded on Titan when his spacecraft malfunctions because of a broken part. Salo is a machine, but has emotions that seem to run deeper than most of the human characters in the novel. He comes to love Rumfoord as a friend after helping him build up his Martian army and invent his new religion. Salo is despondent when Rumfoord disappears, and commits suicide by taking himself apart.

Salo is waiting for a replacement part to be delivered. He watches the activities on Earth as the entire history of civilization advances to the point where the simple part can be manufactured and delivered to him. After his self-dismantling, Constant manages to put Salo back together again and helps him repair his ship. Salo returns Constant to Earth in the ship.

Boaz

Boaz is one of the "real" commanders of the Martian army. Although only a private, Boaz does not have a controlling antenna in his head and possesses a control box that can direct the actions of the other soldiers in his platoon.

Boaz is stranded on Mercury with Constant, where he comes to love the simple creatures called harmoniums, finding a purpose in his life by caring for them. When Constant figures out how to get out of the caves of Mercury, Boaz decides to stay behind to care for the creatures.

Stony Stevenson

Stony Stevenson is Constant's best friend on Mars, and is one of the "real" commanders. He helps Constant try to remember what he can about his past, encouraging him to write it down so he can recall it whenever his memory is erased. Stony is found out by the other commanders and is sentenced to death for helping Constant. It is Constant himself who strangles Stony at the execution, unaware of what he is doing or who Stony is at the time.

Noel Constant

Noel Constant is the father of Malachi Constant. Using a bizarre method of choosing stocks based on the letters in the Bible, Noel Constant builds an enormous fortune, which, with the help of Ransom K. Fern, is turned into a powerful corporation. Noel only sees his son Malachi once during his life.

Sergeant Brackman

Constant's platoon leader on Mars. He is actually controlled by Boaz. Brackman is one of the few survivors of the ill-fated Martian invasion. He becomes a souvenir seller like Bee.

Moncrief

The butler at the Rumfoord estate, and Rumfoord's right-hand man on Earth. Moncrief helps Rumfoord build the first spacecraft to take recruits from Earth to Mars.

Reverend C. Horner Redwine

The pastor of the Barnstable Church of God the Utterly Indifferent who first welcomes Constant in his role as the Space Wanderer.

Objects/Places

The Rumfoord Estate

The large house and grounds where Beatrice Rumfoord lives and where Winston Rumfoord rematerializes every fifty-nine days. The grounds feature a tall fountain made up of several bowls, each smaller than the one below it. It is the scene of Rumfoord's grand religious spectacle when Constant and Beatrice are exiled to Titan.

Hollywood, California

The home of Malachi Constant, the wealthiest man on the planet. Constant lives in a mansion where he throws wild parties.

Phoebe

The only city on the planet Mars, founded by Rumfoord to drive his Martian invasion of Earth.

Caves of Mercury

Deep caves on the dark side of Mercury where Constant and Boaz are transported instead of to Earth to fight in the war, and where Boaz decides to remain. Rumfoord visits the caves of Mercury every fourteen days.

Titan

One of the moons of Saturn. Titan is inhabitable by humans and is covered by forest, meadows, rivers, lakes, and seas. Rumfoord is permanently materialized on Titan. It is where Salo, the creature from Tralfamadore, is stranded, and where Beatrice, Constant, and Chrono spend their final days.

Tralfamadore

A distant planet 150,000 light years from the Solar System where Salo comes from. The machine creatures of Tralfamadore can influence events at great distances from their planet. They use their influence to drive human civilization toward creating a spare part for Salo's spacecraft.

Malachi

A small doll that is hung in effigy, representing Malachi Constant, the primary negative symbol of Rumfoord's Church of God the Utterly Indifferent.

The Whale

A giant spacecraft designed for interplanetary travel. It is later rechristened The Rumfoord.

Titanic Bluebirds

Giant, eagle-like birds that inhabit the forests of Titan. The Titanic bluebirds take in Chrono on Titan, allowing to live among them.

Chrono's good luck piece

A small piece of metal strapping with two holes in it. It is the culmination of all human civilization. It is also a replacement part for Salo's space ship.

The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent

The organized faith formed by Rumfoord in the wake of the Martian invasion based on the idea that God has nothing to do with luck.

