

# Captain Corelli's Mandolin



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LOUIS DE BERNIÈRES

De Bernières was born just outside of London and grew up in Surrey. Though he joined the army when he was 18, he only made it four months in the officer training course and then moved on to attending several universities, including Victoria University of Manchester and the University of London. He held a number of odd jobs, including that of a mechanic and an English teacher in Colombia, before turning to writing full-time in the late 1980s. His experiences in Colombia influenced his first three novels, known collectively as the Latin American Trilogy. He's most famous for *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, though he openly disapproves of the film adaptation. De Bernières has never been married but has two children with the actress Cathy Gill. He also plays a number of instruments and though he considers himself to be just an enthusiastic amateur, a majority of his novels illustrate his love of music.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*Captain Corelli's Mandolin* is based primarily on the Italian occupation of Cephalonia during World War Two and, specifically, the Massacre of the Acqui Division (also known as the Cephalonia Massacre). Prior to occupying Cephalonia, the Italians invaded Albania in what was widely considered to be a poorly thought-out plan; Carlo and Francisco are involved in this invasion, and they also participate in the invasion of Greece from Albania in the fall of 1940. The formal occupation of Greece began in 1941, and the division headquarters moved to Cephalonia in the spring of 1943. In the fall, however, Italy deposed their fascist dictator Mussolini and surrendered to the Allied forces—though things were complicated by the fact that Italy *also* promised its troops to the Germans. After the Italian troops on Cephalonia threatened mutiny if they were forced to cooperate with the Germans, General Gandin, the commanding officer of the Acqui Division, agreed to stand and attempt to defeat the Germans. This resulted in a conflict that lasted several days in which local Greeks fought alongside Italians but ultimately lost. The Italians that survived the fighting were murdered in what became one of the largest prisoner of war massacres of World War Two. Following the war, Greece descended into a civil war that's considered to be one of the first proxy wars of the Cold War. The pro-west faction effectively won in 1949, though Greece's economy was devastated by the conflict for decades after and still experiences political polarization because of the war today.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

De Bernières has specifically cited the work of Gabriel García Márquez as an influence on his own novels; a number of García Márquez's books utilize magical realism and while *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* doesn't technically utilize the form, critics have noted that the larger-than-life characters in the novel would fit easily in a work that did. The novel itself makes a number of references to classic Greek works, most notably Plato's *Symposium*. Carlo mentions Dante's [Inferno](#) as well. In that the novel deals with civilian life in a time of war, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* also shares similarities with Euripides's play [The Trojan Women](#). It also joins a number of contemporary novels that explore love and the human cost of World War Two, including Ian McEwan's [Atonement](#) and Mary Ann Shaffer's [The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society](#).

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Captain Corelli's Mandolin (Corelli's Mandolin in the U.S.)
- **When Written:** 1993-94
- **Where Written:** Surrey, England
- **When Published:** 1994
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary Fiction
- **Genre:** Historical Fiction
- **Setting:** The Greek island of Cephalonia, 1930s-1990s
- **Climax:** Günter Weber's firing squad kills Corelli's division; Carlo saves Corelli
- **Antagonist:** Hitler, Mussolini, cold, hunger
- **Point of View:** Various

### EXTRA CREDIT

**The Earthquake.** Though characters in the novel express fear after the great earthquake of 1953 that Cephalonia is going to sink into the sea, the opposite happened: the entire island actually rose two feet higher out of the water.

**Cat Haters.** Mussolini was a known hater of cats. The American journalist John Gunter wrote in 1936 that "the things that Mussolini hates most are Hitler, aristocrats, money, cats, and old age."



## PLOT SUMMARY

The Greek doctor Dr. Iannis attempts to write an impartial history of his island, Cephalonia. However, he finds he cannot do so without getting angry about the numerous Greek conquests, so he amends his title to read "A Personal History of

Cephalonia." In the village, his daughter Pelagia falls in love with a young fisherman named Mandras. They get engaged in August on the feast day of St. Gerasimos, but Pelagia is unhappy about it. Dr. Iannis refuses to provide a dowry, suggests Mandras is too uneducated to appreciate Pelagia, and counsels that they should wait to get married until after the war. Dr. Iannis spends most of his time at the kapheneia with his friends Stamatis and Kokolios, who are royalist and communist respectively. Though they used to fight about politics, as the war moves towards Greece, the three band together for the sake of their country. Dr. Iannis also adopts a pine marten that the child Lemoni names Psipsina.

It's 1940 and Mussolini is preparing to invade Greece. He fabricates border incidents and in August, he torpedoes a Greek ship. In the fall he sends his delegate Grazzi to deliver an ultimatum to Metaxas, the prime minister of Greece. Metaxas refuses to allow the Italians invade, but they invade anyway. Mandras leaves to join the war effort and Dr. Iannis gives Pelagia a pistol to protect herself.

Carlo, a gay soldier in the Italian army, begins to tell his story. He joins the army so that he can find love, and he does: Francisco, a married man, becomes his best friend and the unwitting object of Carlo's affections. The two are communists and are uneasy about rebuilding the Roman Empire, but they follow orders to blow up a "Greek" watchtower. They discover that the mission was actually an attempt to frame Greece. That winter, their division invades Greece. For months the Italians march in the cold and the wet as Greek forces pick them off at their leisure. Francisco goes mad from exposure and hunger and commits suicide. He dies in Carlo's arms, and Carlo shoots himself in the thigh to get out of Greece. He later visits Francisco's mother and tells her that Francisco died peacefully and for a good cause.

Pelagia begins writing letters to Mandras, though he never writes back. She starts working on a **bedcover** and a waistcoat, though she struggles with the crochet as her mother died before teaching her any of those female skills. Dr. Iannis notices this and does what he can to take Pelagia's mind off her sadness. It works and when a skeletal, smelly, and nearly unrecognizable Mandras shows up in her kitchen, she doesn't recognize him. She fetches Mandras's mother Drosoula and the two women attend to Mandras's many ailments, which makes Pelagia realize she wants to be a doctor. Mandras understands that Pelagia is disgusted by him; he wants to return to the front so that he can do something to make her proud. To Pelagia he seems mad, though he miraculously returns to normal on the day the Italians invade. The Italians make fun of Hitler as they march through the streets and, shockingly for Kokolios, some of them seem to be communist. Carlo arrives in Cephalonia a few weeks after the other Italians. Though he's still grieving Francisco, he soon falls in love with Captain Corelli. Corelli runs an opera group called La Scala that sings on the toilet and he

"drafts" Carlo as soon as he hears him sing.

Soon, the Italians decide to house officers with local Greeks. Dr. Iannis strikes a deal with a quartermaster to house an officer in exchange for medical supplies, so Corelli arrives that evening. Dr. Iannis and Pelagia do everything in their power to make Corelli feel horrible about occupying Greece, including telling him that Psipsina is a "Greek cat." When Psipsina bites Corelli, he feels very foolish. The following morning, Carlo meets the Greek strongman Velisarios and Corelli strikes up a friendship with Lemoni. Mandras calls later to tell Pelagia he's joining the partisans. He insults her and the waistcoat she made him, but promises he loves her. Corelli notices the coat later and offers to buy it, insisting it's magnificent.

Corelli begins to play mandolin for Pelagia and the two talk about their dreams for life after the war. Corelli wants to be a musician and for the first time, Pelagia voices her desire to be a doctor. Though Pelagia and Dr. Iannis continue to torment Corelli, Pelagia finds herself falling for him. She stares at him, touches him without thinking, and becomes gradually less angry with him. Dr. Iannis notices their budding romance and wonders what to do.

Mandras joins a partisan group called ELAS, which is communist and seeks to take control of Greece after the war. He has to whip a man in order to gain entry and he's entranced by the communist theory that the leader, Hector, introduces him to. Mandras learns to hate the British and the bourgeoisie, including Dr. Iannis. A fellow partisan who doesn't believe Hector tells Mandras that the main point Hector makes is that if they don't obey him, they'll die. Meanwhile, Corelli becomes friends with a young German soldier, Günter Weber. Weber only hates Jews because he's never met one and Corelli quickly drafts him into La Scala.

A pamphlet appears on Cephalonia one day that makes fun of Mussolini and all the ways in which he's hypocritical and absurd. Corelli isn't charmed, though Carlo and Dr. Iannis are. Pelagia suggests that given the syntax, the pamphlet could've been written by conspiring Greeks and Italians, but when she sees her father and Carlo's reaction to this, she thinks they're stupid. A few days later, Corelli wakes up with a hangover, argues with Pelagia about his role in the war, and begins to compose "Pelagia's March."

Dr. Iannis arranges for Lemoni to take his household to gather snails, as there's little else to eat. Corelli and Pelagia become separated from Dr. Iannis and Lemoni, and they admit that they love each other. Corelli struggles with the fact that the war that brought them together is ruining Greece, which makes Pelagia angry. She tries to prepare the snails but is interrupted when Lemoni visits and Corelli realizes she found a **mine**. Though the mine is old, Corelli and Carlo decide to blow it up for safety. The entire village and the Italian troops watch. It kills an engineer and covers everyone in sand. Corelli and Pelagia spend as much time as they can kissing, talking about the future, and riding a

motorcycle around the island.

Early one morning, Alekos the goatherd notices an angel falling from the sky. Alekos nurses the injured angel for two days before leading it to Dr. Iannis's house. Dr. Iannis discovers that the angel is actually a British spy, Bunnios, who speaks ancient Greek.

Dr. Iannis counsels Pelagia and Corelli in turn. He tells Pelagia to wait to marry Corelli until after the war, as that's the only way she'll know if their love is genuine. He tells Corelli that Pelagia has a dark and mysterious other side, as all Greeks do, and cautions him against making plans.

One night when La Scala gathers at Dr. Iannis's house, Weber makes several jokes in poor taste and defends his Nazi beliefs. He also promises to leave Pelagia his gramophone after the war. In the weeks after, things begin to go downhill. The Allies invade Italy, and the Italian general in Greece, General Gandin, refuses to issue orders that could save his men. On September 8, Carlo hears that Italy surrendered to the Allies. The Italians are asked to surrender to the Germans, and Weber hopes to be able to teach his friends a lesson. Gandin tries to act honorably, but the German General Barge betrays him and orders his troops to attack the Italians. Corelli leads his men in the fight and Stamatis, Kokolios, and Velisarios go to help. Finally, after three days, the Italians are forced to surrender.

Though Weber tries to refuse, he eventually agrees to lead the firing squad and execute his Italian friends. Corelli forgives Weber and when the shooting starts, Carlo steps in front of Corelli. Weber allows Corelli to live and that night, Velisarios discovers Corelli and Carlo. He carries Corelli to Dr. Iannis's house, where he and Pelagia perform surgery to remove the bullets. In the morning, they bury Carlo under their olive tree. The Germans burn the rest of the bodies as Pelagia and Dr. Iannis care for Corelli. When he's well enough Corelli moves to an abandoned shack and then Bunnios smuggles him off the island. Before Corelli goes, Dr. Iannis gives him permission to marry Pelagia and Pelagia gives him the waistcoat.

When the Germans leave Cephalonia, Weber follows through and leaves Pelagia the gramophone. The Greek Civil War starts and ELAS wreaks havoc on Greece. Dr. Iannis, Kokolios, and Stamatis are taken to concentration camps, and Drosoula moves in with Pelagia. Eventually, Mandras returns, fat and mean. He intimidates Pelagia, admits he read her letters and knows she doesn't love him, and tries to rape her. Pelagia shoots him and Drosoula disowns him. Mandras drowns himself in the ocean.

Drosoula and Pelagia adopt a baby girl they name Antonia. Dr. Iannis returns after two years, though he doesn't speak again. Pelagia discovers Carlo's papers in the trapdoor and reads them. Soon, the village begins to spread rumors that Pelagia is a witch for practicing medicine. Pelagia comes to believe in ghosts when she starts to see Corelli's ghost every year at the

anniversary of the massacre, and she pretends that she's Italian. In 1953, the great earthquake strikes Cephalonia, destroying everything. Dr. Iannis dies saving Pelagia and Drosoula, and Pelagia struggles with the grief for years afterwards. She only recovers when she picks up Dr. Iannis's History and finishes it for him. As she does, she begins to talk to Antonia about politics. Because of this, she's not surprised when Antonia marries an older radical lawyer, Alexi, and claims to be communist.

Drosoula opens a taverna to serve the increasing number of tourists. Antonia eventually gives birth to a boy that Pelagia names Iannis. Iannis spends most of his time at the taverna and as he grows, he desperately wants to impress girls. He asks the musician Spiridon to teach him the bouzouki, but Spiridon suggests Iannis pick up a mandolin first. Pelagia gives them permission to dig up Corelli's mandolin and as they do, Velisarios explains that he leaves a rose on Carlo's grave every year. Iannis is very talented and when he's fourteen, Corelli catches him playing up at the old house. He reunites with Pelagia and explains that he did come back for her, but he thought she was married because he saw her with a baby. She's extremely angry, but warms to him when he gives her a cassette of "Pelagia's March." He convinces her to ride a motorcycle with him like they used to.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Pelagia** – Pelagia, who is seventeen at the beginning of the novel, is a young Greek woman and Dr. Iannis's daughter. Dr. Iannis raised her to think for herself, which sets her apart from other girls. However, when she falls in love with a fisherman named Mandras, she worries that any dreams she has of being more than a wife won't come true, given that she believes Mandras won't actually appreciate her intelligence. After Mandras goes away to fight for Greece, Pelagia writes him a letter every day and falls out of love with him when he never replies. During this time, she also becomes friendly with Drosoula, Mandras's mother. Pelagia realizes when Mandras returns that she has the knowledge to be a doctor and that she doesn't want to marry Mandras. When the Italians invade Cephalonia, Pelagia joins her father in tormenting them. However, she's more willing than her father to see that they're worthy of friendship and soon falls in love with Corelli. They spend much of their time kissing and talking about the future. Their idyllic future is cut short when the Italians surrender to the Allies and Corelli survives the massacre with horrific injuries. Pelagia forces Dr. Iannis to save Corelli and when he's well enough, she smuggles him off the island. Pelagia adopts an abandoned baby girl she names Antonia and attempts to practice medicine, but she's accused of being a witch. In 1946 she decides that ghosts are real after she sees Corelli's ghost.

Life doesn't improve for Pelagia until a few years after the earthquake that kills Dr. Iannis, when she picks up his history of Cephalonia and finishes writing it. As she writes, she teaches Antonia to think, just as her father taught her. She's thrilled when Antonia has a son, Iannis. Thanks to Iannis's interest in learning to play the mandolin, Pelagia reconnects with Corelli in her old age. She hates him at first for not returning for her, but she forgives him when he gives her a cassette of one of his concertos that he began to compose during the occupation, "Pelagia's March."

**Dr. Iannis** – Dr. Iannis is the only doctor in his unnamed village in Greece. He's also an amateur and hobby historian and spends most of his life working on "A Personal History of Cephalonia," which explores the history of Greece and how Greece's history of conquest influences the Greek people's behavior in the present. He learned medicine on a ship as a young man and his wife, Pelagia's mother, died very young. Because of the loss of his wife and because he has no sons, Dr. Iannis raised Pelagia to think for herself and engage with the world like a man might. He's not particularly keen on Mandras as a husband for her, as he believes that Mandras won't want a wife that's smarter than him. Though he's a proud Venizelist, Dr. Iannis regularly encourages his best friends, Stamatis and Kokolios, to care for each other and treat each other with kindness and respect regardless of political differences. When the Italians invade, Dr. Iannis is initially rude and short with them. He torments Corelli and makes him feel guilty for invading Greece. However, as Dr. Iannis gets to know Corelli and the other soldiers, they become great friends. He worries when he recognizes that Pelagia and Corelli are falling in love with each other, as he's very aware that the Greeks would persecute his daughter were she to break off her engagement with Mandras to marry an oppressor. He encourages them to wait to marry until after the war. Dr. Iannis's medical knowledge is tested after the massacre, when Velisarios brings a bullet-riddled Corelli to him. Dr. Iannis is able to provide care until Corelli is well enough to be smuggled off the island. Before Corelli goes, Dr. Iannis gives him his blessing to marry Pelagia on the condition that Corelli allow her to become a doctor. Dr. Iannis is taken to a concentration camp during the Greek Civil War and though he returns, he's mute, shaky, and haunted by memories. He accepts his granddaughter Antonia without question and dies in the earthquake while making sure that Pelagia and Drosoula get out of the house.

**Captain Antonio Corelli** – Captain Corelli is the captain of the Italian 33rd Infantry division. He only takes music, friendship, and romance seriously; he regularly mocks the war. Corelli is also an accomplished musician: he carries his mandolin, Antonia, with him everywhere and starts an opera group of soldiers he calls La Scala. After a few weeks on the island, he's sent to live with Dr. Iannis and Pelagia. When Pelagia and Dr. Iannis try to make his life miserable by humiliating him and

making him feel like a horrible person, Corelli admits that he doesn't believe in the Italian invasion of Greece and actually wants to do what he can to make the invasion pleasant for the Greeks. He's able to win Pelagia over with his charm and his love of music, and the two fall in love. Corelli feels very guilty for the fact that he can't stop the war, but he does what he can to make sure that it's as fair as possible to the Greeks by punishing soldiers when they steal and sneaking food for Pelagia and Dr. Iannis. Corelli attempts to make the German soldier Weber see that all people are worthy of love and respect. When the Italians concede to the Allies, Corelli leads his division in fighting the Germans, against the orders of General Gandin. When the Italians lose, he leads his men singing to their deaths. He tells Weber, who's in charge of the firing squad, that he forgives him. Corelli survives because Carlo steps in front of him, while Dr. Iannis and Pelagia conduct surgery that saves him from his wounds. They smuggle him out of Greece when he's well enough to go, though by then he already feels more Greek than Italian. Though Pelagia doesn't know until later, Corelli came back for her as promised but thought she was married. He moved to Athens, became a Greek citizen, and wrote three concertos, one of which he called "Pelagia's March."

**Mandras** – Mandras is a young fisherman who falls in love with Pelagia after hurting himself and requiring medical attention from Dr. Iannis. He does whatever he can to impress her, which often makes him behave ridiculously. He often tries to impress her by bringing her fish that he catches with the help of his dolphin friends, Kosmas, Nionios, and Krystal. Because of this, Pelagia begins to doubt that they're truly right for each other, as she wants someone who will be able to talk to her about politics. However, Pelagia isn't aware that Mandras is serious and interested in politics; he just thinks it's inappropriate to speak to women about politics. Mandras proposes on St. Gerasimo's feast day and within a week of becoming engaged, he leaves the village to join the Greek army. When he leaves, he's thrilled to be able to do something meaningful that will make him an impressive man to Pelagia and the rest of the village. He returns months later a broken, emaciated, and parasite-infested man. Pelagia cares for him and because Mandras can tell she's disgusted with him, he desperately wants to leave and prove himself again. He admits to Pelagia that he never returned any of her letters because he's illiterate, so he forces her to read them to him and intimidates her into only telling him nice things. After the Italians invade, Mandras runs off again and joins the partisan group ELAS. The leader of ELAS, Hector, recognizes that Mandras is friendless, angry, and therefore vulnerable to manipulation. During Mandras's time in ELAS, he becomes well versed in communist theory, learns to hate the British and most other Greek people, and learns that he, as a member of ELAS, owns everything. He returns to claim Pelagia after the war, intimidates her, and attempts to rape her. When his mother Drosoula learns what he did, she disowns

him. Realizing that he has no way forward, Mandras goes to the sea and commits suicide. Kosmas, Nionios, and Krystal push his body back towards shore.

**Carlo Piero Guercio** – Carlo is a huge and secretly gay man in the Italian army. He joins because he reads writing by Plato that suggests lovers make the best soldiers, and Carlo believes he'll be able to find someone to love in the army. This proves correct and Carlo falls in love with a married man named Francisco. He believes his love for Francisco makes him a better soldier and for a time, it makes Carlo feel better about being in the army in the first place. He admits that he doesn't believe in fascism and is uneasy about rebuilding the Roman Empire, but his disillusionment becomes complete when Colonel Rivolta sends him on a secret mission. Carlo and Francisco discover that they weren't supposed to survive the mission, which was intended to frame the Greeks for "border incidents." Not long after, Carlo's division is sent to invade Greece in the winter. Carlo comes to hate his uniform, which abrades his body, cuts off circulation, and can't keep him warm, and he watches Francisco become gradually madder. Carlo gets to the point where he believes that Greece should win if it will stop the carnage. When Francisco allows himself to be shot, Carlo brings him back to the trench and holds him until he dies. He then shoots himself in the thigh to get himself out of Greece. Months later, Carlo joins Corelli's division in Cephalonia. Though he arrives disillusioned and grieving, he soon falls in love with Corelli. Especially once Corelli "drafts" Carlo into the singing group La Scala, life begins to look up for Carlo. He collaborates with the local man Kokolios to print an anti-Mussolini pamphlet that they distribute across the island and is thrilled about his work. As it becomes clear that the Italians will lose the war, Carlo records his story and leaves a letter for Corelli with Pelagia and Dr. Iannis. When the division is executed by firing squad, Carlo places himself in front of Corelli in a final act of love. Velisarios buries Carlo under the olive tree in Dr. Iannis's courtyard.

**Günter Weber** – Weber is a young German soldier who is stationed in Lixouri, not far away from Corelli's group of Italian soldiers in Argostoli. He grew up in the mountains of Austria as the son of a Lutheran pastor, and is only able to hate Jews and Gypsies because he's never met any. Despite this, he believes fully in Nazi ideals. He meets Corelli and La Scala at the beach one day and is drafted into La Scala. He becomes the only member who cannot actually sing. As the war progresses, he spends a great deal of time with La Scala and attends meetings at Dr. Iannis's house. Weber loves the music of Marlene Dietrich and often brings his record player and records to the house. He promises to leave them for Pelagia when the war is over and makes good on that promise. However, as the end of the war approaches, the Italians surrender to the Allies, and the Italians and the Germans begin a standoff on Cephalonia, Weber becomes increasingly disillusioned with his friendships, with the Italians, and with Corelli. When he's ordered to kill

Corelli's division, which includes most of La Scala, Weber lodges a formal complaint but agrees to carry out the order. He notices that Corelli survives but he doesn't kill him. Years later, Corelli goes to find Weber in Germany. He's become a pastor and seems tortured by the atrocities he committed as part of the Nazi army.

**Francisco** – Francisco is a young married corporal in the Julia Division, where Carlo is first stationed. Carlo falls in love with Francisco immediately: he's extremely handsome and never misses an opportunity to make fun of the war or of Italian officials, Mussolini especially. Not long after being stationed in Albania, Francisco adopts a mouse he names Mario. Mario lives in his pocket, eats scraps, and tries to climb out at inopportune moments. Carlo takes Francisco with him when he's sent on a secret mission by Colonel Rivolta. Francisco immediately understands that the mission is fishy and he's right: after they destroy a "Greek" watchtower, they discover that the residents of the tower were high-ranking Italian officials. Later, when the Italians invade Greece in the winter, Francisco is initially optimistic but soon becomes depressed and almost mad. He speaks exclusively to Mario and goes to extreme measures to keep warm. Finally, when Francisco discovers that he has gangrene, he jumps out of the trench and lets the Greeks shoot him. He confesses to Carlo on his deathbed that he knows Carlo loves him, and Carlo discovers a photo of himself in Francisco's possessions.

**Drosoula** – Drosoula is Mandras's mother. She was born in Turkey and was moved with her mother to Greece as a young teen as part of an effort to ease ethnic tensions in both countries. In two years she learned Greek and married, a feat that surprises many people as she's always been an ugly woman. In her old age, this means that she's not jaded and mean, as she was never able to develop a sense of vanity. After Pelagia and Mandras become engaged, Pelagia and Drosoula become good friends. They work together to rehabilitate Mandras when he returns from his stint in the Greek army, though Drosoula barely recognizes her son. She also notices that Pelagia doesn't love Mandras. The two women continue to be friendly with each other when Mandras joins ELAS, and Drosoula doesn't hold it against Pelagia that she's obviously no longer in love with Mandras. When Mandras returns and attempts to rape Pelagia, Drosoula disowns him and sides with Pelagia. In the years following the war, Drosoula and Pelagia live together and adopt the baby Antonia. Drosoula acts as the child's grandmother. She and Antonia encourage Pelagia to follow in Dr. Iannis's footsteps and write the history of Cephalonia to pull her out of her grief when Dr. Iannis dies. Following the tourist boom that begins after the earthquake, Drosoula opens a restaurant that caters to tourists and becomes a beloved fixture on the island until her death.

**Antonia** – Pelagia's adopted daughter; she's named after Corelli's mandolin. Pelagia and Drosoula find the infant Antonia

on their doorstep near the end of the war and though they initially consider turning her over to the Red Cross, they raise her themselves. Antonia is a happy and quiet baby and when Dr. Iannis returns when she's a toddler, she's instrumental in helping him recover from the trauma of the concentration camp. She has little time for being ladylike or proper and often gets into trouble. When she's around eight, the family adopts a cat they call Psipsina. This causes a number of problems, as Antonia's nickname is also Psipsina. Pelagia teaches Antonia to think and the two debate politics and philosophy once Antonia is a teenager. Because of this, Pelagia isn't surprised when Antonia declares herself a radical communist and decides to marry a radical lawyer when she's seventeen. Antonia and her husband, Alexi, have a baby boy, Iannis, after more than fifteen years of marriage--though prior to becoming pregnant, Antonia was very annoyed with Pelagia's insistence that Antonia provide her a grandchild, while Pelagia respected her autonomy in nearly every other way. After Iannis's birth, Antonia opens a string of souvenir shops and becomes forgetful and distant from her son. She and Alexi do very well financially and remain close with their family, but they both break promises to Iannis and make him feel alone and unmoored.

**Megalo Velisarios** – Velisarios is the strongman in Pelagia's village. Despite his massive size and impressive strength, he's kind and gentle. However, he's also prone to abusing his power for laughs, as when he lifts Father Arsenios onto the wall, embarrassing the priest. During the occupation, Velisarios commits petty crimes against the Italians and becomes friendly with Carlo, another massive man in the Italian army. They share cigarettes with each other and curse the war. By the time the Italians are slaughtered by the Germans, Velisarios, like many of the Greeks, has become friends with the Italians and helps them fight the Germans. When he finds Carlo dead, Velisarios feels as though it's improper to leave the body of such a kind man and in moving Carlo's body, he discovers Corelli alive underneath. He rushes Corelli to Dr. Iannis for medical attention and helps bury Carlo under Dr. Iannis's olive tree. At the end of the novel, the reader learns that Velisarios returns to the grave every year at the anniversary of the massacre to leave a rose on Carlo's grave. After the earthquake in 1953, Velisarios becomes a leader in his village and helps organize the villagers until relief workers arrive. He shuts down dangerous rumors before they can spread and encourages Pelagia to help by healing others.

**Father Arsenios** – Father Arsenios is the Orthodox priest of Pelagia's village. He's rotund, greedy, and there are rumors that he skirted rules in order to marry his very young wife. Because he's so greedy and not particularly godly, none of the villagers truly respects Arsenios at the beginning of the novel. Kokolios refers to him as a parasite and he often gets embarrassingly drunk. However, when the war starts, Arsenios suffers a crisis of faith. Believing that God has abandoned Greece, Father

Arsenios takes it upon himself to preach and do what he can to religiously help the Greeks. He adopts a dog and begins walking all over the island, preaching. Though the German soldiers turn him away from their camp, the Italians listen to him and offer him food. This earns them his respect. After two years, Arsenios has become skeletally thin and though he neglects his village, the narrator notes that he had the potential of becoming a saint because of the preaching he does during the occupation. Once he learns that the Germans massacred the Italians, Arsenios goes to one of the pyres, preaches at the Germans, and then begins to beat them. They shoot him and throw him on the pyre.

**Mussolini** – Benito Mussolini is the Fascist dictator of Italy during World War Two. He was once a businessman and a journalist, but with war on the horizon, Mussolini seeks to distance himself from these associations--he wants to be seen instead as the embodiment of the Italian ideal and the supreme leader of the Fascist party. He's very aware of how to manipulate the press into creating the illusion that Italy is winning and doing the right thing, and he rejects critique from anyone who tries to tell him otherwise. He's somewhat exasperated with the Italian men he has in his service, as he finds them too emotional to be proper fascists. Mussolini is instrumental in arranging attacks on ships and people that make it look as though the Greeks and the British are attacking each other and attacking Italy, which allows him to justify invading Greece. Despite his alliance with Hitler, Mussolini despises him. Though Mussolini thinks highly of himself, he's one of only a few people who do: all the Italian soldiers in Cephalonia mock Mussolini incessantly, and Carlo even conspires with Kokolios to print and distribute a satirical "Italian" pamphlet making fun of Mussolini. The Fascist government finally removes Mussolini from office in the summer of 1943, after which he's not mentioned again in the novel.

**Stamatis** – Stamatis is an elderly man in Dr. Iannis's village. He's been deaf in one ear since childhood, which Dr. Iannis cures by extracting a pea out of Stamatis's ear at the beginning of the novel. This makes Stamatis's world significantly less pleasant: he can suddenly hear his wife nagging him and he also becomes aware of his friend Kokolios's unpatriotic communism. He himself is a monarchist. Though he argues all the time with Kokolios and Dr. Iannis at the kapheneia over their political beliefs, the three men band together when Greece becomes a target of World War Two. When the Italians are forced to surrender to the Germans and put up a fight, Stamatis goes to help with Kokolios and Velisarios. He dies in Kokolios's arms when they're marched to a concentration camp during the Greek Civil War, suggesting that Stamatis learned the importance of friendship and finally chose to put it above his political beliefs.

**Lemoni** – Lemoni is a young girl who flits around Pelagia's

village. She cares for animals but torments them as well; she calls Dr. Iannis when she finds Psipsina caught in a fence and also pokes dogs with sticks. When the Italians invade the island, Lemoni becomes great friends with Corelli almost immediately. Though they can't understand each other, she visits him daily and tells him all about her day. This is how Corelli finds out about the **mine** that washes up on the beach, an event that Lemoni never forgets and talks about often, even into her old age. Lemoni is a serious and driven child who has no qualms about reprimanding adults. She shames Corelli and Pelagia when they don't collect enough snails and scolds Dr. Iannis at times as well. Lemoni survives the invasion and goes on to have several children and grandchildren. When Corelli returns forty years after the war, Pelagia describes Lemoni as being as big as a ship.

