

The Subtle Knife Study Guide

The Subtle Knife by Philip Pullman

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Plot Summary

The *Subtle Knife* is the second book in the three-volume *His Dark Materials* series and continues the story of the conflict between the Authority, personified by the Church, that demands humility and submission from all creatures and those who rebel against the Authority's control. This book introduces the character of Will Parry, a twelve-year-old boy who stumbles into another world by accident. Will joins Lyra, the protagonist from the first book in the trilogy, and even though they have different goals and objectives at first, they discover that they are both an integral part of the same battle.

The book begins with Will Parry's efforts to keep his vulnerable and mentally unstable mother safe from two men who repeatedly harass them, demanding information about Will's vanished father, arctic explorer John Parry. In trying to flee the thieves after he finds his father's letters, Will accidentally causes the death of one of the thieves. Will finds refuge in another world and meets Lyra who is searching for answers about Dust, a material that may be the cause of human consciousness.

The witch Serafina Pekkala, Lyra's rescuer from a cruel experiment designed to separate children from their daemons, is looking for Lyra. Serafina knew Lyra from adventures in the company of the bear-king Iorek Byrnison. Lee Scoresby, the Texas aeronaut, is also looking for Lyra so he can protect her from the harm that so many mean to do the young girl.

Will and Lyra have stumbled into Cittàgazze, populated only by roving bands of children, two of whom have a secret about the Torre degli Angelica, the four-story tower in the middle of the town. Lyra shows Will her alethiometer, a compass-like device that is always truthful. The pair returns to Oxford, Lyra to search for a scholar who can answer her questions about Dust, and Will to find out information about his father. In Oxford, Sir Charles, an older, obviously important and influential man, spots Lyra in a museum reading the alethiometer. He tries to strike up a conversation, but Lyra is evasive and goes on to find Dr. Mary Malone, a scientist who is working with what she calls Shadows.

Will and Lyra go back to Oxford and Sir Charles steals the alethiometer. He will only give it back in return for a knife in Cittàgazze. Will and Lyra return to Cittàgazze where they must fight for the knife, which has been stolen from its true guardian by the older brother of some of the children. Will loses two fingers of his left hand in the fight.

Will and Lyra steal the alethiometer back, from Sir Charles—no small feat considering Sir Charles is being visited by Mrs. Coulter and Lyra finally recognizes him as Lord Boreal from her world. He has known who she was all along.

Lee Scoresby finds Grumman and makes him promise to protect Lyra. Back in Oxford, Dr. Mary Malone quits the project, contacts the Shadows, destroys the experiment's equipment, and enters the world of Cittàgazze.



Lee and Grumman are perused by Church soldiers, and they crash-land in a gulch. Grumman does what he can with his magic to kill the soldiers, but there's one zeppelin left and Grumman is not well. Lee decides to stay and hold off the soldiers while Grumman goes on to make contact with the bearer of the knife, on the condition that the knife protects Lyra. Grumman is able to leave, but Lee and his daemon Hester are killed.

In the final chapter, Mrs. Coulter finds out why Lyra is important: the girl is to be the new Eve, and Mrs. Coulter knows her own daughter must die to keep mankind from falling. She kills Sir Charles/Lord Boreal, and sends the Specters under her control to attack Will and Lyra. Will and Grumman come face to face and Grumman tells Will everything he needs to know about the knife, and about his own destiny, and urges him to join Lord Asriel. They realize they are father and son, but have only a moment before Grumman is killed by a witch. Will goes back to Lyra, but finds her witch guards have been destroyed by Specters and that Lyra is gone. Two angels appear and urge Will to go to Lord Asriel immediately. Will is left at a point where he must make a decision.



Chapter 1, The Cat and the Hornbeam Trees

Chapter 1, The Cat and the Hornbeam Trees Summary

Will Parry, who is twelve years old, is hurrying his mother down a street. She seems unwilling and unsure of what they are doing, but Will manages to get her to the home of Mrs. Cooper, his former piano teacher. Mrs. Cooper is surprised to see both Will and his mother; Will because she has not seen him in some time and Will's mother because she has made up only one eye, but she invites them inside anyway. Will asks Mrs. Cooper to watch his mother for a few days. He offers very little explanation for his request, but does manage to convey to Mrs. Cooper that there is no one else to look after his mother and that it will not be for long. Mrs. Cooper agrees to take in Mrs. Parry.

Will returns to the home he shares with his mother. He picks up his cat before beginning a search for a "battered green leather writing case." He does not find it at first and, overwhelmed with fatigue, falls asleep. After waking up in the middle of the night, he realizes he knows where it is and that there is someone in the house. As he finds the case in a compartment of the sewing machine, he hears the men who have broken in and who are looking for the case also. One man comes up the stairs to confront Will but trips on the cat and falls backwards down the staircase, and cracks his head. As Will escapes his home, he realizes the man is probably dead. Will had intended to contact the family lawyer—but now a man is dead and Will's plans have changed.

Will recalls how he first began to understand that his mother had something wrong. At first Will believed that a game they played in the grocery store was for fun, then he realized she was making a game out of protecting the both of them from "the enemies." Then he began to understand that the enemies were in her head. But in order to protect her, he never let her know that he knew she had emotional problems. Will's mother would also never tell him much about his father, so Will made up games in which he and his father went on adventures together (since he knew his father was an explorer). One day, his mother told him he would take up his father's mantle. However, men started coming and asking Will's mother questions about his father—and Will understood that the danger was not all in his mother's mind.

So Will has some clothes and his father's letters and is on foot and exhausted when he sees a stand of trees and a cat that looks like Moxie. The cat begins to bat at something in the air that Will cannot see, but then takes a step forward and vanishes into thin air. Will investigates and finds an entrance to another world.

The place is very different from his home in Oxford. It is like a place in the Mediterranean or maybe the Caribbean. It is a harbor town by the edge of a sea, but apparently deserted. Wherever it is, Will feels it is safer than Oxford. He is able to clean up and find food and drink. He finds a place to sleep and is getting ready to enter one of



the bedrooms when he is surprised by a girl who flies at him just as he is opening the door. Will bruises her cheek, hurting her to defend himself. Will is astonished to see the wildcat crouching next to her turn into a stoat after it jumps into her arms. The girl is Lyra, and Lyra is just as astonished that he is "alive" even though he does not have a daemon she can see. They talk and establish that neither of them is from this world. Lyra reveals that she is looking for Dust and for Scholars.

Will prepares some food for them, which surprises Lyra since she has never had to cook for herself. Lyra tells him that he does indeed have a daemon, just not separated from him like Lyra is a separate being from her daemon, Pantalaimon. They learn that they are both from Oxford, but that their Oxfords are very different ones in different worlds.

Will explains to Lyra that cleaning up after they eat is the right thing to do, he goes to bed. Lyra washes some dishes, then slips quietly into Will's room and asks the alethiometer about him. "What is he? A friend or an enemy? The alethiometer answered: He is a murderer." Lyra is content with this and feels safe.

Chapter 1, The Cat and the Hornbeam Trees Analysis

Will's cat, Moxie, saves him from the strangers trying to steal his father's letters. Another cat appears and assists Will by showing him the window that leads him out of Oxford and into another world, generally acting like his daemon. In this first chapter, Will is shown as brave and responsible. He cleans up after himself even when there does not seem to be anyone around who will care, careful to leave things as he found them. Lyra, by contrast, has never performed any housekeeping chores and does not see the point of washing things like a servant. Both children are very different from one another on first glance. They do not immediately join forces and Will assumes they will be going their separate ways.

Will comments many times in the book about how he used to imagine spending time with his father. He has taken up his father's mantle without realizing it as soon as he starts on his journey. He is a young person with too many burdens on his shoulders, and is negotiating not only his own danger-filled world, but now has stumbled upon another one. By contrast, Lyra is brash, argumentative, and seems only barely civilized.

It seems strange that Lyra would feel safe with a murderer and consider one to be "a worthy companion." But consider that the alethiometer confirms the impression Lyra had while she looked at Will as he slept, that he is "savage, and courteous, and unhappy." Whatever violence he is capable of, he's not a coward and he will not lie to her. And Lyra's device assures her that Will is no danger to her. He might kill others, but not her.



Chapter 2, Among the Witches

Chapter 2, Among the Witches Summary

This chapter begins with the point of view of the witch Serafina Pekkala and gives an overview of events that closed out the previous book, *The Golden Compass*. Serafina is looking for Lyra. As she searches, she comes upon a witch's daemon separated from her witch because the witch has been captured by Mrs. Coulter and is being held prisoner on a ship. The captured witch was aligned with the child cutters, but not any longer. Serafina agrees to help the daemon. When she flies down to the boat where the witch is being held, one of the sailors assumes she is an allied witch, so she can move safely about the boat at first without being discovered. Serafina guides the boat to land as per the sailor's orders.

Mrs. Coulter is impatient to torture the captured witch and even though she knows that the witches are no longer allied with her and her party, she does not take measures to investigate why one would have helped guide in the boat. In order to find out what is going on, Serafina makes herself "unseen": not truly invisible, since this is not possible in her world, but rather a way to make herself unnoticeable.

So, disguised by her ability to remain unnoticed, Serafina investigates the ship and looks for the lost witch. She comes to a room with perhaps a dozen people seated around a table. A couple of them glance her way, but due to her powers, they do not see her. Serafina sees Mrs. Coulter and several members of the Church. They are discussing a prophecy about Lyra of which they only know part, in addition to Lyra's amazing skill with the alethiometer. Mrs. Coulter is indignant because a Cardinal cannot believe that she knows nothing of the prophecy associated with her own daughter. Mrs. Coulter responds that even though she is Lyra's mother, she does not know anything, and she leaves the room to question the imprisoned and tortured witch. Everyone follows, including Serafina, who is having trouble keeping herself concealed.