Themes

Organized Religion

Vonnegut makes some pointed suggestions about organized religion throughout the novel. In the very first sentences of introduction, the narrator speaks of the time in which the story takes place as the "Nightmare Ages" before people had learned to find the meaning of life. This age was filled with "gimcrack religions", the narrator says, calling them "big business" (p. 7). This period is placed as the period between World War II and the fictional "Third Great Depression". In other words, the time the narrator describes could be the time contemporary to Vonnegut's 1959 novel.

The first such religion described in the novel is the anti-space-exploration faith espoused by a character called Bobby Denton, who compares the building of large spacecraft to the building of the Tower of Babel in the Bible and reforms the Ten Commandments into a rocket launch countdown.

The organized religion of Rumfoord's Church of God the Utterly Indifferent provides another example of organized religion in the novel. Rumfoord creates the faith out of whole cloth, using his ability to see into the future to bedazzle potential followers by making accurate predictions about the future. Rumfoord manipulates the lives of Beatrice and Constant to add to the spectacle.

Rumfoord's religion approaches farce. So that no person may have an unfair advantage over another, his followers handicap themselves. Beautiful women wear ill-fitting clothes and garish makeup. Those with keen eyesight wear glasses of the wrong prescription. Many wear weights strung around their bodies. They worship a God who they freely admit does not care if He is worshipped or not. These caricatures of organized religion point up some of the seemingly bizarre conclusions that can be drawn from following some basic ideals of faith when carried to an extreme.

The one actual religion that is referred to in Vonnegut's novel is Christianity, which plays a role in the unusual investment technique of Noel Constant. Finding a Gideon's Bible in his small hotel room, Constant begins using the letters from the first sentences of Genesis to choose stocks, eventually amassing a huge fortune. Once the true purpose of human civilization has been revealed at the end of Vonnegut's novel, the implication is that all of Christianity to that point was merely to provide Noel Constant with a blueprint for setting the final wheels of the plan in motion.

Free Will

The question of whether human beings are in complete control of their own destinies is one that has occupied philosophers and thinkers for centuries. The theme of free will runs through Vonnegut's novel as several of the main characters struggle against what they perceive to be their destinies.



Early in the story, the character of Beatrice is told what her fate will be by her husband, who can see into the future. She rebels against his prophecies, but he assures her that the events of human history are like a roller coaster that she cannot get off. Rumfoord says he knows the shape of the roller coaster and so can see where it goes, but cannot stop it, start it, or alter its course. Beatrice replies with a story about herself as a girl when her father wanted her to ride a roller coaster and she refused. She tells Rumfoord she refuses to ride the roller coaster he describes.

Beatrice tries to do everything she can to avoid the fate that Rumfoord says is hers, but in doing so she eventually fulfills the prophecy. The same thing happens to Malachi Constant when he tries to avoid his destiny. Constant's relationship with his destiny is slightly different. He and his father before him have given over part of their own free will to be ruled by luck. Noel and Malachi Constant use the letters of the Bible to choose stocks to buy. The method turns out to be wildly successful, although neither understands why.

It is this kind of abdication of free will and reliance on luck that Rumfoord seems to be railing against in his new religion, which teaches that God is indifferent to the fate of humans, implying that He is leaving it all up to us. Rumfoord himself is struggling against his own fate, which he is aware of. Although he learns that all of human history has been influenced by an outside force toward a relatively simple outcome, and even though he can see his own fate by looking into the future, near the end of the novel, Rumfoord tells Salo that he still imagines that he has the capacity to transcend his destiny by making decisions he feels he is in control of.

Perhaps the only character who manages to take hold of his own destiny is Boaz. Boaz thinks he knows what he wants, just as everyone else does, but finds the ability to question why he wants those things, eventually rejecting them for something far simpler. Boaz chooses to stay behind on Mercury even when his stated desire was once to live the high life on Earth. Boaz seems to actually climb down from the roller coaster.

Transformation and renewal through destruction

Malachi Constant undergoes a significant transformation over the course of the novel, as does Beatrice Rumfoord. In both cases, Vonnegut emphasizes how the characters have their lives first virtually destroyed before they are able to undergo these transformations.