**Kokolios** – Kokolios is a communist man living in Pelagia's village. He spends his days at the kapheneia with his best friend Stamatis, Dr. Iannis, and Father Arsenios. They argue about politics and how society should function, and Kokolios refuses to compromise on his politics. When the war comes to Greece, however, Kokolios puts his politics aside in order to support Greece, even when that means supporting Prime Minister Metaxas and the king. Kokolios is perplexed when he discovers that some of the Italian soldiers are communist like himself, and this eventually leads to a partnership with Carlo. Because Kokolios has a printing press, he and Carlo conspire to print an anti-fascist pamphlet that makes fun of Mussolini. He joins the Italians during the final battle with the Germans and is taken to a concentration camp during the Greek Civil War. He dies in Stamatis's arms and the sight of their death haunts Dr. Iannis until he himself dies.

**Psipsina** – A pine marten that Lemoni finds caught in a fence and Dr. Iannis decides to keep as a pet. Psipsina earns her name because Lemoni told Dr. Iannis that she found "a funny kind of cat"--"Psipsina" is the Greek equivalent of calling a cat "Puss." Though Pelagia initially resents having to grind up mice for Psipsina, they soon become close and Psipsina sleeps with Pelagia at night. She's an active and mischievous pet and climbs the walls; the neighbors resent her because she steals eggs from their chickens. Psipsina is the only individual to recognize Mandras when he returns from fighting for the Greeks--she's only truly friendly to people she knows, which tips Pelagia off to Mandras's identity. Psipsina also becomes extremely friendly with Corelli after a somewhat rocky start in which she bites him. During the German occupation of Cephalonia, a German soldier clubs Psipsina and kills her for being tame.

**Hector** – Hector is the leader of the ELAS group that Mandras joins. He's a devout communist and carries a copy of Lenin's pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* As far as Mandras is concerned, Hector is a god: he's all-knowing and promises to teach him to read, and he introduces Mandras to the central tenets of communism that make Mandras feel as though he was cheated

as a fisherman and is righteous in being involved with ELAS. In reality, Hector recognizes that Mandras and young men like him are vulnerable and friendless, and so is able to play to Mandras's weaknesses to rope him into the atrocities that ELAS commits. Hector steals from peasants and other guerilla groups alike and orders ELAS members to kill anyone who opposes them, including British soldiers fighting for Greece. His goals have more to do with taking control of Greece after the war is over, not liberating Greece from Axis rule during the war.

**Iannis** – Iannis is Antonia and Alexi's only child. He's named after Dr. Iannis, his adoptive grandfather. Because Antonia and Alexi throw themselves into their business ventures and don't have much time to parent Iannis, Iannis grows up helping Pelagia in Drosoula's tavern. He can say several phrases in six languages by the time he's six and he keeps track of how many foreign women have kissed him. He dreams of reaching sexual maturity and of impressing women, and he does what he can to take care of his grandmother. When he's ten years old, he asks Spiridon to teach him bouzouki, but Spiridon starts him on the mandolin instead. Iannis quickly becomes obsessed and soon loves the mandolin more than he likes girls. When Corelli hears him play as a teenager, he believes that Iannis is extremely talented and is going to be a successful musician.

**Lieutenant Bunny Warren/Bunnios** – Bunnios is a British spy who parachutes onto Mt. Aenos, where Alekos finds him and believes he's an angel. When Alekos finally takes Bunnios to Dr. Iannis, it comes out that Bunnios thought he was fluent in Greek but actually speaks ancient, not modern, Greek; he can barely communicate. He was also sent to Greece in festival dress, not normal clothes. Bunnios spends most of his time pretending to be mute and walking with Father Arsenios. Every week he radios British officers in Cairo to give them a report. Eventually, he learns enough to Greek to communicate, though he continues to pepper his speech with British colloquialisms. He remains friendly with Dr. Iannis and Pelagia through the end of the war and smuggles Corelli off of the island. He's murdered by ELAS during the Greek Civil War.

**Alexi** – Alexi is Antonia's husband. Pelagia objects to him at first because he's fifteen years her senior and is overweight and unattractive, but she soon understands why Antonia fell for him: he's extremely kind and wants to be a part of the family. He's a radical communist lawyer who's good at his job; he can bring judges to tears and does what he can to fight for the working class. However, as he gets older, he becomes gradually more conservative. When his son Iannis is born, Alexi completes this transformation. He begins secretly voting for conservative candidates in elections and purchases land to develop vacation rentals so he can pass something to Iannis without tax penalties. Despite this, he's not an involved parent by any means; he often fails to follow through on his promises to his son.

**Prime Minister Metaxas** – Metaxas is the Prime Minister of Greece at the start of the novel; he dies of a chronic illness in January of 1941. He's a small and regretful man who feels trapped by his choice to lead Greece. He spends most of his time worrying about Mussolini and his daughter, Lulu, who contradicts him publically and is uncontrollable. When Grazzi delivers Mussolini's ultimatum to Metaxas, Metaxas very calmly refuses to give in. Grazzi declares that this is Metaxas's finest moment, and insists that Metaxas is the most honest leader he's ever met. After the start of the war with Italy, Metaxas's choice to refuse the Italian occupation earns him the love and respect of Greeks who never before thought they'd support him--Dr. Iannis even puts a picture of Metaxas on his wall, despite believing his past policies to be silly.

**Alekos** – Alekos is a goatherd who lives in the mountains on Cephalonia. He descends to the villages only occasionally, and Dr. Iannis meets him in the mountains once per year to examine him and his goats. Alekos acts an outside, mostly unaffected observer of the war. He finds the explosions in the valleys beautiful and loves watching airplanes, and he's especially struck when an "angel," Bunny Warren, parachutes out of a plane and lands near Alekos. Alekos is thrilled when Bunnios allows him to keep the parachute. He's still alive at the end of the novel, though he's an exceptionally old man by that time.

**General Gandin** – The Italian officer in charge of controlling the Italian troops on Cephalonia. Corelli describes him as someone who rose to the top by following orders, but who doesn't know how to give them. In the weeks before the Italians surrender to the Allies, Gandin tells the troops to trust the Germans rather than disarm them. After the Italians surrender, he's paralyzed by indecision and refuses to issue orders to the troops.

**Colonel Rivolta** – The colonel who sends Carlo and Francisco on the mission to destroy the "Greek" watchtower. Carlo believes that Rivolta has only risen in rank because he knows the right people; he's short, fat, and does next to nothing. He also has a flair for the dramatic, fabricates military success stories, and loves to throw out popular Fascist slogans whenever he can.

**Spiridon** – Spiridon is a bouzouki player from Corfu whom Pelagia hires to play in Drosoula's taverna. He reminds her of Corelli. Iannis also idolizes Spiridon and asks Spiridon to teach him to play the bouzouki so that he can impress girls. Spiridon gets Iannis started playing Corelli's mandolin and when Corelli reappears, he shares that Spiridon is a relatively famous musician.

**Mario** – Francisco's tame mouse. He lives in Francisco's pocket and eats scraps. Mario remains with Francisco even through the invasion of Albania and the cold and hunger they both suffer. Though Francisco attempts to give Mario to Carlo for safekeeping after he's shot, Francisco unwittingly kills his

mouse by squeezing him too hard. Carlo tucks Mario into Francisco's pocket and buries them together.

**Daut Hoggia** – Hoggia is said by the Italians to be an Albanian rebel who was brutally and wrongfully murdered by Greeks. Later, it comes out that Hoggia was actually a thief, a murderer, and a rapist, not a hero. The Italians killed him but blamed his death on the Greeks to stir up conflict between Greece and Albania.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Lieutenant Colonel Myers** – A British officer in Greece who has the misfortune of reprimanding ELAS leaders, including Hector, with some regularity. Though the ELAS groups are clearly not following orders, Myers never has enough proof to shut them down, and Hector often manages to mock Myers.

**Marshal Badoglio** – Badoglio is appointed Prime Minister of Italy after the king unseats Mussolini. Prior to that, he was one of Mussolini's top military officers, though he was unable to do anything of note since he was never given any information. He concedes to the Allies.

**Colonel Barge** – Commander of the German troops in Cephalonia. He encourages General Gandin to trust him and then issues orders for the German troops to massacre the Italians.

**Count Galeazzo Ciano** – Mussolini's son-in-law and the Foreign Minister of Italy until 1943. Mussolini resents Ciano for his love of golf. He's often privy to Mussolini's plans and is tasked with giving orders to the proper people in the military.

**Captain Fienzo Appollonio** – Captain Appollonio leads the Italians in the battle against the Germans. He stands up to General Gandin in order to do so, and Corelli offers his support. Appollonio dies in the massacre.

**Colonel Mondini** – A colonel stationed in Athens before the Italians invade Greece. He's good friends with Emmanuele Grazzi and like Grazzi, Mondini is entirely unaware of Italy's plans to invade Greece and unsupportive when he does find out.

**Emmanuele Grazzi** – The Italian ambassador to Greece who delivers Mussolini's ultimatum to Metaxas. Prior to delivering the ultimatum, he has no idea what Mussolini was planning, and he and other diplomats were good friends with the Greeks they live amongst.

**Kosmas, Nionios, and Krystal** – Three dolphins that swim with Mandras and help him fish. When Mandras commits suicide, it's implied that these dolphins are the ones who push his body towards shore.

**Mina** – Mina is a young woman who lives in the insane asylum run by nuns. She's one of the two residents who are healed by St. Gerasimos on his feast day.

**St. Gerasimos** – The patron saint of Cephalonia. He has two feast days; one in October and one in August, and he cures a mad person at each feast. He left the entirety of his body to the church in Argostoli.

**Lulu** – Lulu is Metaxas's daughter. It's unclear how old she is, but she's wild, shockingly modern, and an utter embarrassment to her father.

## TERMS

**Bouzouki** – A Greek instrument that is similar to a mandolin, but bigger and tuned lower.

**Iconostasis** – A screen, ornately decorated with paintings of icons, that separates the clergy from the masses in an Orthodox church. Only the clergy are allowed behind the screen.

**Kapheneia** – The local Greek bar and coffeehouse. It's an exclusively male space and the place to argue political theory and escape the nagging of women.

**Puttees** – A type of lower leg wrap that Italian soldiers wore during World War Two.

**Venizelism** – A Greek political movement named for Eleftherios Venizelos. The movement championed the formation of a Greek state that encompassed all areas that are ethnically Greek, espoused pro-Western and pro-democratic ideals, and was against communism and the Greek monarchy. Greece had a Venizelist government during the Axis occupation, though the movement fell out of favor in the 1950s.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### WAR: HORROR, BEAUTY, AND HUMANITY

*Captain Corelli's Mandolin* tells the story of the Greek Dr. Iannis, his daughter Pelagia, and the

Italian Captain Corelli. It begins several years before the start of World War Two and closely follows the Italian occupation of the Greek island Cephalonia, though it also spans decades after the end of the war. In telling such a sweeping tale from a variety of both first- and third-person perspectives, de Bernières paints a rich picture of what war is and what it can mean for different people. Though de Bernières is careful to make it clear that war is shocking and dehumanizing for all involved, he also makes the case that awe-inspiring beauty can be borne even

from the horror of war.

One of the novel's most tragic yet optimistic characters is Carlo Piero Guercio, a closeted gay man in the Italian army. Carlo initially finds life in the army a perfect venue for admiring the sculpted bodies of his brothers in arms and experiencing a sense of love and camaraderie that was unavailable to him as a civilian attempting to pass as straight. Carlo also falls in love with one of his fellow soldiers, a married man named Francisco. Carlo never gives voice to his love for Francisco, yet the time they spend together in Albania is one that Carlo characterizes as being wonderful in terms of his romantic life. However, this seeming idyll is tainted by the fact that the soldiers have no idea what they're supposed to be doing, and it turns into a nightmare when they're ordered to invade Greece on foot in the winter. Because the soldiers don't have proper winter clothing, many develop lethal cases of gangrene and frostbite; their maps don't match what they find on the ground, making it impossible to carry out their orders; their guns freeze, making them useless; and the Greek forces, despite being a significantly smaller group, are easily able to pick off Italian soldiers at their leisure. As the situation worsens, Francisco goes mad from the cold and hunger and finally commits suicide by jumping out of a trench and into the line of Greek fire. While dying in Carlo's arms, he professes his love for Carlo, turning his death and the lead-up to it into an intensely bittersweet time for Carlo. Though Carlo is well aware of the human cost of the invasion, it's also a time during which he is unashamedly able to be in love--something he characterizes as beautiful.

On Cephalonia, de Bernières takes a different tack in illustrating the ways in which people are able to find happiness and beauty, even in light of appalling and horrendous circumstances. The Italian occupation of Cephalonia is surprisingly peaceful; it only feels like war because of the food shortages and the curfew. Over the course of the occupation, Corelli and Pelagia fall madly in love, and Carlo falls in love with Corelli. Corelli is also able to dedicate a great deal of his time to artistic pursuits, such as playing his mandolin and leading his military choir La Scala in daily performances. All of this paints a portrait of the Italian occupation as something mundane and only tangentially connected to the war itself--which, in turn, allows it to be viewed in a positive light, as something that actually improves the relationship between the Italians and the Greeks. To that end, when Italy finally does admit defeat and surrender to the Allies in 1943, many of the Italian troops join the Greeks in mounting a defense against the few German troops also occupying Cephalonia--with disastrous results. Because of Italian indecision at the upper levels in the military, the Italians in Cephalonia are unable to properly prepare and are eventually brutally massacred by the German soldiers. Carlo dies to save Corelli, who barely survives the ordeal and isn't able to return to Pelagia and the love they shared for almost forty years after the end of the war. The juxtaposition of

these stretches of friendship, love, and artistic production with instances of death and destruction suggests that, even in war, there is beauty to be found. However, that that beauty is fundamentally precarious and will inevitably be destroyed, stolen, or overpowered by the tragic realities of war.



### POWER, REALITY, AND ABSURDITY

Because of the way in which *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* makes use of a variety of perspectives and narrative styles, it's able to explore how power

functions from a number of angles: Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, tells the reader directly about his plans to conquer Europe; Hector, the leader of the Greek rebel group ELAS explains how communist theory provides the justification for cheating and then killing Greek peasants; and Dr. Iannis notes on numerous occasions how powerful "megalomaniacs" from Philip of Macedon to Mussolini himself abuse their power. Both despite and because of these narrators' wildly differing viewpoints, the novel explores how, within the contexts of Mussolini's fascism, Greece's rebel communism, and World War Two as a whole, leaders manipulate their political power and use it to warp perceptions of reality, both their own and that of others. In this way, the novel exposes these leaders as fundamentally hypocritical, as they're far more interested in power simply for the sake of having it than anything else.

In Mussolini's narration prior to the Italian invasion of Albania, he speaks to an unnamed and unrecorded underling and demonstrates exactly how much power he has, how intent he is on gaining more, and how ridiculous this fixation makes him look. He shows impressive vanity by asking his underling to hold a mirror for him so he can find his best angle from which to be photographed, and then goes on to show how his power as Il Duce, the dictator of Italy, affords him the ability to fundamentally shape reality. He makes numerous references to fabricating attacks by the Greeks and throws out a number of other "facts," such as the notion that planting trees on mountains will naturally create more snow and, in turn, will create men coldhearted like the Germans. He further erroneously states that "fascist economics are immune from the cyclic disturbances of capitalism"--something that he insists is correct, regardless of his listener's apparently telling him that the opposite appears to be true. When combined with his petty attitude and, specifically, his exaggerated and emotional explosion when a cat enters his chambers, these lies create a portrait of him that insists that his power to dictate what's considered reality isn't actually enough to keep him from seeming ridiculous--even, and especially, in the eyes of the soldiers who are supposed to be fighting for him. This in turn discredits him and his goals in the eyes of the rest of the characters who are aware he's hiding the truth or fabricating information, though many high-ranking Italian generals must continue to outwardly support those delusions.

Though Mussolini is the novel's primary example of a power-hungry ruler, it also offers Mandras's introduction to Hector and the Greek communist rebel group ELAS as another example of the ways in which hunger for power is shown to be ultimately destructive and ineffective, even to those within the leader's organization and those it purports to help. Mandras is initially entranced by Hector's promise to teach him to read, but Mandras eventually becomes intoxicated by a political system that promises him power and that is shown to be just as corrupt and convoluted as Mussolini's fascism. Though the rebels claim to be fighting for Greece, in reality, they steal from civilians and other Greek military groups, brutally murder innocent people when they attempt to stand up for themselves, and refuse to help other Greek forces defend the country against either the Italians for the Germans. Further, just as the Italians recognize that Mussolini is full of lies and half-truths, none of the Greeks believe the ELAS is truly out to help them either. In short, by diving into the ways in which Mussolini and ELAS attempt to manipulate those in their inner circles as well as everyone else, the novel ultimately proposes that the kind of power that Mussolini and ELAS enjoy is fundamentally corrupt. Rather than making either Mussolini or ELAS into the heroes that they believe themselves to be, that power actually turns them into absurd caricatures of absolute power run wild--and fools nobody but those also hungry for power.



### HISTORY AND STORYTELLING

*Captain Corelli's Mandolin* begins with Dr. Iannis working on "The New History of Cephalonia," his sweeping account of the island from ancient to

modern times, focusing primarily on the various powers that occupied the island and the ensuing effects on the island's culture. As Dr. Iannis develops his account, however, he's frustrated that he cannot write like "a writer of histories"--in other words, without writing emotionally about what the island has suffered over the years. To make up for this, he amends his title to read "A Personal History of Cephalonia." In doing so, Dr. Iannis makes an important discovery that goes on to guide the novel: history is innately personal, and there's power to be had in telling one's version of events--a power that, in turn, can be dangerous.

"A Personal History of Cephalonia" is concerned with what exactly it means to be Greek, exploring in particular how Greece's history of being conquered by a number of European and eastern powers has shaped specifically the Cephalonian outlook on life. Dr. Iannis goes into great detail about the powers that have occupied Greece over the centuries: Philip of Macedon in ancient times, followed by the Normans, the Turks, and the British more recently. By recording these occupations and considering Greece as a nation shaped primarily by its past of near-constant conquest, Dr. Iannis seeks to portray the Greeks as a strong people who have spent thousands of years

standing up to outside forces. This portrayal does two things. First, Dr. Iannis's insistence on thinking of the Greeks as strong and independent despite the numerous foreign powers that attempted to control them goes against how the novel says the rest of Europe thinks of Greece: that is, as weak, provincial, and strategically meaningless in the grand scheme of World War Two. In challenging these widely held narratives about Greece's role in the modern world, Dr. Iannis subtly insists that the victors aren't the only ones capable of recording what happened. In other words, while the history books might gloss over Greece, Dr. Iannis's personal account is still a valuable document, as it gives voice to oppressed people who otherwise had no power to tell their stories.

Though Carlo would at first appear to disagree with this--he says outright that the winners of a given conflict are the ones who get to decide what exactly happened--his actions ultimately reinforce Dr. Iannis's insistence that personal stories nevertheless have power. While in Cephalonia, Carlo records his experience of joining the military and participating in the attempt to invade Greece in the winter, as a closeted gay man secretly in love with one of his fellow soldiers, Francisco. In his story, Carlo draws attention to the inconsistencies between the official story of the war and his lived experience of it: while the Italian generals were enthusiastic about their "successes" and their plans for invading Albania and Greece, in reality, commands often contradicted each other and Italian soldiers died by the thousands of cold, hunger, and poorly planned marches that turned them into easy targets for Greek rebels. Carlo demonstrates a keen understanding of the fact that what he wrote is extremely dangerous for him as an individual and possibly for the public perception of the war as righteous and an easy win, especially since he leaves his writings to Corelli and instructs him to read them only after Carlo himself is dead. Carlo thus ensures that nobody will be able to punish him for the numerous offenses he confesses to, which include contradicting the official version of events, questioning the Italians' goals, and ultimately, being a gay soldier for a nation that aligned itself with Hitler and the Nazis, people who would've killed Carlo or sent him to a concentration camp had they known of his sexuality.

While the novel concerns itself primarily with these personal records of the war and the sense of fulfillment that Dr. Iannis and Carlo gain by telling their stories, it also shines a light on the way in which powerful individuals can shape public opinion by formulating "official" versions of events. Many of these "official" narratives, such as Mussolini's insistence that the war is going splendidly, or Italian generals' attempts to cast the Greeks as aggressors, create the illusion that the Italians are winning the war when, in reality, things are far more complicated. The existence of Carlo's narrative in particular pushes back on the truth of those "official" stories and exposes them to the reader for what they are: outright lies. With this,

the novel ultimately suggests that while those in power may have the privilege of telling the official version of events, these stories are hardly akin to truth. Personal narratives, meanwhile, for all their biases and intimacy, may better capture the lived experience of war--and, perhaps, of all history--than allegedly objective accounts ever could.



## POLITICS AND FRIENDSHIP

Cephalonia is home to people of all manner of political affiliations, in particular alignment with the monarchist Stamatis or the communist Kokolios.

Yet despite spending years arguing with each other over the proper way to govern a nation, these two political theorists remain close friends and even die in each other's arms. The relationship between Stamatis and Kokolios is just one of a number of friendships in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* that transcend political beliefs. Through Stamatis and Kokolios, as well as the friendships of young men like Günter Weber and Mandras, the novel makes the case that genuine friendship has the power to triumph over all manner of differences. Sacrificing one's personal relationships for the sake of party loyalty, on the other hand, is a ticket to a lifetime of regret at best.

Prior to the war's arrival on the shores of Greece, politics and political theories fuel lively, good-hearted debate. Stamatis and Kokolios delight in arguing with each other, and Dr. Iannis, a Venizelist, is absolutely thrilled when he comes up with a scathing critique of communist economic practices with which to scorch Kokolios later at the kapheneia--and yet, all three men notably remain friends. Dr. Iannis also cultivates this kind of argumentative relationship with Pelagia, teaching her how to formulate a solid argument and successfully support her own political beliefs as she grows into adulthood. She clearly takes the necessity and the joy of argument to heart, as long after the war is over, Pelagia doesn't find her adult daughter Antonia's profession of being a radical communist surprising or a bad thing--and she recognizes that Antonia's views will likely change over time anyway. This assessment in particular suggests that in the Greek tradition, the political theories themselves don't matter as much as the respectful relationships people form with each other by talking about--and in turn, honing--their beliefs. It also implies that one's political views are, to a degree, fluid--they change over time with age and circumstances.

When the war arrives in Greece after the Italians torpedo a Greek ship and harbor, Stamatis, Kokolios, and Dr. Iannis put their political differences aside and come together to support their country, rather than argue about their individual beliefs regarding how Greece should be governed. This camaraderie in the face of political disagreement continues throughout the war and the Italian occupation. Carlo even joins in--he's a communist like Kokolios, and the two conspire to print and distribute an "Italian" pamphlet making fun of Mussolini and all

of Italy's goals in the war, including the occupation of Greece. While a shared political bent is what presumably initiates this partnership, it's the friendly and caring relationships that the Greek residents form with their Italian invaders that allow this kind of friendship and conspiracy to take place at all. Further, the Italians in Cephalonia are vocal about the fact that they believe the Greek occupation is a fool's errand, which helps facilitate the friendships between the Greeks and the Italians. In other words, because of a shared political belief, the Italians and the Greeks are able to recognize each other as human beings and act on the realization that they actually have much more in common than it appeared at first.

While Carlo, Stamatis, Kokolios, and Dr. Iannis manage to form deep and lasting relationships despite their differing nationalities and political leanings, the German soldier Günter Weber provides counterpoints to the others' genuine friendships. Weber meets Corelli and Carlo when the Italians make an excursion to the shore with prostitutes, and Corelli immediately "drafts" Weber into his singing group La Scala. This becomes the basis for their friendship, and Weber soon becomes friends with Dr. Iannis, Pelagia, and a number of other Greek people. Despite their friendship—which is described as genuine—Weber is different from his Italian and Greek friends in one important regard: he believes fully in the superiority of the Aryan race and the Nazi vision of the future, and he prioritizes these political beliefs over the humanity of his friends. This ultimately leads Weber to follow an order to head the firing squad that murders Corelli's division, something that Weber regrets for the rest of his life—but something that he felt he had to do in order to uphold his political beliefs.

Mandras suffers a similar fate: though he did love Pelagia when he left to fight for Greece, his involvement in the Greek rebel group ELAS and his introduction to radical, violent communism changed him into someone incapable of recognizing Pelagia's humanity or even his own. He commits suicide after his mother Drosoula disowns him for attempting to rape Pelagia, suggesting that while political theory kept him going in the field, it's impossible for that theory to be the guiding force in his civilian life. With this, the novel makes it abundantly clear that it's exceptionally dangerous to divorce political ideology from humanity. Rather, it proposes that it's impossible to form meaningful, supportive friendships with individuals whom one doesn't consider human first and foremost—and that the alternative to recognizing others' humanity is death or a lifetime of regret.



## FAMILY, OPPORTUNITY, AND GENDER DYNAMICS

Pelagia is a unique character in a number of ways: she's one of only a handful of female characters mentioned in the novel at all, and is also the only woman who, in Dr. Iannis's words, has learned how to think. Because of this, it's

worth examining where women in general exist in the culture of Cephalonia, how Pelagia flouts these conventions, and what the consequences of doing so are. Ultimately, the novel suggests that while Pelagia initially sees her status as a liberated and educated woman as something that will surely allow her to succeed in a man's world, the opposite ends up being true: she's punished over and over again for violating social mores and is ultimately denied both the milestones of traditional womanhood and the freedom of moving through the world as a man might.

Dr. Iannis justifies Pelagia's unconventional upbringing by consistently citing the death of his wife, Pelagia's mother. His reasoning is twofold: because his wife was never able to give him a son, he feels compelled to raise Pelagia as one, while also citing the fact that his wife wasn't around to teach Pelagia how to be a proper woman according to Greek standards. This means that Pelagia's skillset is rich and varied, and overwhelmingly includes skills considered masculine. While Pelagia did learn how to cook, a traditionally female task, she can also speak Italian, argue about political theory, and read and write in both Greek and Italian. Pelagia finds herself caught between what seem like two different worlds when she and Mandras, a local Greek boy, get engaged right before the start of the war. She not-so-secretly wants to be a doctor, a profession that's entirely off-limits to her as a woman, and she also wants to create the dowry that her father won't give her. However, she's barely proficient at any kind of needlework or crochet, and so her **bedspread** never gets any bigger on account of her picking it out and starting over. In other words, she feels as though her dreams of being a doctor are ending, yet she's unable to properly throw herself into being a wife instead.

Dr. Iannis understands something that Pelagia doesn't as she worries over her bedspread: marrying Mandras is a bad idea for women like Pelagia, who want to be more than a wife. He explains to the reader that Greek culture dictates that men love their mothers forever and their wives for about six months before hating them. Greek society at large also hates widows, which is why women hope to have sons—their sons have to love them, even when society doesn't. This is one of the reasons why Pelagia so easily falls in love with Corelli when he arrives to live in their house: he is much like Dr. Iannis and sees no problems with women who know how to think. As Pelagia's loyalties shift and she breaks off her engagement with Mandras, she recognizes that because Corelli is Italian, he's capable of offering her a life in which she will be freer to pursue her passion to become a doctor and be a wife.

However, that idealized vision of Pelagia's future turns out to be yet another dream lost to the war, as (as far as Pelagia knows until the very end of the novel) Corelli doesn't return for her. Instead, after Dr. Iannis is taken by the Greek communists, Pelagia attempts to step into his shoes as the local doctor, only

to discover that when she practices medicine as he did (that is, without formal training or licensure), others accuse her of witchcraft. After Mandras returns and tries to rape her, Mandras's mother, Drosoula, disowns him and moves in with Pelagia. The two adopt an abandoned baby they name Antonia, and in doing so form a family unit consisting only of women until Antonia marries and, in her thirties, gives birth to a baby boy they decide to name Iannis after the late Dr. Iannis.

Pelagia is never able to become a doctor, and she's also denied all the trappings of traditional womanhood. She ends the novel an unmarried, virgin grandmother, and her finished bedspread, which she finally decided would be for her bed with Corelli, was buried in the great earthquake of 1953. However, the happiness and sense of purpose that Pelagia does eventually feel within her chosen family suggests that family doesn't have to mean marriage or even biological children. Similarly, success doesn't have to mean making it in a man's world. Rather, it's possible that chosen family has the power to make up for unrealized dreams, and one can experience success vicariously by teaching one's daughters to think, thereby giving them the tools to realize their dreams.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### THE MINE

During the Italian occupation, Lemoni discovers a Turkish mine from World War One that Corelli believes likely contained enough explosive material to blow up at least one warship. He and Carlo—who loves explosives from the bottom of his heart—decide to blow up the mine for the safety of the villagers, and the event is treated like a fun and entertaining diversion from both mundane day-to-day proceedings and the horrors of the war. However, when the mine explodes, it causes a great deal of damage: Corelli is deaf for two days, an engineer is decapitated by a flying piece of metal, and all the gathered soldiers and villagers are cut, bruised, and covered in hot sand. With this, the mine illustrates that even those parts of war that can be beautiful and exciting are, in actuality, dangerous and destructive.



### THE BEDCOVER

Not long after Pelagia and Mandras get engaged, Pelagia begins crocheting a decorative cover for their marriage bed. Because Pelagia's mother died before she could properly teach her daughter various needlecrafts, Pelagia struggles with the bedcover, ripping it out and re-crocheting parts of it over and over again. At this point in the novel, the

bedcover symbolizes Pelagia's internal struggle of whether to accept her future as a wife or to strive for a future as an educated woman and, possibly, a doctor. Years later, when Pelagia becomes engaged to Corelli and is suddenly able to complete the bedcover, it indicates that Pelagia made the choice to do both, which she believed she'd be able to do as Corelli's wife. However, when Corelli never returns for Pelagia and the bedcover spends nearly forty years forgotten in the hidden room of the old house, it suggests that Pelagia's belief that she'd be able to have it all was misguided. Even if the choice wasn't an active one on Pelagia's part, she was still denied both domestic bliss and fulfillment from a professional career in medicine. In this way, the bedcover represents both Pelagia's stolen dreams and the liminal space she occupies between being properly feminine and successfully masculine.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* published in 1994.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

☹️ This would never do; why could he not write like a writer of histories? Why could he not write without passion? Without anger? Without the sense of betrayal and oppression? He picked up the sheet...It was the title page: "The New History of Cephalonia." He crossed out the first two words and substituted "A Personal."