The captured witch is in terrible agony, but despite further torture, is trying not to reveal what she knows about Lyra. Lyra had been tested by picking out a branch of cloud pine, the method and provider of witch flight, and had picked the right one. Still, the witch will not explain the prophecy despite torture. Serafina realizes that she must free her sister witch both to ease her pain and to keep her from revealing the prophecy.

At that moment, the tortured witch's daemon flies into the room and the witch cries out for help from Yambe-Akka, the goddess who comes to the witches before they die. Serafina becomes visible and, smiling, since Yambe-Akka is welcomed when she comes, kisses the witch and delivers a fatal knife wound.

Everyone is confused at Serafina's sudden appearance except for Mrs. Coulter, who orders the others to capture the living witch. Serafina fights her way out and swears that she will one day kill Mrs. Coulter herself.



Serafina visits Dr. Lanselius in the port city of Trollesund to try and get answers. She sees ships coming to Trollesund, more than she has ever seen before. Dr. Lanselius tells her that the Magisterium is assembling an army, many of whom are zombies. The Church does not know what is going on, and there are rumors that Lord Asriel is forming an army. Dr. Lanselius suggests that she find Lord Asriel's former servant, Thorold, and asks him what he thinks his former master is up to. After saving Thorold from a group of cliff-ghasts, Thorold tells her that he believes Lord Asriel is planning a rebellion against the Church and against God, whom they call the Authority, with the aim of destroying the Authority himself.

Serafina returns to her home, the other witches, and the Texan aeronaut Lee Scoresby. Mr. Scoresby joins in on the council as does the queen of the Latvian witches, Ruta Skadi. The witches must decide if they will take sides in the coming battle, or remain neutral. Ruta Skadi urges joining Lord Asriel to fight against the Church. She explains what the Church was doing at Bolvangar; making a permanent cut between children and their daemons. Lee Scoresby relates what he knows about Lyra and the mysterious Dr. Grumman, whose head Lord Asriel purported to show to the Scholars back in Oxford. But Lee thinks Grumman is alive, and that Asriel never had the head of Dr. Grumman. Serafina gives Scoresby a flower by which he can summon her aid should he ever need it and Lee goes off to Nova Zembla to look for Lyra

Chapter 2, Among the Witches Analysis

Mrs. Coulter's motives and feelings can never be taken for granted. She lies so well and so often (like her daughter Lyra), that it is impossible to know her plans or her motives. Since we rarely see things from her perspective, it is equally difficult for the reader to know what she wants. Is she such a servant of the Church, as she describes herself, that she would capture and deliver her own daughter to be killed?

The scope of Lord Asriel's plans is guessed at by many of the characters. He wishes to overthrow the Church by destroying the Authority and this is confirmed by his servant, Thorold, when Serafina questions him, although it is more of an educated guess on Thorold's part.

Ruta Skadi says that Lyra is the one the witches have waited for, and she proved it by choosing the right cloud-pine branch at the house of Dr. Lanselius. Ruta also gives some insight into the Church and its motives, saying the Church wishes to cut out every "natural impulse," and then describing the "cutting" the Church was responsible for at Bolvangar. She also ties it in with violent suppressions of sexuality.



Chapter 3, A Children's World

Chapter 3, A Children's World Summary

Will and Lyra see two humans, the first in this new world. They are children, Angelica and her brother Paolo. They say the name of their town, Cittàgazze, and the younger child, Paolo, starts to talk about their brother, Tullio, but Angelica strikes him to keep him from talking. Angelica explains about Specters, evil creatures that feed on grownups but do no harm to children.

As they make plans to return to Oxford, Will explains to Lyra that he is hiding and then, angrily, tells her he has his own tasks to perform in his world and if she goes with him to look for scholars, then she will have to be inconspicuous. If she gets in his way, he says he will kill her and Lyra believes him, her knowledge of his personality reinforced by alethiometer readings. Will instructs Lyra to clean up and hides his father's letters under the mattress where he has slept.

Will observes the town of Cittàgazze before they go back to his world and notices how it is run down, but was obviously once a very splendid place. Both Will and Lyra notice a four-story tower in the middle of a square and are interested, but they keep going.

Lyra and Will enter Will's world, and Lyra is immediately hit by a car. She is not hurt but she has never seen automobile traffic like this before and did not understand the danger. More importantly to Lyra, the alethiometer is unharmed. Will concocts identities for them and a story as cover to keep the police from finding him. Again, he warns her to stay inconspicuous.

Chapter 3, A Children's World Analysis

Will and Lyra discuss the technology and science of their various worlds and have a moment of shared understanding while each explains the meaning of "electric" and "anbaric." It is the first time they connect mentally and emotionally. This moment does not last long, however, as the pair are soon at odds over things like hair washing, and paying for what they have used. Will is very clear with Lyra that he expects her to behave in a ways so as to not draw attention, and threatens her if she causes any problems for him. The two are clearly uneasy allies, and hey are both intrigued by the tower even though they cannot say why and do not speak to each other about their attraction to the building.

Lyra feels vulnerable when they go to Will's Oxford. It is enough like her own Oxford to be familiar, but the differences are many. These differences that she does not expect and must struggle to integrate make this other Oxford a frightening place.



Chapter 4, Trepanning

Chapter 4, Trepanning Summary

Will calls the family lawyer from a pay phone in Oxford to try and find out if his father is alive. The lawyer is unwilling to give out much information over the phone and tries to convince Will to come into the office or to have his mother call. The only information the lawyer is willing to divulge is that his father has disappeared—it is unknown if John Parry is alive or dead. The money to support Will and his mother comes from a family trust fund. The lawyer tells Will that his father's disappearance was a matter of public record and suggests he look up newspaper articles in the library to find out what happened when his father was exploring in Alaska. Will sends a postcard to his mother and begins searching for a public library, taking care to disguise himself by purchasing a clipboard and some pens so that when he goes to the library, he will look like a student working on a special project. He finds some old newspaper stories about the expedition and his father's disappearance.

Lyra, meanwhile, is searching for a place to read the alethiometer and taking the measure of what she calls a "mock-Oxford." It is hard for Lyra to adjust to seeing people who look fully alive and human, yet do not have visible daemons. She goes into a museum and sees objects and artifacts that are familiar to her, identical, in fact, to people and objects familiar to her from her time at Bolvangar. She also sees a case containing some human skulls that had been trepanned: holes drilled into the skulls where the bone had re-grown, indicating that the people had survived the process. She asks the alethiometer about them and the compass tells her that the skulls are over 33,000 years old, the people were shamans, and they had holes drilled to let the gods in - and that there was lots of Dust around those skulls. However, Lyra has been observed all this time by a man who calls himself Sir Charles.

Sir Charles tries to get Lyra to come with him, but she will not even though he seems clean and friendly. Pan, inside a pocket, is warning her against it. But she does take Sir Charles' card and goes on in search of a Scholar. She asks the alethiometer more questions and it tells her that her most important task is to help Will find his father, and she is instructed to tell the Scholar the truth.

Lyra finds Dr. Mary Malone. Dr. Malone is distraught since the funding for her research has just been cut. Dr. Malone is also astonished as Lyra begins to tell her what she knows about Dust, and about Lord Asriel's fight against the Church. Dr. Malone explains about her research into what makes gravity work; dark matter being the name for something that must exist but that no one has seen or recognized in any measurable form. Dr. Malone says that Shadows, her name for Dust, has consciousness and that she can communicate with the Shadows via her computer. Dr. Malone explains that she has discovered that Shadows collect around objects which have been made by humans (a ruler as opposed to an un-carved piece of wood), and that the Shadows are present in skulls between thirty and forty thousand years old. Lyra shows Dr. Malone the



alethiometer and uses the computer for Dr. Malone the same way she uses her compass. The computer (also known as the Cave) responds in pictures on the screen. Dr. Malone asks Lyra where she comes from and Lyra explains about her Oxford. Dr. Malone believes her. She asks Lyra to come back the next day. Suspicious, Lyra agrees to do so.

Will consults an archaeologist who can tell him a little bit about his father's expedition. However, one of the men who broke into his house (the one who lived) has been posing as a journalist and asking the same set of questions. Will leaves the archaeologists office without giving away that he is the son of one of the members of the exploring party. Then Will sees the man, tall with pale eyebrows, headed towards the family lawyer's office. Will quietly drifts away.

Chapter 4, Trepanning Analysis

Lyra's knowledge about Dust coincides exactly with Dr. Mary Malone's, and Dr. Malone is astonished that a child would come in out of nowhere and begin talking about elementary particles and human consciousness. Dr. Malone calls dark matter "Shadows" and her studies indicate that Shadows are particles of consciousness—which sounds too crazy to fund, hence the end of her research. Her description of asking questions of the Shadows sounds very much like the technique Lyra uses to read the alethiometer. Lyra discovers from reading her alethiometer that Dr. Malone was once a nun, and is surprised to see her out in the world, a thing that would never happen in Lyra's Oxford.

Will and Lyra's ways of being are contrasted once again in this chapter. Lyra is acting on the orders of her alethiometer ("Do not lie to the Scholar") and tells everything she knows. She makes little effort to hide herself (Sir Charles easily spots her in the museum) and is very open and forthright with people about what they should do. When Dr. Malone says that she began working as a scientist so she would no longer have to worry about issues of good and evil, Lyra sternly tells her that she must think about those things. Will, meanwhile, is very careful to reveal nothing about himself to the adults he must deal with, telling the librarian and the archaeologist that he is with a school group and working on a special project. While Lyra personally rejects Sir Charles' offer, Will moves slowly and quietly away when he realizes someone is on his trail.