The first type of destruction they each face is the ruin of their financial fortunes. Their loss of wealth sets the events in motion that eventually bring them together. In the case of Beatrice, her ruin requires her to mortgage her estate and implement a scheme to sell tickets to Rumfoord's materializations. The idea to sell tickets turns out to be ideal for Rumfoord's establishment of his new religion, and it turns out the people who buy her mortgage are actually Martian recruiters who take her to Mars.

In Constant's case, his financial ruin and the possibility of several lawsuits drive him to seek an escape by joining the forces of Mars. Both characters break from the paths of their lives out of desperation brought on by ruin.

Once on Mars, their lives are almost literally destroyed by the destruction of their memories and personal identities. With none of their previous social cues or cultural notions to limit or inhibit them, they each begin from scratch to become new people. Every time they seem to gain an inkling of what they were before, they are taken in to have their memories removed again. This process of destruction is also a form of purification for them.

After leaving Mars, the process stops, and they are once again free to become new people. They each spend several years living in remote areas away from social influences that might sway their development. In the case of Constant, just as he approaches a level of self-reliance and action once more by determining to fly the Martian spacecraft from Mercury to Earth, he is crushed again upon reaching Earth and finding that he has become a symbol of pity and wrongdoing. Beatrice is brought alongside him as he is publicly destroyed in Rumfoord's grand religious spectacle.

Exiled on Titan, Beatrice and Constant are again free to exist as individuals, as is their son Chrono. They start over once again, finding a happy and peaceful existence with one another. Vonnegut seems to suggest that such peace is only possible when allowed to develop on its own outside social and cultural influences such as organized religion.

Cycles of destruction and renewal are found throughout the novel. The faith of Rumfoord's new religion is brought about out of the shame following the destruction of the Martian army. Rumfoord himself is constantly being destroyed and transformed as his existence travels throughout the Solar System.

Style

Point of View

Sirens of Titan is written in the third person, related by an omniscient narrator. The omniscient point of view allows the author to describe the inner thoughts and feelings of all the characters. The narrator is telling the story as if looking back from a good deal of time after the events being described, and relates them as if they are already well known to his contemporaries.

Using the omniscient point of view provides Vonnegut with flexibility in outlining the events of the story, which relies on the paths of several disparate characters intertwining, even through space and time. Vonnegut even makes a point of the narrator's omniscience. By having the narrator stop at times and address the reader directly, the author portrays him as an actual person relaying a story and not just a bodiless narrative voice. This technique seems to create some narrative impossibility in the story, as when events are related that nobody except a sole character could have witnessed. The final death vision of Malachi Constant is an example of such an apparent contradiction.

Implied in these contradictions is that the narrator, like the character Winston Niles Rumfoord, actually may be able to travel through time and space and thus be truly omniscient. The narrator may even be Rumfoord himself.

Setting

The setting for *Sirens of Titan* ranges across the solar system and beyond, into the wispy regions of time and space. Much of the action takes place on Earth, in the United States, with a large segment of the story occurring on the planet Mars. The imagined deep caves of Mercury provide the setting for a period of isolation of the main character, Malachi Constant, who from there returns to Earth and eventually travels on to Titan, a moon of Saturn.

The time setting of the events described is some time in the near future, "between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression" (p. 8) as imagined by Vonnegut in 1959. Space travel is possible, and wealthy individuals may own private spacecraft. Popular religions have sprung up everywhere and people seem eager to grab onto whatever they can as objects of faith. By keeping the setting familiar to his readers, Vonnegut's social commentary on subjects such as popular religion can be read as only slight exaggerations of society as Vonnegut views it.

The narration of the events is taking place "less than a century" after the events take place, providing another dimension to the time setting. The story takes place in the future from the viewpoint of the actual readers, but is told in the past tense as if the events took place long ago.



Language and Meaning

The story is told largely in the past tense and in the third person voice. The exception is when the narrator addresses the reader directly, when the language changes to the present tense. Framing the story in this way gives Vonnegut flexibility to provide background information directly, without having to use expository techniques within the story itself. It also supports the pretense, announced at the very beginning of the book, that the events described actually happened from the point of view of the narrator.

Vonnegut inserts phony citations and references to other books that do not exist, which creates a more vivid backdrop for his story. He begins each chapter with a quotation, often purportedly from one of these phony reference books. At times he quotes from the chapter itself, as in Chapter Four when the quoted text appears just lines into the beginning of the chapter. In this instance, the quotation seems useless, and it appears that Vonnegut is parodying the practice of introducing chapters with quotations.