**Related Characters:** Dr. Iannis

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 5

#### Explanation and Analysis

When Dr. Iannis returns from his day of work, he struggles to work on his side project, a sweeping history of Cephalonia and, eventually, all of world history. When Dr. Iannis changes his history to be something personal rather than something separate from him, he recognizes that history is actually personal for everyone. In other words, he can't write objectively about history because history itself isn't objective. The events he writes about (which overwhelmingly concern Greece's history of conquest) are the very reason that Dr. Iannis is the way he is, reinforcing that history influences people's day-to-day lives and is innately personal.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ Do you think I don't understand economics? How many times do I have to explain, you dolt, that Fascist economics are immune from the cyclic disturbances of capitalism? How dare you contradict me and say it appears the opposite is true?

**Related Characters:** Mussolini (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 10

### Explanation and Analysis

As Mussolini berates an underling and tells him about his plan to alleviate economic tensions, Mussolini takes great issue with being corrected. His insistence that Fascist economics won't actually do what they've seen them do shows Mussolini in the act of attempting to create reality, not just for him but for all of Italy. Because Mussolini has so much power, and particularly because he controls the press and can print whatever he wants in the papers, he's able to, in some ways, actually make these things come true. However, whether or not people believe what he says depends on whether they only read the papers, as anyone who actually looks at Italy and tries to corroborate what Mussolini says will understand that everything he says is a lie.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ We were new and beautiful, we loved each other more than brothers, that's for sure. What spoiled it always was that none of us knew why we were in Albania, none of us had an easy conscience about this rebuilding of the Roman Empire.

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker), Mussolini, Francisco

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 32

### Explanation and Analysis

Carlo explains to the reader what life was like in the early days of his military involvement. There, he found family and companionship that he'd never experienced before as a closeted gay man. However, his assertion that what ruined the experience was not knowing what they were doing does several things. First, it suggests that as soldiers, they were asked to consider politics and the military as being more

important than their strong relationships with each other. Then, remember that everything Mussolini says is probably a lie; the soldiers don't know what's going on and are kept entirely in the dark about their purpose. This means that they're never able to get a true sense of what reality really is, as they're told different things are true than what they see in front of them.

☞ I know that the Duce has made it clear that the Greek campaign was a resounding victory for Italy. But he was not there. He does not know what happened. He does not know that the ultimate truth is that history ought to consist only of the anecdotes of the little people who are caught up in it.

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker), Mussolini, Francisco

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 33

### Explanation and Analysis

As Carlo tells his story, he makes it clear that his story would contradict much of what Mussolini would say about the matter, but he also suggests that his account is somehow more correct or more valuable than Mussolini's. This is because Carlo is, as far as the reader knows, telling the truth. Mussolini, on the other hand, is shown again and again to be lying to other characters as well as to the reader. With this, Carlo suggests that the individual experiences of people, especially when considered together, are a much better way of understanding history. In suggesting this, he indicates that it's impossible for one person to create or record a history that includes and speaks to everyone's experience; the only way to do that is to use those individuals' stories directly.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☞ "I have always been a Venizelist; I am not a monarchist, and I am not a Communist. I disagree with both of you, but I cure Stamatis' deafness and I burn out Kokolios' warts. This is how we should be. We should care for each other more than we care for ideas, or else we will end up killing each other."

**Related Characters:** Dr. Iannis (speaker), Kokolios, Stamatis

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 52

### Explanation and Analysis

In the kapheneia, Dr. Iannis tries to get Kokolios and Stamatis to stop fighting and recognize that they're all friends and integral members of their community, even if they differ politically. By voicing this idea, Dr. Iannis begins his project of encouraging all individuals he comes into contact with to value people for their own sake, and to value human life over one's political ideas. He recognizes that leaning heavily on politics--and specifically, political systems like Nazism that deny huge groups of people their humanity--allows people to dehumanize others in a way that, in turn, enables them to justify violence against them. In this way, he suggests that friendship is the only antidote to dehumanization.

## Chapter 13 Quotes

☞ For Lemoni there would be no freedom until widowhood, which was precisely the time when the community would turn against her, as though she had no right to outlive a husband, as though he had died only because of his wife's negligence. This was why one had to have sons; it was the only insurance against an indigent and terrifying old age.

**Related Characters:** Pelagia (speaker), Lemoni

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 86

### Explanation and Analysis

In the days after Pelagia and Mandras get engaged, Pelagia thinks about the role of women in her village and her society. Specifically, she recognizes that women's power comes from their proximity to men: their husbands ensure their success while they live, and after that, a woman has to rely on her sons to escape the wrath of a society that doesn't believe women should be independent. It's important to note that in this case, she's thinking about Lemoni's lot in life, not her own. This suggests that Pelagia believes that she herself is trapped in the future she lays out here, but she's not quite ready to actively work against it.

☞ It occurred to Pelagia that perhaps the same scene had been enacted generation after generation since Mycenaean times; perhaps in the time of Odysseus there had been young girls like herself who had gone to the sea in order to spy on the nakedness of those they loved. She shivered at the thought of such a melting into history.

**Related Characters:** Pelagia (speaker), Mandras

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 89

### Explanation and Analysis

When Pelagia accidentally ends up spying on Mandras as he fishes naked in the sea, she wonders if Greek women have been doing the exact same thing for millennia. Her comment about "melting into history" suggests that Pelagia places a great deal of importance in connecting to her cultural history and the stories that her culture produces. This shows that she sees herself as part of that history, not just an outside observer. Then, the fact that Pelagia has to spy on Mandras in order to see him (he hasn't come for several days now to ask Dr. Iannis for her hand) illustrates how powerless she is when it comes to romantic relationships at this point. She can only be with Mandras when she wants to by spying on him; she has no power to demand his time.

## Chapter 19 Quotes

☞ (We lost the war and were saved only when the Germans invaded from Bulgaria and opened a second front that the Greeks had no resources to defend. We fought and froze and died for the sake of an empire that has no purpose...)

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker), Francisco, Mussolini

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 127

### Explanation and Analysis

When Carlo visits Francisco's mother to tell her about Francisco's death, he tells her positive things about how and why Francisco died while sharing the truth with the reader. This is one of those truths that goes against Carlo's earlier assertion that Mussolini was thrilled with the Greek campaign and called it a victory for Italy. Carlo's disillusionment suggests that the Italian army is nowhere near as wonderful or as skilled as Mussolini would like to think it is, and knowing this has made him believe that Italy

itself has no purpose. With this, Carlo begins to turn away from politics as a whole and fixate instead on those individuals who wrongfully lost their lives in the war. They died because Mussolini didn't see them as fully-fledged humans who required proper clothing and food; he saw them only as a means to build his empire.

## Chapter 21 Quotes

☝☝ As she reached for it she realized for the first time, and with a small shock, that she had learned enough from her father over the years to become a doctor herself. If there was such a thing as a doctor who was also a woman. She toyed with the idea, and then went to look for a paintbrush, as though this action could cancel the uncomfortable sensation of having been born into the wrong world.

**Related Characters:** Drosoula, Mandras, Dr. Iannis, Pelagia

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 134

### Explanation and Analysis

After Mandras returns from the war and Pelagia does everything that Dr. Iannis would've done to fix him up, she makes the uncomfortable discovery that she wants to be a doctor. It's important to keep in mind that Pelagia has this knowledge and can even consider becoming a doctor because Dr. Iannis raised her to think critically, not just to perform traditionally female labor. Though she has to perform this task out of necessity (Dr. Iannis is out), this suggests that when women are pushed into situations in which they have to carry out traditionally masculine tasks, they'll overwhelmingly be able to accomplish them. The fact that Drosoula later praises Pelagia's knowledge and competence offers hope that going forward, Pelagia will be able to become more confident in her abilities and works towards becoming a doctor.

## Chapter 25 Quotes

☝☝ "It had 'To The Glory Of The British People' inscribed on the obelisk. I have heard that some of your soldiers have chipped away the letters. Do you think you can so easily erase our history? Are you so stupid that you think that we will forget what it said?"

**Related Characters:** Dr. Iannis (speaker), Captain Antonio Corelli, Pelagia

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 169

### Explanation and Analysis

On the day that Corelli comes to live with Pelagia and Dr. Iannis, Dr. Iannis takes Corelli to task for destroying Greek monuments. His questions to Corelli indicate that history isn't just something that's written down and can be forgotten by erasing the words. Instead, history is something that lives inside people. It's memories, and the inscription on the obelisk won't truly disappear until everyone who once remembered it dies or forgets it. This suggests that the task of changing a people's history isn't easy, as it requires actually infiltrating the culture and changing it from within by changing the people themselves.

By making Corelli feel awful about this, even though Corelli isn't the one directly responsible for the destruction, Dr. Iannis also impresses upon Corelli that he's complicit in the horrors of the war. Even if Corelli doesn't actively carry out any violence against the Greeks, by not standing up for the Greeks or against the war, he's still complicit in the violence by default.

## Chapter 27 Quotes

☝☝ "I just don't understand why an artist like you would descend to being a soldier."

He frowned, "Don't have any silly ideas about soldiers. Soldiers have mothers, you know, and most of us end up as farmers and fishermen like everyone else."

**Related Characters:** Captain Antonio Corelli, Pelagia (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 186

### Explanation and Analysis

After Corelli plays his mandolin for Pelagia for the first time, she wonders why he became a soldier when he's clearly an artist. The question itself betrays that Pelagia believes that soldiers are fundamentally different from other people. By suggesting that being a soldier and being a musician are opposite each other, she implies that soldiers are all coldhearted and can't appreciate art. Corelli, on the other hand, seeks to impress upon Pelagia that this isn't true. When he insists that soldiers have mothers, he tries to show her that soldiers are human in a very basic way by insisting

that all humans, no matter what they become when they grow up, come into the world the exact same way. With conversations like these, both Corelli and Pelagia begin the work of understanding that the other is truly human, despite being different.

## Chapter 28 Quotes

☝ "You have to be firm with these people, or they start doing what they like...You won't believe this, but half of these peasants are Royalists. Just imagine! Identifying yourself with the oppressors!"

It had never occurred to Mandras to be anything other than a Royalist, but he nodded in agreement.

**Related Characters:** Hector (speaker), Mandras

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 194

### Explanation and Analysis

After Hector inducts Mandras into ELAS by making him beat a peasant, Hector introduces Mandras to some of the central tenets of ELAS's warped political theory. This passage illustrates how Hector uses communist theory in order to first manipulate Mandras and then dehumanize the peasants. At this point, Mandras is friendless and still wants to do something amazing with which to impress Pelagia, and he sees Hector's displays of strength as an indicator that Hector will be able to help him do something amazing. However, Hector only uses Mandras's interest to manipulate him into dehumanizing himself and others, as he does with this peasant. The way that Hector talks about the peasants suggests that he sees them as too stupid for their own good--or, in Hector's mind, in need of his guidance. The fact that Mandras is willing to go along with this only reinforces how vulnerable he is to manipulation.

## Chapter 30 Quotes

☝ Weber was still a virgin, his father was a Lutheran pastor, and he had grown up in the Austrian mountains, capable of hating Jews and gypsies only because he had never met one.

**Related Characters:** Captain Antonio Corelli, Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker), Günter Weber

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 201

### Explanation and Analysis

The narrator offers a description of Günter Weber, a young Nazi in the German division in Cephalonia. By insisting that Weber can only hate Jews because he's never met one, the narrator shows that it's only possible to turn to politics by dehumanizing others. This suggests that Weber may not have been a bad person had he had relationships with individuals that the Nazis prosecuted and learned to see them as human and worthy of attention. At its heart, Nazism seeks to deny entire swaths of people their humanity, and it only works when those people are turned into enemies and then denied their personhood. Taken together, this shows that Weber is, like Mandras, vulnerable to manipulation, and that if Weber continues down this path, he'll have to face the consequences of dehumanizing people.

## Chapter 31 Quotes

☝ It came to her that she could actually shoot him when he came through the door, and then run away to join the andartes with it. The trouble was that he was no longer just an Italian, he was Captain Antonio Corelli, who played the mandolin and was very charming and respectful.

**Related Characters:** Captain Antonio Corelli (speaker), Pelagia

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 204

### Explanation and Analysis

When Pelagia discovers that Corelli left his pistol out, she considers shooting him but discovers she can't. This is because over the few weeks that Corelli has been living with her, Pelagia has learned to humanize him and now sees him as an individual deserving of life and respect. She can no longer flatten him into a stereotype of an invading Italian, as she knows now that he's more than a soldier, more than Italian, and more than an invader.

This shows that as Pelagia learns to humanize the Italians as a group, she also learns to prioritize friendship and humanity over political theory and what others would say is the right thing to do: defend her country. Given the circumstances, Pelagia recognizes that the Italians aren't excited to occupy Greece and many of them are actually against it. They're all people in this together, and the only way to get through it is to treasure the friendships that they

form with each other.

## Chapter 35 Quotes

☛☛ We have lost one-third of our merchant marine because He forgot to order them home before declaring war, we have been persuaded that halving the size of a division means that we have double the number of divisions, we have been made to invade Greece from the north in the rainy season, without winter clothing...All of our Albanian soldiers immediately deserted, and we only know what is happening to us by listening to the BBC.

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio, Mussolini , Kokolios

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 227

### Explanation and Analysis

In the satirical pamphlet that Carlo and Kokolios print and distribute on Cephalonia, they point out the numerous inconsistencies in Mussolini's policies and all the ways that Mussolini's actions make him look ridiculous and absurd. It's especially telling when they mention that the Italian soldiers get their news from the BBC--in other words, their enemy--because Mussolini is so untrustworthy. This suggests that as hard as Mussolini tries to create the reality that he wants to see, he's actually very unsuccessful in doing so because he keeps his soldiers from being able to make informed decisions and even carry out his orders. In this way, the narrator suggests that dictators like Mussolini who work so hard to fabricate the truth are guaranteed to fail, as it becomes obvious to those who are hurt by their policies what's going on.

## Chapter 36 Quotes

☛☛ But on that evening, one of the Venizelists who was about to risk his life by defecting to EDES came up to him later in the darkness, sympathetically offering him a cigarette, and explaining, "Look, you don't have to understand all that jargon from our sesquipedalian friend, because all it boils down to is that you've got to do just as he says, or he'll cut your throat."

**Related Characters:** Hector, Mandras

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 232

### Explanation and Analysis

One night after Hector gives a long and complicated speech about communist theory, a disillusioned member of ELAS kindly tells Mandras that he's being manipulated. This man's advice shows how young men like Mandras and Weber are susceptible to being roped into political movements they don't understand, and they're more vulnerable because they want power and fame. ELAS and the Nazis offer Mandras and Weber ways to make themselves look good and feel as though they're doing something to help their respective countries when in reality, they're simply being used to advance the goals of powerful men who don't care about them. This is why this man suggests that Mandras could have his throat cut if he doesn't obey; the system isn't actually intended to work for the people at all--they're disposable.

## Chapter 37 Quotes

☛☛ "I should have brought her up stupid," said the doctor at last. "When women acquire powers of deduction there's no knowing where trouble can end."

**Related Characters:** Dr. Iannis (speaker), Carlo Piero Guercio, Pelagia

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 236

### Explanation and Analysis

After Pelagia figures out who's responsible for the anti-Mussolini pamphlet on the island, she agrees to stop talking about it but is angry that her father put himself in danger by getting involved. When Dr. Iannis tells this to Carlo, he recognizes that by teaching Pelagia to think, he allowed her to grow into a person who could one day disagree with him. However, he sees this as something normal and not even bad, given that he doesn't punish her for thinking. Rather, his tone here suggests that he sees Pelagia as the first of many women who might learn to think and cause trouble in the future. This does indeed hold true--Pelagia pays Dr. Iannis's education forward by teaching her daughter, Antonia, to think.

## Chapter 42 Quotes

☝☝ But I know that she will never tell me that she is waiting for a new world where a Greek may love an Italian and think nothing of it.

**Related Characters:** Captain Antonio Corelli (speaker), Pelagia

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 250

### Explanation and Analysis

As Corelli watches Pelagia run away from him in anger, he knows that she's upset because with the war raging, it's impossible for them to love each other and not feel as though they're betraying their countries. This shows that even though Corelli and Pelagia do love each other--and even though their love transcends their nationalities--they're still at the mercy of a world that places a lot of stock in people's nationalities. Just as Pelagia's problems don't end just because she's an educated woman, Pelagia and Corelli's romance cannot automatically work just because they've learned to see each other as human and worthy of consideration. The fact that Pelagia feels unable to tell Corelli that she's waiting for the world to change suggests that she's afraid it never will.

## Chapter 43 Quotes

☝☝ No one could recognize anybody else, and Italian and Greek peered into one another's faces, denationalized by coughing, by grime, and by mutual amazement.

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio, Captain Antonio Corelli, Pelagia, Lemoni

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 260

### Explanation and Analysis

After Corelli and Carlo blow up the mine in front of an audience of Italians and Greeks, nobody can recognize anyone else due to the sand that falls from the sky. The assertion that the sand "denationalizes" the viewers implies that the beautiful and community-oriented parts of war can bring people together. However, it's also important to remember that the mine explosion was extremely

dangerous, which then suggests that those who survive are now bonded with each other in a way similar to how the soldiers who go through difficult experiences with each other bond. They've all survived this explosion together, so they can now recognize that they're all human and worthy of acknowledgement. The fact that the sand makes it impossible to tell who's who and who's of what nationality also suggests that underneath the uniforms, all of these people are exactly the same: they're all human.

## Chapter 48 Quotes

☝☝ "I don't have your advantages, Günter."

"Advantages?"

"Yes. I don't have the advantage of thinking that other races are inferior to mine. I don't feel entitled, that's all."

**Related Characters:** Captain Antonio Corelli, Günter Weber (speaker), Carlo Piero Guercio, Pelagia

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 285

### Explanation and Analysis

During one of the La Scala meetings at Dr. Iannis's house, the group discusses Nazism and Corelli defends his decisions to stand up for the Greeks. Here, Corelli succinctly explains to Weber how Nazism actually works: by insisting that Nazis are the only beings on earth who are truly human, which in turn enables them to justify violence against everyone else and believe that they're the righteous winners. Corelli, on the other hand, recognizes that they're all people, regardless of what someone's politics are. Because of this, he feels as though it's his responsibility to help everyone, even if they're not Italian. He understands that they're still human and worthy of his attention.

## Chapter 51 Quotes

☝☝ "If he had an impulse that quickened the seeds of his inactivity, it was foolish hope and the desperate need to spare the blood of the hapless men he loved. He took a sightless road and shortly condemned them to a grisly doom, failing to see in the Nazi promises so thick a mask of falsehood that by trusting them he condemned his beautiful youngsters to abandon their bones..."

**Related Characters:** General Gandin

**Related Themes:****Page Number:** 296**Explanation and Analysis**

The narrator offers a sample of how Homer may have written about General Gandin, had he had the chance. By portraying Gandin in this way, the narrator seeks to humanize the man who condemned so many Italian soldiers to die for no reason, when he did have the ability to save them. This encourages the reader to learn the same lessons that many of the characters are; namely, that all people are worthy of consideration, attention, and empathy, even if they appear to be bad people at first glance.

This assessment suggests that Gandin also buys into the false reality that the Italian forces are still trying to promote. He gets a number of orders to surrender to the Nazis or trust them, and he's willing to believe that those things are a good idea because he's been told they are. In reality, the Germans are doing everything in their power to cheat the Italians and win, which suggests that Gandin doesn't have the ability to think critically about what he sees and put those assessments into meaningful action.

**Chapter 52 Quotes**

☝☝ The general had an obsession with Stukas. The thought of those crook-winged howling birds of destruction made his stomach turn with dread. Perhaps he did not know that from a military point of view they were one of the most ineffective weapons of war ever devised...

**Related Characters:** General Gandin**Related Themes:****Page Number:** 304**Explanation and Analysis**

General Gandin fears that the Italians won't be able to beat the Germans in a standoff without Stukas, which the narrator asserts are useless as weapons of war. This again shows how Gandin relies heavily on the sense of reality that he's created for himself with the help of the other Italian officials. He genuinely believes that it's a good thing when he's asked to surrender to the Germans, despite the fact that he has enough weapons to decimate them in hours. Again, this illustrates how Gandin relies on things he wants to be true rather than what's actually true, simply because what he wants to be true makes him feel better and

protects him from having to make difficult decisions.

**Chapter 54 Quotes**

☝☝ "I wish that you will have children together, and I wish that once or twice you will tell them about their Uncle Carlo that they never saw."

**Related Characters:** Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker), Captain Antonio Corelli, Pelagia**Related Themes:****Page Number:** 313**Explanation and Analysis**

Carlo writes a farewell letter to Corelli in the days before the massacre, asking him to tell his children about him. The request that Corelli refer to Carlo as an uncle to his children shows that Carlo understands already what Pelagia learns later: chosen family can be far more meaningful and supportive than one's blood family. In the army, Carlo found men who loved and supported him in a way he'd never been loved before. He was able to fulfill his desires to love men, fight for them, and die for them, and those men became his family. With this letter, he asks Corelli to continue to think of him as family, even after he's gone. This is one way of asking Corelli to remember him and use Carlo's memory to guide his life after the war.

**Chapter 58 Quotes**

☝☝ He did not know it, but he buried Carlo in the soil of Odysseus' time, as though he had belonged there from the first.

**Related Characters:** Megalo Velisarios, Carlo Piero Guercio (speaker)**Related Themes:****Page Number:** 337**Explanation and Analysis**

After the massacre, Velisarios digs Carlo's grave under Dr. Iannis's olive tree, in a soil level that was at the surface during Odysseus's time. Remember that Carlo felt as though he'd found people who loved him by reading ancient Greek writings, as the ancient Greeks were far more accepting of homosexuality than the world that Carlo inhabits. By allowing Carlo to be buried in ground that is

implied to be the "correct" time for Carlo, the novel suggests that while times may not change fast enough for individuals who are persecuted while they live, it's always possible to find oneself in history and in stories. Those stories are able to unify people who feel alone in their own worlds and remind them that there are other people like them, which in turn, helps those like Carlo feel as though there's hope for the future.

## Chapter 61 Quotes

☝ "You must allow Pelagia to become a doctor. She is not only my daughter. She is, since I have no son, the nearest to a son that I have fathered. She must have a son's prerogatives, because she will continue my life when I am gone. I have not brought her up to be a domestic slave, for the simple reason that such company would have been tedious in the absence of a son."

**Related Characters:** Dr. Iannis (speaker), Captain Antonio Corelli, Pelagia

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 350

### Explanation and Analysis

On the night that Corelli leaves Cephalonia, Dr. Iannis gives him permission to marry Pelagia on the condition that he allow Pelagia to become a doctor. By laying out the reasons why he raised Pelagia to be a thinking and contributing member of society, Dr. Iannis suggests that unfortunately, Pelagia is more of an anomaly than one might hope. He implies, after all, that if he'd had a son there would've been no need to teach Pelagia to think in the first place. In this way, the novel shows that just as Pelagia is freed by her father's decision to teach her to think, she could've just as easily been trapped by him like so many other women born in her time. In other words, though Pelagia has Dr. Iannis to thank for her status, she's still under his control because of the way that her society treats and thinks about the role of women.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1. DR IANNIS COMMENCES HIS HISTORY AND IS FRUSTRATED

At the end of Dr. Iannis's day, he sits at home and chuckles about his medical successes of the day--namely, curing old man Stamatis's earache, which Dr. Iannis discovered was the result of a pea in the ear canal. Stamatis has been deaf in this ear as long as anyone can remember. Dr. Iannis referred to the pea as an "exorbitant auditory impediment," knowing that would sound better than using simple vocabulary. Then, he instructed Stamatis's wife to fill the ear with warm water and returned in the evening to fish out the pea. The removal of the pea also cured Stamatis's deafness.

Now, Dr. Iannis sits at his table and works on his history of Cephalonia. He struggles to write objectively and so has wasted a great deal of paper in the last year. He writes that Cephalonia "breeds babies for export;" men leave the island and return only to die. Dr. Iannis throws the paper away, frustrated, and picks up his title page. He amends his title to "A Personal History of Cephalonia" and continues to write. He writes that Odysseus's ships were from Cephalonia, and the island was once full of gods. Their worship was understandable, especially that of Apollo: he's the god of light, and the clear, bright light on the island blinds visitors for at least two days.

Dr. Iannis reads over his work, takes a break to urinate on the mint, and then returns indoors to chase his daughter Pelagia's goat away from eating his writing. He threatens to butcher the goat, but Pelagia only smiles and says that the goat is fond of him. Dr. Iannis returns to his writing, reasoning that it was probably a good thing the goat ate it. He writes that Cephalonia is stupidly situated on a major fault line and is infested with goats.

*Though it's humorous here, when Dr. Iannis uses flowery language to describe the pea knowing that it'll make him look better, he flirts with something that many other powerful leaders also flirt with: he recognizes that because he's an esteemed man, he has the power to shape reality by naming it as he sees fit.*



*By changing the title to something more personal, Dr. Iannis makes another important discovery: history is actually personal, not just a sweeping and interesting story. When he chooses to make his history personal rather than impersonal, he chooses to tell a far more compelling story than he'd originally planned. By mentioning the gods, he also shows that Greeks' lives are intrinsically tied up in the religious stories that guide them.*



*Pelagia's lack of fear when Dr. Iannis threatens to butcher the goat suggests that she's likely on more equal footing with her father than one might expect. Dr. Iannis will confirm this later and explain that he taught Pelagia to think, unlike other women of her age. This allows her to engage with him like a man might.*



## CHAPTER 2. THE DUCE

Mussolini summons an underling and asks him which is his good side. The underling agrees with whatever Mussolini says, so Mussolini sends him to fetch a mirror. He insists that it's important for people to see him as the Italian ideal. The underling returns with the mirror and Mussolini instructs his listener to find balconies so that he can be seen only from below. He gives orders to plant trees in the mountains--this will, he insists, create more snow and breed Italians cold like the Germans.

*It's important to note in this chapter that Mussolini as the narrator leaves out his conversation partner's responses. In doing so, he makes himself seem even more ridiculous and self-centered, as it appears almost as though he's talking to himself. His ridiculousness is further reinforced by his order to plant trees; this so-called fact is clearly made up.*



Mussolini continues his tirade; he says that Italian Jews must decide whether they're Italian or Jewish and says they must enforce quotas on Jewish employment. He orders a salary freeze to keep inflation low, but also issues an order to increase family subsidies. Mussolini tells his underling that Fascist economics will work, even if they're observing the opposite. He asks his underling to tell the press that one of his generals lost a hand doing something heroic, not playing with hand grenades.

*The comment about the press indicates that Mussolini has the power to control the press in Fascist Italy. This, in turn, allows him to control reality to an even greater degree. He reinforces this by insisting that Fascist economics work despite evidence to the contrary, an attempt to create reality in action.*



When Mussolini learns that a group of artists and intellectuals waiting outside wants to present him with an award, he asks that they be sent in. He has no idea who they are but deems them responsible for imaginatively representing the ideals of Fascism. When they leave, he rants about his foreign minister, Ciano, whom he believes is playing golf. When Ciano arrives, Mussolini greets him warmly and expresses interest in golf. Then, he turns the subject to the "Greek business." Mussolini notes that everyone is against Italy; the British have pledged to help Greece and Hitler is taking land without asking first. He insists it's important to pretend that there are indeed British bases in Greece, as it makes Metaxas, the prime minister of Greece, nervous.

*The decision to receive the artists and intellectuals just to accept their award indicates that Mussolini is mostly interested in looking powerful and important, not in actually making connections with people. Again, when Mussolini speaks awfully of golf and then expresses interest in front of Ciano, it shows that Mussolini is willing to say whatever it takes to keep people engaged and close to him. This suggests in turn that the reader shouldn't believe anything Mussolini says.*



Mussolini tells Ciano to fabricate attacks against Italy. He suggests they blame the assassination of an Albanian patriot on the Greeks and sink a Greek battleship and blame it on the British. He lists several other plans and complains that he has to do his military experts' jobs for them. Mussolini says that this must all be kept secret from Hitler. Suddenly, Mussolini starts screaming--a cat has entered the room. He won't be told that cats let them save on mousetraps and shoots the cat. He tells Ciano to clean up the mess and goes to take a nap.

*The tirade against the cat makes Mussolini seem even more unhinged, and cruel as well. Especially when combined with his orders to fabricate border problems, this indicates that Mussolini only wants power and he's willing to do anything--including shoot cats, and possibly kill people, for no reason--to get it.*



## CHAPTER 3. THE STRONGMAN

High up on the Greek Mt. Aenos, Alekos the goatherd watches his goats around him and notices a valley burning down below. The narrator notes that while Alekos's life is timeless, soon Greece will have more problems than hedgehogs dying in a fire. Soon, Greece will have to deal with the "superior races" unleashing genocide on the world.

*Alekos acts throughout the novel as an outside observer of the war, as it seldom touches him. In this way, he shows another way for someone to interpret history that's separate from it, yet technically involved.*



Despite this, the narrator says that everyone, including Pelagia, admires strength. She hears that the strongman, Velisarios, is performing in the square and she joins the crowd. He hops on one foot, holding a man on each arm and the six-year-old girl Lemoni on his head. Lemoni, however, is too scared to move her hands from Velisarios's eyes, so he stops and drops his helpers with a flourish. Then, someone asks Velisarios to lift the passing Father Arsenios--the priest is globular, greedy, and has no respect from the villagers. Velisarios swoops Father Arsenios up onto a wall before the priest can protest. Soon, however, an embarrassed hush falls, and Father Arsenios tumbles down. He goes into the church without speaking.

Pelagia scolds Velisarios for his cruelty. He considers lifting her into a tree but decides to end the act. One woman, however, calls for "the cannon." Velisarios agrees. Villagers race off to find stones and shards of pots to fill the cannon and then gather for the explosion. After the villagers suggest a number of unsuitable targets, Velisarios picks it up and shoots the cannon down the road. As the smoke clears, they hear a groan and see that young Mandras happened to come around the corner and received an old nail in the shoulder. Velisarios carries him to Dr. Iannis's house. There, Mandras falls madly in love with Pelagia at first sight. On Mt. Aenos, Alekos hears the boom and wonders if another war is starting.

## CHAPTER 4. L'OMOSESSUALE (1)

Carlo Piero Guercio introduces his tale; it's meant to be read after his death so his reputation won't suffer. He explains that he's never told a doctor or a priest that he's gay--both would tell him that he's an abomination and needs to choose to be straight. Carlo says that he'd tell them that God made him the way he is, and says that God should be blamed, not him. Carlo says he feels like a spy who must keep this secret, and the weight of it is crushing: he desperately wants to love someone, but nobody will accept it.

Carlo notes that according to Dante, gay men live in the Seventh Circle of Nether Hell--yet, Dante pities him like most others don't. Carlo explains that he's read extensively looking for people like him, and he finally found himself in Plato's writing. He finds this ironic as he's currently oppressing the Greeks, the only people who were once okay with homosexuality.