Chapter 5, Airmail Paper

Chapter 5, Airmail Paper Summary

As two police officers "with suspicious eyes" come towards Will and Lyra, Lyra throws them off the scent by explaining that she and Will are siblings and are trying to find a museum. Lyra explains to Will that she did a good thing and made the policemen go away, but Will is furious at the way she drew attention to herself. He accuses her of not being serious. Lyra counters that she is indeed being serious and is helping him to find his father. Then she demonstrates how she uses the alethiometer. She lets Will know that his mother is safe, that Will took some letters, and confirms that the thief in the house is dead. Will is angered also by the lack of privacy, but Lyra assures him that she would never try to find out anything about anyone without permission, and that she only did so when they first met in Cittàgazze because she did not know if she could trust him or not. They both agree to trust one another, and Lyra promises not to give him away. She reveals how she inadvertently caused the death of a friend, Roger, due to carelessness.

Will and Lyra go to the movies to use up some time before they can go back to the window. Lyra has never seen a movie and is entranced. Once in Cittàgazze, they see the children of the town attacking a cat at the base of the tower. Will saves the cat and Lyra sees a young man up in the tower looking down at them.

Will reads his father's letters. He learns that his father, John Parry, was looking for an "anomaly" in Alaska, a kind of doorway to another world—and that he was not the only one. John Parry found out from one of the Eskimo that the Soviets had also been looking. Parry relates the description of a window to another world that he heard from the Eskimo.

Chapter 5, Airmail Paper Analysis

The differences in personalities and coping strategies between Will and Lyra come to the surface as the pair argues. Will thinks Lyra draws too much attention to herself. Lyra takes offense at this idea. There does not seem to be much room for compromise.

Will's father was also searching for Dust or Shadows, but did not use either of those words. John Parry was seeking an "anomaly," and his letters home resonate with the findings of Dr. Mary Malone. Will recognizes the description of the anomaly. Most importantly, Will gets confirmation that he is indeed on to something, the same something that his father searched for. Recall what Will said earlier, that his mother had told him he would take up his father's mantle.



Chapter 6, Lighted Fliers

Chapter 6, Lighted Fliers Summary

Lee Scoresby arrives in Nova Zembla in search of Lyra and information about Stanislaus Grumman. The men in the bar of a hotel tell Lee what they have seen and what rumors they have heard. Grumman was considered a shaman by residents of Nova Zembla and had his skull trepanned. The men confirm that Grumman was interested in studying and measuring star light and the aurora, and was also a formidable man. Lee is directed to the observatory. He travels there with a Tarter dog sled runner who explains that the changes happening in the world, like the shifting of the magnetic poles, happened before, long in the past, and that it is part of a huge war that is going to happen, just like it did many thousands of years ago.

The astronomers at the observatory tell Lee Scoresby a little more about Grumman. Among the astronomers is a representative of the Magisterium, a required staff member at any place where "philosophical research" is being conducted. The representative, a Skraeling, does not say much, and his job is to suppress rumor and be on the look out for heresy. Lee leaves the observatory knowing very little more than when he arrived, but he and Hester are attacked by the Skraeling and his owl daemon. The Skraeling calls Lee Scoresby a heretic, lets him know that the Magisterium has been alerted, and then dies, refusing any kind of first aid. Lee feels bad about having given the man a mortal wound even though Hester reminds him it was in self-defense. He returns to the station with his guide, who suggests he continue the search for Grumman by finding the tribe that he lived with.

Meanwhile, the witches are searching and encounter Specters roaming about the land. They witness an attack on a group of travelers and watch in confusion and horror as two adult riders in the group run away, leaving the children behind. However, the Specters ignore the children and consume the adults, somehow eating the spirit while leaving the body intact. The witches are able to talk to one of the people who left the group on horseback while the Specters attacked. He explains that, by law, any group must consist of a man and a woman on horseback who escape while the Specters attack, then return to take care of the children. Serafina and the witches stay with the group and learn from the man about what has happened in their world. 300 years earlier, the Specters came into a world that had been bustling and happy. Some think it was the work of the philosophers who lived in the Torre degli Angeli, the Tower of Angels, in Cittàgazze. According to the man, the Specters arrived when the philosophers learned how to open ways from one world into another. Society has fallen apart since any adult could be taken by the Specters at any time. The people survive on what the philosophers can steal from other worlds and gangs of children, safe from the Specters they cannot see, roam the countryside and find food for adults. He also says that angels have been seen heading north, and that he himself saw one who had been wounded or killed after a battle he heard one night while hiding from Specters, and he thinks that a war is coming. He points out a passing band of angels.



Ruta Skadi follows the angels. She catches up with them and demands that they lead her to the place they are going, and asks if they are journeying to join up with Lord Asriel and if so, why. They are going, they explain, because they have been called. Ruta Skadi accompanies them as they pass into another world by an open door that she does not see, and then on to the exterior of Lord Asriel's fortress.

Chapter 6, Lighted Fliers Analysis

Forces are at work and some kind of movement is taking place in the world; indeed, in every world. The magnetic poles are shifting and compasses can no longer be trusted. Men see angels in the sky flying north.

The Specters do not attack adults physically, although they are compared to vampires. They do not attack the bodies of people and mutilate them. The angels are beings with physical bodies, however different from humans, and who are very old. Angels are compared to the witches, who live a very long time compared to humans. Ruta Skadi thinks she is commanding the angels when she joins them and does not understand that they consider her to be very young and immature, the way witches consider humans to be young and immature.

"Philosophical research" is the same thing as science. In worlds like Lyra's, where the Magisterium and the Church are in power, the word "science" does not seem to exist. It is never used, at any rate, and the concept is different, as is the overall technology. Zeppelins and hot air balloons are the preferred methods of air transportation



Chapter 7, The Rolls-Royce

Chapter 7, The Rolls-Royce Summary

Lyra talks to some children in Cittàgazze and they explain about the Specters. The children say that there is no one in the Torre degli Angeli, but Lyra can tell they are lying.

While Will sleeps, Lyra returns to his world to talk to Dr. Malone again. She stops off at the Tower, but can only go in short ways before fear drives her and Pan back out again. Once in Oxford, she goes to see Dr. Malone. Something is wrong. Dr. Malone has visitors, a man and a woman who say they are inspectors. Lyra lies at first while they question her, but they trick her into admitting she knows Will. Lyra escapes with the help of Dr. Malone who manages to get in the way as the tall man with the white eyebrows tries to catch Lyra.

As she steps out of her hiding place after escaping from Dr. Malone's lab, Sir Charles comes by in his blue Rolls Royce. She accepts a ride from Sir Charles, who drops her off near the window to Cittàgazze. He reminds her to take her rucksack.

Will is re-reading his father's letters when Lyra runs up, beside herself with anguish. Sir Charles stole the alethiometer and Lyra also tells Will what happened with Dr. Malone. Then Lyra tells Will that the alethiometer told her to stop looking for Dust, and to help Will find his father. Will is very angry and Lyra feels his displeasure. However, she has Sir Charles' card and therefore can find where he lives. Will makes her understand that getting the alethiometer back will not be as easy as sneaking in and stealing it, but they go to the house because that is all they can do.

Sir Charles welcomes them into his home. Yes, he has the alethiometer and no, he will not give it back. Lyra explodes with rage at him, telling how much she wants him dead, how much she hates him and how he is worse than her mother. Sir Charles is apparently unmoved by her display of rage. Will sees Sir Charles' daemon, a snake, which shows itself only for a moment. Then Sir Charles tells them what he will trade for the alethiometer—it is a knife and someone in the Torre degli Angeli in Cittàgazze has it. Bring it, and he will swap.

Chapter 7, The Rolls-Royce Analysis

The children of Cittàgazze tell Lyra a story that matches the one the adult rider told the witches: the Philosophers of the Torre degli Angelis are somehow responsible for the arrival of the Specters. One of the Cittàgazze children tells a garbled version of the hunt for subatomic particles that echoes and mirrors the scientific searches of Dr. Mary Malone, Lord Asriel, and the Magisterium.

Lyra suffers several consequences for her actions in this chapter. Lyra makes a mistake when questioned. Her overconfidence in her ability to lie and fool grownups gets the



better of Pan trying to tell her that there was something wrong. When she is lying to Sir Charles, she cannot recall which lie she has told him about who she is and where she is staying. As it will soon turn out, Sir Charles knows exactly who she is and tolerates her lying to put her at ease so he can steal the alethiometer. She also comes clean to Will that she was not supposed to be looking for Dust, but supposed to be helping Will find his father but she ignored the instrument's instructions.

Further contrast between Will and Lyra is shown in their interaction with Sir Charles. While Lyra curses and spits, Will stays quiet and observes the layout of the room. Their differences serve them well, however, as Lyra's usual bad behavior is a distraction. The snake, of course, is Sir Charles' daemon, meaning he is from Lyra's world, and has probably known who she was from the moment he saw her.



Chapter 8, The Tower of Angels

Chapter 8, The Tower of Angels Summary

Sir Charles has his chauffeur drive the children back to the window. He tells them that the person in the tower who has the knife will not want to give it up since it keeps him safe from Specters. Sir Charles tells Will not to bother coming back if he comes without the knife.

When Will tells Lyra about Sir Charles' daemon, Lyra once again feels like she has seen him somewhere, but she cannot remember where. Lyra tells Will that she saw a young man in the tower and that she thinks it is Angelica and Paolo's brother. They send Pan up to look around. Pan reports back that he has seen a young man dancing around in the tower, holding a knife. Will and Lyra ascend the steps of the tower and first peek into the room where the young man is dancing with the knife—except that he is not dancing. He is thrusting and jabbing the air and seems quite mad. Will and Lyra keep going and enter a kind of glassed-in greenhouse at the top where they are surprised to find an old man with his hands tied and his face battered. The man, Giacomo Paradisi, is the current bearer of the knife and he tells Will and Lyra that the young man has stolen it from him. At that moment, the young man comes in and Will must fight him.