Dialogue is not widely used in the book. Instead, the author relies on long passages of narrative description, with the dialogue between characters sparse and direct.

Vonnegut writes with ironic, sometimes biting humor. His description of the Martian invasion of Earth, complete with Martians with antennae on their heads, is a farcical version of the popular image of space invaders. Vonnegut lampoons popular religion in the climactic scene when Rumfoord goads him into boarding the spaceship for Titan in front of a zealously religious crowd that has been duped by Rumfoord.

Structure

Sirens of Titan is written in twelve chapters plus an epilogue. A brief section at the beginning introduces the nameless narrator who sets the time and place. The first chapter proceeds to bring the three main characters, Malachi Constant, Winston Niles Rumfoord, and Beatrice Rumfoord together. Winston Rumfoord, who travels through time and space, materializing in different places at regular periods, knows the future of Beatrice and Constant, and astonishes them by telling them about it. Vonnegut essentially sketches out the entire arc of the story by having Rumfoord describe the events that will befall them, and indeed this is the path that they both take, despite their every effort to avoid the outcome predicted by Rumfoord.

Vonnegut's ironic sense of humor is evident in creating such a structure, where the outcome is announced boldly at the beginning of the book. As he has only just introduced the main characters, who have not met before, the prediction offered by Rumfoord at the beginning of the book seems nearly as farfetched to the reader as it does to the characters.

But of course Vonnegut, as the author, is in complete control of the outcome of the story, and no possible conclusion can be truly ruled out by the reader. Vonnegut structures the story to follow exactly the path that Rumfoord says, and much of the

enjoyment of the writing comes from learning how he connects the seemingly disparate events into a cohesive narrative.

The story is structured as a frame narrative, where the events are being described after the fact by a narrator that introduces the story and occasionally addresses the reader directly to provide supporting information and bridge the various portions of the text.

Quotes

"The crowd had gathered because there was going to be a materialization. A man and his dog were going to materialize, were going to appear out of thin air - wispily at first, becoming, finally, as substantial as any man and dog alive." Chap. One, p. 8

"Winston Niles Rumfoord was a member of the one true American class. The class was a true one because its limits had been clearly defined for at least two centuries - clearly defined for anyone with an eye for definitions." Chap. One, p. 26

"Malachi Constant lay in the wide gutter of his kidney-shaped swimming pool, sleeping the sleep of a drunkard. There was a quarter of an inch of warm water in the gutter. Constant was fully dressed in blue-green evening shorts and a dinner jacket of gold brocade. His clothes were soaked." Chap. Two, pp. 52-53

"The Magnum Opus Building was a slender, prismatic, twelve-sided shaft, faced on all twelve sides with blue-green glass that shaded to rose at the base. The twelve sides were said by the architect to represent the twelve great religions of the world. So far, no one had asked the architect to name them." Chap. Three, p. 66

"Beatrice was feeling marvelous. She had proved so many good things. She had proved that she was mistress of her own fate, could say no whenever she pleased - and make it stick." Chap. Three, p. 93

"They were an infantry division of ten thousand men, formed in a hollow square on a natural parade ground of solid iron one mile thick. The soldiers stood at attention on orange rust." Chap. Four, p. 97

"When Unk got to the man at the stake, Unk hesitated for just a second - because the red-haired man at the stake looked so unhappy. Then there was a tiny warning pain in Unk's head, like the first deep nip of a dentist's drill. Unk put his thumbs on the red-haired man's windpipe, and the pain stopped right away." Chap. Four, p. 104

"No one seemed to have taken particular notice of the execution. If there had been a lesson in the execution for Unk's squadmates, they were finding the lesson as digestible as Pabulum." Chap. Five, p. 108

"The control box had six buttons and four knobs on it. By manipulating these, Boaz could control anybody who had an antenna in his skull. Boaz could administer pain in any amount to that anybody - could bring him to attention, could make him hear a snare drum, could make him halt, fall in, fall out, salute, attack, retreat, hop, skip, jump . . ." Chap. Five, p. 116

"The population of Phoebe at its height, according to Winston Niles Rumfoord's Pocket History of Mars, was eighty-seven thousand. Every soul and every structure in Phoebe

was directly related to the war effort. The mass of Phoebe's workers were controlled just as the soldiers were controlled, by antenna under their skulls." Chap. Six, p. 134