*When Velisarios swoops in and lifts Father Arsenios without thinking, it illustrates one of the issues that comes from having too much power: acting without thinking. This is, notably, something that Mussolini will do throughout much of the novel. By showing Velisarios doing the same thing here, it suggests that the capacity to abuse power is something that all humans have, even humans as kind and generous as Velisarios usually is.*



*The villagers' glee at Velisarios's cannon suggests that most people naturally enjoy explosions that do actually have the power to be destructive, as they assume the explosion isn't actually going to hurt anyone. The fact that Mandras does get hurt implies that while it may be human nature to be attracted to such things, spectacles like this are never truly benign and always have the capacity to hurt people.*



*Like Pelagia, Carlo is also trapped by traditional gender norms simply by virtue of living in a place and a time where it's not acceptable for men to be openly gay. This suggests that both Carlo and Pelagia will suffer for not conforming to the societal ideals about what men and women are supposed to do and be.*



*When Carlo looks to literature to find himself, it again suggests that there's immense value in personal stories that are passed down. This situates Carlo's writing and Dr. Iannis's history as important literary works that tell meaningful personal stories.*



Carlo admits that he joined the army because the men are beautiful and because of Plato. He read [The Symposium](#) and was struck by the suggestion that gay men are a different sex altogether, and thought it made perfect sense when the text suggested that armies should be made up of lovers so that soldiers are honorable and brave. Carlo chose to join the army so he could find someone to love. It worked, though it also brought him grief.

*Plato's suggestion that armies be made up of lovers introduces the idea that war and military life can be beautiful if one mixes those things with love and personal fulfillment. This in turn champions the power of love to help make all manner of ugly and horrific things become beautiful.*



## CHAPTER 5. THE MAN WHO SAID 'NO'

Metaxas slumps in his chair and wonders what he's going to do about Mussolini and his daughter Lulu. He writes about Lulu in his journal and thinks that he's not even sure what exactly she's up to. He knows she doesn't publically support his policies and he's glad he brought the press to heel so they stop printing stories about her. Metaxas thinks it's a shame that he controls Greece but cannot control his daughter.

*Metaxas notes that he's controlling the press when it comes to Lulu; this suggests that at least in some ways, he's much like Mussolini. This also shows that leaders with absurd amounts of power and the ability to control reality exist the world over, not just in Germany and Italy.*



Metaxas feels momentarily like a prisoner in his own country. He wishes he'd retired early so he could die blamelessly. Metaxas thinks often about dying, as he knows he's not going to live much longer. He remembers an uprising that resulted in his persuading the king to suspend the constitution to thwart the communists, then name him Prime Minister. He tells himself that he had to do it, and wonders if he'll be remembered as an absurd ruler.

*It's telling that Metaxas wonders if he'll be remembered as absurd, as this shows that he's far more self-aware than Mussolini is. In turn, this implies that while Metaxas may exhibit signs of a dictator, he's possibly not as horrendous as many of the other dictators in the novel.*



The narrator notes that Metaxas is too caught up in romanticizing his role. Metaxas thinks of himself as a doctor, forcing Greece unwillingly in a direction that it will one day thank him for, but the narrator says that Metaxas is also vain and hungry for power. Metaxas wonders why his fascist international peers mock him, since he created a fascist regime in Greece that mimics Hitler's in Germany. He wonders why Mussolini is fabricating border incidents. He thinks that the only difference between him and the others is that he's not racist and he only wants to unify Greece, not conquer the world. Metaxas vows to not let Greece become part of someone else's empire.

*It's worth noting that regardless of what Metaxas says here about his fascist regime, there's little evidence to support his claim that his mimics Hitler's. There's no mention from the Greek characters that people are being taken away and fear for their lives--there's been little mention of the war at all. With this, it shows that Metaxas likely just thinks more highly of himself than he should, which reinforces the narrator's point that he's vain and power hungry.*



## CHAPTER 6. L'OMOSESSUALE (2)

Carlo says he found his family in the army. There, he was immersed in a male-dominated world and didn't have to flirt with women. At first, he's sent to Albania. Carlo is transferred from unit to unit and marches around for seemingly no reason, but finally he lands in the Julia Division. There, Carlo discovers the joy of being a soldier. He explains that soldiers love each other in a way entirely different from any other kind of love-- they become intimately knowledgeable about each other and are there to support each other.

The one thing that spoils this is that none of the soldiers knows why they're in Albania, and plenty of soldiers, including Carlo, are communist and don't feel good about rebuilding the Roman Empire. He feels haunted by the sneaking suspicion that his cause is pointless, especially when Count Ciano golfs and Mussolini shoots cats. Carlo insists he's not a cynic, but he does know that whomever wins the war will get to say how things happened. He knows too that Mussolini has made it clear that the Greek campaign was a win for Italy, but Carlo says this is a lie. Carlo suggests that history should only consist of anecdotes of the "little people who are caught up in it." For Carlo, the Greek campaign destroyed his patriotism and brought on the greatest tragedy of his life.

Carlo explains that Socrates said that the genius of tragedy is the same as in comedy, but that the comment isn't explained in the text. However, Carlo says that what happened in Greece illustrates the truth of Socrates' statement. He begins by admitting that he fell in love with Francisco. Francisco was gorgeous and smiled constantly. Francisco wasn't secretive about the fact that he despised Mussolini and mocked him incessantly. He adopted a mouse named Mario who lived in his pocket.

Carlo admits that the soldiers knew nothing about what was going on at the top; all they knew was that their orders often contradicted each other. However, he says there were definitely clues that they'd be ordered to invade Greece: they built roads leading towards Greece, and he doesn't believe that the Greeks killed the Albanian Daut Hoggia. He explains that he learned from Dr. Iannis later that Hoggia was no patriot; he was a murderer, a thief, and a rapist. Carlo explains that what follows is an account demonstrating that the Italians started the war, not the Greeks. If the Italians lose, his writings might tell the world the truth.

*At this point in Carlo's military career, war is beautiful exactly because he gets to experience the kind of relationships with men that he's always dreamed of having. This shows how the friendships that soldiers form as they unite to work towards a common goal allows them to create some of the strongest friendships possible.*



*The fact that Carlo is aware of the ridiculousness going on at the top levels of the Italian government suggests that Mussolini isn't as good at controlling the press as he'd like to believe. It also shows that Carlo knows how to think critically about things and is willing to believe what he sees around him, not what his leader tells him to believe. His statement that history should be written by "little people" shows him making the same realization as Dr. Iannis did that history is innately personal.*



*By invoking Socrates, Carlo is able to assign his experiences and his writing a deeper meaning than if they stood alone. Again, this shows how he relies on the stories of others to construct his own. Francisco's behavior indicates that it's not just possible to hate Mussolini; it's possible to mock him openly without being punished-- proof that Mussolini isn't as powerful as he'd like to think.*



*Carlo's closing statement here indicates that he understands clearly how history works: the winners get to say exactly what happened. This means that his writings could someday become dangerous for a number of reasons as he'd be contradicting the "official" story as well as admitting his sexuality to a regime that wasn't friendly towards gay people. By insisting that this be read after his death, Carlo then ensures that his words are more impartial.*



## CHAPTER 7. EXTREME REMEDIES

Father Arsenios sits behind the iconostasis, thinking that the villagers don't respect him. He considers leaving to become a clerk, a fisherman, or a poet, and he begins to talk to himself. His monologue is interrupted by a cough in the body of the church. Father Arsenios goes silent and when he hears the person leave, he peeks and sees a loaf of bread. He wishes there were cheese and promptly, another villager stops to leave cheese. Slowly, the villagers leave gifts of apology. Many gifts are bottles of wine.

Father Arsenios realizes he needs to urinate. He's afraid to leave his safe spot, as it may deter people from leaving gifts. He curses the bottle of wine he drank before going out earlier, and then realizes how to fix his dilemma. Arsenios darts out, snags a bottle, drinks its contents, and urinates into the bottle. It overflows with the urine and splashes his robes, so he decides to stay behind the iconostasis until it dries.

Velisarios arrives at the church to apologize to Father Arsenios, but Arsenios refuses to come out from behind the iconostasis. He insists he doesn't feel well, so Velisarios apologizes and goes to fetch Dr. Iannis. Meanwhile, Father Arsenios empties and fills two more bottles, becoming so drunk he passes out. Dr. Iannis arrives not long after, expecting to reprimand the priest and invite him to dinner, but Father Arsenios only moans from behind the screen.

Dr. Iannis doesn't feel comfortable going behind the iconostasis despite his atheism, but he slips behind when Father Arsenios asks for help. Dr. Iannis attempts to help the priest up, but Father Arsenios is too heavy. Velisarios carries the priest to Dr. Iannis's house. It's the hardest thing Velisarios has ever done. After he finishes his task, he sits in the shade and watches Mandras flirt with Pelagia. Dr. Iannis forces Father Arsenios to drink water, chases the goat off the table, and returns to his history of Cephalonia. He writes that the crusaders originally destroyed Constantinople, not the Muslims, which he insists should make everyone skeptical of noble causes.

Stamatis interrupts Dr. Iannis. He asks if Dr. Iannis can put the pea back in his ear--he can't stand his wife now that he can hear her. He says that beating her doesn't work, to which Dr. Iannis suggests that Stamatis be nice. Stamatis is shocked. Dr. Iannis watches as Stamatis leaves the house and deliberates over picking a flower, and loudly congratulates Stamatis to embarrass him when he picks it.

*Father Arsenios's penchant for dramatic monologues suggests that he'd like to be more powerful than he actually is. In this way, the novel suggests that his involvement in the church actually keeps him in check rather than offering him a way to abuse the power he wants in a large-scale way--though he clearly can still abuse his power on a small scale, as evidenced by the gifts.*



*Again, the fact that Father Arsenios doesn't want to jeopardize the possibility of more delectable gifts shows that he does want to abuse his power; he just doesn't have enough power to do anything substantial. Like Mussolini and Metaxas, he also looks ridiculous when he urinates on himself.*



*The absurdity of Father Arsenios's drunkenness reinforces the novel's assertion that power like this is fundamentally absurd and ridiculous. The fact that Dr. Iannis needs to help Arsenios keeps the villagers from respecting Arsenios enough to afford him any more power to abuse.*



*When Velisarios has to carry Father Arsenios to the doctor's house, it allows him to make up for rudely lifting Father Arsenios without permission and illustrates how someone who did once abuse their power can work to atone for that abuse. Dr. Iannis's note about who originally destroyed Constantinople reminds the reader that winners of a conflict are the ones who get to dictate history--and he implies, that, in this case, they flat-out lied.*



*Dr. Iannis's suggestion shows that he believes that women are people deserving of respect and dignity, not just servants to be beat around. Stamatis's reaction to the suggestion shows that Pelagia is unique in that she was raised to think this way, as it implies that most women aren't.*



## CHAPTER 8. A FUNNY KIND OF CAT

A few mornings later, Dr. Iannis prepares to leave for the kapheneia to eat breakfast and argue with Kokolios about communism. He imagines shutting down Kokolios's arguments definitively when Lemoni tugs on his sleeve and asks him to come--she found "a funny kind of cat." Dr. Iannis is disappointed that he'll have to postpone his argument with Kokolios, but he agrees to follow Lemoni. Lemoni leads him quickly down the road, through an olive grove, and then through a patch of scrub.

Lemoni and Dr. Iannis emerge in a clearing with a barbed-wire fence running through it. Lemoni points vaguely towards the tired "cat," but Dr. Iannis sighs and explains it's actually a pine marten that's caught in the barbed wire. Dr. Iannis insists that it'd be best to kill it, which makes Lemoni cry. She strokes the marten and ignores Dr. Iannis's warnings that it may bite her and give her rabies. He kneels down and decides, for Lemoni's sake, to rescue the animal and kill it at home. He carefully unwinds it from the fence as Lemoni watches and then examines where the barb of the fence pierced the skin. It's superficial; the marten is likely just dehydrated. Dr. Iannis tells Lemoni the marten is a girl and puts it in his pocket.

At home, Dr. Iannis finds Mandras and Pelagia flirting. Mandras explains that his nail wound is giving him trouble, but Dr. Iannis insists he's only here to flirt with Pelagia. In an annoyed tone he gives Mandras permission to talk to Pelagia, asks her to grind up dead mice and gather straw, and then goes inside. Dr. Iannis drips goat's milk into the marten's mouth and decides to kill it later.

## CHAPTER 9. AUGUST 15TH, 1940

On his way to the kapheneia, Dr. Iannis runs into Lemoni again. She's prodding a dog with a stick and the dog can't seem to decide if it's a game. Dr. Iannis tiredly tells Lemoni to leave the dog alone and remembers extracting glass from the dog's paw a while ago. He thinks that his obsession with healing may be strange, but reasons it's at least constructive unlike the obsessions of Hitler or Mussolini. Lemoni declares that the pine marten should be called Psipsina, and won't listen that that's an inappropriate name--she insists she's not a lemon, and yet her name is Lemoni. Dr. Iannis says that when Lemoni was born, he wasn't sure whether she was a lemon or a baby. He leaves her looking very confused.

*The decision to follow a child like this shows that in addition to thinking that women are deserving of dignity and respect, children are as well. This begins to show that as far as Dr. Iannis is concerned, humanity is all deserving of respect--an idea that sets him apart from Stamatis, as well as from Hitler and Mussolini.*



*Here, Dr. Iannis shows that he believes in acting humanely and doing what's best for his patients, even if it's something difficult or unpleasant. His choice to save the pine marten also shows that he respects both the feelings of a child like Lemoni and the life of the marten, which he implies isn't at risk as he thought at first. In this way, he's able to do a kind thing for both Lemoni and the marten by saving it.*



*The fact that Dr. Iannis is feeding the pine marten implies that he's not actually going to kill it, which, once again, casts Dr. Iannis as a fundamentally kind person who recognizes the dignity and the humanity of all living things.*



*Remember that the name Psipsina is like the English Puss, which is why Dr. Iannis objects to the name. When he tells Lemoni this tall tale about her birth, it again shows that Dr. Iannis isn't exempt from attempting to dictate someone's reality--though he does it in jest and in a way that's relatively harmless, unlike Hitler and Mussolini. By drawing comparisons between his obsession for healing and the dictators' obsession with power, he also shows that he prioritizes humans over power or ideas.*



At the kapheneia, Dr. Iannis sits next to Kokolios. They discuss the superiority of Cephalonia's water and Kokolios announces that when Lenin is in charge, they'll have the best life as well. Stamatis, who became suddenly aware of Kokolios's communism after the pea was extracted, curses. They exchange insults until Dr. Iannis interrupts and says that they all hold different political leanings, and yet they must care about people more than they care about the ideas. He even defends Father Arsenios when Kokolios deems him a parasite. He briefly pokes fun at Kokolios's communism before Kokolios asks about the war.

Dr. Iannis gives a brief rundown of what the countries involved in the war are up to and then suggests they turn on the radio. They hear about an Albanian revolt against the Italian occupation but they're interrupted by Pelagia at the door. She asks her father to come home; Mandras fell out of the olive tree and has shards of pottery in his backside. Dr. Iannis grudgingly returns home, forbids Pelagia from watching the operation, and wonders how Pelagia could've possibly fallen for someone like Mandras.

Dr. Iannis tells Mandras he's an idiot and asks if he's going to ask Pelagia to marry him. He insists that he's not providing a dowry, and Mandras says he's not ready to ask anyway--the war is coming and he doesn't want to leave a widow. Six hours later, after napping, chasing the goat, and feeding Psipsina, Dr. Iannis returns to the kapheneia. He knows something is wrong as soon as he enters; both Stamatis and Kokolios are crying and Father Arsenios is preaching outside. Kokolios explains that the Italians just sank the *Elli* and torpedoed a wharf, just as pilgrims were observing the icons at the local church. Everyone agrees when Dr. Iannis suggests they all go to the church.

## CHAPTER 10. L'OMOSESSUALE (3)

Carlo explains that he's a secretly guilty man. He says that he was chosen for the mission because he's reasonably intelligent and a good soldier. He followed orders to take one reliable man and report to Colonel Rivolta. Rivolta's headquarters are at an abandoned villa where he can hold parties. He greets Francisco and Carlo with a Roman salute, which makes Francisco giggle. Rivolta dramatically calls them to his map, points to a spot in Greek territory, and tells them that brigands in disguise have control of the tower. He wants them to take it.

*Dr. Iannis's insistence that they all must care for each other despite their differing politics again shows that what's most important is recognizing others' humanity, not clinging to one's ideals. It's also worth noting that all three men don't seem particularly enraged about the other's different politics; this is just the way that they connect. This also suggests that the focus on argument and arguing politics is something uniquely Greek.*



*The fact that Dr. Iannis returns home to care for Mandras without question again reinforces that as far as he's concerned, people are more important than politics. For him, politics will always be there, while something like Mandras's injuries require immediate attention in order for him to live and be comfortable.*



*When everyone agrees with Dr. Iannis to go to church, it reinforces that arguing about politics is the way that these men connect with each other. Underneath the gruff and argumentative exteriors, the men genuinely care for each other and for their country, no matter how it's governed. Similarly, Mandras's desire to not marry Pelagia yet as to not leave a widow shows that at this point, he recognizes her as a person and is willing to prioritize her future over his own desires.*



*Note that Carlo makes sure to describe Rivolta's headquarters as being suitable for parties. This suggests that the higher levels of the Italian army are all corrupt and more interested in looking fancy and powerful than they are in actually doing anything meaningful. Rivolta's dramatic attitude reinforces this, as it suggests he'd like to think he's powerful and special.*



Francisco is shocked that they're being asked to go into Greek territory and Mario makes matters worse by trying to climb out of Francisco's pocket. Rivolta, thoroughly annoyed, tells Francisco not to question policy and sends them away with the promise of medals. In private, Francisco insists that this mission is fishy and dirty. This is confirmed when the quartermaster gives them British uniforms and Greek weapons, including a machine gun with no instructions. At 10pm, they creep out of their camp. Carlo explains that they were extremely nervous, and implores the reader to understand that the atrocities soldiers commit often feel, to the anxious soldiers, like catharsis.

Carlo and Francisco lie in the scrub near the tower. Near midnight, a freezing wind picks up and Francisco suggests they attack early so they don't die of exposure. Carlo agrees. They discover ten men with machine guns in the tower. The brigands have a drum of kerosene underneath, so Carlo overturns it and sets it on fire. They fire the machine gun upwards and feel no triumph when they're done. Francisco discovers the body of an Italian captain, carrying orders to be on the lookout for an attack by the Greeks at 2am. Carlo realizes the Greeks wear British uniforms--they were supposed to die as Greek soldiers in British uniform. Francisco bitterly says that someone wants to provoke a war with Greece.

*Remember that Italy hasn't yet declared war on Greece; Francisco is right that this is fishy. The combination of British uniforms and Greek weapons reinforces this and suggests that these two are being asked to fabricate one of the border incidents, which as a whole allow Mussolini to make it seem as though Greece is an aggressor. Carlo's explanation of why the atrocities can feel good for soldiers reminds the reader that soldiers are human and susceptible to human emotions like anyone else.*



*Notice that Carlo and Francisco only "succeed" because they choose to go against orders to protect themselves. This shows them that they're disposable and not actually a valued part of the Italian army, as they may have thought once. Rather, they're pawns for people way more powerful to use for their own petty means--which, it should be noted, will send many more Italians to their deaths.*



## CHAPTER 11. PELAGIA AND MANDRAS

As Pelagia sits in the privy, she watches the clouds and thinks of them as spies who saw her kissing Mandras. She notices that her period is due soon and thinks of a poor young girl who was never told about menstruation--she thought she had a secret disease when she started bleeding and committed suicide. As Mandras loads nets onto his boat, he hopes for a good day in which he can catch fish for Dr. Iannis and Pelagia. He imagines his conversations with Dr. Iannis later and thinks about touching Pelagia's foot with his own under the table, and thinks it'll hurt if he gets saltwater on the cuts in his backside.

Later, as Pelagia draws water from the well, she thinks that Dr. Iannis believes that Mandras will always have terracotta specks on his backside. She thinks of how magnificent Mandras's backside is and is glad that nobody can read her thoughts. She reasons, though, that all women are like this--when the men are at the kapheneia, the women talk about the men's penises. Pelagia thinks it's stupid that women have to carry water when men are stronger, and feels ready to kill her father for denying her a dowry. He believes it's obscene to treat women like property, but Pelagia thinks she can't possibly go to Mandras's house with only clothes and her goat.

*The story about the poor young girl shows the dire consequences of not giving women the tools to think or know things. Her suicide could've been easily prevented if someone had explained menstruation to her and not created the environment in which she was able to keep such a secret. This illustrates the dire consequences of denying women knowledge.*



*Pelagia shows here that she places a great deal of importance on tradition, even if it doesn't necessarily elevate her position as a woman. As far as she's concerned, a dowry will actually make her more powerful in her married home, not less. This situation does show, however, that Dr. Iannis has a great deal of power over Pelagia, even if he doesn't abuse it like Stamatis abuses his power over his wife.*



When Mandras rows out of the harbor, he sings a song to call the dolphins. He wonders what people will say about Dr. Iannis not providing a dowry. Mandras thinks that he likes Pelagia, but he can't be himself around her: he's very serious, but he does stupid things to impress her. He believes women aren't interested in politics. Mandras thinks that he won't be a real man until he's done something important, and this is why he wants the war to come so he can prove himself. His dolphin friends Kosmas, Nionios, and Krystal arrive, so Mandras strips and jumps into the water with them.

As Pelagia naps, she grouses that it's too hot. Psipsina settles herself on Pelagia's chest, making her even hotter. Pelagia thinks of Dr. Iannis saying that Mandras had a backside like a classical statue and wonders when he'll ask her to marry. She admits that she has doubts about him, as he's not very serious. Pelagia doesn't want there to be a war and admits she's tired of Mandras's fish.

Mandras mends his nets and thinks of the war. Father Arsenios helped Mandras get the paperwork together to join the army. He vows to ask Pelagia to marry him before he leaves, and thinks that he'll fight for Pelagia as much as Greece.

Pelagia takes bread from the communal oven and wonders where Mandras is. She promises she won't give her fish to Psipsina if Mandras comes for dinner.

*It's certainly a red flag that Mandras doesn't feel like he can be himself around Pelagia, as it opens the door for him to either become dissatisfied with her or to try to become someone else. This shows how, when one's relationships aren't entirely solid, it can begin to push someone towards leaning more heavily on their politics or, in this case, the war to gain a sense of purpose.*



*Pelagia's assessment of Mandras as not being very serious begins to expose the cracks in their relationship for the reader, as neither one is entirely happy with the other. However, because of the impending war, it means that both of them are forced to put their true feelings aside.*



*The fact that Father Arsenios helped Mandras with his paperwork is a clue that Mandras isn't as educated as Pelagia might assume.*



*Pelagia's promise to not give her fish away shows that even as a relatively empowered woman, she's still powerless to dictate when Mandras shows up.*



## CHAPTER 12. ALL THE SAINT'S MIRACLES

Late in August, the island's natural wonders abound as they do every year: snakes swarm, ghosts walk, and St. Gerasimos prepares for his feast day. St. Gerasimos is unique in that he was a real saint who left his entire body to the Cephalonians. They open his sarcophagus on two feast days per year. Alekos makes his way down the mountain for the feast, and Velisarios hopes that he'll win the feast day race with the bull he borrowed from a cousin. The nuns dress inmates at the madhouse and wonder which one will be cured, as St. Gerasimos usually cures one mad person per year.

*The fact that Alekos comes down the mountain for the feast day implies that he is a valued part of the community even if he's not an active part of it most of the time. The presence of these wonders begins to situate Cephalonia as someplace that's naturally a bit strange and absurd, which in turn sets the stage for other miraculous things to happen there later in the novel.*



The church begins to fill with people and flowers. The narrator notes that despite the scenes of merriment, everyone is extremely anxious about the coming war. When Father Arsenios finishes his sermon, bearers carry the sarcophagus of the saint outside to a tree, around which the mad are assembled. One of the mad women who likes to expose herself, Mina, feels strangely calm. She stands and begins to lift her robe, but a nun pushes it down again. She thinks of the voices inside her head and the faces around her, which she knows are trying to kill her. She raises her skirts to hide her face from them, but she's never successful in hiding.

The bearers carry St. Gerasimos away and the crowd watches the madmen closely. One person points to a young epileptic man whose convulsions stopped. The crowd rejoices and the carnival begins. Velisarios shoots his cannon and musicians play. Fishermen sing as nuns arrange wine and food. Pelagia settles on a bench to watch the dancers and the traditional assembly of men dressed in absurd costumes. She notices a tap on her shoulder and Mandras is behind her. He drunkenly asks Pelagia to marry him. After a moment, she quietly agrees. Mandras leaps around and Pelagia discovers that he pinned her dress to the bench. He says they cannot be married until after the war, and Pelagia tells Mandras to speak to Dr. Iannis. She wanders around, feeling strangely unhappy.

Mandras becomes extremely drunk before he can find Dr. Iannis. As evening approaches, everyone prepares for the race. Little boys ride goats, drunks sit on donkeys and horses, and Velisarios sits primly on his bull. The bull is the only creature to plod in the direction of the finish line, so Velisarios wins. He lifts the bull by the horns after he dismounts. As the crowd disperses, Mina finds herself back in the madhouse. When her uncle says goodbye to her, she brightly asks if he's taking her home--another miraculous cure by the saint.

## CHAPTER 13. DELIRIUM

The night of the feast, Pelagia lies in bed and dreams about having sex with Mandras. She thinks she could never follow orders from Mandras and wonders what marriage will be like. She wonders what love actually is. She feels shockingly unhappy. The next day, she invents tasks that keep her in the front of house so she can see Mandras coming. She runs into Lemoni one afternoon and realizes that in two years, Lemoni will start working in her parents' house and won't be free until she's a widow, by which time the community will turn on her. Pelagia wishes that life could be better for Lemoni and comforts the girl when a cricket bites her.

*By offering the reader a glimpse into Mina's inner monologue, de Bernières again reinforces that it's these seemingly inconsequential stories that truly illustrate what life is like. In Mina's case in particular, it seems as though no one knows that she lifts her skirts to hide, not just to expose herself. This creates far more nuance and allows the reader to understand the many different ways that the feast day is meaningful for different people.*



*Again, the fact that Pelagia is immediately unhappy after accepting Mandras's proposal foreshadows that their relationship isn't going to work out. Similarly, when Mandras pins her skirts to the bench, it symbolizes her feelings of being trapped by this relationship and by Mandras himself. This is reinforced later, when Dr. Iannis notes that Mandras would want to control Pelagia and not allow her to use her brain.*



*In addition to providing a greater sense of nuance to the story of the feast day, focusing on Mina also allows the reader to understand that the "madmen" are actually people, not creatures who are subhuman or fundamentally unknowable. This reminds the reader that all people, regardless of who they are, are deserving of respect and dignity.*



*Pelagia's fear of having to take orders from Mandras suggests that once a woman learns how to think and discovers her worth, it's impossible to go back and allow herself to be subjugated and abused by the men around her. This again implies that this relationship isn't going to work out for her. Pelagia's hope for Lemoni's future shows that one of the ways she can help improve life for women as a whole is to teach girls like Lemoni to think as well.*



At dinner, Dr. Iannis suggests that Mandras hasn't come because he's still hung over. Pelagia is relieved that her father knows about it. She asks if he approves, and Dr. Iannis gently tells her that Mandras is too young and she's too educated. He suggests they emigrate, but also reasons that Cephalonia is their home. He steps outside for a moment and when he returns, he drops a small derringer (a pistol) into Pelagia's hand. She drops it in horror, and Dr. Iannis tells her that a war is coming. He says that she's to use it to defend herself by using the gun on herself, or on him, as necessary. He says that her marriage might have to wait.

On the second day, Pelagia waits for Mandras but he doesn't come. On the third day, she goes down to the sea and sits on a rock. She notices someone swimming naked with the dolphins, arranging a net in the rocks. After a few minutes, she realizes it's Mandras. He's extremely handsome as he draws in his net and whistles. Three dolphins swim around him and catch the fish he throws for him, and then he grabs the dorsal fin of one dolphin and lets it tow him out to sea. Pelagia is distraught--she wonders if he is a sea nymph, as it's bad luck to see one naked. She weeps, believing Mandras has drowned.

Pelagia's tears are interrupted by Mandras at the door. He apologizes for being late and says he just spoke to Dr. Iannis. Pelagia feels numb and conflicted. She thinks that Mandras should've drowned and is still a boy who plays with dolphins, but he's too beautiful to die. She pleads with him to not go to war.

## CHAPTER 14. GRAZZI

Emmanuele Grazzi explains that what he regrets most is learning the lesson that ambition can lead someone into a role that history will crucify him for. He says he had a great job as the Italian Minister in Athens and he had no idea war was brewing. Grazzi thought the rumors of war were jokes until Colonel Mondini met with an intelligence officer. The officer said that Greece and Bulgaria would be invaded in three days, but when Grazzi called Rome about it, officials said it was a lie. However, things continued to get fishier, and he believes the Greeks knew more about the impending invasion than he did.

*Note here that while Dr. Iannis expresses his concerns about Pelagia's engagement to Mandras, he also doesn't tell her no outright. This is one way for him to recognize Pelagia's independence and ability to make her own decisions--in other words, he won't stop her if she wants to give up her learning in order to be Mandras's wife, as he recognizes that's her prerogative.*



*Pelagia's slight break with reality and reason illustrates the extent to which she buys into the Greek traditions and superstitions that guide her, given that she's genuinely upset and believes Mandras drowned. However, the fact that she leans so heavily on this possibility only betrays her unwillingness to marry him--focusing on this story allows her to shape her reality and hope to be released from her engagement.*



*When Pelagia asks Mandras to not go to war, she demonstrates a recognition that war and the politics that brought the war about have the power to tear them apart and destroy them, even if she doesn't genuinely want Mandras to die.*



*Grazzi's narration illustrates just how powerless all of the Italian officials were because Mussolini was too intent on fabricating and maintaining his own power. Mussolini didn't let the officials do the right thing, as doing so would've jeopardized his power as an invader. Grazzi's mention that he'll be crucified for his role in this again shows how the winners--the Allies--get to write history and simply vilify Grazzi, not just Mussolini.*



Finally, on October 26, Grazzi attended a party of Greek and Italian intellectuals, poets, and diplomats. He enjoyed it until the telegrams began to arrive for Mondini. Grazzi was embarrassed beyond belief. The next day, Mondini spoke with the Greek chief-of-staff about suspicious border incidents. The Greek knew the incidents were the fault of the Italians, but Mondini and Grazzi knew nothing. They discussed resigning with each other and assured concerned Italian delegates that they'd be fine. Later, the Greeks tried to evacuate the delegates, but the Italian air force bombed them. In the weeks after, Ciano effectively pushed Grazzi out of office.