It is a terrible battle, with Will fighting bare-handed against Paola and Angelica's brother who wields the knife. The young man is bigger and older, and has also gone insane. Will wins the battle and the young man runs away—but Will has been very badly hurt. He has lost the little and ring fingers of his left hand and he is bleeding. Lyra applies a tourniquet and Will sees his own fingers on the floor, "curled like a bloody quotation mark." He laughs and Lyra makes him get up and walk to a small room where Mr. Paradisi keeps medicine. He gives Will some brandy and applies some ointment, but Will can tell the ointment is simply ordinary antibiotic cream.

While Will is being treated, Lyra watches as Paolo and Angelica's brother succumbs to the Specters. The sister and brother look up at the tower and call to Lyra, telling her they will kill her for what she has done to their brother.

Mr. Paradisi explains to Will that he is now the bearer of the knife, just as Mr. Paradisi was before, and shows that he too has lost the same fingers. He cautions Will and Lyra against trusting Sir Charles and tells them that Will must keep the knife. Will examines the knife and sees that it is finely crafted and that the blade is unique. Mr. Paradisi explains that one edge of the blade can cut anything and that other edge cuts through to other worlds, and that the mind is just as important as the blade. Will struggles to cut and is distracted by thoughts of his mother. Lyra's daemon, Pantalaimon, sees Will's anguish and takes the shape of a wolfhound to comfort the boy. Lyra understands that Will must be in the same place mentally as she is when she uses the alethiometer and when Dr. Malone connects with Shadows. Will learns to open by getting his mind in the



right frame. Lyra helps him to deal with the pain from his severed fingers as he learns to close, since the pain impedes his concentration.

Giacomo Paradisi explains that the Specters' arrival in the world is the fault of the philosophers of the Guild of the Torre degli Angeli. Paradisi also explains that he was the one who left the window open into Will's world in order to trick a man into it so that he would be eaten by the Specters. He tells Will the four rules of the knife that he remembers, and tells the children he is going to poison himself rather than be eaten by Specters. As they take their leave of the old man, Lyra is sad and Will says they will steal the alethiometer back.

Chapter 8, The Tower of Angels Analysis

When Pan flies away to look in the tower, Lyra gasps in agony. She explains to Will that daemons cannot be far from their people, because it hurts too much. This gives Will (and the reader) a much deeper understanding of what it means for someone from Lyra's world to be parted from their daemon.

The people of the world of Cittàgazze can no longer grow or manufacture anything since Specters destroy all of the adults. The only medicine Mr. Paradisi has to treat Will's wound must have been stolen from another world, as the two travelers explain to the witches in a previous chapter.

The knife handle is decorated with an angel design. The knife comes into Will's possession in the Torre degli Angeli (the Tower of Angels), and angels are joining Lord Asriel's war against the Church. Lyra recognizes the material out of which the blade is constructed. It looks just like the knife that was going to be used to cut Lyra and Pan apart. This is a reference to the first book of the series, *The Golden Compass*, which tells the story of the Church's experiments with severing children from their daemons. Will does not want the responsibility of being the bearer and tries to protest. It is not the first time he will feel fear and anger over the role he has been thrust into. Giacomo Paradisi explains that he is the one who opened the doorway between his world and Will's Oxford in order to trick a man into being eaten by Specters. Paradisi does not specifically name Sir Charles, but that is the implication since Sir Charles wants the knife.



Chapter 9, Theft

Chapter 9, Theft Summary

Will and Lyra rest and clean up at the café in Cittàgazze that serves as their temporary home. Will asks Lyra to keep his father's letters in her rucksack. The cat accompanies them back to Oxford. Will has mastered the art of cutting with the knife, and he cuts directly through to the grounds outside of Sir Charles's house, then makes another cut through to Cittàgazze, from where he will make a final cut into Sir Charles's study. While Will is gone, Lyra waits and watches as Sir Charles returns with a guest: her mother, Mrs. Coulter.

Will enters the study but the alethiometer is not in the cabinet where Sir Charles placed it earlier. Lyra goes through the windows to catch up and tell him that Mrs. Coulter is with Sir Charles and that now she knows who he is: Lord Boreal from her world, and that he has known who she was the whole time. While Lyra stays in Cittàgazze and Will is hidden behind the sofa, the two adults come in and begin to talk. Will is fascinated by the sound of Mrs. Coulter's voice and wants to see her face.

Mrs. Coulter tells Sir Charles/Lord Boreal that Lord Asriel is assembling an army while he tells her about the openings to the worlds, and about Specters and their inability to hurt children. This information excites Mrs. Coulter a great deal and she talks about the witch who almost revealed the prophecy about Lyra. Mrs. Coulter also has two bodyguards who have "undergone intercision" and have no daemons, and Sir Charles/Lord Boreal wonders what effect, if any, Specters would have on them.

Sir Charles/Lord Boreal explains how he came to have power in this world. Will listens as he hears his father spoken of. Then Sir Charles brings out the alethiometer and Will sees Mrs. Coulter's daemon. He instructs Lyra to run back to Oxford through the windows and throw stones to distract the adults so he can steal the alethiometer back. Lyra does so, breaking a window and giving Will the moments he needs to grab the device. But as he does, the monkey daemon sees him and almost gets through before he can close the window. Will returns to the other window in Cittàgazze to rescue Lyra in Oxford. Mrs. Coulter and Sir Charles are very close to finding her when the cat, all but forgotten, leaps out of the bushes and attacks the monkey which almost had its claws in Lyra.

Together, Will and Lyra go back to the café, Lyra promising to help Will find his father as she helps him walk.

Chapter 9, Theft Analysis

Will no longer feels guilty about not paying for the things he uses in Cittàgazze. His life has taken a dramatic turn as he becomes a warrior.



The cat that attacks Mrs. Coulter's daemon before it can capture Lyra is acting like Will's daemon, according to Lyra. Will's own cat, Moxie, tripped one of the men hunting for Will and his father's letters.

At the end of the chapter, Lyra wants to help Will to rest and recover. About one-third of the way through the book, she has changed from the girl who wouldn't wash her own hair or cook to someone who wants to tie bandages and make omelets for someone she cares about.



Chapter 10, The Shaman

Chapter 10, The Shaman Summary

Lee Scoresby goes in search of Grumman. The world is continuing to change and the hunters and fishermen cannot catch the animals they once did. Lee travels up the Yenisei River to find Grumman's village, which he does. The villagers have been expecting someone to take Grumman to another world, but tell him that the man they call Jopari is sick. Dr. Grumman emerges from his hut with his osprey daemon, and Lee tells him about his search for Lyra. Grumman explains that the name "Jopari" is his own name, John Parry, and confirms that Lee is indeed supposed to take him to another world, and then shows Lee a ring that belonged to Lee's mother. Grumman explains about his expedition to Alaska where he and two of his companions wandered into another world. The companions were destroyed by Specters, but Grumman escaped to another place, coming to the present world where he met his daemon, gained membership to a scientific academy, and devoted himself to study since he could not get back to his wife and child. John Parry explains that he wants to help Lord Asriel, and he summoned Lee Scoresby to take him to Asriel and help him in his rebellion against the Church, and to destroy the Specters by gaining possession of the subtle knife. He also knows that he is gravely ill and will not live much longer.

Lee disagrees with Parry, saying he sought out the explorer because he wants to help Lyra. Lee makes Parry promise that Lyra will come under the protection of the subtle knife, and he will help Parry—and asks him to swear by whatever made him say no to the witch who was in love with him. Parry agrees, and clears the weather so Lee can navigate his balloon.

When they reach the port, things have changed again. An army that serves the Magisterium has commandeered everything. Lee's balloon has been spoken for, but he shows the ring he took from the finger of the Skraeling who tried to kill him at the observatory. John Parry calls up a wind, but just as they are casting off, soldiers try to stop them. Of the four men helping Lee ascend, two let go of the ropes but two hang on when they hear the soldiers, and let go too late to save themselves, dropping to the ground to their deaths.

Chapter 10, The Shaman Analysis

Stanislaus Grumman is really John Parry and therefore Will's father Lee tells Grumman about events that happened in the first book, *The Golden Compass*, including the time Lord Asriel showed the Jordan College scholars what he said was Grumman's head in order to get funding to mount an expedition to the north.

Grumman/John Parry does not explain how he came to have possession of Lee's mother's silver and turquoise ring and his explanations confirm for the reader that he is



Will Parry's father. However, Lee is looking for Lyra and does not know Will, so the connection is not significant to him.

John Parry agrees to protect Lyra and swears by the love he has for his wife which caused him to turn down the love of a witch. In an earlier chapter, some of the other explorers who know John Parry as Grumman feel that he was foolish to turn down the love of the witch, perhaps for his own personal safety. This will come into play in a critical moment when Will and his father reconnect



Chapter 11, The Belvedere

Chapter 11, The Belvedere Summary

Back in Cittàgazze, Lyra continues to do the best she can to take care of Will. Lyra tells Will about being threatened by Angelica and describes how Tullio behaved before being eaten by the Specters. Will thinks that Specters maybe came from his world originally. Will wonders what Sir Charles and Mrs. Coulter are up to, and Will and Lyra discuss the bodyguards who have had their daemons cut away and how they might be immune to Specters. Lyra finds out from the alethiometer that Will's mother is safe. Before she can ask about his father, the children of Cittàgazze approach the tower. They have guns and are wild and screaming. Will and Lyra do not have time to cut and look for a safe world, so they make their way to a small circular temple, the belvedere, to take shelter and try to hold off the pack of Cittàgazze children. The local children are serious about killing Will and Lyra, and even have a gun. The children start to climb an iron staircase, which Will can cut with the knife. Even though they have suffered injuries, the children are still determined to attack, and begin scaling the wall of the building. Lyra uses an iron bar to push Angelica back, and Will is prepared to fight, one-to-one, with one of the boys. The fight is interrupted by the arrival of Serafina Pekkala's daemon. A group of witches arrive and shoot their arrows, making the Cittàgazze children retreat. The witches cannot land, however, because they will be destroyed by the Specters. However, Serafina and the others lead Will and Lyra to some temporary safety. All this time, Will is suffering from his wound and every step is painful. He can no longer force himself to move quickly.