"This was Chrono's good luck piece. It became as much a part of him as his right hand. His nervous system, so to speak, extended itself into the metal strap. Touch it and you touched Chrono." Chap. Six, p. 143

"She neither stared at Unk nor avoided looking at him. As they told her at the hospital: she had been very, very sick, and she would be very, very sick again if she didn't keep her mind strictly on her work and let other people do the thinking and the worrying. At all costs, she was to keep calm." Chap. Six, p. 156

"When American troops arrived at Boca Raton to fight the Martians, there was nothing left to fight. The civilians, flushed and proud, had taken care of everything nicely. Twenty-three Martians had been hanged from lamp posts in the business district, eleven had been shot dead, and one, Sergeant Brackman, was a grievously wounded prisoner in the jail. The total attacking force had been thirty-five." Chap. Seven, p. 170

"Rumfoord didn't want Unk killed in the war. Rumfoord wanted Unk to stay in some safe place for about two years. And then Rumfoord wanted Unk to appear on Earth, as though by a miracle. Rumfoord was preserving Unk for a major part in a pageant Rumfoord wanted to stage for his new religion." Chap. Seven, p. 176

"The creatures in the caves are translucent. When they cling to the walls, light from the phosphorescent walls comes right through them. The yellow light from the walls, however, is turned, when passed through the bodies of the creatures, to a vivid aquamarine." Chap. Eight, p. 185

"Unk and Boaz had been on Mercury for three Earthling years when Unk found Kazak's footprints in the dust on the floor of a cave corridor. Mercury had carried Unk and Boaz twelve and a half times around the sun." Chap. Nine, p. 198

"Boaz now said it: 'I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm, and I can see I'm doing good, and then I'm doing good for now I'm doing it, and they love me, Unk, as best they can. I found me a home.'" Chap. Nine, pp. 213-14

"There was not a country in the world that did not have graveyards with Earthlings and Martians buried side by side. There was not a country in the world that had not fought a battle in the war of all Earth against the invaders from Mars. All was forgiven." Chap. Ten, p. 216

"There in the space ship, the lemon-yellow suit fit Unk like a coat of paint. The orange question marks on his chest and back clung without a wrinkle. Unk did not yet know that no one else in the world was dressed like him. He assumed that many people had suits like his - question marks and all." Chap. Ten, p. 226

"'You won't stumble, Mr. Constant,' said Rumfoord up in his treetop, reading Constant's mind. 'There is nowhere else for you to go, nothing else for you to do. By putting one

foot in front of the other, while we watch in silence, you will make yourself the most memorable, magnificent, and meaningful human being of modern times." Chap. Eleven, p. 256

"As far as I'm concerned,' said Constant, 'the Universe is a junk yard, with everything in it overpriced. I am through poking around the junk heaps, looking for bargains. Every so-called bargain,' said Constant, 'has been connected by fine wires to a dynamite bouquet.'" Chap. Twelve, p. 290

"Constant swore. One of the vital pieces of information that had disappeared with Rumfoord and died with Salo was how they had managed, in their time, to keep the pool so crystal clean. Ever since Constant had taken over maintenance of the pool, the algae had been building up." Epilogue, p. 309

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the dignity of Boaz. Could he have found happiness anywhere but where he did?

The image of the fountain with ever-widening bowls of water recurs in Constant's memory, and at the beginning and ending of the story. What does the fountain symbolize? Why is it dry at the beginning of the story but full at the end?

Discuss Vonnegut's portrayal of the practice of popular religion in the novel.

How does Vonnegut's use of a narrator who is telling the story from a hundred years beyond the events affect how the reader interprets the story?

Give examples of how Vonnegut uses irony in his writing to comment on society and culture.

Discuss the notion of free will in *Sirens of Titan*. Do any of the characters possess true free will?

How does Beatrice transform over the course of the story?

Vonnegut gives Beatrice Rumfoord and Malachi Constant several names in the story, using each at different points in the characters' development. What meaning does Vonnegut convey through his use of names?

Both Beatrice and Constant have their memories erased more than once while on Mars. How does this affect the development of these characters?

Why does Vonnegut call the novel *Sirens of Titan*? What role does the image of the sirens play in the story?