Grazzi says the interview with Metaxas was the most painful occasion of his life. Metaxas greeted him in his nightgown and showed him to a sitting room. Grazzi notes that Metaxas was an honest politician; the poor quality of furniture betrayed that he didn't siphon funds to furnish his house. Mussolini's ultimatum asked Greece to allow the Italians to occupy Greece in order to fight Great Britain, assuring Metaxas that he's not the target. Metaxas cried, making Grazzi feel even more ashamed. Metaxas sighed that it's war, knowing that Italy would occupy Greece whatever he said. Grazzi tells the reader that this was Metaxas's and Greece's finest hour, and Italy's worst. Metaxas died months later.

## CHAPTER 15. L'OMOSESSUALE (4)

Carlo and Francisco don't report back to Colonel Rivolta after destroying the watchtower. They often talk about it with each other and feel so betrayed that they make a pact that one of them must kill Colonel Rivolta. Carlo wants to desert, but he ends up being called with Francisco to train Albanians in the art of sabotage and fabricating "Greek incidents," something both of them are unqualified to do. The Albanians don't want to learn, either. When the Albanians released into Greece, they disappear.

After Francisco and Carlo return to the Julia Division, several other things happen that Carlo recognizes now were Italian attempts to sow discord between Greece and Albania. After the Governor-General has his own offices blown up, Mussolini declares war. By this time, the Italian forces have few troops, not enough weapons, and no knowledgeable officers. Higher-ups tell the men that Greece will fall in two weeks.

*Because Grazzi got caught up in Mussolini's web of power, he's discredited as a politician and as a friend to the Greeks he lived with. This shows how believing that one has to remain loyal to political leanings above all else has the potential to ruin lives--in this case, Grazzi doesn't even get to continue as a politician after this. The fact that the Italian air force bombs its own delegates reinforces the absurdity and nonsensical nature of the war.*



*It's worth noting that in comparison to Mussolini, Metaxas does read as honest even if he admits to foul play. It's clear that Metaxas's goal is to protect Greece and the Greek people, not just to take over the world like Mussolini wants. This suggests that there's power and dignity to be had in standing up for one's own countrymen, which is what allows Metaxas to look so good in this instance.*



*The mention that Carlo and Francisco are unqualified to train the Albanians reminds the reader that there's nothing logical about the way that Mussolini is commanding his troops or conducting his war; it's fundamentally absurd and he's willing to go to ridiculous lengths to get what he wants. It's also important to note that those lengths don't even work; his power doesn't go that far.*



*The insistence that Greece will fall in two weeks is another instance in which Mussolini attempts to create the reality he'd like to see. Carlo's observations about the state of the troops, however, suggests that in war, it's not enough to simply say things and hope they come true; success is contingent on supplies and knowledge.*



At the end of October, the Italian troops are happy to be at war. Francisco says again and again that they'll be in Athens in two weeks. Then, it starts to rain. The heavy guns sink into the mud and Mussolini refuses to send winter clothing. The Albanian troops disappear and the guns rust, but the Italian troops remain hopeful since the Greeks haven't attacked yet. Carlo notes that he hates puttees; they hold onto mud and his feet become soft and flaky. He and Francisco loot a Greek house and steal warm socks, but then they cross two rivers and begin climbing into the mountains. The soaking puttees freeze, making them heavy and cutting off circulation. Francisco says they'll be in Athens in two months.

On November 1, a sniper kills a corporal. The Greeks hide in the trees and throw bombs at the Italians, killing many. They continue to trap the Italians and pick them off at their leisure. Francisco begins saying they'll be in Athens in two years. The horses die as the Italians are commanded to head back from whence they came--now, they have to fight the Greeks that are behind them. An Italian bomber mistakenly drops a bomb near the Italian soldiers. The food runs out and the soldiers sleep huddled together for warmth. The Greeks continue to kill Italians and Francisco seems on the verge of madness. Carlo notes that war is a wonderful thing, but only in movies and books.

## CHAPTER 16. LETTERS TO MANDRAS AT THE FRONT

Pelagia records her letters to Mandras. In the first, she wonders if he's not getting her letters or if his replies just aren't getting through. She's written to him every day. Pelagia is terrified that Mandras is dead, and begs him to write so that she knows he's alive. She asks if he received the sweater and the scarf she made and describes how things are at home. She tells Mandras that she has her derringer and that already the women have learned to perform tasks that men once did. The news from the front is often positive.

Pelagia continues that Dr. Iannis, Stamatis, and Kokolios have banded together to praise the military and Metaxas despite their differing political views. Italian residents have been beaten. She says she's decided to make her own dowry and so has begun a crocheted **bedcover**. She also wants to make Mandras a waistcoat. She mentions that the Italians bombed Corfu on Christmas Day and implores him to write to Drosoula, as she's very worried.

*Again, Mussolini insisting that his troops can make this work in inclement weather isn't actually enough to override the realities his troops face. This shows that for those soldiers on the ground who have to put up with these misguided beliefs and policies, it quickly becomes clear that Mussolini has no idea how war actually works and instead is just trying to create his desired reality. The puttees act as a symbol for the way that going to war like this actively destroys the men.*



*The errant Italian bomb shows once again that the Italians have no idea what they're doing or where they are--in other words, it's nearly impossible for any of the Italians to make appropriate decisions given how little they know about what's actually going on. When Mussolini or the other officers don't step in to try to rescue the soldiers, it implies that they don't recognize the soldiers' humanity and right to live through this.*



*The mention that women are already starting to do men's work shows that all women are capable of learning to think and perform masculine tasks; it's just a matter of necessity and learning how to do it. This offers hope that the women of Pelagia's village will be able to do better for themselves after the war, given what they learn to do during it.*



*By taking matters into her own hands in regards to the dowry, Pelagia shows that she is aware that she can use the dowry to her advantage and to give her more power in the long run. This shows another way in which Pelagia behaves in a way that's more masculine rather than feeling incompetent or lost.*



Pelagia begins her next letter by saying she's becoming accustomed to Mandras not replying. For St. Basil's Day, Dr. Iannis got her a book of political writings and poems, and the lucky coin ended up in her piece of cake. She's begun the waistcoat and is still picking out her **bedcover**. News from the front says that the Greeks are taking down Mussolini, but Metaxas apparently isn't well. She again asks him to write to Drosoula.

Pelagia begins her hundredth letter to Mandras. She's glad that she hasn't seen his name on the list of the dead. Metaxas is dead and Dr. Iannis cut off his moustache so he doesn't look anything like Hitler. Everyone is hungry and it's been stormy and cold. The waistcoat is nearly finished, but Psipsina vomited on the **bedcover** and the goat ate a few bites of it.

## CHAPTER 17. L'OMOSESSUALE (5)

Francisco is becoming madder by the minute; he's convinced he'll be shot through the heart, so Mario now lives in his sleeve pocket. Hierarchy breaks down as soldiers die. Finally, on November 14, the Greeks corner the Italians. A chaplain picks shrapnel out of Carlo's arm without anesthetic and then sends him right back out. Carlo's hate for puttees has now spread to his entire uniform, which seems to abrade his skin. Both Carlo and Francisco skin animals and wear the hides. Another division left rusty tanks behind, but the Greeks managed to repair them and now use them against the Italians.

Over the next month, the division is cut off from all others. Men put the brains of dying mules in their helmets to keep warm. They try to keep to the high ground to stay warm, but the wind is bitter. Every morning, they discover new men who died in the night. The Albanians begin to help the Greeks, and Francisco talks only to Mario. Men die of gangrene, and Carlo thinks that Greece should win if it will end this war. The snow makes it so they don't recognize landmarks, but their maps don't match anything on the ground anyway. Mussolini comes to visit, but Francisco and Carlo don't stand when he walks by.

Francisco writes a letter to his mother and gives it to Carlo to deliver to her if he dies. He tells her that Carlo is a good and true friend whom she should think of as a son. He says that he's too weary to care if he dies and feels as though he's been dead for months. Carlo laments the things he doesn't tell Francisco's mother when he delivers the letter to her in April.

*When Pelagia notes that she's picking out her bedcover again, it symbolizes her own unhappiness with her engagement to Mandras given that she can't complete this task for her dowry. In this way, Pelagia begins to feel a bit less womanly given that she seems to be failing at womanhood and these specifically female tasks.*



*The animals' destruction of the bedcover acts as a major sign that the engagement itself is misguided, as it seems at this point as though the bedcover isn't going to happen. This in turn suggests that the marriage itself isn't going to succeed either.*



*Carlo's hatred for his uniform as a whole illustrates how the Italian army dehumanizes and abuses its soldiers in every way imaginable. It destroys their bodies not just by putting them in harm's way, but also by giving them uniforms that destroy bodies in other ways. By skinning the animals for warmth, Carlo and Francisco suggest that the only way to survive is to reject the army altogether.*



*Note that Francisco and Carlo aren't punished for not standing for Mussolini. This suggests that it's possibly not worth it for Mussolini to make a fuss out of it, or it's possible that Mussolini is too caught up in himself to notice. The numerous elements that go wrong and work against the Italians show just how horrendous war can be--but also indicate that some of that horror comes because of the poor decisions the Italians made in the first place.*



*By writing this letter to his mother, Francisco accepts that he's going to die. This suggests that Carlo's letters are also written with the knowledge that he's going to die, and that they're a way for him to find a sense of peace in death.*



## CHAPTER 18. THE CONTINUING LITERARY TRAVAILS OF DR. IANNIS

Dr. Iannis is lost in thought about goats, as it's nearly time to head up the mountain to check on Alekos and his flock. He thinks that the goats are determined to keep him from his literary pursuits. He quotes a line by Homer about marriage and thinks it has nothing to do with the Venetian occupation, which is what he wanted to write about. He thinks that since Mandras left, Pelagia has been emotionally unwell. She's anxious, panicky, and then calm. She suddenly picks up her **bedcover** and works on it furiously, and then rips it apart with just as much ferocity.

It's clear that Mandras won't write and Dr. Iannis knows that Pelagia is becoming bitter and believes Mandras doesn't love her. He sends her on tasks designed to tire her out and then he does his best to make her laugh and provoke her rage in turn by stealing the olive oil or moving the knives. Shockingly, the "treatment" for her depression works. Dr. Iannis is glad on one hand, as he didn't think Mandras suitable, but he also knows that breaking the engagement would be disastrous for her. He guiltily hopes that Mandras dies.

To make matters worse, Dr. Iannis is running short on supplies. Fortunately, people don't seem to be as sick now. He often shows up and just looks solemn while examining people, and he comes to think of himself as a priest of the body. Both he and Father Arsenios have become increasingly important figures. Dr. Iannis hears Pelagia singing and writes that Greece is situated at the very center of the world: it lies halfway between east and west and has been occupied mostly by Turks and Venetians. The Italian influence is obvious in Cephalonia's language and architecture. Dr. Iannis admires his work, moves the knives to anger Pelagia, and leaves for the kapheneia.

## CHAPTER 19. L'OMOSESSUALE (6)

Carlo visits Francisco's mother in April. She asks if he died on a good day, and Carlo tells her he did. He tells the reader that Francisco died when the snow was melting and revealing dead bodies. Francisco's mother asks if he died in victory. Carlo says he did, but the truth is that the Greeks were slaughtering them. He tells her that Carlo died happy, but this is also a lie. Francisco discovered gangrene on his leg, gave Mario to Carlo, and stepped out of a trench. A mortar shell fell next to him and when the dust cleared, Carlo saw him still moving.

*Again, when Dr. Iannis finds himself writing about marriage and thinking about Pelagia and Mandras, it reinforces the novel's assertion that his history isn't going to be impartial and indifferent; rather, it's going to be able to tell the reader what life has actually been like for Greek people--and this includes discussing marriage and how the war affects Pelagia's impending marriage.*



*Here, Dr. Iannis betrays that he's just as trapped by social conventions surrounding gender roles as Pelagia is, given that he knows he doesn't have the power to save her from her unsuitable marriage. His guilty hope that Mandras will die shows that it's possible to prioritize politics and war for one's own means, but in doing so, one has to become cruel and uncaring.*



*It's worth noting that Dr. Iannis and Father Arsenios become important figures because they were powerful before this time of need. However, neither man actually wants to take over the village or Greece; they simply want to help their village feel better. In this way, the novel offers the two men as examples of what a person should do with power: use it to help others.*



*Carlo paints a scene of horror as he explains what happened, but he also nods to the importance of telling a story that's going to make someone feel better when he lies to Francisco's mother. This suggests that the horror of the war is something that Carlo is going to have to carry himself; like his sexuality, it's not something that someone who hasn't been there can understand.*



Francisco's mother asks if he died quickly and painlessly. Carlo says he died of a bullet through the heart. In truth, Carlo climbed out of the trench and went to Francisco. Half of his head was blown away, but he was alive. Carlo picked him up and the Greek soldiers cheered. Back in the trench, Francisco held on for two hours. Carlo confessed his love for Francisco, and Francisco said he knew. Francisco's mother asks for his last words, which Carlo says were the name of the Virgin. Francisco's real last words were reminding Carlo of their pact to kill Rivolta and to ask for Mario. Francisco clenched the mouse so tightly in his hand that Mario died.

Francisco's mother asks where he's buried. Carlo tells her he's on a beautiful mountain, but he actually buried Francisco in their trench with Mario in his breast pocket. She hopes that he died for a reason, and Carlo assures her he did. He tells the reader that the Italians were saved only when the Germans arrived. Carlo kissed Francisco before he died and didn't participate in conquering Greece after that. Instead, he shot himself in the thigh.

## CHAPTER 20. THE WILD MAN OF THE ICE

Pelagia hauls a jar of water into the house. She's finally feeling strong and whole again. She stops abruptly when she finds a strange, stinking man at the table. She's terrified and tells him that Dr. Iannis is out. The man says he's glad she's happy and says he'll never be warm again. His voice is phlegmy and he sounds sick. The man continues to ramble on about being cold in the mountains and when Pelagia asks him to leave, he says he has no boots. Psipsina comes inside, races to the man, and finds a scrap of cheese in his pocket. Pelagia realizes the man is Mandras.

Mandras asks Pelagia for coffee and says he stinks. Pelagia feels helpless and accuses Mandras of not writing. He admits he can't write or read, but pulls out the letters and asks her to read them to him. Pelagia is horrified--Mandras doesn't know how cold her letters became at the end. He admits he thought only of Pelagia at all times and begins to cry. Pelagia puts her hands on his shoulders and discovers he's bony and infested with lice.

*The fact that Francisco's dying words are to remind Carlo to kill Rivolta suggests that Francisco has been corrupted by the war and now can only think of the destruction, not anything good in life. Though it's understandable in his situation, it also makes his death seem even more tragic as it suggests that Francisco has already lost an important part of his humanity long before actually dying.*



*When Carlo shoots himself to get out of fighting, it shows the lengths that soldiers will go to as they attempt to escape the war. This shows that both the war itself and the ways to get out of it are horrific, shocking, and dehumanizing. The only beauty Carlo experiences is kissing Francisco as he dies.*



*Mandras's state shows that even if the Greeks were winning in the mountains where Carlo and Francisco were, it was still a gruesome experience for them. The fact that Pelagia fears Mandras right now indicates that she's somewhat unwilling to see him as Mandras because of his appearance; in other words, she's dehumanizing him out of fear.*



*Pelagia's fear that Mandras will have to find out now that she's falling out of love with him indicates that she still knows that Mandras has a great deal of power over her and in his state, might be more willing to use it. He, on the other hand, has become even more in love with her thanks to the horrors of the war.*



## CHAPTER 21. PELAGIA'S FIRST PATIENT

Drosoula has always been ugly, yet she married a handsome man, had a child, and hasn't become bitter in her old age. She's from Turkey; as a teenager, she and her mother were sent to Greece as part of the Lausanne settlement. Within two years, Drosoula learned Greek and married. During Mandras's absence Drosoula and Pelagia became friends. Now, Pelagia runs to her for help. Drosoula enters Pelagia's kitchen intending to hug Mandras but stops short. She leads him outside and inspects him from head to toe. She sends Pelagia for scissors and to boil water.

Drosoula hacks away at Mandras's hair and burns the lice. She discovers eczema and infected scratches. Pelagia runs to fetch oil of saffron and realizes that she's learned enough from Dr. Iannis to become a doctor herself. She instructs Drosoula to paint the oil on Mandras's head and bind it with cloth. They look at Mandras for a moment before Drosoula insists they attend to the rest of him. Pelagia flushes at the thought of seeing him naked, thinking that she doesn't want to marry Mandras, but doesn't want to say anything because she loves Drosoula. However, when Mandras is naked he's so emaciated she's not embarrassed. His feet are the worst, with necrotic flesh, pus, and maggots.

When Pelagia finally recovers from the stench, she instructs Drosoula to attend to the rest of Mandras's body while she deals with his feet. Fortunately, Mandras's feet aren't as bad as they seemed. The flesh is dry and the gangrene hasn't spread to the bones. Pelagia washes Mandras's feet in saltwater and then binds them in a garlic poultice. She diagnoses a number of parasites and fungal infections. When she's done, Drosoula smiles and hugs Pelagia, declaring that she's the first woman who knows anything. Drosoula suggests that Mandras is a poor fiancé and tells Pelagia it's nonsense that looks don't matter.

The next morning, Dr. Iannis returns from the mountain and discovers Mandras in Pelagia's bed. He doesn't recognize him. Later, Pelagia tells him everything she did. He examines Mandras and then praises Pelagia, suggesting he might retire and let her be the doctor. Drosoula is thrilled to have Pelagia as a daughter soon and ignores it when Pelagia sidesteps her comment about getting married.

*The Lausanne treaty provided for the protection of Orthodox Christians in Turkey and Muslims in Greece; many of those religious minorities were deported to the country where their religion was the majority due to an earlier part of the treaty. This illustrates another way in which history is truly personal, as Drosoula's life was changed in every way by being forced to move and become Greek.*



*As Pelagia begins to think that she might be able to become a doctor, it's important to recognize that she, in important ways, dehumanizes her first patient. She's only not embarrassed by Mandras's naked body because he's so emaciated as to be barely human. It's worth noting that as a doctor, Pelagia's goal will be to recognize the humanity of all her patients so that she can properly and effectively relieve their suffering--not dehumanize them for her own comfort.*



*Drosoula's happiness with Pelagia's medical knowledge suggests that there are other women in Pelagia's village who believe that women should have knowledge and power. This marks Drosoula as an ally for Pelagia going forward as an educated woman in the world. Mandras's many medical issues illustrate one of the costs of war: it destroys his body in the name of a cause, recalling Dr. Iannis's warning to beware of noble causes.*



*Dr. Iannis's support for Pelagia's possible future as a doctor again shows that Dr. Iannis believes that Pelagia is a fully capable human being in her own right, not someone lesser because she's female. Similarly, Drosoula's happiness to have Pelagia in the family suggests that others will support her independence.*



## CHAPTER 22. MANDRAS BEHIND THE VEIL

Mandras tells the reader that Pelagia, Dr. Iannis, and Drosoula all talk about him as though he's not there. He spent all his time away thinking of Pelagia, but he knows now that his dream of her is better than the real thing. He knows she's disgusted and he wants to leave so that he can do great things and make her proud. Mandras says he needs to leave again anyway, as he wasn't supposed to come home after his unit was wiped out. However, Pelagia visited him in a vision. He looted a pair of boots and started walking.

Mandras walked for days and felt as though Pelagia lay next to him at night. He was aware that his body was failing and he was going mad, as monsters chased him. Finally, he came to a stone hovel inhabited by an old hag. She was repulsive, but she fed him for two days. Then, on the third night, Mandras dreamed that he and Pelagia had sex. As he climaxed in his dream, he woke to find the hag underneath him. Horrified, Mandras called her a witch and kicked at her, but then he laughed. He realized then that God had abandoned them all, and humans are blameless. He lay with her until morning and left her in tears.

Mandras hitched rides on trucks and then walked the final miles to Pelagia's house. When he arrived, however, she was disgusted. He was disappointed that Psipsina was the only one who recognized him. Mandras says that there was also great beauty out there: once, when it was extremely cold, the Italians set off a shell that exploded like a blue firework. He wants to go back to the front so he can experience how beautiful and god-like war can be.

## CHAPTER 23. APRIL 30TH, 1941

On the day of the Italian invasion, the Cephalonians know the worst is coming. Kokolios and Stamatis clean a hunting rifle together, at last putting aside their ideological differences. Men expect to be beaten and young women expect to be raped. Father Arsenios finds his usual prayers aren't comforting. He asks God what he thinks he's doing and promises that if God won't help, he will. Dr. Iannis cuts an open letter to Hitler out of the paper and tacks it to the wall, like every other literate man in Greece.

*Just as Mussolini attempts to create his own reality about the course of the war, Mandras creates his own version of Pelagia that exists only in his head. It's worth keeping in mind that it's unlikely that the real Pelagia will ever measure up to the one in Mandras's head, as Pelagia is far too independent and Mandras's Pelagia is nothing but adoring.*



*Mandras's interpretation of sex with the old woman seems to be one in which he realizes humans are actually less than human--by accepting this, he's able to accept that he wanted to have sex badly enough to not recognize who he was having sex with. However, this dehumanization of all people is dangerous, as it means that Mandras will be far more likely to behave cruelly to people he doesn't think are worthy.*



*Just as with Velisarios's cannon, Mandras implies that explosions are inherently beautiful regardless of where they occur. It's important though to recognize that the shell is a weapon that can cause death and destruction in a heartbeat; in other words, it's beautiful, but not at all innocent.*



*Kokolios and Stamatis illustrate how conflict like the war has the power to bring people who are very different together over a common goal, if those people are willing to set aside those differences first. The fact that Dr. Iannis is one of many to cut out the open letter illustrates how people find connection and meaning through the written word.*



Dr. Iannis turns to his history of Cephalonia and writes about how the Cephalonians have a habit of comparing their many invaders to the horrendous Turks--who, on later reflection, weren't that bad. The British weren't that bad either; they were consistently awful but then made up for it later. He writes that he hopes the British will sweep in and save them this time, even if they've abandoned them now. When Dr. Iannis finishes, he boxes up his history and hides it in the trapdoor in the floor.

At Drosoula's house, Pelagia sits shamefully with Mandras. She believes he's torturing her deliberately, as he spent days rigid and drooling, got up to celebrate a holiday, and then returned to bed, limp and yet able to resist being fed. Mandras asked for Father Arsenios and confessed that he had sex with the queen and that his legs were made of glass. Father Arsenios suggested they send him to the madhouse. Two days later Mandras tried to amputate his leg with a spoon and finally, on April 30th, asked Pelagia to read him her letters.

Pelagia begins with the first letters and is privately aghast at them. Mandras glares at her whenever she pauses. As she reaches the letters where she begins to reprimand him for not writing, he throws a fit about not wanting to hear about how he disappointed everyone--but when she simply omits those parts, he complains the letters are too short. He angrily waves the last four-line letter at her. It reads that she's calling off their engagement, but she lies and tells him that it asks him to come back soon. He forces her to read the others and she makes up romantic things instead of reading her unhappy letters.

Finally, Pelagia hears planes overhead and races outside. She watches Italian soldiers parachute down and then runs to Dr. Iannis. He remarks that they're in the middle of history and fetches a pencil and notebook. Slowly, the Italian soldiers begin to march through town, some waving to the Greeks and others making fun of Hitler. Kokolios raises a communist salute and is flabbergasted when soldiers return it. When an officer asks Dr. Iannis where Lixouri is, Dr. Iannis says in Italian that he doesn't speak Italian. A column led by Captain Antonio Corelli marches past and makes funny faces at Pelagia. She laughs, but Dr. Iannis tells her it's her duty to hate them.

*The comment about the Turks not being that bad in particular suggests that in the Cephalonians' minds, the Turks are more of a caricature than actual people who did them wrong. While the Turks were horrible to the Greeks, this implies that the Greeks' dehumanization of those invaders makes it harder to handle other invaders after that.*



*It seems entirely possible that Mandras is sane throughout all of this given his previous narration. This illustrates how hearing his story allows the reader to humanize him (even if Pelagia can't), as it makes it seem as though Mandras is punishing Pelagia for dehumanizing him when he first appeared at her house.*



*Mandras demonstrates his power over Pelagia here by forcing her to actively create the reality he wants for him. This allows him to reinforce the version of Pelagia he holds in his head and ignore the truth of the situation. His fits and complaints suggest that Mandras can't handle not being in control and not being obviously beloved by everyone, which again suggests he'll be vulnerable to abusing his power in the future.*



*Kokolios's experience with the Italian soldiers in particular suggests that these men may be more like the Greeks than Kokolios or any of the other villagers gave them credit for, given that there are clearly some communists among them. It's telling that some of the soldiers make fun of Hitler, as it implies that they understand that Hitler is ridiculous and think of themselves as victims of his hunger for power alongside the Greeks.*



## CHAPTER 24. A MOST UNGRACIOUS SURRENDER

Carlo arrives in Cephalonia in the middle of May to join the Acqui Division. He's disillusioned, depressed, and still grieving Francisco, and is saved only by Corelli and the peaceful beauty of the island. Corelli is a consummate jokester, loves children, mocks General Gandin, and loves to make ladies blush. He runs the opera group La Scala, which performs every morning in the communal latrine to minimize the embarrassment of having no privacy. When Corelli overhears Carlo singing one morning he "drafts" him into La Scala with a faux official order from the supreme commander of the Italian forces.

Carlo is struck by the clarity of the light, the ancient olive trees, and the dignity of the islanders. According to Corelli, when the Italians asked the Greeks to surrender at the town hall in Argostoli, the Italians' written requests for surrender were answered with several obscene notes. The Greeks eventually asked to surrender to a German officer, so the Italians flew one in and felt utterly humiliated. Corelli finds the story endlessly amusing. Carlo notes that this is because the only things Corelli took seriously were music and Pelagia. Carlo fell in love with him regardless.

*Carlo's description suggests that Corelli heightens the absurdity of the war to make it more manageable and enjoyable for himself. La Scala in particular suggests that he's capable of taking something inhumane and uncomfortable and making it hilarious to distract from how awful it is. Further, Corelli's willingness to use an "official" order for the La Scala drafts implies that he doesn't take the military seriously at all.*



*Again, Corelli's ability to respect the Greeks for their cheek and find this situation funny shows that he sees the Greeks as humans first and foremost, and conquered people second. The Greeks' ability to humiliate the Italians also makes the Italians remember they're human, which places the two sides on slightly more equal footing.*



## CHAPTER 25. RESISTANCE

The Cephalonians begin taking advantage of the fact that the Italians can't read Greek and graffiti all manner of rude messages on buildings. Greek men in the kapheneia make rude jokes about the Italians and, in their camps, the Italians make rude jokes about the Greeks. The Italians feel guilty for invading Greece, while the Greeks are livid they've been invaded. Eventually, the Italians decide that they need to house soldiers with locals. Pelagia returns home one day to find an Italian officer, sergeant, and private in her kitchen. The officer smiles and Pelagia instructs them to wait while she fetches Dr. Iannis.

Dr. Iannis greets the officer in Italian and the two shake hands. The officer is thrilled to find someone who speaks Italian and suggests they could use a translator, but Dr. Iannis acidly refuses. He also refuses to house an officer. After a moment of awkward silence, Dr. Iannis asks if the officer is a quartermaster. The officer is and admits he has access to medical supplies. The men agree that an officer can stay on the premises in exchange for medical supplies.

*In the case of the graffiti, the Greeks are able to use their shared language to create a sense of solidarity and make the Italians feel like outsiders. In this way, the Greeks are able to gain a degree of power as well. Similarly, the fact that the Italians feel guilty for invading Greece in the first place shows that they believe invading Greece is improper, given that there is no cruelty or violence against the Greeks to speak of.*



*When Dr. Iannis and the officer are able to strike this deal so quickly, it again implies that the Italians recognize that the Greeks are people who want to get on with their lives even with the war on their doorsteps. They feel they can make the invasion somewhat better by helping the Greeks in that endeavor.*



When the Italians leave, Dr. Iannis and Pelagia vow to be horrible to their officer. Corelli arrives that evening, driven by Carlo. Both men are entranced by the massive olive tree and the quiet domestic scene. Pelagia stands in the doorway with a kitchen knife and Corelli falls to his knees at her feet. Carlo explains that Corelli is always foolish, and Pelagia finds herself smiling at Carlo, who is as big and looks as gentle as Velisarios. Corelli suggests he introduce Pelagia to Antonia as Dr. Iannis comes outside and curtly asks Corelli for a word.

Corelli anxiously insists he was joking with Pelagia, but Dr. Iannis wants to know about a defaced Greek monument--it used to read "to the glory of the British people" and no longer does--and why Greek students must now learn Italian in school. Corelli is wildly uncomfortable and insists he's not responsible for either of these things.

When Corelli learns he's to sleep in Pelagia's bed, he briskly says he'll sleep outside and then request new accommodations tomorrow. Pelagia is alarmed; she runs to Dr. Iannis and asks how she's supposed to make Corelli feel horrible if he leaves. Dr. Iannis insists Corelli stay and cowed, Corelli agrees. He and Carlo stay for an uncomfortable supper and then Carlo drives away. At dinnertime, Dr. Iannis tells Corelli how to heal the hemorrhoids he knows Corelli has and doesn't invite him to the table until he and Pelagia have already begun eating. Dr. Iannis makes sure to point out that thanks to the Italians, the meat pie is meatless. After dinner, the doctor insists on going for a walk despite the curfew.

Pelagia asks Corelli about Antonia. He explains that Antonia is his mandolin. He says he wants to be a musician, and Pelagia admits she wants to be a doctor. Later that night, Corelli yelps and comes into the kitchen to ask about the "weasel" on his bed. Pelagia tells him that she's a "Greek cat" named Psipsina. Corelli attempts to stroke Psipsina but she bites him. He feels foolish and unloved and lies on the floor until Psipsina abandons the bed.

## CHAPTER 26. SHARP EDGES

In the morning, Corelli waits anxiously for Carlo to pick him up. Carlo's jeep, however, is broken. Carlo begins to walk towards the village and passes Velisarios on his way. The two giant men gawk at each other, share a cigarette, curse the war, and go on their ways. Velisarios finds the broken jeep, removes the tires, and fill the radiator with gas.