The witches notice that the Specters are steering clear of Will and he explains that it is because of the knife. He is still weak. Serafina says she will cure him with a spell and gives him a potion to help him sleep. Lyra tells her how she and Will came together.

Chapter 11, The Belvedere Analysis

Tullio began counting bricks before the Specters destroyed him, similar to the behavior displayed by Will's mother when she would obsessively count or touch objects. Will's wound is especially cruel in that when he hears good news about his mother and relaxes, the pain in his hand intensifies. The children of Cittàgazze are violent beyond anything Lyra has seen before in people her own age, but Will has seen this sort of mob behavior before. All of the children in this story are ready to fight to the death. All of the children have also been taking care of themselves for some time; the Cittàgazze kids because they have never known a time without Specters since the creatures have lived in their world for 300 years, Will because of his mother, and Lyra because she has more or less raised herself with minimal adult interference.

Will confirms with that the daemons of Lyra's world do not change shape after their humans reach a certain age. This is a very important clue in the motives of Mrs. Coulter and the Church.



Chapter 12, Screen Language

Chapter 12, Screen Language Summary

Dr. Mary Malone is trying to convince her colleague, Dr. Oliver Payne, that Lyra's extraordinary visit is true. She mentions that a policeman came around asking questions about Lyra and Will. Dr. Payne listens, but does not quite believe it and has had a job offer somewhere else. Sir Charles unexpectedly drops in for a visit. He offers to see what he can do and Dr. Malone is excited. Then Dr. Payne asks Sir Charles what they would need to do, and Dr. Malone sees some kind of understanding pass between the two men. The catch is that Sir Charles will be in charge of the direction of the research. Dr. Malone objects, but Dr. Payne silences her. He also begins to backpedal on his upcoming move to Geneva. There is a catch, however. Sir Charles wants the experiments to concentrate on manipulating consciousness and work on the alternate world theory. He also wants the girl, the "antique scientific instrument, surely stolen," and the boy. Sir Charles says that the boy is wanted for murder and that the two of them have been seen together.

Dr. Malone crosses her arms as she listens to this offer and to Sir Charles' insistence that she turn over the children to him. Sir Charles gives a card to Dr. Payne, who takes it, and puts one down on the table in front of Dr. Malone, who leaves hers untouched. Dr. Payne berates her for her uncooperative attitude. Payne is willing to reject the Geneva job since nothing is signed or definite. Malone objects that the research will now be controlled by defense (the military) and she wants nothing to do with it. Payne points out that if she stays, she might be able to control the direction, but Malone rejects it all and leaves. When she is gone, Dr. Payne picks up the phone, presumably to call Sir Charles.

That night, Dr. Malone returns to the lab but is challenged by a security officer. There has never been a security officer before. He allows her admittance and she goes to the computer and begins typing, something she has not done before when trying to communicate with the Shadows. "ASK A QUESTION" appears on the screen. She begins to have a conversation with the Shadows, which confirm her beliefs and urge her to ask more questions. When she asks what they are, they respond that they are angels.

There follows a series of questions and answers between Dr. Malone, and Shadows/Dust/Angels. They make it very clear they can read her mind by quoting from the St. Augustine passage that has just run through Dr. Malone's mind. The Angels tell Dr. Malone to find the boy and the girl, and to "play the serpent." They give her directions to the window through which Will and Lyra have come and gone from Will's Oxford to Cittàgazze. Finally, she is directed in no uncertain terms to destroy the equipment so that the enemies will not take it. She does so, erasing the program and physically destroying the computer before leaving.



Then Dr. Malone goes to Sunderland Road with a packed bag of provisions and an identification card that states she is "Dr. Olivia Payne." The guard asks her if she knows Dr. Mary Malone, that they are looking for her and want to detain her. The guard takes one more look at her ID and lets her in the tent. Dr. Malone has fulfilled the command

Chapter 12, Screen Language Analysis

Lyra's visit provides Dr. Malone with more evidence for her theory that humans became conscious about 30 to 40 thousand years ago. Sir Charles/Lord Boreal delivers a long speech that shifts from what he can do for the research project to what he expects the project to be. He finishes by threatening Dr. Malone, implying without saying that she has no choice but to turn Lyra and Will over to him without contacting the police.

Dr. Payne has been taken in by the offer of money right away. He has no loyalty to Dr. Malone or the project and offers her several justifications to stay on the project. He is tempted and he succumbs to temptation, obviously deciding to take Sir Charles up on his offer and to go back on his obligation to Geneva. Dr. Malone is having none of it, and, in a simple act symbolic of the step she is about to take, removes her lab coat and leaves the building.

When Dr. Malone talks to the Shadows/Dust/Angels using the computer, it takes a tone similar to the one the Alethiometer takes with Lyra. It answers in short sentences and gives direct commands. Dr. Malone has also rejected the Church in her own world, having once been a nun, but left the religious life when it conflicted with the understanding of the world she gained through her education.



Chapter 13, Æsahætter

Chapter 13, Æsahætter Summary

The witches work a spell to heal Will's wounds and prepare a medicine. Serafina splits open a tree sapling and then heals it with the potion. She captures a rabbit, cuts it open, and also heals the wound cut with the knife. Will sleeps under a blanket of leaves, next to Lyra, and in the morning he looks to Serafina's face for some sign that the medicine is working, but he cannot tell what she thinks.

The witches, Lyra and Will continue on their trip to find Will's father. It is hard going for Will who is still weak from all he has been through. Pan tries to convince Lyra to ask the alethiometer about Will's father, but Lyra says they have to wait.

Lyra and Pan argue about what they have both done up to this point, about Will's father, and what they should be doing. Lyra talks about how shocked she was at the way the kids acted in Cittàgazze; she expected that from adults, but not other children. However Will has seen it before, when some boys from school attacked his mother—Will retaliated by breaking one boy's arm. He apologized to the teachers and the boy to keep his mother safe from the authorities, and the boys left him alone since they knew how much he could hurt them.

Will explains more about his life—how he wanted to find his father, how he could not have friends, how he accidentally killed a man. Both Will and Lyra think about how they have been brought together by so many seemingly small events. They travel on, asking the alethiometer if they are going the right way. They buy food and clothing from a village, the witches nearby but staying out of sight. Will's hand begins bleeding again. When Will thinks Lyra is asleep, he talks to Pan but Lyra hears every word.

Lee Scoresby has been sighted, and this information gets the attention of Juta Kamainen, the witch who loved Stanislaus Grumman. Serafina wanted to keep Juta from killing Grumman, but she is distracted and does not notice the change in her sister witch upon hearing the news.

Ruta Skadi arrives, being chased by a cliff ghast. Will kills the monster and Ruta tells everyone what she has seen: the fortress of Lord Asriel. He has asked the witches to join him and Ruta wanted to pledge their support, but knew she needed to talk to her sisters first. She also overheard cliff ghastrs discussing something they call the Æsahætter, the World-Destroyer, and how much food there will be for them once it does its work. Serafina tells Ruta that they must stay with Will and help him find his father. They also know that there is a destiny connected with Lyra, but are unsure as to its exact nature.



While Serafina and Ruta talk, angels arrive and cluster around Lyra and Will. They do not disturb the sleeping pair, but continue on their way. Ruta leaves to alert the other witches to the battle that will soon take place.

Chapter 13, *Æsahætter* Analysis

Pan and Lyra take different positions about asking the alethiometer about Will's father, but instead of Pan urging restraint and Lyra forging ahead, it is the other way around. They also discuss the events that sent them on their journeys and adventure. They reference the retiring room at Jordan College and how Lord Asriel was almost poisoned.

Will offers some theories about Specters and why he thinks they come from his world, comparing his mother's obsessive acts with those of Tullio before the Specters got him.

There is more discussion about Lyra's importance in the upcoming war between the Authority and Lord Asriel as the plot keeps nudging towards the problem the Church has with children. There are also several references to adult sexuality in this chapter, including Jute Kamaiman's anger over her rejection by Stanislaus Grumman and Ruta Skadi's relationships with Lord Asriel. Ruta Skadi specifically states that Lyra is the child of Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel and wishes that she had a child with him. At this point, no one knows that the *Æsahætter*, the World-Destroyer, is the subtle knife that Will carries.



Chapter 14, Alama Gulch

Chapter 14, Alama Gulch Summary

Lee and Grumman sail over Cittàgazze and Grumman explains about the Specters and the children. Lee wants to help a child who is very close to being eaten by the Specters, but Grumman insists that he keep going. Lee reminds Grumman of his promise that the knife will be used to protect Lyra. Grumman says that the knife will protect everyone.

Lee's balloon is spotted and he flies faster to try and outrun the enemies even though he knows this is not possible. Zeppelins show up and Lee explains to Grumman that they will have to land soon in the hills. Grumman causes a storm to blow in and a bolt of lightning strikes the zeppelin, causing it to catch on fire. However, they are still being pursued.