*Though Pelagia looks domestic, it's also telling that she's holding a knife and seems to not be using it to cook. This allows her to show the officers that she means business and isn't afraid of them, which is reinforced by her assessment of Carlo. Corelli's behavior again shows that he doesn't take the war seriously and would rather fixate on the beauty than the horror.*



*Dr. Iannis makes it clear that the Italians are wrong to try to make the Greeks give up their history and their language-- two things that bind the people together. Corelli's discomfort once again suggests that he feels as though the war is misguided, but powerless to stop it.*



*By making Corelli acutely aware of what the Italians are doing to the Greeks, Dr. Iannis doesn't let Corelli forget that whether he takes the war seriously or not, he's complicit in the violence and the damage the Italians are causing. This impresses upon Corelli the importance of going on to build up his personal relationships rather than his political theories or military prowess, as it's those personal relationships that will get him through the war.*



*Corelli's willingness to sleep on the floor until Psipsina moves shows that he is, at heart, respectful of the Greeks and remorseful for having to occupy their land. He recognizes that he's an outsider and therefore, has a responsibility to make the occupation as painless as possible for the occupied.*



*Velisarios's actions show that at this point, the Greeks are still unwilling to truly humanize their invaders. This again suggests that Velisarios is still willing to use his power as a strongman to hurt or humiliate others in some circumstances.*



Dr. Iannis passes Corelli on his way to the kapheneia. Corelli shows Dr. Iannis his "cat" bite, which is red and swollen. Dr. Iannis remarks that pine martens have awful bites and suggests he show it to a doctor, which makes Corelli feel hurt and foolish. Pelagia comes outside a bit later to find Corelli tossing a laughing Lemoni up in the air and conducting an Italian lesson with her. Pelagia sends Lemoni on her way and tells Corelli that fraternization is indecent. Corelli sighs and says that in war, it's important to take advantage of innocent pleasures, and then he heads down the road.

Pelagia returns inside and studies the reproduction section in Dr. Iannis's copy of *The Complete and Concise Home Doctor*. She does chores and thinks about Corelli. Mandras interrupts her reverie, having suddenly returned to normal on the day the Italians invaded. Mandras asks to see Dr. Iannis about some bad skin and makes a rude joke at Pelagia's expense when she offers to look at it. After a moment of silence, he says he's leaving to join the partisans.

Pelagia fetches the waistcoat she embroidered for Mandras and asks if he'd like to take it. He inspects it and remarks that the embroidery doesn't match side to side. Pelagia feels disappointed and betrayed. He apologizes and asks Pelagia to tell Drosoula that he's leaving. He promises to think of her every minute and as he leaves, he says he'll always love her.

That evening, Corelli notices a beautifully embroidered waistcoat hanging in the kitchen. Pelagia catches him inspecting it and is embarrassed, but he insists it's a masterpiece and says that things aren't supposed to be perfectly symmetrical. He offers to buy it, but Pelagia refuses. Corelli asks about paying rent and offers her a chunk of salami, saying he already gave some to Psipsina. A week later, the refurbished jeep explodes and kills a young member of La Scala.

*Corelli's response to Pelagia shows that he understands that the only way to get through the war is to focus on the beauty as much as possible, just as Carlo focused on the beauty of his love for Francisco in Albania. This will be especially important if Dr. Iannis and Pelagia continue to treat him horribly and as though he's barely human or worthy of acknowledgement.*



*Pelagia's choice of study material betrays her attraction to Corelli, while Mandras's joke makes it more apparent that her engagement to him isn't going to last. This is especially true given that he insults Pelagia's abilities when he refuses to let her look at his skin, which suggests he wouldn't respect her as a wife.*



*Mandras's critique of the embroidery indicates that he has high standards for a wife and expects the best from her--something that Pelagia, with few domestic skills aside from cooking, won't be able to live up to.*



*The fact that Corelli is entranced by the waistcoat suggests that he's a much better match for Pelagia, as he'd celebrate her faults and inconsistencies. The salami acts as a peace offering and suggests that Corelli is going to do what he can to show the Greeks that he's human and respects them, starting with their non-human companions.*



## CHAPTER 27. A DISCOURSE ON MANDOLINS AND A CONCERT

Dr. Iannis wakes early in the morning and passes Pelagia asleep on the kitchen floor. He kisses her on the cheek and heads to the kapheneia. Corelli wakes a bit later and also discovers Pelagia asleep on the floor. Not wanting to wake her, he returns to his room and begins to practice with Antonia. Pelagia's dream begins to include the music. She dreams about the day before, when Corelli had borrowed a horse that pranced at the sight of pretty girls and ridden for her. The face keeps switching between Corelli and Mandras. She makes it stay on Corelli and finally wakes and becomes aware of what she's listening to.

*Corelli's music is one of the many beautiful parts of the Greek theater of the war, especially since it shows Pelagia how human and vulnerable Corelli is. By allowing Pelagia to sleep undisturbed, Corelli is able to show her that he respects her and doesn't want to embarrass or intrude on her privacy--in other words, he understands the importance of being kind and courteous.*



Corelli comes out of the bedroom when he hears Pelagia in the kitchen. He apologizes for waking her, though she insists it was a wonderful way to wake up. She admires how beautiful the mandolin is and then asks why he plays it. Corelli explains that he used to play the violin, but he played horribly. When his uncle gave him Antonia, he discovered he was a much better mandolin player. He says that when the war is over, he's going to be a professional concert player and write a concerto.

Corelli asks Pelagia about her dream of becoming a doctor. She says she's not sure, as women can't be doctors. He suggests she have children and shares that he wants a bunch of children. Pelagia asks him to play something. She watches his hands and his face, which flickers with emotion. When he finishes, she remarks that an artist like him shouldn't be a soldier. He insists that soldiers are just like everyone else and agrees that war is a waste of time. As he puts Antonia away, he admits that he's seen Pelagia's derringer and cautions her that if someone else sees it, she could be in trouble. After Corelli leaves, Pelagia thinks that she could've killed him a number of times already, but decides she can't poison a musician.

That night, Dr. Iannis asks Corelli for a concert. Corelli spends minutes tapping the mandolin. Dr. Iannis finally asks what he's playing. Annoyed, Corelli says he was playing a concerto and imagining the first 45 bars before the mandolin comes in, like it would be played in a concert hall. Dr. Iannis stands, apologizes to the invisible masses for interrupting the concert, but asks where the other instruments are.

## CHAPTER 28. LIBERATING THE MASSES (1)

Mandras joins a small guerilla group with no plan or purpose. They spend months living in a cave stirring up small-scale mischief. When they're forced to move, however, they come into contact with organized guerilla groups. EDES is led by enthusiastic Brits; one is a thinly disguised communist group called ELAS. ELAS's agenda has more to do with seizing power after the war than helping with the war effort. The British officers at the top don't believe the reports that ELAS is trouble, so the group is allowed to do what it wants. Simply because ELAS is the first group that Mandras encounters, he joins it. Its leader, Hector, sees that Mandras is lost and impressionable.

*Corelli's dreams for the future suggest that the war is an inconvenient interlude in his life as far as Corelli is concerned; it's not something he actively wanted to participate in. This is another way that the novel points to his humanity, as war itself doesn't interest him.*



*In everything Corelli says during this exchange, he tries to impress upon Pelagia that he and his fellow Italian soldiers are human and normal, just like she is. They're all caught up in the war for no good reason, and he recognizes that she's likely afraid for her safety because of the occupation. When Pelagia reasons that she can't kill Corelli because he's a musician, it shows that she's starting to see him as human and deserving of life, even if he is her oppressor.*



*Dr. Iannis asserts his power over Corelli again when he forces Corelli to abandon his imaginary concert hall. In Corelli's case, however, he wasn't using this alternate reality for evil, which shows that it's possible to use a false reality like this for good.*



*The way that the narrator describes ELAS suggests that those at the top of the group recognize that once either the Axis's or the Allies' power topples at the end of the war, there's going to be a power vacuum--and they intend to fill it. This automatically casts the group in a suspicious light given that they're unwilling to help the war end and save the lives of thousands of people. Like Mussolini and Hitler, ELAS is selfish.*



In the days before Mandras meets Hector, he dreams of Pelagia. One evening, ten ELAS men surround Mandras and his group. Hector tells the group that they either go home and leave their weapons or join them. Mandras and his group decide to join, so they follow Hector to the nearest village. There, Hector has an old, shirtless man brought out of his house, hands Mandras a knotted rope, and tells him to beat the old man. Hitting the man becomes easier with each lash, and Hector offers pointers.

Then, Hector gives Mandras a pistol and tells him to shoot the man. Mandras kneels, puts the pistol to the man's head, and reasons that he's just the executioner; Hector is truly the guilty one. When he pulls the trigger, he discovers that the gun wasn't loaded. Hector helps Mandras to his feet and they head off. Mandras asks what the old man did. Hector explains that the British drop supplies to ELAS and EDES, one of the other guerilla groups, and this man reported the drop and then got drunk on dropped whisky. He incredulously remarks that the man is a Royalist and therefore "identifies with his oppressors." Mandras is a Royalist, but he nods in agreement. He listens to a young woman screaming and thinks that if he doesn't think about what the sound is, it's beautiful.

*This incident confirms that ELAS is an evil organization: asking Mandras to beat this man for seemingly no reason shows that the group thrives on violence, power, and dehumanizing others. In doing this, Mandras also becomes less human as he must see the man differently in order to continue to do so.*



*By shifting the blame in his head to Hector, Mandras continues to dehumanize others as well as deny his own humanity. This is reinforced when he disassociates the sound of the woman screaming with what it actually is. This suggests that dehumanization can, in some cases, be beautiful as well, but this suggests that Mandras will suffer as a result of getting sucked into this power vacuum and exposed to this kind of dehumanization.*



## CHAPTER 29. ETIQUETTE

One morning, Corelli feels guilty for ousting Pelagia from her bed. He decides to learn how to say "good morning" in Greek so he can make her smile, so he asks Dr. Iannis for help. Dr. Iannis tells Corelli an obscenity but when he learns that Corelli wants to say it to Pelagia, he tells him the correct phrase and explains that the correct phrase is the feminine version. Corelli says "good morning" to Pelagia and then uses the obscenity to greet Velisarios, Kokolios, and Stamatis. When they all scowl at him, he thinks he shouldn't try to speak Greek at all. He learns that night that Dr. Iannis misled him and feels miserable.

*Dr. Iannis makes Corelli look like a jerk by doing this, which in turn will encourage the Greek villagers to continue to hate Corelli. This illustrates how someone can feign kindness and turn it against someone in order to gain the upper hand. Notably, the reader has already been led to sympathize with Corelli, so this makes Dr. Iannis look as though he's abusing his power.*



## CHAPTER 30. THE GOOD NAZI (1)

Though the cities of Argostoli and Lixouri have always been rivals, in 1941, the rivalry takes on a new tone: the Italians occupy Argostoli, while a small group of Germans occupy Lixouri. The Germans are only there to keep an eye on the Italians and the relationship between the two camps is tense; the Italians think the Germans are too serious, while the Germans think the Italians are culturally inferior. Corelli, however, becomes friends with one young German soldier, Günter Weber. Weber desperately wants to be blond, so he spends his free time on the beach hoping that the sun will bleach his hair. He only hates Jews and Gypsies because he's never met one.

*This passage illustrates clearly how dehumanization functions for political purposes. The Germans feel the way they do about the Italians because they find them inferior and sub-human, while the Germans seem almost inhuman to the Italians because they're emotionless and cold. Importantly, Weber's description shows how Nazism is predicated on dehumanizing entire swaths of people and denying them personhood, as this implies that Weber wouldn't have been a Nazi had he known a Jew.*



Weber sits on a rock one afternoon when the Italian truck arrives at the beach, bearing La Scala and army prostitutes. Corelli likes to bring the women to the sea to cheer them up. Weber is a virgin and desperately wants to see the naked women, so he stiffly goes to introduce himself. Carlo and Corelli introduce themselves and Carlo makes jokes about ogling the women, though he's privately uncomfortable and still grieving Francisco.

Corelli asks Weber if he's "descended from the great composer." Weber is offended and insists his name is Weber, not Wagner; Corelli says he was referring to the composer Carl Maria Von Weber and Wagner is a horrible musician. Corelli prompts Weber to ask if he's descended from the great composer Arcangelo Corelli, but Weber is too perplexed and offended by Corelli's jab at Wagner to play along. Corelli introduces his men by their rank in La Scala and further offends Weber by suggesting he's not German since he's from Austria, but things improve when Weber starts drinking. He enjoys a thoroughly pleasant afternoon and drunkenly joins La Scala, which means he agrees to never praise Wagner. He's the only member who can't sing.

## CHAPTER 31. A PROBLEM WITH EYES

Pelagia treats Corelli as horribly as she can. She spends two months attempting to provoke a fight with him, but he remains deferential to her. She thinks he doesn't even seem like a typical Italian; he's impulsive and gets drunk regularly, but he also seems sad and nostalgic. One day he leaves his pistol on the table. She considers stealing it and shooting him later, but realizes she's already passed up a number of opportunities to kill him. Instead, she decides to dunk it in water so it rusts. Corelli catches her and pretends to act patronizing, which makes her angry.

Corelli fishes his pistol out of the water and remarks that it must be hard for the Greeks to put up with the Italians. He says it's time to clean his pistol anyway, and Pelagia demands to know why he isn't angry that she's trying to sabotage him. Corelli suggests they think about more important things and just ignore each other, which Pelagia finds unacceptable. She slaps Corelli across the face and strides outside to throw things. She throws a few olives at Corelli and then disappears. Corelli is fascinated and thinks he should write an opera about feisty Greek girls.

*The existence of formal army sex workers suggests that someone in the Italian army recognizes that the soldiers have human needs, though the tone of the novel tends to imply that the women themselves exist in a sub-human state that only serves the soldiers. Corelli's desire to cheer them up suggests he sees them as more than that.*



*Corelli's clear disdain for Wagner and unwillingness to understand how the German empire functions at this point in time is a deliberate attempt to show Weber that the Nazi project is misguided and horrific. In this way, he's attempting to make Weber see that friendship and music are more important than nationality (especially when one's nationality is used as a weapon, as it is by the Nazis). The fact that Weber enjoys himself opens him up to begin to shift his views on non-Nazis.*



*One of the reasons that Pelagia is so frustrated is that Corelli doesn't play into her idea of what a stereotypical Italian invader should be--instead, he's more human and individual. This shows that it's much harder to truly hate someone when the person in question is a full person, with thoughts and feelings, in another's eyes.*



*Pelagia's decision to slap Corelli, knowing he won't do anything about it, again comes from the way that Dr. Iannis raised her to believe in her own worth and abilities. When Corelli indeed does nothing about it, it suggests that should this relationship come to fruition, he might not, like Mandras, see Pelagia's independence as a bad thing.*



As time goes on, Pelagia becomes upset as she realizes she's less angry. She enjoys Corelli's greetings and he plays amusingly with Psipsina. He's also curious and can sit watching Pelagia work on her **bedcover** for hours. She begins to think he's a bit mad, which makes her life more interesting. Eventually, Pelagia becomes irritated with him because she keeps looking at him and he keeps catching her doing it. She realizes he's playing with her when he starts raising an eyebrow when their eyes meet, so she decides to begin a staring contest. It seems to go on for hours until he starts making faces at her and finally, she laughs. He cries that he won and she accuses him of cheating. Dr. Iannis sighs and wonders how to best deal with the budding romance.

*The willingness to play with each other and enjoy each other's company, even under the guise of hatred and irritation, shows that the two are becoming still more human to each other. In other words, Pelagia is learning that Corelli likely doesn't believe in a grander, more violent narrative about what invaders are "supposed" to do in an invaded country, and instead, he's willing to make friends and enjoy his time in Greece.*



## CHAPTER 32. LIBERATING THE MASSES (2)

Mandras comes to idolize Hector. They steal a lamb one morning and Mandras thinks that with the lamb slung over his shoulders, Hector looks like Jesus. Hector carries a book written by Lenin called *What Is To Be Done?* and promises to teach Mandras to read. Mandras has already learned that he's a worker, not a fisherman, and it's the king's fault that the capitalists profit from his work. He now resents Dr. Iannis for being bourgeois.

*It's worth noting that Lenin was fairly critical of religion and saw it as another structure that oppressed the proletariat. Mandras's assessment that Hector looks like Jesus (and the fact that in his mind, this is positive) suggests that Mandras still doesn't know what ELAS or communism are all about and is being manipulated.*



When the shepherd asks for a gold sovereign in compensation for the lamb, Hector and Mandras laugh at him. The shepherd insists that EDES and the British always pay for their sheep. Hector threatens to kill the shepherd if he sells supplies to EDES. As Hector and Mandras walk away, Mandras calls the shepherd a fascist stooge.

*The threats of violence and the language Mandras uses show that ELAS isn't at all concerned with helping the people it insists it's going to help. Just as dictators abuse their power, ELAS does the same thing to remain in power.*



## CHAPTER 33. A PROBLEM WITH HANDS

One rainy evening, Pelagia pulls out parts of her **bedcover** and watches Corelli compose a sonata. She gets up to stand behind him and puts a hand on his shoulder. When she realizes what she's done, she agonizes over what to do. She decides to leave it there and hope he doesn't notice. Psipsina saves Pelagia by scratching at the door, creating an excuse to move away. Corelli smiles when he realizes her hand has been on his shoulder, but his happiness is interrupted when a sopping Psipsina settles herself in his lap.

*These early romantic overtures cast physical intimacy between Pelagia and Corelli as something natural and almost instinctive. This again illustrates how their ability to set aside their political differences and their stereotypes about each other allows them to find a comfortable way to interact with each other.*



Pelagia scoops Psipsina out of Corelli's lap and begins to brush at his wet and dirty breeches, but she haughtily leaves him when she notices Corelli looking astonished. Psipsina returns to his lap and Corelli starts to daydream about a classroom full of Pelagias. He dreams about naked Pelagias and Psipsina leaps away, annoyed by his erection. Corelli grabs his sheet music and thinks about having sex with each of the Pelagias. At that moment, the real Pelagia asks Corelli for help winding up her wool. Corelli panics.

Corelli thinks it's a blessing he often acts idiotically as he drops to all fours and approaches her like a dog. Pelagia tells him he's silly and positions his hands so she can wind her wool around them. Corelli continues the charade and Dr. Iannis informs both of them they look ridiculous. Corelli starts to howl and Pelagia jams a peach in his open mouth. Dr. Iannis primly notes that invaders should be more dignified. When Corelli discovers that Pelagia wound her yarn too tightly around his hands for him to escape, he jokingly accuses her of plotting against him. She lowers her eyes and quietly calls him a bad dog.

*It's important to keep in mind that for both Corelli and Pelagia, there could be major consequences for admitting their attraction to each other. This is one of the reasons why Pelagia leaves and pretends to be upset; admitting they care for each other and fantasize about each other like this could leave them vulnerable to people who would take issue with their romance.*



*While Dr. Iannis chides Corelli for behaving this way, it's important to recognize that he doesn't forbid their flirting entirely. This suggests that he's also beginning to come around and see Corelli as a full person who may even be an appropriate match for Pelagia, though like her, he's also required to pretend to disapprove to escape the possible danger that others pose.*



## CHAPTER 34. LIBERATING THE MASSES (3)

For Hector, being taken to task by Lieutenant Colonel Myers for "misdemeanors and atrocities" has happened so many times, it's become a game. All he has to do is act ignorant, insist he can't sign anything until a runner is sent to Athens, and blame the disappearance of that runner on the Italians, the Germans, the peasants, or the British. Mandras stands outside while Myers reprimands Hector, marveling at the height and the paleness of the British soldiers. Mandras believes the British are dumb because they mispronounce Hector's name as "My Sector;" in truth, they call him that because Hector just repeats, "this is my sector" when they catch him.

Myers sighs at Hector as they go through their usual song and dance. He lists the crimes that ELAS committed in the past week, all of which Hector insists he didn't do and then explains why he was forced to do it. These include castrating, killing, and then cutting smiles on the faces of peasants who stand up to ELAS, as well as keeping peasants from purchasing food from EDES. Hector insists he'll need to send a runner to Athens before he can sign any agreements and exits the tent.

*The fact that Mandras doesn't get that the British nickname for Hector is an exasperated joke betrays one of the consequences of his lack of education. Because of the power that he and Hector have due to their association with ELAS, Mandras is unable to see that in actuality, ELAS looks ridiculous. This allows the reader to sympathize with Mandras, as it implies that he's unwittingly caught up in something he doesn't understand.*



*The crimes that ELAS committed illustrate how horrific war and power can be in the hands of people like Hector, who care only for themselves and their cause. This also implies that the peasants that, in theory, ELAS should be helping will always be less than human to ELAS as it allows them to justify committing atrocities.*



Hector tells Mandras that the British are fascists and suggests they go teach the villagers who tattled on them some lessons. They laugh about the women, who they believe deserve to be raped since they're traitors. In his tent, Myers thinks about evacuating, since the higher-ups don't believe that ELAS is going to start a civil war and he feels like he's wasting his time. One of his soldiers comes to tell him about blowing up a bridge, and Myers mentions that Hector is awful. The soldier notes that the awful ones always end up as leaders.

*Given the other horrendous leaders the novel has already offered, the soldier's comment about awful people becoming leaders suggests that a necessary quality for those leaders is charisma and the ability to manipulate friendless people like Mandras. Myers's thought about evacuating also shows that nobody higher up truly cares about Greece; in the grand scheme of World War Two, it's meaningless.*



## CHAPTER 35. A PAMPHLET DISTRIBUTED ON THE ISLAND, ENTITLED WITH THE FASCIST SLOGAN 'BELIEVE, FIGHT, AND OBEY'

An unnamed Italian pamphleteer calls readers to celebrate the achievements of Mussolini. The pamphleteer writes that Mussolini was a cruel child who tortured animals, stabbed a boy, and started visiting brothels as soon as he reached puberty. He raped a virgin and accused her of not resisting well enough, and then he became a schoolteacher. However, Mussolini developed a taste for cards, alcohol, and mistresses, and fled to Switzerland to escape military service. The pamphleteer points out that there, he encouraged soldiers to desert, which is consistent with his current demand to shoot deserters.

*This pamphlet is intended to make fun of Mussolini and all the ways in which the Italian leader has abused his power for years. It later comes out that the pamphlet was written jointly by Carlo and Kokolios, who owns a press. It's worth keeping in mind that writing this pamphlet is extremely dangerous, as it gives voice to the fact that Mussolini is ridiculous and abusive, something that many know but are too afraid to say.*



The pamphleteer points out that the Duce believes his own propaganda, so of course his subjects do too. Mussolini came up with a political ideology that insists one must act and think up reasons afterwards. He wrote a novel in a style similar to Poe's, which all the publishing houses refused to publish because it was too sophisticated for them. He became an editor for a newspaper and discovered that he could create the news himself. He married his half-sister, fathered a child with her, and became known as "The Madman"--though he, of course, isn't actually mad.

*Specifically, the assessment of Mussolini's political ideology (fascism) and the mention of controlling the papers suggests that Mussolini is a master of handling the aftermath of events, not actually making things go to plan. In other words, he's far more adept at altering how history is seen than at shaping his present reality.*



In 1915, Mussolini again avoided joining the war effort. He claimed that the Austrians bombed a hospital just to get at him, the most important man in Italy. Mussolini stole money to fund his campaign and since his election, he has carried out an average of five acts of political violence per year. Purportedly, he stopped a lava flow on Mt. Etna by wishing it to stop. He pretends he's not going bald and stands on a hidden stool to look taller. Mussolini is a saint; he's declared himself greater than Aristotle, Michelangelo, and Bonaparte. All of his speeches contradict each other, but that just means that everyone can find some bit of his policy to support.

*The comments about Mussolini's speeches contradicting each other offer a reason why Mussolini became so powerful in the first place: he's able to rope in anyone and make them feel seen simply by saying what they want to hear. This elevates the power of the spoken and written word and shows again how stories like this are able to fundamentally shape the beliefs and realities of people.*



Mussolini has made it illegal to do many of the things he's done. He sends troops to fight invented enemies without proper equipment, despite having signed peace treaties. He mocks Hitler but takes orders from him. Italian troops are dying as the British sink their fleets, but the Italians are winning. Commanders only figure out what's going on with their divisions by listening to the BBC. The pamphleteer asks soldiers to weep for their country, which is being led by a lunatic.

*This passage in particular makes it clear to the reader that leaders like Mussolini, Hector, and Hitler aren't to be taken seriously, given that they lie and fabricate events. This encourages the reader to place more stock in the stories of the "little people" like Carlo and Dr. Iannis, who actually see what's going on and have no reason to lie.*



## CHAPTER 36. EDUCATION

The ELAS boys sit around the fire and listen to Hector "teach." Most of them don't agree with Hector at all and know that whatever Hector says, the opposite is likely true. Venizelists wonder how Hector can be so anti-British when the British are the only ones who have tried to help Greece. Mandras, however, is immediately sucked into Hector's discussion. Hector mentions that Lenin and Marx were intellectuals, but gave themselves over to raising up the workers--today, it's unnecessary to raise up workers; the workers must simply be taught to trust their intellectual leaders. He tells them why democratic processes will bring awful consequences, and why anyone who defects will be killed.

*By including the note about the opposite of what Hector says being true, the novel links Hector to Mussolini and suggests that powerful leaders like them aren't to be trusted to tell the truth. Notice too that while Hector and communism purport to free the proletariat and put them in charge of their lives, Hector's insistence that workers must be taught to trust their leaders rather than raised up themselves implies that he's actually more interested in abusing communism to gain power than being truly communist.*



Mandras pledges his support to Hector, hoping that one day he'll be able to read *What Is To Be Done?* himself. The narrator says that Mandras never will discover that the pamphlet is merely an irrational tirade against a rival communist newspaper, but he will learn the theory well enough to buy fully into the ideals of communism. After Hector's lesson, one of the Venizelists offers Mandras a cigarette and tells him that what Hector is basically saying is that they need to obey or they'll die.

*The fact that the pamphlet itself isn't even what Hector says it is offers one more example of the ways in which powerful, enigmatic individuals can seize power by preying on uneducated and lonely individuals like Mandras. The Venizelist presumably knows how to think critically, which is why he sees it as a power grab.*



## CHAPTER 37. AN EPISODE CONFIRMING PELAGIA'S BELIEF THAT MEN DO NOT KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRAVERY AND A LACK OF COMMON SENSE

Corelli nearly dies of shock when Father Arsenios interrupts his reading of the pamphlet. Arsenios merely glares in response to Corelli's polite greeting, prophetically recites some Bible verses, and walks away. Dr. Iannis, Pelagia, and Carlo interrupt Corelli again a few minutes later. Carlo is in a fantastic mood and Dr. Iannis remarks that the pamphlet is amusing. Corelli insists it's British propaganda, but when Carlo points out that there were no planes last night, Dr. Iannis happily says that someone on the island printed and distributed the pamphlet. He notices Carlo looking angry and walks back his assessment. Corelli tears up his pamphlet, offers it to the goat, and stalks off.

*Remember that Carlo was one of the people who contributed to the pamphlet. Because of this, his good mood suggests that it's possible to reach some semblance of catharsis by telling the truth and going against powerful leaders, even if doing so is also very dangerous. Note, however, that Dr. Iannis doesn't seem particularly worried about anyone being persecuted; this reinforces the world's view of Greece as inconsequential, where things like this can happen without needing to crack down.*



Carlo apologizes for Corelli's rudeness. Pelagia suggests the pamphlet could've been written by conspiring Greeks and Italians, and notes that the Greeks listen to the BBC. The narrator notes that she doesn't know that the Italian soldiers do the same thing, which is why the entire island knows the same jokes about Mussolini. Carlo and Dr. Iannis worry that someone else will also figure it out, and, catching this, Pelagia drops the subject. She thinks for a moment and then realizes her father was involved in something extremely stupid. She storms away, and Dr. Iannis suggests he should've brought her up stupid since smart women cause trouble.

*The fact that everyone on the island gets their news from the BBC-- in the case of the Italians, they're getting news from their enemies-- illustrates just how broken the Italian military system is at this point, given that the only place to hear the truth is from the enemy. Dr. Iannis's comment about Pelagia and smart women recognizes that because Pelagia has critical thinking skills, she's more likely to anger the men around her by not agreeing with them.*



## CHAPTER 38. THE ORIGIN OF PELAGIA'S MARCH

One morning, Corelli wakes up hung over. His world spins and he groans that he wants to die. Pelagia enters with a pitcher of water and tells him that last night, Carlo brought him back at two in the morning, drunk and singing out of tune, and that Carlo is asleep outside on the table. Corelli says he was just excited that his team won the football match. She says that Weber came earlier and told her that the Italians cheated, and she says that Weber looks at her like she's an animal. Corelli explains that Weber is a Nazi; he thinks *everyone* who isn't a Nazi is an animal but he might grow out of it. Pelagia calls Corelli a drunk who just chases local girls and plays football.

*Corelli's assessment of Weber as being young and impressionable suggests that Weber is a lot like Mandras: both of them joined their respective organizations because they didn't know any better--and both the Nazis and ELAS allow them to feel superior to everyone, even their own countrymen. The fact that Corelli attributes this to Weber's youth is one way that the novel suggests that youth are idealistic, though in some cases, it can go horribly wrong.*



Corelli insists that the local girls do well because of the Italian interest, which enrages Pelagia. She dumps water on him and insists that the girls are bullied into sleeping with the Italians. Corelli sits up and asks if she thinks he wants to be here oppressing the Greeks. He apologizes for his role in the war. Pelagia mocks him for acting like a victim. Corelli offers no retort and instead feels a tune forming in his head that will portray Pelagia.

*Though Corelli has a point, it's also important to keep in mind that by acting as though he has no power to stand up to those above him, Corelli remains complicit in the horrors of the war. Carlo, on the other hand, is able to feel far more righteous because he stood up to those in power by writing the pamphlet.*



## CHAPTER 39. ARSENIOS

The narrator says that Father Arsenios is saved by the war. He gradually realizes that God failed Greece and takes it upon himself to save his country. He adopts a dog and starts walking and preaching. The Germans ignore him, but the Italians listen with wide eyes to his words that they don't understand. After two years of traversing the island and preaching, Arsenios becomes skeletally thin. He's happy for the first time in his life and the narrator notes that had Arsenios lived, he might've become a saint.