Lee is landing in less-than-ideal conditions and warns Dr. Grumman that he will have to jump soon. Lee lets out the gas and throws out a grapnel so the balloon will catch on the branch of a tree. The basket catches high up in the trees and after waiting a few moments to see how securely they are tethered, Lee lets out a rope so that he and Grumman can climb down. They both hear the zeppelins above as they reach the ground, and Lee climbs back up to retrieve their supplies from the balloon basket. Grumman, who always carries matches, has prepared a fire which they must quickly put out so as not to attract attention.

During the night, Lee seems to have strange dreams of witnessing a Specter devour one of the Zeppelin pilots and the subsequent wreck of the Zeppelin. Then he dreams he is a bird participating in the sinking of another zeppelin. In the middle of these dreams, he wakes and Hester tells him he is not dreaming, but having visions.

With his magic, Grumman has destroyed three of the four zeppelins chasing Lee. The fourth starts to burn down the forest the next morning to flush out Lee and Grumman. They head for a ravine, but the zeppelin follows. Lee and Grumman can hold out as long as their ammunition does, and Grumman offers to stay behind. Lee tells him to go on because at all costs, Lee wants Lyra to live. They shake hands, Grumman departs, and Lee and Hester are left alone to stop the attackers, many of whom are on foot by now and coming after them. They are Russians and they are advancing. Hester warns Lee when one of the men is getting close. Lee uses his rifle and kills some of the men, and receives a scalp wound. He fires well and has killed many of the men, but then receives the first two of his mortal wounds. He realizes that he is going to die. Both Lee and Hester remember the flower that the witch Serafina gave them to use if they were ever in trouble. He calls her, but both Lee and Hester are dying. He is struck by another bullet and it gives him an even worse wound. With his last bullet, Lee fires on the zeppelin. It catches fire, taking with it the last of the Russian soldiers. Hester reminds Lee that the two of them are helping Lyra, and together they die.



Chapter 14, Alama Gulch Analysis

Depending on how one feels about Lee Scoresby, this might be the hardest chapter to get through. Affection for this character depends heavily on familiarity with the first book in the series.

Lee and Grumman sail over Cittàgazze and discuss the morality of helping people who need help immediately vs. pursuing their journey for the greater good. When Lee and Grumman crash-land in the forest, Lee notices that Grumman's daemon can travel farther away from her human than is the case with the daemons Lee has known. The witches are like this also in that their snow-goose daemons can fly on ahead. Lyra, on the other hand, is in pain and discomfort when Pan flies to the top of the Torre degli Angeli.

The alternative nature of this world to our own is made explicit in Lee's recollection of his childhood, when he and his friends would pretend they were at the Alamo, "taking turns to be Danes and French." Lee does not want to kill. He tells Hester he does not want to do it and sees no difference between himself and the men he must kill in order to save Lyra. He does not even care who is on which side, but is concerned only for the girl.



Chapter 15, Bloodmoss

Chapter 15, Bloodmoss Summary

Lyra and Will travel on through increasingly tough terrain. Will's hand is no better. Serafina Pekkala says that Lee Scoresby needs her, and she flies away before she has time to explain. Lyra asks Will if he knows why they must find his father. Will says that he has always known that he must find him. Lyra understands how tired Will is. As the children walk, the witches make sure they have water and keep an eye out for anyone who might be following. Lena Feldt, one of the witches, goes back to spy and sees Mrs. Coulter, who is accompanied by men who have no daemons; none inside, none outside. Lena makes the spell to be invisible and spies on Mrs. Coulter and her companion, and older man with gray hair whom she calls Carlo. Mrs. Coulter, who the man calls "Marisa," explains how she keeps the Specters from destroying her. She wants Carlo to tell her why he is after Will. The two daemons are touching each other and Carlo is becoming more and more relaxed. Lena Feldt could easily kill Mrs. Coulter, but instead she watches and does not notice that a Specter is coming closer to her. Carlo tells Mrs. Coulter about the subtle knife and Mrs. Coulter poisons his wine when he is not looking. Then Mrs. Coulter looks right at Lena Feldt. She knew the witch was there the whole time. Carlo is gasping for breath. A Specter is devouring Lena Feldt's daemon. Mrs. Coulter gets all the information she needs about how many witches are accompanying Will and Lena. Then Lena Feldt reveals the prophecy: Lyra is the new Eve. Mrs. Coulter vows to destroy her own daughter to prevent another fall of man, and the Specters finish with Lena Feldt and her daemon. Mrs. Coulter sends the Specters to Will and Lyra.

Will and Lyra stop to rest, but Will cannot sleep. He gets up and walks a short distance away and when he pauses, someone grabs him. It is a man and Will is prepared to fight to the death. But he cannot get the knife because the man grabbed his right arm, and his left hand, the wounded one, is too swollen and stiff to reach the knife. Then Will realizes the man is not hurting him, just holding on. Will stops struggling. The man feels Will's left hand in the dark, realizes that Will is the knife bearer, and lets go. He begins to heal Will's hand with an ointment and is shocked that a child is the one who must bear this terrible burden. The man, who is obviously ill despite his strength in fighting, tells Will that he, Will, is the bearer and has no choice in the matter. Then the man, who is Grumman, tells Will he must go to Asriel and that angels will guide him. Grumman lights a lantern and sees Will. They both recognize one another - and then Grumman falls dead, killed by an arrow from the witch who loved him whom he would not love in return.

Will attacks the witch when he realizes what has happened. The witch, Juta Kamainen, then kills herself. Will promises his dead father that he will do as he has been told, then returns to Lyra. Angels approach him before he can reach her. They call themselves Watchers or bene elim, and tell him he must go to Lord Asriel. However, Lyra is gone. The witches that were to have protected her are standing around the place where she



slept, the victim of Specters. Lyra's alethiometer is still there. The angels urge Will to hurry and come with them, but he does not move.

Chapter 15, Bloodmoss Analysis

Lyra is maturing as she travels with Will and as she sees his distress, pain, and anxiety. She is learning to care for another person more than she cares for herself. While she's always been brave and intelligent, and has learned with the loss of her friend Roger that her actions affect others, she has never before achieved this level of empathy. Will achieves his ultimate goal of meeting his father, only to have John Parry die at the moment they both recognize each other. It is the goal towards which his whole life has been directed. Will does not want to be the bearer of the knife and argues with Grumman after they struggle in the dark, but learns that he must accept his destiny.

Grumman breaks his promise to Lee Scoresby when he tells Will that Will must get to Lord Asriel at all costs, that that is the most important thing to do and nothing else matters. Lee Scoresby had made Grumman promise to protect Lyra, yet Grumman does not mention Lyra.

As the chapter ends, Will is faced with another choice; to obey the angels and his father and immediately set out to reach Lord Asriel, or to find Lyra.



Characters

Will Parry

Will is 12 years old, from our world, and already carries a heavy burden of responsibility on his shoulders when the book begins. He takes care of his mentally ill mother and tries to stay hidden and anonymous so that he will not draw any attention to his family and risk his mother being institutionalized. His father vanishes during an Arctic expedition when he is a very small child, and the loss of his father is always on his mind. The search for his father leads Will into the other world where he will meet Lyra and embark on a far more difficult journey than he imagined. Will becomes involved in the battle between the forces of Lord Asriel and the forces of the Church in his role as bearer of the subtle knife and companion of Lyra. Will changes during the story, from a boy who tries to stay invisible to a warrior who must make decisions and take risks far beyond what a boy would be considered capable of doing. His bravery and acceptance of his role while still exercising his power to choose are hallmarks of this character's growth. Will must fight with both his body and his mind and despite his already sensitive nature, becomes truly compassionate and caring.

Lyra Silvertongue

Lyra was the main character in the first book of the trilogy. She is also twelve years old and she too is in possession of a magical instrument; the alethiometer. Lyra has a natural ability to read the images of this device which always tells the truth. She is on a search for Dust. Lyra's daemon, Pan (short for Pantalaimon) has not yet arrived at a permanent form (Lyra is too young) and Pan often cautions Lyra but is not always listened to. Lyra was an aristocrat in her world, good at lying and telling stories, and always sure of herself. She and Will come into conflict over their very different ways of dealing with people and situations. She also seems to be completely the opposite of Will and at first, to have nothing in common with him. However, a measure of her character is her initial acceptance of Will after the alethiometer tells her he is a murderer. Lyra is the daughter of Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter, and has a good reason to want to stay away from her powerful and dangerous mother. Lyra also wishes to make amends for the death of her friend, Roger, whom she inadvertently betrayed back in another world in a situation detailed in the first book, *The Golden Compass*. Despite her headstrong and willful nature, Lyra inspires the devotion of such people as the witch Serafina Pekkala and the Texas aeronaut Lee Scoresby, people whom she loves in return. Lyra learns to love Will as the story moves along, wanting to protect him at all costs.

Serafina Pekkala

Serafina Pekkala is a witch. She rescued Lyra and the other children from the terrible experiments they were about to undergo. Serafina is an expert archer, as are all of the



witches, and her daemon is a snow goose named Kaisa. Serafina uses a branch of cloud pine to fly and is very adept at other arts that the witches have in common, such as making herself unnoticed and healing. She is devoted to Lyra and wants nothing more than to kill Lyra's mother, the complex Mrs. Coulter, especially after she witnesses Mrs. Coulter torturing one of Serafina's sister witches. With her ability to fly long distances and to use her arrows to attack and defend, Serafina is one of Lyra's most effective allies. Later on in the story, she also becomes loyal to Will when a moment arises where she could tell an interested party that he is the bearer of the knife. But she lets Will and Lyra make this decision for themselves. She fights against the Authority but is not formally aligned with Lord Asriel and his cause. Unlike many of the other adults in the lives of the two main characters, Serafina is dependable and trustworthy while also being caring and compassionate. She is very beautiful and, also like the rest of the witches, has a very long lifespan, much longer than that of humans.

Lee Scoresby

Lee Scoresby is from the country of Texas. He is an aeronaut and his daemon is Hester, a prairie jack rabbit. Lee is in the tradition of independent Texans; a man of few words who is a sure shot with a rifle, but who loathes taking another human life. He has strong ideas of right and wrong and when he sees someone in trouble, he wants to help. This is the source of a brief conflict he has with Stanislaus Grumman. He also believes a man should stick to his word, and it possibly does not occur to him that a man would do otherwise. Lee is courageous and brave, and willing to travel anywhere. He keeps a cool head in a crisis and while he is accepting of his ultimate fate, he does not go down without a fight. Hester says even less than Lee but is always listening, which leaves Lee free to obtain information when necessary. She also watches his back. Lee feels towards Lyra as if she was his own daughter and wants to do everything he can to protect her. He is also a friend of the bear king Iorek Byrnison. Iorek does not appear as a character in this book, but he is mentioned frequently by Lyra, Lee and Serafina.

Mrs. Coulter

Mrs. Coulter is Lyra's mother, and one of the most terrifying individuals in the book. She has a will of iron and nothing stops her in her pursuit to fulfill the mission of the Church, not even capturing and killing her own daughter, the child she had out of wedlock with Lord Asriel. She can command Specters and make them do her bidding and with her daemon, a golden monkey, can seduce and manipulate with just her voice and her face. Mrs. Coulter is searching for her daughter from world to world and knows the girl is important, but does not learn Lyra's true importance until the last chapter of the book.

Mary Malone

Mary Malone is what Lyra calls a Scholar and what we would call a professor. She has her doctorate and is researching what she calls Shadows and what Lyra calls Dust. A



former nun, she left her order when she realized she no longer had faith in the teachers of her church, and is drawn back into questions of morality much against her will. However, she believes Lyra (especially when Lyra demonstrates her abilities) and tries to protect both Lyra and Will from the forces trying to capture them.

Stanislaus Grumman / John Parry / Jopari

Stanislaus Grumman is a shaman living with a group of people in the north. Lee Scoresby seeks him out in order to find and protect Lyra. Grumman is also the long-lost father of Will Parry who disappeared from our world while on an expedition in the Arctic to secretly search for an anomaly. The anomaly turns out to be a window to the other worlds. Grumman misses his wife (Will's mother) very much, which eventually causes his death when he rejects the love of a young witch. Grumman is very powerful and has learned to command the forces of nature and animals.

Sir Charles / Lord Boreal

Sir Charles knows Lyra from the world he shares with her, but she does not recognize him. He is determined to get the subtle knife and steals Lyra's alethiometer to force the Will and Lyra to bring the knife to him. He has also obtained power in Will's world, and makes an offer to Dr. Malone and Dr. Payne to keep funding their experiments if they follow his instructions. He is, however, vulnerable to Mrs. Coulter, who finds out what she needs from him before giving him poison.

Ruta Skadi

Ruta Skadi is the queen of the Latvian witches. She is in contact with Lord Asriel and urges her sisters to join him in the battle against the authority.

Giacomo Paradisi

Giacomo Paradisi is the last of the philosophers of the Torre degli Angeli, and the last true bearer of the knife before Will. He is very old and near death when Will and Lyra find him in the Torre degli Angeli, but is able to show Will how to open and close with the knife.



Objects/Places

The Subtle Knife

The knife is so strong it can cut any object, including doorways to other worlds. It can (and does) cause great harm when it is in the wrong hands. It is made out of the same material used to separate children from their daemons in the experiments at Bolvangar.

The Green Leather Case

The case is where Will's mother keeps a few precious airmail letters from Will's father, sent when he was exploring in the north. Will manages to find them and keep them from the strange men who bother his mother and break into his house.

The Alethiometer

The alethiometer is a small intricate device that tells the truth. Lyra is the only person in the book who can use it, and she has a natural ability. It is inscribed with images around the corners and a compass-like point swings from picture to picture in answer to a question.

Dust

Dust is human consciousness. That is the word Lyra knows it by and Dr. Malone uses the word Shadows. When Dr. Malone communicates with the Shadows via her computer, they speak and tells her that they are angels.

Cittàgazze

The world that opens up into Will's Oxford. It is a nearly-deserted seaside town that is now populated by bands of children who are devoured by Specters as they mature.

Torre degli Angeli

The Tower of Angels in Cittàgazze was the home of the guild of philosophers who created the subtle knife, but who had no idea of how strong and dangerous it was.

The Cave

Dr. Malone's nickname for her computer, which functions like Lyra's alethiometer.



Will's Oxford

In this book, Will's Oxford is in our world. It is very much like Lyra's Oxford, enough alike to cause her confusion as she tries to navigate it.

Dark Matter Research Unit

Dr. Malone does her work in the Dark Matter Research Unit, which is where Lyra finds her with the help of the alethiomenter. The unit is in the process of being shut down for lack of funding.

Nova Zembla

Very much like our Alaska, occupying approximately the same position in an alternate world. It is populated by Russians and Tartars.

Bloodmoss

A healing substance. Even though the witches cast spells and use all of their arts to heal Will, it only his father's medicine that can heal his wound and stop the bleeding.

Cloud-pine

The witches use cloud-pine to fly.



Themes

Authority

Throughout the book, Will and Lyra have conflicts with different kinds of authority and authority figures. Will has spent most of his young life trying to fool the school, social service agencies, friends and neighbors in his efforts to keep his mother safe and to keep the two of them together. He has done this by making himself invisible and unnoticed to the adults around him. Lyra, on the other hand, prefers to lie to the adults she must deal with, and that is how she has handled things for all of her life.

Both styles have their limitations. Will is initiated into a warrior's life quite by accident when the thief in his home falls down the stairs and dies. This is only his first encounter with the kind violence that he must learn to accept—and to use—as he and Lyra protect themselves from Mrs. Coulter and Sir Charles, the children of Cittàgazze, and Specters.

The Church of Lyra's world is also loyal to the Authority, the one who demands to know the whereabouts of Lyra, the one Mrs. Coulter has served, apparently without question. This Authority, or its earthly representatives, seems to be hostile to the maturation of children into adults. It sends out armies to find Lyra and kills anyone who stands in the way.

On the other side of the authority coin are those with a natural authority. Lee Scoresby, the Texas aeronaut, is master of his craft and a crack shot with a rifle. However, he does not seek to dominate anyone but rather to do everything he can to keep Lyra safe. Stanislaus Grumman, who is also Will's father, spends years studying Dust, medicine, and human consciousness after he realizes he cannot return to his world. He is respected as a shaman by the tribe of people with whom he lives, and has even undergone trepanning (having a hole drilled in his skull) in his quest for knowledge.

Then there are those who desperately need guidance: the children of Cittàgazze. With most of the adults rendered ineffective by the Specters, the children must take care of their own needs. There is no one for them to turn to, so they turn into a mob.

Human Consciousness/Knowledge

Lyra makes an interesting discovery when she asks the alethiometer about the skulls in the display case in the museum. Her device tells her that the skulls with the trepanned holes have a lot of dust around them, much more than the skull that has a hole from an arrowhead. One of the trepanned skulls is also 33,254 years old and the card in the display case says the skull is from the Bronze Age. When Lyra searches for a scholar (to whom she may not lie according to the alethiometer's instructions), and asks her for the dates of the Bronze Age, Dr. Malone gives her a date of five thousand years ago. Clearly there is a discrepancy between what someone at the museum knows and the truth that the alethiometer tells. However, this date of over 30,000 years fits in with what



Dr. Malone has discovered as she has researched Shadows, which she calls particles of consciousness. Lyra's theory of Dust, meanwhile, is that it comes from space and attaches itself to adults, not to children. Lyra knows something that Dr. Malone does not, that certain people want to interfere with the process of Dust becoming part of a human being as humans reach maturity.

The atmosphere in which scientists must work in some of the other worlds is not free for the pursuit of knowledge. When Lee Scoresby visits the astronomers, a representative of the Church is present to ensure that the talk does not stray into heretical subjects. When Lee asks about Dust, all of the astronomers stop talking and they look to the Church's man before they say anything. "I beg your pardon," says Lee, "Have I asked about something it's forbidden to know?"

There is strong conflict between those who search for knowledge and those who would suppress it.

Maturity

There is more than one kind of maturity in this book. There is the maturity that the Church seems to wish to stop from developing naturally. See Mrs. Coulter's quote: "This is at the heart of everything, this difference between children and adults! It contains the whole mystery of Dust!" As we find out at the end of the book, Lyra is destined to grow up to become the new Eve according to the witch's prophesy, and this is something Mrs. Coulter wishes to stop at all costs.

Maturity is fatal in a land where Specters roam. In the world of Cittàgazze, maturity means death as the Specters feed on people who have crossed into adolescence, and there is nothing to protect them except a swift horse and the hope that they can outrun the invisible monsters. Growing up has its consequences.

Meanwhile, Will and Lyra are maturing into human beings who are capable of taking the right action and of caring for each other. If the Church and Mrs. Coulter have their way, would it prevent these two from continuing to discover the world on their own terms? Would they become dependent on an authority (or Authority) that would shape and direct them in all things?



Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person from many different points of view. The reader sees things from Will's perspective, from Lyra's, from Serafina Pekkala's, from Lee Scoresby's, and also from some of the minor characters such as the witch in the last chapter who watches Mrs. Coulter obtain information from Carlo/Lord Boreal/Sir Charles before administering poison. While the daemons are an integral part of certain characters' personalities, the reader never sees anything from a daemon's point of view. The closest we get is the scene set at night when Will talks to Pan, and since he has an incomplete understanding of what it is like to have a daemon, he probably does not know that Lyra is indeed a part of the conversation even though she does not speak.