*When the narrator notes that the war saves Father Arsenios, it suggests that there are ways for individuals to find purpose in such horrific times. The fact that the Italians listen to Arsenios shows that they're more than willing to humanize and respect the Greeks, which makes the Italians read as more human and sympathetic.*



## CHAPTER 40. A PROBLEM WITH LIPS

As Corelli and Pelagia pass each other going through the door, she, without thinking, kisses him on the cheek. They're both astonished and she stops at the edge of the courtyard. He asks her what's for dinner and she accuses him of teasing her and threatens to not speak to him. At this, he throws himself at her feet and pleads with her to speak to him. He says he's drunk with agony, so she teases him about losing another football match. He delightedly leaps to his feet and says his team actually won their most recent match. Corelli invites Pelagia inside, but in the doorway he kisses her on the forehead and then runs away. She tries not to laugh.

*Again, the way in which Pelagia behaves affectionately towards Corelli without thinking implies that deep down, she does think of him as a person just like her and not a faceless oppressor. By making the entire thing into a joke and a charade, Corelli is able to make their romance seem less serious and in turn, less dangerous. This, however, doesn't diminish the fact that their relationship is actually dangerous for them and for those around them.*



## CHAPTER 41. SNAILS

Dr. Iannis looks out the window to see Corelli sneaking up on Lemoni. Psipsina settles herself on his writing, and the doctor has a splendid idea. He interrupts Corelli and Lemoni and asks her if she can show him where she found Psipsina, a part of the forest teeming with snails. She agrees to take him there in the evening. Dr. Iannis insists to Corelli that they need the protein, so Corelli offers to help collect snails. That evening, Corelli, Pelagia, and Dr. Iannis follow Lemoni. They all begin to fill their buckets with fat snails.

*The decision to gather snails is one borne out of necessity thanks to the food shortages caused by the war. However, notice that the tone of this passage isn't one of desperation; it's humorous and fun, which again shows that even times like this can be beautiful in some ways.*



Lemoni and Dr. Iannis disappear into one tunnel and Corelli and Pelagia move down another. Corelli feels content until he hears Pelagia yelling. He finds her on her knees, her hair caught in a bramble and a cut across her cheek. He laughs at her and dabs at her cheek with a handkerchief. When he finally untangles her hair, he kisses her cheek softly. Inexplicably, she begins to cry and finally says she can't stand it anymore. They kiss until dusk. Lemoni shames them for collecting fewer snails together than she did alone.

*When Lemoni takes Corelli and Pelagia to task for kissing and not working, it's an initial indicator that they're passing into dangerous territory. Their romance will mean that they're in danger of persecution from anyone who deems their relationship improper, including children.*



## CHAPTER 42. HOW LIKE A WOMAN IS A MANDOLIN

Corelli states that women are like mandolins. Pelagia's wrists remind him of the neck of a mandolin, while he imagines that her breasts are like the rounded backs of mandolins. Whenever he plays Antonia, he thinks of Pelagia as though she's music. Her laughter, questions, and teasing are all different notes, and the guns in the distance become the drums in their symphony. She worries about the war and he knows that she's waiting for a time when they can love each other openly.

*Corelli's ability to look at Pelagia like a mandolin and their interactions with each other like music shows that for him, music is a way to escape the horrors of war and assign a deeper meaning to the good things that the war lets him experience. By turning the guns into drums, he indicates that he can also make horror seem beautiful.*



Corelli tells Pelagia that he's composing a march for her and plays some of it. Suddenly, she becomes angry and asks why he can come and play her beautiful music while Greece is pillaged and traded among lying dictators. She runs away. Corelli knows that she hates him because she loves him, and he's unwilling to stand up to the evil. Ashamed, he returns to thinking about how women are like mandolins and how the war brought them together and is pulling them apart. "Pelagia's March" is the only way he can give voice to any of this.

*Corelli's assessment of Pelagia's anger and the role the war plays in their relationship suggests that the beauty of war is contingent on there being a war in the first place--something naturally bad that's harming them both. Note too that what Pelagia takes offense to is the fact that nobody on the international stage cares much about Greece, which is why the war is still raging there.*



## CHAPTER 43. THE GREAT BIG SPIKY RUSTBALL

Pelagia hates preparing the snails. She's afraid that if she cooks them poorly then Corelli will like her less, but she receives conflicting information about how to prepare them. By the time she's ready to cook them, she's heard five different ways to do it and feels both disgusted by the snails and sorry for them. She thinks it's a cruel world in which powerful creatures survive by preying on weak creatures.

*In this moment, Pelagia comes to think of the powerless people of the world as being like snails: at the mercy of powerful people, even if those powerful individuals aren't quite sure what to do with the powerless people. This allows Pelagia to humanize the weak in a way that someone like Mandras can't.*



Pelagia's reverie is interrupted by Lemoni calling for Corelli. She comes every evening and tells Corelli about her day, even though Corelli still doesn't understand any Greek. Lemoni excitedly says that she found a "great big spiky rustball" on the beach and climbed on it. Pelagia translates and both Corelli and Carlo go pale: Lemoni found a **mine**.

*The friendship between Lemoni and Corelli is another indicator that friendships are more important than nationality, language, or age. They genuinely enjoy each other despite their many differences, and Corelli's reaction shows he deeply cares for her.*



The entire village goes with Corelli and Carlo to look at the **mine**. Carlo discovers that it's Turkish from the Great War, which Corelli says probably means the explosive material is too decayed to do much. Carlo is disappointed as he loves explosions, but Corelli says it'll still make a magnificent spectacle if Carlo fetches enough dynamite. Corelli returns to Pelagia and the villagers, asks her to warn children to not touch mysterious metal things. Then, he explains that he's going to explode the mine and needs men to dig him a trench so he can safely do so. Stamatis and Kokolios agree to do it for two chickens each.

*Carlo's excitement at getting to explode the mine and enjoy the spectacle again shows that it's natural for people to be attracted to the more aesthetically pleasing parts of war, though prior events such as Velisarios's cannon shooting Mandras accidentally suggests that this explosion may also not be entirely harmless.*



Carlo returns with dynamite and a truckload of troops ready to enjoy the explosion. Corelli is annoyed, but Carlo says he can't move explosives alone because of the partisans. Corelli is even more annoyed when an engineer points out his trench is too close to the **mine**. They insult each other and Corelli threatens to press charges, but the engineer insists that dead men can't.

*The fact that the troops are just as excited about the explosion as the villagers suggests that this interest in spectacle is something that crosses all sorts of lines and boundaries; in other words, the Italians and the Greeks are all human despite their differences.*



Corelli arranges the dynamite and soldiers pile up sand around the **mine**. Finally, Corelli gets in his trench and the villagers and soldiers head up the hill. He takes a deep breath and depresses the plunger. The mine blows straight up in the air. The shock wave hits the crowd suddenly and knocks them all down, and then wet sand and bits of metal rain down on them. Eventually they stand, unable to tell who is Greek and who is Italian. They discover that a piece of metal decapitated the engineer and only then do they start to look for Corelli. Carlo runs down to the beach and finds Corelli lying in the bottom of his trench, covered in sand and concussed. He's deaf for two days.

*When the explosion makes it so the Greeks and the Italians can't tell who's who, it reinforces the novel's assertion that the Italians and the Greeks are all the same under their uniforms--they all enjoyed the explosion, and they all suffer because of it. The death of the engineer and Corelli's deafness remind the reader that nothing that has to do with war is entirely benign--there are always consequences of violence like this.*



That evening, Dr. Iannis is angry and perplexed when a mass of sandy, unrecognizable people turn up in his courtyard. He loudly asks the crowd who filled his house with snails, and Pelagia is horrified to see that all her snails escaped. General Gandin later charges Corelli with acting without permission, because Axis troops swarmed to the island thinking the explosion was the work of the British.

*The swarm of Axis troops to the island suggests again that there's nothing benign or innocent about what happened. A person died and many were injured, all in the name of spectacle. This offers the message that people should be skeptical of entertainment that's based on violence.*



## CHAPTER 44. THEFT

Kokolios wakes in the middle of the night to the sound of his chickens in distress. He figures that Psipsina is in his coop again and vows to kill her. He pulls on his boots, grabs his makeshift club, and goes outside naked. Kokolios discovers two Italian soldiers in his coop and beats them. Finally, he grabs them by their collars and drags them to Dr. Iannis's house. Dr. Iannis, Pelagia, and Corelli all come outside and are shocked by what they see, especially since the Italian soldiers still have their guns. Corelli goes inside and Dr. Iannis teases Kokolios about his rage not quite matching up with his communist beliefs.

*The fact that the Italians didn't fight back against Kokolios is one indicator that they do see the Greeks as worthy opponents and not as playthings to kill on a whim. When Dr. Iannis takes the opportunity to give Kokolios a hard time about communism, it shows that even the war and the Italian invasion hasn't diminished the role that arguing about politics plays in Greek friendships.*



Corelli returns with his revolver and motions for both soldiers to lie on the ground. He yells at them to crawl to Kokolios and lick his boots. Kokolios finally remembers he's naked and runs home. Pelagia laughs, but Corelli isn't done. He slaps his men, sends them away, and then rants that everyone is hungry.

*Corelli's willingness to humiliate his soldiers shows that he truly believes that the Greeks don't deserve to be treated as lesser people just because they're not the conquerors.*



Two days later, Pelagia discovers her goat missing. Corelli finds her crying and promises to get her another goat, but she yells that the Italians are all thieves. The shame nearly crushes him.

*Corelli's shame functions as a reminder that it's not enough to punish soldiers for theft some of the time; those thefts still have dire consequences for the victims.*



## CHAPTER 45. A TIME OF INNOCENCE

Corelli and Pelagia spend their time kissing under the olive tree and going on walks. She knows that it'd be disastrous if she became pregnant and she's seen the horrific results of home abortions, so they don't have sex. They're able to spend more time together after Weber gets Corelli a motorcycle. He's a horrendous driver and they fall twice, but Pelagia loves it. One of their favorite places is an abandoned shepherd's hut they call Casa Nostra. They kiss and talk about what they're going to do after the war. They want to get married and raise bilingual children; he wants to write concertos and she wants to become a doctor. They promise to love each other forever after the war.

*Weber's willingness to procure a motorcycle for Corelli suggests that despite Weber's Nazism, the two are actually friends who care deeply about each other. This suggests that it's possible for a young man like Weber to learn about the importance of friendship and offers hope that he'll go on to prioritize relationships over his political leanings in the future. Now that Corelli and Pelagia's relationship is in the open, the war no longer provides cover; it's entirely awful as it keeps them apart.*



## CHAPTER 46. BUNNIOS

At dawn, Alekos rises and picks up his rifle to check on his goats. He's already shot two bandits who tried to steal his goats. Alekos is aware that there's a war and loves watching the searchlights and flashes, though he knows that people in the villages are starving. He thinks nothing of it when he hears a plane overhead, but he looks up and sees what he's certain is an angel dropping under a white mushroom. Alekos watches the angel hit his head on a rock when he hits the ground. For two days, Alekos feeds the angel honey and yogurt. When the angel begins to speak, Alekos has no idea what it's saying, but he can tell it's frustrated that he doesn't understand.

*All of what Alekos says about the bandits suggests that he's coming into contact with ELAS. However, because of his role as a mostly outside observer, he's able to see the war as something visually appealing that doesn't really affect him. The simple fact that he has honey and yogurt when people in the villages are starving makes it clear that not everyone will suffer through the war like Pelagia and Dr. Iannis are.*



Perplexingly, the angel speaks to God through a big metal box. God even talks back. After four days, Alekos motions to the angel and it follows him to Dr. Iannis's house. Because the angel scowls when there are Italians or Germans nearby, Alekos understands that God is on the Greeks' side. They reach Dr. Iannis's house at three in the morning. Alekos explains he brought an angel and slips away.

*While Alekos's interpretation of events is humorous, he's able to make these assessments because the war hasn't affected him enough for him to understand that this "angel" is actually a British spy who's talking to higher-ups, not God.*



The angel introduces himself as Bunnios, but Dr. Iannis can barely understand anything he says. He invites Bunnios in and Pelagia is shocked to see a tall man dressed in a fustanella, the festival dress of the mainland. Finally, they realize that Bunnios is speaking ancient Greek and Dr. Iannis asks that they speak English. Bunnios is relieved; he's upset that he speaks Greek and yet no one understands him. They learn that Bunnios is a spy. Dr. Iannis is thrilled to be able to trade some regular clothes for the fustanella, as he's wanted a set for a long time. He instructs Bunnios to be quiet until he learns Greek, warns him about the rebels, and sends him off. Bunnios lives with Italians, sometimes walks with Father Arsenios, and reports weekly to the British forces.

*Bunnios parachuting into Greece with only a grasp of ancient Greek only heightens the absurdity of the war. This also reinforces that most powers in World War Two don't see Greece as particularly important, given that they clearly didn't do their research as to what language Bunnios needs to speak or how he should dress. This shows that in stereotyping the Greeks, the British are actually hurting their ability to do anything meaningful through Bunnios.*



## CHAPTER 47. DR. IANNIS COUNSELS HIS DAUGHTER

Dr. Iannis packs his pipe with nasty tobacco and vows to quit smoking. He writes that Cephalonia has always been home to great and powerful men. He wonders if his problem with his History is that history is actually impossible. Forgetting his vow to not smoke he draws on his pipe, only to cough and sneeze. He hands Pelagia his tobacco tin and asks her to mix it with honey and brandy, but asks her to sit first. Dr. Iannis notes that Pelagia and Corelli are obviously in love with each other. He notes her blush, takes her hand, and "diagnoses" her as being in love, which he says is making her stupid.

Dr. Iannis squeezes Pelagia's hand and says that it's a simple fact that a family's honor is based on the conduct of its women. He admits that he likes Corelli a great deal, but reminds Pelagia that she's engaged to Mandras. Dr. Iannis insists that this will make people hate her. Then, he says that love is only "a temporary madness," and the true test of whether love is real or not is if two people are entwined with each other *after* the rush of initial attraction wears off. He admits that he'd be thrilled for Pelagia to marry Corelli after the war is over, especially since Mandras might be dead.

Dr. Iannis tells Pelagia not to be ashamed, but says he's aware that she and Corelli are sexually attracted to each other. He says that he wouldn't help her with an abortion if she became pregnant, and points out that women who have babies with the enemy often end up as prostitutes. He reminds her that Corelli may have any number of venereal diseases because of the army prostitutes. Pelagia cries and accuses her father of making everything awful, but Dr. Iannis insists he's not forbidding anything, just telling her to be careful and act honorably. He tells her to pray for Greece's liberation and apologizes for upsetting her.

## CHAPTER 48. LA SCALA

La Scala is gathered at Dr. Iannis's house and Weber tells Corelli that Italians are making off with Greeks' ration cards. Dr. Iannis confirms that this is happening, and Corelli promises to put a stop to it. Weber points out that Corelli is very ready to defend the Greeks and asks why he's even in Greece. Corelli replies that he doesn't want to be a jerk and doesn't think he's better than everyone else, as the Nazis do. Weber, Carlo, and Corelli argue about whether the Nazi beliefs are scientific and if science makes them right morally. Weber insists they are right because strength wins every time; Corelli insists that it's important to do the right thing and protect the weak.

*By diagnosing Pelagia as being in love, Dr. Iannis attempts to make something very emotional into something that's rational and easier for him to talk about with her. It's important to note that during this conversation, Dr. Iannis never truly talks down to Pelagia or tells her what to do. This is another indicator that he sees her as a person capable of making her own decisions; he's only making sure she has information.*



*Even though Dr. Iannis has raised Pelagia to be independent and thoughtful, he recognizes that she's still going to be hindered by a society that doesn't believe women should be that way. In doing so, he shows he understands that he didn't raise Pelagia in a vacuum; she's still a part of Greek culture even if she's grown up differently than her female peers did.*



*By essentially asking Pelagia to wait until after the war to move forward in her relationship, Dr. Iannis recognizes that while the war brought Pelagia and Corelli together, now that they are together, the war will deny them their happiness and insist that they think of each other as less than human and unworthy of each other's love.*



*Weber's arguments here betray that though he is friends with Corelli, La Scala, and Dr. Iannis, his beliefs dictate that he must deny his friends' humanity and, therefore, devalue them and their friendships. Corelli, on the other hand, understands that it's far more important to behave in a way that makes an individual feel as though they're doing the right thing, which is something he can do without a political framework.*



Weber hears Pelagia in the kitchen and suggests they bring one of the prostitutes to even out the gender divide. When Pelagia insists that Dr. Iannis would throw them out, Weber jokes that La Scala could bring armored cars and come anyway. Nobody laughs. One of the tenors suggests they sing, so Weber fetches his gramophone and plays Marlene Dietrich. Corelli plays along on his mandolin. The entire village listens and Pelagia touches the gramophone. Weber promises that after the war, he'll leave it with her. Touched, she kisses him on the cheek.

*Marlene Dietrich was bisexual and was one of the most successful performers to denounce the war and the Nazis in particular. Weber's affinity for her implies that though he's a Nazi through and through, he does have the ability to recognize the humanity and the power of people different from him and opposed to him.*



## CHAPTER 49. THE DOCTOR ADVISES THE CAPTAIN

As Dr. Iannis and Corelli try to figure out an appropriate substitute for a mandolin string, Dr. Iannis abruptly asks if Corelli is going to marry Pelagia. Corelli is taken aback. Dr. Iannis tells him that they'll need to go to Italy or America, though he insists that Pelagia will wither outside of Greece. Corelli says that he thinks things will be just fine with Pelagia; she's suggested to him that because Corelli is obsessed with music in the same way that Dr. Iannis is obsessed with medicine, she's already learned how to love someone like him and their nationalities are of no consequence.

*Corelli's assessment of the reason Pelagia will be able to love him shows that Pelagia's ability to think critically is indeed something that Corelli sees as an asset, not a hindrance. Further, when he says that their nationalities don't matter, he indicates that he sees humanity as a group as being fundamentally the same regardless of where they live.*



Dr. Iannis is touched but insists Corelli doesn't understand. He goes on to explain that all Greeks have two Greeks inside of them. The first is called the Hellene and is reasonable, loves education, and obeys the law. The other is called the Romoi and seeks power, money, and self-interest. The only quality the two share is a love of country, though the Hellene will fight humanely against threats and the Romoi is more like Mussolini. Corelli insists he doesn't believe that Pelagia has this horrible other side. Dr. Iannis says that he's just saying that they'd need to live in Greece. He leaves the room and returns to say that Greece has experienced nothing but slaughter for millennia and it's teeming with ghosts. He cautions Corelli that there will be more and he shouldn't make plans.

*Dr. Iannis's final warning to Corelli foreshadows the horrors to come by insisting that history will repeat itself in Greece. This shows Dr. Iannis using his grasp of history to influence how he looks at his present and the future, as he recognizes that it's impossible for the war to end peacefully, even someplace like Greece that has little strategic importance. By giving Corelli his blessing in other ways, Dr. Iannis does show that he now fully accepts Corelli as a worthy person.*



## CHAPTER 50. A TIME OF HIATUS

The narrator explains that after the Allies invaded Sicily, all hell broke out in Greece. The Greek Civil War began, as did the Cold War, and the Americans couldn't believe that the Greek communists were committing such atrocities. In regards to the rest of the war, the Allies begin to gain the upper hand. This perplexes the Germans, but the Italians surrender happily. In Cephalonia, the Italians listen to the BBC report that the Allies are marching through Italy. Weber continues to attend La Scala meetings, but he's cold and distant.

*Because Weber's beloved Nazi ideals are being struck down as the Allies enjoy wins, it shows him that his politics aren't actually able to create the world he'd like to see. Put another way, he's realizing that simply believing he's right isn't enough to make him right, as there's more to winning a war than simply believing in what he's fighting for.*



One evening, Corelli asks Pelagia what they'll do when the Italians have to surrender before the Germans do. He says they can't get married, and General Gandin won't let the Italians disarm the Germans now. Pelagia sees Father Arsenios and Bunnios and runs to talk to them. She asks Bunnios when the British are coming. He doesn't know, but he can tell her that the Germans aren't sending more troops to Greece. She relays this to Corelli. He remarks that Arsenios has a fantastic voice and tells Pelagia about the songs he heard sailors singing earlier. He begins to hum one that makes her laugh; it's the national anthem.

## CHAPTER 51. PARALYSIS

The narrator asks the reader to imagine if Homer had written about General Gandin. Homer would've written that Gandin was vague, foolish, and couldn't make decisions. Gandin wanted to save his men and ended up dooming them because he believed the Nazis. The narrator explains that Gandin was so stuck because everyone above him issued conflicting orders and so he had no clout. In July, the U.S. had bombed Rome and a week later, the Italian king imprisoned Mussolini and appointed Badoglio in his place. Badoglio asked the Allies for terms, abolished the Fascist party, and released political prisoners.

Badoglio signed a secret armistice with the Allies in the beginning of September, but the Germans were ready: they sent troops to Cephalonia to prepare. Gandin doesn't order counter-preparations. La Scala stops meeting at Dr. Iannis's house and all the Germans and Italians who had become friendly stop seeing each other. Weber feels betrayed by the Italians and wants to teach them a lesson. Corelli doesn't come home much, as his battery runs drills day and night.

Then, on September 8, Carlo fiddles with the radio and hears that the Italians will stop fighting the British and the Americans. He'd been thinking about Francisco and Albania, and he feels impossibly hopeful as the church bells start to ring in Greece. He excitedly runs outside and tells Corelli everything is over since the Allies will help them now. Corelli insists that the Allies won't help; they need to disarm the Germans themselves. That night, the Italian warships in Greece leave and take nobody with them. Corelli receives a phone call telling him to not attack.

*Remember that General Gandin is in charge of the Italians in Greece. His unwillingness to allow the Italians to act suggests that he's either sympathetic to the Germans themselves or unwilling to admit defeat. It's worth considering that even though it'll soon be revealed that Gandin isn't actually as powerful as he wishes he were, he still holds some degree of power because of his role in the war and likely wants to hang onto it.*



*Homer's assessment of Gandin betrays that the Gandin of the novel isn't actually a bad person; he's just acting as though he's involved in a war that's far more fair and ethical than World War Two actually is. This also traces back to the way that Mussolini paralyzes his officers by not letting them in on information; even if Gandin had been willing to do more, it's likely he wouldn't have had the knowledge to do the right thing.*



*When the Germans send troops to Cephalonia, it implies that Greece will actually become an important part of the war. Weber's sense of betrayal shows that he believes in the Nazi and Axis ideals far more than he values his friendships, given that he believes their friendship is compromised by their unwillingness to support the Axis.*



*Carlo's happiness betrays his optimism and belief in humanity's goodness, even after what he experienced in Albania and what's brewing in Greece. This suggests that Carlo's time in Cephalonia has taught him to value the power of human connection and goodness, even if in this case, that belief in the Allies is indeed misguided.*



Weber waits for orders and thinks about how he misses the certainty that the Nazis were going to win. He feels that with a few troops as are in Cephalonia, the Germans are sure to lose. The next day, General Barge moves troops and General Gandin attempts to contact Rome. Pelagia and Dr. Iannis prepare medical supplies and Corelli attempts unsuccessfully to contact Greek partisans to ask for help.

Corelli sits on a wall and thinks about Pelagia and home. He feels he has no home: his family was forced to move to Libya by Mussolini and they all died of dysentery. Cephalonia feels more like home now. He feels pained at the thought of Pelagia mourning his death. When he returns to camp, his men are in revolt: they've just received orders to surrender to the Nazis.

*Notice that Weber is looking only at numbers, while General Barge and General Gandin are looking at the conflict in a more strategic way. Corelli's attempt to contact partisans betrays that the Italians will need more than just themselves if they want to win.*



*The way that Corelli talks about his birth family shows how Mussolini's policies fundamentally destroyed all of Corelli's meaningful relationships and in doing so, left him alone--and able to empathize with the people he's supposed to oppress.*



## CHAPTER 52. DEVELOPMENTS

Carlo tells the reader he's full of rage and tired of being a pawn in a game of powerful men. The Germans are flying in more reinforcements and he wonders if Gandin even listens to the radio. The Italians greatly outnumber the Germans and yet they've been told to surrender.

General Gandin calls Colonel Barge to tell him that he's withdrawn infantry from Kardakata in a token of goodwill. Barge promises to help send Italian troops home and puts the phone down. He instructs a major to take troops to Kardakata.

Corelli tells the reader that he asked Pelagia and Dr. Iannis to take care of Antonia. They put the mandolin in their trapdoor, along with writings from Carlo. Pelagia is worried and has been trying to contact partisans. At the same time, Weber feels relieved that the German reinforcements are arriving. General Gandin asked for written guarantees for his men's safety, but Weber thinks they'll teach them a lesson.

*Carlo's rage stems directly from his powerlessness to do anything when things seem perfectly obvious to him: the Italians could win if they only acted. By extension, he's frustrated with the way that the Italians attempt to insist that their reality is worse than it is.*



*Here, Colonel Barge shows the reader that he doesn't respect the Italians at all and is willing to play dirty in order to win. He's able to do so because he dehumanizes them.*



*The rage that Weber feels towards Gandin in particular shows that he's moving away from valuing his friends and towards valuing strength alone. In doing so, Weber will become less human and will choose to look at strength rather than relationships.*



General Gandin asks chaplains for advice. They disagree on whether to give in or fight. Gandin fears he won't be successful in beating the Germans, though the narrator says he has enough guns to destroy them. Not long after, the chaplains speak to the boys. Carlo runs in with news that the Germans killed an Italian officer and he suggests they hold a vote. Corelli agrees and says that if they have to, they'll arrest Gandin. In the morning, Gandin does nothing. Colonel Barge, however, sends a small group to surround an Italian battery. The Italian officer surrenders and the men are sent away, believing that the Germans will let them go without a fight. The following morning, an Italian sergeant shoots his captain because he wanted to surrender, and Corelli's division points their guns towards the Germans.

Colonel Barge receives an order from Hitler to destroy the Italian forces in Cephalonia upon telegraph receipt of a code word. It says that prisoners are to be treated as traitors. General Gandin speaks anxiously with one of his men, trying to decipher conflicting orders and figure out why the Allies won't help them. He insists that since the Germans were friends until a few days ago they can't just kill them, and explains that he's asked for someone higher up to replace Colonel Barge in negotiations to buy them more time. Meanwhile, British spies decode Hitler's order to attack Cephalonia, but the British do nothing so the Germans won't know they can decode their messages.

## CHAPTER 53. FIRST BLOOD

The Acqui division votes to resist the Germans, but the battle begins before they can organize. The Italians feel as though they're doing something right for the first time. The narrator wonders if Captain Appollonio opens fire on German landing craft without an order because he is tired of being part of a fallen empire or because he knows it is a matter of life or death. A seaplane drops bombs on houses in Argostoli, but the Italians advance. Finally, a German car waves a white flag and the troops stop until sunset. The Italians watch more German reinforcements arrive and Appollonio curses when he receives a call saying that Gandin has agreed to a truce. He receives a message of support from Corelli.

*Everything Colonel Barge does should be treated with suspicion, as he's attempting to lure the Italians into thinking that the Germans do value their friendships and will let them go because of it. Gandin's choice to go to chaplains instead of make a logical decision illustrates how years of being deprived of information and the ability to make decisions has turned Gandin into a person who simply can't make them anymore. The Italian way of doing things has turned him into someone ineffective, just as Mussolini was ineffective.*



*The British decision to not help in order to be able to trick the Germans later indicates that Greece truly isn't a country that matters to any of its allies on the international stage. Gandin's unwillingness to attack the Germans reminds the reader that he is trying to be an honorable person and do the right thing, but his unwillingness to fight Barge's nastiness with equal nastiness will be his downfall. In other words, in times like this, the only way to win is by embracing the horror of war.*



*The German reinforcements that keep arriving are a clue that even if there's technically a truce in the works, the Germans have no intention of keeping it. Instead, they've committed themselves fully to their political ideologies and in turn have decided to think of the Italians as sub-human creatures to trick and kill. This shows how powerful entities can use their grasp of power to create the world they want to see by lying and cheating.*



## CHAPTER 54. CARLO'S FAREWELL

Carlo leaves a letter with his story for Corelli. He says he knows he's going to die and hopes that Corelli doesn't think less of him for being gay. Carlo says that when Francisco died his life was meaningless, and he came to Cephalonia filled with grief. He tells Corelli that he loves him dearly for banishing his sorrow with laughter. In closing, Carlo tells Corelli that he wishes for Corelli to find his future happiness with Pelagia, and he hopes that Corelli will tell his children about their Uncle Carlo.

*In particular, Carlo's request that Corelli talk to his children about him and call him an uncle shows that Carlo has learned that family isn't something that's bound only by blood; it's something that individuals can create through friendship and understanding, even from beyond the grave.*



## CHAPTER 55. VICTORY

General Gandin goes against what his men want and agrees with Colonel Barge: the Italian soldiers should evacuate the island. He doesn't think it's important that there are no ships with which to do so. In Corfu, German soldiers offered their own ships to the Italians to evacuate but shot all the Italians as they waded towards them. Italians who managed to reach German ships were bombed by the British. In Cephalonia, the Germans have two weeks to organize while the Italians either prepare for the final battle or give up, knowing they'll lose. The Greeks feel as though the worst is yet to come.

*General Gandin's unwillingness to look at the facts and recognize that what he's agreeing to is practically impossible again shows how his time in the dysfunctional Italian army has hampered his ability to do anything right: he's no longer accustomed to looking at the facts and making a decision. The fact that the British bombed the escaping Italians shows that the horror of the war is inescapable.*



When the German planes finally arrive in Cephalonia, it becomes clear to all that the Germans never meant to evacuate the Italians. Weber knows he'll have to kill his friends, and Gandin knows that his indecision has condemned his men to die. The planes drop bombs on the Italian battery. Corelli and Appollonio understand that the Germans will try to destroy Argostoli because that's where most of the Italians are, but Gandin filled the city with troops and remains in a conspicuous place anyway. He doesn't provide radios or telephones, meaning that none of the Italian forces can communicate with each other.

*When Gandin sets his troops up to fail and die, it suggests that in addition to not being able to make practical choices, he's also come to resemble Mussolini in that he doesn't think of his soldiers as full humans who are capable of helping him make decisions either. The fact that they listened to him for the most part suggests that the Italian forces still hope that they'll have someone to rally around.*



That night, Alekos watches the battle from the mountain. Bunnios sits next to him talking into his radio, trying to get his superiors to help the Italians. They refuse. Dr. Iannis and Pelagia sit in their kitchen, wondering if Corelli is dead. Stamatis and Kokolios knock on the door. They ask for Dr. Iannis's blessing to go shoot Germans with Velisarios and ask that he take care of their wives if they die.