While we know quite a bit about what Lyra thinks and what Will thinks, we never quite get inside Mrs. Coulter's head in the same way. This technique of the author's keeps the reader guessing as to exactly what Mrs. Coulter's motives are or how she feels about the daughter whom she pursues so relentlessly.

The story has lots of dialogue interspersed with action scenes and the fifteen chapters alternate between what Will and Lyra are doing and what other characters are doing, sometimes in other worlds.

Setting

The book begins in Will's world of Oxford in England and moves back and forth between that world and other worlds. The readers first find themselves in another world along with Will when he finds the entrance to Cittàgazze, the city by the sea that seems deserted, but which later turns out to be inhabited by a roving band of children. This is also where Will and Lyra meet, Lyra having wandered in from her world after escaping from an experimental station in her world's equivalent of the Arctic. Will & Lyra move in and out of Cittàgazze and Will's Oxford as they begin their different missions; Will to find his father and Lyra to find answers about Dust. Will's Oxford includes his home, a library, a museum, a movie theatre, and the research offices of Dr. Mary Malone.

Other characters, such as Serafina Pekkala and Lee Scoresby, are active in other worlds. Several characters are making their way to Lord Asriel's fortress, although this place is not one of the settings that appear in this book. Much of the novel is set outdoors, in rough and wilderness areas, as Will and Lyra travel to stay ahead of their enemies. There is little or no protection from the elements other than what the characters can fashion for themselves. The outdoor settings are very much in contrast to the interior of Sir Charles' Oxford home, complete with rich furnishings and a security system.



Language and Meaning

The novel is very readable, with contemporary language. Lyra has a few verbal ticks (she throws in the word "yeah" on occasion and says "en't" for "it isn't"), but both Will and Lyra speak in a familiar way. Ruta Skadi, the queen of the Latvian witches, has an elevated and excited way of speaking, while the people of the tribe with whom Stanislaus Grumman is staying use simpler words. The writer makes it clear that both Scoresby and the tribesmen have to try several languages until they find a way to communicate with one another. Scoresby is himself a man who uses plain language to say exactly what he means, as does his daemon Hester.

Several other of the individuals in the book have distinctive characteristics in their speech. Sir Charles has an easy, unrushed way of speaking that reflects his confidence and arrogance in dealing with Will and Lyra. He talks down to Lyra a bit, which probably confuses her in that it throws her off the scent of how truly dangerous he is. Dr. Malone is confused, fatigued, and overwhelmed by events that seem to be coming very fast. At first, she holds back a bit when talking with Lyra, not sure how much a child will understand—and understandably confused by what the strange visitor to her lab has to say. Then, when she begins to open up, the words come in a rush as she explains about her findings with Shadows and how she uses the Cave, her computer, to try and communicate.

Structure

The novel consists of fifteen chapters, and each chapter has a title that is relevant to the events in the chapter. The chapters are of varying length and complexity. Some are full of action, like Chapter Fourteen, "Alamo Gulch," in which Lee Scoresby and Stanislaus Grumman are trying to escape from the zeppelins piloted by Muscovite or Russian soldiers. Other chapters, such as Chapter Four, "Trepanning," have a lot of dialogue that is heavy with explanations of concepts. However, even though these chapters might seem a little more complicated, they are still a good read and do provide added insight into the characters' motivations.

The book's chapters also move back and forth between the actions of various characters. For example, Lee Scoresby is never in the same chapter with Will and Lyra. While his actions are simultaneous, they are not happening in the same place.

The novel begins with virtually no explanation and the reader is immediately presented with the scene of Will hurrying his mother through the street in an attempt to find shelter for her. The novel also ends with Will, who, in the space of two pages, discovers the Specter-devoured witches, Lyra missing, and is also confronted by two angels. The reader is left in the same place as the character of Will, with no understanding of where Lyra has gone, surprise at the arrival of the angels, and uncertainty as to what to do or what will happen next.



Quotes

" ' But you, your daemon en't separate from you. It's you. A part of you. You're part of each other. En't there anyone in your world like us? Are they all like you, with their daemons all hidden away?' " Chap. 1, The Cat and the Hornbeam Trees, p. 25.

"The witch was sobbing. 'She is the one who came before, and you have hated and feared her ever since! Well, now she has come again, and you failed to find her . . . She was there on Svalbard—she was with Lord Asriel, and you lost her.' "Chap. 2, Among the Witches, p. 39.

"She sat very quietly, watching the houses and gardens of the city that was hers and not hers. It was like being in someone else's dream." Chap. 3, A Children's World, p. 69.

" 'You might not call it that. It's elementary particles. In my world the Scholars call it Rusakov Particles, but normally they call it Dust. They don't show up easily, but they come out space and fix on people. Not children so much, though. Mostly on grownups.' " Chap. 4, Trepanning, p. 84.

"She reached into the muddle of papers on her desk and found a scrap on which someone has written with a green pen. She read: 'Capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.' You have to get into that state of mind. That's from the poet Keats, by the way." Chap.4, Trepanning, p. 88.

"His father was describing exactly what he himself had found under the hornbeam trees. He, too, had found a window—he even used the same word for it! So Will must be on the right track. And this knowledge was what the men had been searching for . . . So it was dangerous, too." Chap. 5, Airmail Paper, p. 114.

"Lee had once seen a painting in which a saint of the Church was shown being attacked by assassins. While they bludgeoned his dying body, the saint's daemon was borne upward by cherubs and offered a spray of palm, the badge of a martyr. The Skraeling's face now bore the same expression as the saint's in the picture: an ecstatic straining toward oblivion. Lee dropped him in distaste." Chap. 6 Lighted Fliers, p. 126.

" ' I think you'd better listen to me instead of behaving in this uncontrolled way,' he said. 'You really haven't any choice. The instrument is in my possession and will stay there. I want it. I'm a collector. You can spit and stamp and scream all you like, but by the time you've persuaded anyone else to listen to you, I shall have plenty of documents to prove that I bought it. I an do that very easily. And then you'll never get it back.'" Chap. 7, The Rolls-Royce, p. 164.



" 'You have come here for a purpose, and maybe you don't know what that purpose is, but the angels do who brought you here.' " Chap. 8, *The Tower of the Angels*, p. 188.

" 'What? I must know about this, Carlo,' said the woman; and Will could hear her passionate impatience. 'This is at the heart of everything, this difference between children and adults! It contains the whole mystery of Dust! This is why I must find the child. And the witches have a name for her—I nearly had it, so nearly, from a witch in person, but she died too quickly. I must find the child. She has the answer, somehow, and I must have it!' " Chap. 9, *Theft*, p. 199.

" 'But something's drawn me here, Dr. Grumman, beyond simple curiosity. I'm concerned about the child. I think she's important, and so do the witches.' " Chap. 10, *The Shaman*, p. 211.

" ' You know what I think? I think what they eat, the Specters, is people's daemons.' " Chap. 11, *The Belvedere*, p. 225.

" 'Vengeance for—oh! Rebel angels! After the war in Heaven—Satan and the Garden of Eden - but it isn't true, is it?' " Chap. 12, *Screen Language*, p. 250.

"Both of them sat silent on the moss-covered rock in the slant of sunlight through the old pines and thought how many tiny chances had conspired to bring them to this place. Each of those chances might have gone a different way. Perhaps in another world, another Will had not seen the window in Sunderland Avenue, and had wandered on tired and lost toward the Midlands until he was caught. And in another world another Pantalaimon had persuaded another Lyra not to stay in the retiring room, and another Lord Asriel had been poisoned, and another Roger had survived to play with that Lyra forever on the roofs and in the alleys of another unchanging Oxford. ' " Chap. 13, *Æsahætter*, p. 265.

" So he took aim with his last bullet at the zeppelin itself, still roaring and straining to rise with its one engine, and the bullet must have been red-hot, or maybe a burning brand from the forest below was wafted to the airhipon an updraft; the gas suddenly billowed into an orange foreball, and the envelope and the metal skeleton rose a little way and then tumbled down very slowly, gently, but full of a fiery death." Chap. 14, *Alamo Gulch*, p. 305.

"The fact was that where Will was concerned, she was developing a new kind of sense, as if he were simply more in focus than anyone she'd known before. Everything about him was clear and close and immediate." Chap. 15, *Bloodmoss*, p. 308.



Topics for Discussion

What is the importance of angels in this story? Recall that the tower in Cittàgazze is named the Torre degli Angeli, there is an angel on the handle of the subtle knife, and angels are beings with physical bodies that move between the worlds.

The Church is obsessed with the relationship between children and their daemons, which stop changing shape after puberty. Does this have something to do with knowledge or a fear of maturity? Both? Neither?

The author of this book, Phillip Pullman, has used a famous piece of English literature for much of the structure of this story. Do some research on the phrase "His dark materials" and find out about what it means.

When Dr. Malone talks about the Rebel Angels and the Garden of Eden, to what is she referring?

What is the I Ching? Why is it significant in this story?

When Lee and Grumman are sailing over Cittàgazze Lee wants to rescue a child who will soon be destroyed by Specters. Grumman will not allow it—and explains that they themselves would be devoured. They have a conversation about injustice and doing the right thing. Grumman says that they can do more good by helping him to finish his task, and Lee's response is that you should do what you can when you can. Which one is morally correct and why?

Why is it important to Mrs. Coulter when she discovers that her daughter Lyra will be the next Eve? And why is she determined (or seems to be determined) to kill the girl?