*When Stamatis, Kokolios, and Velisarios decide to go help the Italians, it indicates that all three of them now recognize that the Italian invaders were true friends and are worthy of their help and support.*



Corelli walks through the ruins of Argostoli. He notices a child's hand sticking out of a pile of rubble and he finds the crushed head of a girl Lemoni's age. He apologizes to the girl and thinks that the war is killing children everywhere. He understands that he has to win the war. Because Cephalonia is of minimal strategic importance to anyone, however, nobody comes to help and nobody follows the few orders Gandin does give. German troops continue to arrive as displaced villagers run to Argostoli for shelter.

*While Corelli doesn't specify what winning the war means, it's implied that he now believes the Germans should be taken down and the Allies should win so that the carnage can stop. This completes Corelli's transformation into someone who's willing to do the right thing for his friends and for humanity at great risk to himself.*



The next morning, a German soldier feeds Italians who surrender and then shoots them all. The Germans continue to force Italians to surrender and then shoot them. On September 22nd, after three days of fighting, Corelli knows that the Italians will have to surrender. He rides his motorcycle to Pelagia and tells her that it's over. She offers to hide him, but he cries and insists he needs to stay with his boys.

*The Germans show themselves to be heartless when they begin murdering Italians. Feeding the Italians first shows that the Germans understand how to manipulate their victims into believing the Germans care about them, suggesting the Germans know how to weaponize kindness.*



## CHAPTER 56. THE GOOD NAZI (2)

Weber requests that his mission be assigned to someone else. The major is incredulous but isn't angry; he hopes that he'd do the same in Weber's position. They argue over whether or not the Italians are traitors, and finally, the major wins by reminding Weber that the penalty for refusing to obey is death by firing squad. He tells Weber that the Italians are going to be shot whether he does it or not and chooses not to record Weber's resistance in his file.

*Though the major suggests in several roundabout ways that he recognizes the humanity of Weber and of the Italians, he ultimately convinces Weber by impressing upon him the importance of living, even if one has to commit atrocities against one's friends in order to do so.*



Corelli sits in a truck with his boys and encourages them to sing. Carlo begins to sing "Ave Maria" and then another La Scala member begins a song from *Madama Butterfly*. The truck reaches the brothel and Weber's knees nearly buckle; he hadn't thought that the Italians would arrive singing a song they'd once sung together. He's shocked when Corelli waves. Weber approaches Corelli and Carlo and offers them cigarettes. Carlo refuses the offer and when Weber coughs, jokes that Weber shouldn't pass on a cold. Weber trembles and asks Corelli to forgive him. Carlo sneers that nobody will, but Corelli says he does. He shakes Weber's hand and then links arms with Carlo.

*Corelli's kind treatment of Weber shows that he recognizes that Weber is a kid caught up in a truly horrific political system that prioritizes loyalty over humanity; he's doing what he believes he needs to do to survive. By offering Weber his forgiveness and being so kind, Corelli implies that he hopes Weber will take this lesson to heart in the future and make better choices to prioritize life, love, and friendship.*



A Croatian tells Weber that they have to kill the Italians quickly, as more are coming soon. When Weber gives the order, most of the Germans aim high or wide. The Croatian aims to kill and Weber watches his friends flail and die. He doesn't see Carlo step in front of Corelli and hold Corelli's wrists so that the bullets don't hit him. Carlo takes bullet after bullet before finally flinging himself backwards. Corelli is dumbfounded and doesn't hear the German sergeant's command for any Italians still alive to stand. Weber kills those who stand and then checks the rest. He meets Corelli's eyes but doesn't shoot. Corelli realizes he's struggling to breathe because some of the bullets went through Carlo and into his own body.

*By sacrificing himself for Corelli, Carlo shows that he hopes this act of kindness will enable Corelli to go on and continue this legacy of saving others. Carlo also ensures that he's going to die for love by doing this, which given his focus on love and friendship, will make him feel as though his final act is a worthwhile one. Weber's decision to allow Corelli to live shows that he's not all bad, though he still fears what will happen to him if he were to help Corelli in any other way.*



## CHAPTER 57. FIRE

That evening, Velisarios stops when he notices Carlo's body. He thinks it's improper to leave Carlo there and so picks him up. He notices Corelli underneath, still alive. Velisarios takes him to Dr. Iannis. The narrator notes that between four and nine thousand Italians were massacred in Cephalonia that day. Alekos looks down from the mountain and notices fires. When he smells burning hair, he wonders if it's the end of the world. The Germans do their best to burn all the bodies and pile ancient olive trees on the pyres.

*The decision to move Carlo shows that Velisarios also learned that the Italians were true friends and are now worthy of a proper burial by respectful friends. When Alekos wonders if the world is ending, it shows that some of the atrocities of the war do actually reach someone who is mostly separated from it, reinforcing the horror and the consequences of the war.*



When Father Arsenios learns of the massacre, he feels responsible. He approaches one of the fires and preaches loudly and angrily. Nobody listens. Arsenios begins to beat German soldiers with his staff and the Germans halfheartedly defend themselves. Finally, an officer shoots Arsenios and throws him on the pyre. His dog remains nearby until the Germans leave and the surviving Italians and a few Greeks approach. They try to remove the bodies from the edges to bury them properly and wonder if this is what it's going to be like under the Germans. The next night, they return to the pyres to find more bodies to bury.

*Father Arsenios's sense of responsibility for the dead Italians indicates that while he tormented them during the occupation, their kindnesses towards him and willingness to listen to him had a profound effect on him. They were, in other words, part of his flock just as the Greeks were, which allows him to feel responsible for the fact that he wasn't around to protect them.*



Weber nearly goes mad, especially since the Germans start to make Italian officers load their dead boys onto trucks and then shoot the officers. A rumor circulates that St. Gerasimos got up and wandered, as the nuns find him in the morning with tears on his cheeks and blood on his slippers.

*The rumor about St. Gerasimos reinforces that the tragedy is so great, it's nearly supernatural and affects even dead religious figures, just as it now affects and scares Alekos.*



## CHAPTER 58. SURGERY AND OBSEQUIY

When Velisarios kicks Dr. Iannis's door open, Pelagia thinks it's the Germans. She's shocked to see Velisarios. Velisarios deposits Corelli on the table and Corelli weakly greets Pelagia. She runs for the kapheneia and bursts in, the first woman to set foot inside. The men all look at her disapprovingly, but she drags Dr. Iannis home. He's immediately concerned about how much blood there is and suggests it'd be kinder to kill him. Velisarios lifts Pelagia when she starts to beat at her father's chest.

Pelagia boils water, tears bandages, and shouts at Dr. Iannis when he suggests he's not qualified. He's too intimidated to resist again. He discovers that Corelli has six bullets in him and a nasty cut on his cheek. He knows that he doesn't have the proper equipment to locate the fragments of bullets and uniform that are surely inside, but decides to proceed. When Dr. Iannis discovers that the bullets aren't that far under the skin, he realizes that Corelli may live. Dr. Iannis gives Corelli morphine and alcohol and yells at Pelagia to wash her hands and attend to his face.

Soon, Pelagia realizes how horrific this surgery is going to be: Dr. Iannis cuts wide holes around the bullet wounds and tells her to do the same. When he extracts the first bullet and notices how flat it is, he asks rhetorically how Corelli is alive. Velisarios explains that Carlo stood in front of Corelli. Pelagia and the doctor cry, and Velisarios decides to go back for Carlo's body. Pelagia feels as though she's in a nightmare as she and Dr. Iannis discuss whether to sew up the bullet crease on Corelli's cheek or let it heal on its own. Velisarios returns with Carlo's body, binds his shattered jaw, and digs a grave under the olive tree. The narrator notes that Carlo is buried in the soil of Odysseus's time.

Just before dawn, Dr. Iannis and Pelagia bury Carlo. Dr. Iannis puts silver coins on Carlo's eyes and puts a bottle of wine in the grave, while Velisarios gives Carlo a cigarette. Dr. Iannis delivers a eulogy praising Carlo's goodness, strength, and kindness.

*Pelagia's willingness to invade a male-only space shows that with Dr. Iannis's education and her love for Corelli, she now recognizes that the lines themselves are ridiculous and meaningless when a person's life is at stake. The men's disapproval, however, foreshadows the difficulties Pelagia will face in the future as she continues to transgress these lines.*



*When Pelagia shows herself capable of intimidating her father, it shows that she's beginning to come into herself and when someone she loves is at risk, she's more than willing to step outside of what she's supposed to do to make things happen. Dr. Iannis makes sure she realizes this won't be easy when he asks her to participate with the surgery.*



*Noting that Carlo will be buried in Odysseus's soil suggests that Carlo's final resting place is one where he was always meant to be, given that the ancient Greeks accepted gay men. When the surgery feels absurd, Pelagia realizes that it's a normal human reaction to try to turn the horror into something else entirely; it's the only way that she can protect herself from the trauma of seeing Corelli so damaged.*



*Dr. Iannis's eulogy reinforces the fact that he learned to see Carlo as a friend and a fellow human, not just as an invading Italian.*



## CHAPTER 59. THE HISTORICAL CACHETTE

Soon, the Germans become interested in taking valuables from the Greeks. Dr. Iannis moves Corelli to the secret room under the trapdoor. They leave the door open unless they hear Germans, and Pelagia sits with Corelli and they listen to the Germans beat Dr. Iannis. Corelli sleeps for a day and then wakes in excruciating pain. Dr. Iannis sits with him and apologizes for stealing two mandolin strings to bind his broken ribs. They discuss Carlo's death and Dr. Iannis tells him that he needs to grow a beard and learn Greek. He suggests that when Corelli is better, they'll move him to Casa Nostra.

Corelli spikes a fever two days later. Pelagia watches for infection and Dr. Iannis assures her that he'll be okay, but he's privately sure that Corelli will die. Corelli spends six days feverish but finally, the fever breaks.

*When Dr. Iannis admits that he used mandolin strings in his surgery, it reinforces the novel's insistence that music and life are intimately connected: here, the mandolin very clearly allows Corelli to heal and to go on living. Asking Corelli to become effectively Greek for his safety foreshadows Corelli's later transformation to becoming even more Greek by choice.*



*It's easy to link Corelli's survival to the mandolin strings and to Pelagia's love, which again suggests that love and music can help a person live.*



## CHAPTER 60. THE BEGINNING OF HER SORROWS

The narrator notes that later, Pelagia would look on the time during which she nursed Corelli as the beginning of her sorrows. She's thin and weak and passes her extra food on to Corelli. Once Corelli can walk, Velisarios moves him to Casa Nostra. Pelagia sits in the trapdoor and crochets, Corelli's ring in her hands. Corelli begins to visit at night and they lie together and talk about the past and the future. They discuss Weber and the reasons young men join the Army; they decide that if they have a daughter they'll call her Lemoni and they'll call a son Carlo. Corelli promises to leave Antonia with Pelagia as a hostage and then creeps back out to Casa Nostra. Pelagia knows that Corelli has to leave, so Bunnios arranges for Corelli to leave Cephalonia.

*By deciding to name their children after Lemoni and Carlo, Corelli and Pelagia illustrate another way to expand one's family by honoring friends in this way. This will tell the world that Lemoni and Carlo are and were important people to Pelagia and Corelli. Corelli's decision to leave Antonia with Pelagia shows that he still views music as a connecting force between them, and he believes that it'll continue to connect them even when he's away.*



## CHAPTER 61. EVERY PARTING IS A FORETASTE OF DEATH

On Corelli's last day in Cephalonia, he stays at Dr. Iannis's. He looks enough like a Greek and speaks well enough that he'd likely fool a German. Corelli finds that when he speaks Greek, he feels fiercer. He sits at the table with Dr. Iannis and Pelagia and admits he feels guilty for leaving Carlo. Dr. Iannis encourages him to live on Carlo's behalf and enjoy music for the La Scala boys. He also says he'll give Corelli permission to marry Pelagia as long as he allows her to become a doctor. Corelli jokes that as a musician he'll need her income. Dr. Iannis tells Corelli that he's always welcome in his house.

*Corelli's assessment of his own Greek-ness again foreshadows his decision to apply for Greek citizenship later, as being Greek makes him feel more like a whole, good person. It allows him to distance himself from the atrocities that Italy committed during the war and lets him assume a new identity. Dr. Iannis's condition shows that he believes fully in what he's done for Pelagia by teaching her to think.*



The men embrace and Corelli promises to return after the Nazis are defeated. Pelagia is indignant that he's going to go back to the army and tells him to join the fire brigade or do something else useful. Dr. Iannis excuses himself and leaves Pelagia and Corelli alone. They hold each other and Corelli again promises to come back. They decide to read Carlo's papers when Corelli returns. Bunnios fetches them at eleven. He gives them instructions as to how to proceed to a hidden cove and before they leave, Pelagia gives Corelli the waistcoat. It fits perfectly.

The trek to the cove is long, cold, and quiet. They finally reach the cove and wait for the signal from the boat. Corelli remembers frolicking on the beach with the prostitutes and La Scala, and he feels as though he's nearly Greek now. When Bunnios receives the signal from the boat, Corelli kisses Pelagia and wades out to it. Pelagia sobs.

## CHAPTER 62. OF THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

The narrator says that there's little to report of the German occupation. It was grim; the Germans were barely human. They stole, raped, and let people starve. One soldier killed Psipsina, and others burned Drosoula with cigarettes. That year, neither the holy snakes nor the sacred lily appeared at all. When the Germans were ordered to withdraw in 1944, they destroyed everything before they left. Weber, however, quietly left his gramophone, his collection of Marlene Dietrich records, and an envelope outside Pelagia's door. The envelope contained a photo of Corelli and Weber at the beach, obviously drunk, with a prostitute in the background. Weber wrote on the back that he promised to always remember Pelagia.

## CHAPTER 63. LIBERATION

The celebrations begin as soon as the Germans leave, but ELAS immediately steps into the public eye and imposes their rule. They elect themselves to public office and deport people they don't like to concentration camps. They poison wells, tax the people, and create their own newspaper that runs stories about their heroism. ELAS murders British soldiers, Red Cross workers, and civilians alike and destroys factories and railways. They create a hundred thousand refugees and kidnap thousands of children. The narrator notes that there's both irony and tragedy in all of this: the Greek communists could've become the first freely elected communist government in the world if they'd done nothing, but their actions made communism the ideology of madmen.

*When the waistcoat fits Corelli perfectly, even though it wasn't made for him, it suggests that he's a more worthy recipient of the coat due to some outside force of nature. Deciding to wait on Carlo's writings allows Pelagia and Corelli to maintain a vision of Carlo in their minds that doesn't entirely match up with who he truly was, though in doing so, it means that they don't have to grieve and learn about Carlo's sexuality at the same time.*



*Corelli's memory of frolicking with the prostitutes reminds the reader that the occupation was full of beauty and friendship, despite being war. However, the current situation suggests that the beauty could never continue; the war would always destroy it.*



*The choice to follow through on his promise and leave the gramophone for Pelagia shows that Weber regrets what he did and does value his friendships with La Scala and with Pelagia. Because the idyll depicted in the photo is so different from the current horror, however, it reinforces the novel's assertion that beauty and wonder during times of war will always be compromised when the war finally asserts itself.*



*The narrator's comment about the irony of communism's fate in Greece reminds the reader once again that regardless of one's political leanings, it's almost always terrible when a political group seizes power like this and commits such heinous crimes. Much of what they do mirrors what Hitler and Mussolini did, which continues the novel's project of illustrating how these dictators all resemble each other in a number of ways.*



Dr. Iannis, Kokolios, and Stamatis are all taken away, and Pelagia considers committing suicide. She recalls saying that she'd always hate the Nazis, and wonders if she actually needs to hate the Greeks. The narrator mentions that Bunnios, a man who openly professed his love for the Greek people, was invited to a party by Greek communists and shot. Fortunately, Pelagia has Drosoula. Drosoula doesn't hold Pelagia's love for Corelli against her and treats her like a daughter.

Drosoula is out when Mandras returns. He doesn't knock and comes upon Pelagia finishing her **bedcover**, which she decided to make for her bed with Corelli after he left. After she made that decision, she didn't have to rip it out again. She doesn't recognize Mandras; he's fat and ugly. Mandras doesn't recognize Pelagia either as she's thin and already going gray. They stare at each other and Mandras feels his hatred slipping away. He asks for a kiss, grabs Pelagia's wrists, and asks after Dr. Iannis. When she explains that the communists took him, he scoffs that the doctor must've deserved it. She realizes he's one of them.

Mandras leans casually against the door to intimidate Pelagia. He asks when they're getting married and notices her tremble. Pelagia tells him that they're not getting married. Mandras rants that he's come home to a "faded slut" and spouts communist ideas of marriage. He throws his packet of letters to her and commands her to read her final letter, threatening to hit her if she refuses. Pelagia finds a different letter and starts to read, but he stops her. She finds the last one and starts to make up something happy. Mandras snatches the letter, reads it to her, and accuses her of being a fascist traitor.

Pelagia stands and tells Mandras to let her out, but he strikes her, flings her onto the bed, and attempts to rape her. Mandras's schooling in communism has taught him that everything, from property to bodies, are rightfully his. Pelagia fights him until the derringer falls out of her apron pocket. She shoots him in the collarbone just as Drosoula enters the kitchen. She pushes into the bedroom and sees Mandras, but runs to Pelagia. She becomes furious while Mandras feels ready to weep. Drosoula disowns Mandras and he slowly leaves the house. He looks around and remembers how things once were.

Mandras remembers that he used to love the sea. He stands at the shore, kicks off his boots, and carefully undresses. He remembers how happy he was as a fisherman and remembers kissing Pelagia. He remembers Kosmas, Nionios, and Krystal and calls for them as he wades into the sea. When the fisherman finds Mandras's body later, he sees three dolphins nudging it towards shore.

*The strength and community that Pelagia finds with Drosoula again makes the case that chosen family can be far more powerful than one's own flesh and blood. Now that Pelagia is separated from Dr. Iannis, she will be tested in terms of whether or not she has the skills to truly function in the world as an educated woman.*



*Pelagia's ability to finish her bedcover now that it's intended for her bed with Corelli suggests again that her relationship with Mandras was doomed from the start, while her relationship with Corelli is far more respectful and suitable for her. Everything Mandras does shows that he believes he's better than Pelagia and is now an expert in intimidating people, and she recognizes that he's dangerous exactly because he thinks he's powerful.*



*Pelagia's choice to tell Mandras that they're not getting married suggests that she doesn't have much to lose by standing up to him, and it also implies that she recognizes his power is tenuous at best. The fact that Mandras did learn to read thanks to ELAS suggests that they followed through on some of their promises, but only for people like Mandras who pledged undying loyalty to them.*



*Drosoula's decision to disown Mandras again shows that chosen family is more meaningful than flesh and blood, especially when one's flesh and blood learns to prioritize political theories over their friends and family. The fact that Mandras is so reduced by Drosoula's reprimand and the non-fatal gunshot shows that he recognizes his power isn't what he thought it was.*



*Because Mandras refused to recognize others' humanity, he gave up his own as well. By committing suicide, he frees himself from having to think about it again. His dolphins, however, show that there is the possibility of redemption from his friends.*



## CHAPTER 64. ANTONIA

Drosoula and Pelagia aren't surprised when they find a baby girl on their doorstep. She's calm and smiles all the time, and Pelagia names her Antonia after Corelli's mandolin. Drosoula and Pelagia find purpose in caring for Antonia, who never asks about a father. Dr. Iannis returns after two years in a concentration camp. He kisses Antonia before going to bed. He spends the rest of his life dreaming of forced marches and watches Stamatis and Kokolios dying in each other's arms again and again. He plays with Antonia and helps Pelagia act as a doctor. Pelagia attempts to get him to work on his History, but he can only write one paragraph that the Greeks have only themselves to blame.

Pelagia rediscovers Carlo's papers when she fetches the History out of the trapdoor and reads them in an evening. She understands that he'd been equally intent on ending his life *and* saving Corelli's, and Pelagia understands that she'd do the same for Antonia. Antonia grows up tall, slender, and indifferent to acting ladylike. Pelagia understands that in their house run by women, she has only herself to blame for Antonia's wildness. The entire village finds the family eccentric and even starts rumors that Drosoula and Pelagia are witches. They continue to come to Pelagia for medical attention until Pelagia is unable to bribe a public health official to let her practice without a license.

Fortunately, a depressed Canadian poet arrives and rents Drosoula's old house for nearly ten times what she'd planned to ask. He stays for three years until 1953 and would've stayed longer if he hadn't realized that the sunshine was hurting his depressing poetry. During his stay, Pelagia, Drosoula, Antonia, and Dr. Iannis do well for themselves. Their only issue is that they adopt a cat that they call Psipsina, which also happens to be Antonia's nickname.

Pelagia believes that Corelli is surely dead and, in 1946, learns that ghosts are real. Around the anniversary of the massacres she sees Corelli at the far end of her courtyard. She quickly puts the infant Antonia down and runs to meet him, but he disappears. Pelagia calls for him but can't find him. The next day, there's a red rose on Carlo's grave. She sees the ghost every year at about the same time and every year, there's a rose on Carlo's grave. She understands that Corelli is following through on his promise to return to her from the afterlife.

*The fact that Antonia is adopted again reinforces the novel's assertion that chosen family can be more meaningful than blood family. It also allows Pelagia and Drosoula a way to give back and help their shattered community. When Dr. Iannis also accepts Antonia without question and is happy to be her grandfather, it indicates that Antonia's love and happiness is powerful enough to make life more bearable for Dr. Iannis.*



*When the village begins to call Pelagia and Drosoula witches, Pelagia discovers that she's still living in a man's world: it was okay for Dr. Iannis, a man, to be a doctor, but as a woman, Pelagia will be punished for stepping outside of what she was supposed to do with her life. Because Pelagia doesn't say much about doing anything to curb Antonia's wildness, it implies that she doesn't necessarily see much wrong with allowing her to behave in an unladylike fashion—or, in a way that's more masculine.*



*This period in the family's life suggests that they manage to discover the beauty even in these hard times, just as they did during the war. This implies that the necessity of finding beauty isn't something unique to wartime; it's something that must happen at all times.*



*When Pelagia is able to convince herself that Corelli is still following through, just in a different way than she expected, it again shows that families don't have to form in conventional ways. Rather, Pelagia can feel comforted and not alone because Corelli is able to be there for her in some way, even if it's just a figment of her imagination.*



## CHAPTER 65. 1953

Pelagia stops taking pride in being Greek. She sees Drosoula mistreated for being a widow and herself scorned as a witch for trying to heal. She pretends that she's Italian and raises Antonia to speak Italian. Right after the civil war, Pelagia buys a radio that only picks up Italian stations and listens to it every chance she gets. She often waits to hear the songs that La Scala used to sing. One afternoon she feels she catches the final bars of "Pelagia's March," but reasons that it's impossible since Corelli is dead.

One morning, Pelagia is in awe when she finds the water at the top of the well, though it quickly disappears. Dr. Iannis discovers his screwdriver is suddenly magnetic, and Antonia finds hedgehogs, owls, and other animals in plain sight outside. Dogs bay, things inexplicably fall over, and Drosoula feels ill. Antonia also suffers a headache but laughs as the cat races around. Antonia bursts into tears, cries that she has to get out, and runs outside. Suddenly, the earth starts to plunge and shake. Dr. Iannis yells for Pelagia and Drosoula to get out and they struggle for the door. They reach the door as the roof caves in.

Drosoula and Pelagia watch the olive tree split in half and boulders start to roll down the hill. Everything falls silent. The priest runs through the streets cursing God, but another aftershock strikes. Finally, Drosoula, Pelagia, and Antonia stand outside and look at what's left of the house. Dr. Iannis is crushed inside.

## CHAPTER 66. RESCUE

The British arrive first to provide relief and Italy soon sends firemen. The Americans send bulldozers and the Brits toil for days in the heat, blowing up unsafe buildings and scaring the islanders. Helicopter crews drop supplies for remote villages. Velisarios emerges as a leader. Now 42, he feels as though the earthquake has given him eternal stamina. He helps clear rubble from houses and wells and shuts down silly rumors. He coaxes Pelagia out to set bones and puts Drosoula in charge of tending children so their parents can help.

*Pelagia's decision to act like an Italian shows her attempting to lean on anything that will allow her to escape from the horrors of the Greek Civil War. Remember that in much of Dr. Iannis's history he talks only about the invaders of the Greek islands. This suggests that Pelagia was raised believing her own people weren't going to turn on her.*



*The lead-up to the earthquake suggests that people shouldn't necessarily trust strange happenings to be benign; the possibility of easy water or seeing elusive wild animals is likely a clue that something horrible is about to happen. When Dr. Iannis yells for Drosoula and Pelagia to get out of the house and seems to not save himself, it shows that his final act is to make sure that his family will go on to be able to care for each other.*



*The earthquake throws the war into perspective: while humans can certainly fight for power, the earth will always be able to put them in their place by displaying its own capacity to bring death and destruction.*



*For Velisarios, the earthquake makes him understand that it's necessary to give people someone to rally around so they don't abandon themselves to grief or panic. In doing so, he mimics Metaxas (remember the narrator said that Metaxas thought of himself as a doctor for Greece), though because Velisarios works on a smaller scale, he does no harm.*



The earthquake's aftershocks continue for three months. The villagers live in tents that wash away with every storm and in three years, the Grecian villages are all rebuilt. Pelagia's is moved down the hill, forcing her to abandon her childhood home and the trapdoor. One afternoon, an Italian fireman inspects the house and notices a fissure in the earth. He looks down and sees Carlo's skeleton. Moments after the fireman begins to rebury Carlo, the earth moves again and closes the fissure.

*When the fireman decides to rebury Carlo, it shows that he understands that Carlo is a man who deserves to be treated with respect, even in death. Allowing the reader to glimpse Carlo also acts as a reminder that the dead can still influence the living and be a part of living families if they continue to remember them.*



## CHAPTER 67. PELAGIA'S LAMENT

Pelagia remembers Dr. Iannis. She remembers how he'd put her to sleep as a child and then, during the day, they'd discuss poetry and fight on purpose. He'd tell stories about the Turks and faraway lands. Now, Pelagia sits in her childhood home and sees only ghosts. She thinks her home is nothing but sadness and life is a prison. She spends all her time at the house thinking that her life could've been different had Corelli lived. Pelagia mourns her father's death and remembers Velisarios digging him out. In that moment, she'd realized that Dr. Iannis was the only man who'd loved her to the end.

*Pelagia's memories of fighting on purpose with Dr. Iannis reinforces the novel's assertion that for the Greeks, arguing about things is one of the main ways they build community, family, and relationships. Pelagia's hopelessness comes from the fact that though she's been taught to think, she hasn't learned how to truly exist on her own and lead. This then becomes her next quest.*



## CHAPTER 68. THE RESURRECTION OF THE HISTORY

Drosoula, Pelagia, and Antonia become even closer, but Pelagia wallows in guilt and remorse. She fixates on the fact that while Dr. Iannis tried to save them, she only thought about saving herself. She spends all of her time sitting at his grave with a candle. One day, Drosoula tells Antonia about Corelli and says that Dr. Iannis's death tipped her over the edge. They conspire to bring Pelagia to her senses.

*Pelagia's sense of loss regarding her life and her family suggests that she's still adjusting to the fact that she no longer has any blood family; she doesn't necessarily see that Drosoula and Antonia could be enough to get her through if only she'd let them help.*



At breakfast the next morning, Drosoula and Antonia brightly discuss that they had dreams about Dr. Iannis the night before. They tell a distraught Pelagia that he told both of them that he wants her to write his History of Cephalonia, and Antonia asks her if she's going to. Pelagia goes to the cemetery and realizes that she can keep his memory alive by finishing his history. She nearly becomes her father as she works; she neglects housework and chews on his pipe. As she writes, she discovers that she's almost more passionate than he was.

*Drosoula and Antonia's trick, as well as Pelagia's assessment of the power of writing the History, shows that they all understand that the History is a valuable document because it tells the story of small people who got caught up in the war. It's a personal account and by adding her own touches to Dr. Iannis's history, Pelagia will be able to remember her father and make the story more truthful by adding more perspectives.*



Pelagia writes letters to museums and libraries around the world, asking for information. Many of them write back and send her all sorts of information. Finally, she finishes the History in 1961, though nobody will publish it. Pelagia flips through and realizes that she discovered that she's Marxist, but believes that capitalism is most appropriate for dealing with problems. Drosoula won't listen, so Pelagia sits up late with teenage Antonia and they discuss politics and philosophy.

*By engaging in these political and philosophical conversations with Antonia, Pelagia continues Dr. Iannis's work of teaching daughters to think. In this way, Pelagia ensures that Antonia will also be able to go out in life and break molds, though with the hope that her world will be better than Pelagia's.*



Pelagia torments Antonia and repeatedly tells her that when Antonia is old, she'll see that her mother is right. Antonia declares that she'll die young so she never has to get old. At seventeen, Antonia announces she's a communist and is getting married.

*Now that Pelagia is aging, she recognizes that one's political beliefs change over time and are malleable. This casts youth as a whole as an idealistic and somewhat misguided time.*



## CHAPTER 69. BEAN BY BEAN THE SACK FILLS

Pelagia begins receiving postcards in the mail from all over the world. They're written in Greek and she wonders if Dr. Iannis's soul is traveling or if they're from Corelli, but reasons they're both dead. She keeps them anyway. Antonia teases Pelagia about a secret boyfriend to distract from her own romance. While working at a café Antonia met Alexi, a radical lawyer. They got engaged quickly. Pelagia sees that Alexi will become conservative later in life, but objects mostly to the age difference: Alexi is 32. Nonetheless, their wedding is delightful. Alexi's speech praises Pelagia and he asks her permission to buy a house in her village, which earns him a place in her heart.

*Again, Pelagia's assessment of Alexi's future political leanings shows clearly that she recognizes that political beliefs themselves aren't all that important when it comes to relationships, as the beliefs will inevitably change over time. Rather, what's more important is Alexi's desire to be kind and respectful to Pelagia, as he understands that she'll be able to make life better for him than politics can.*



Pelagia waits for a grandchild while Drosoula opens a taverna in her old home. Cephalonia begins to attract tourists from Italy and Germany, and Drosoula does so much business in the summer she doesn't have to work in the winter. Lemoni helps serve and Pelagia pretends to help, but actually just practices her Italian. The service is impossibly slow but the tourists love Drosoula for her preposterous stories.

*The new influx of German and Italian tourists returns the island to a state that resembles the positive aspects of how things were during the occupation, which reinforces Dr. Iannis's assertion that history will repeat itself in a number of different ways.*



Eventually, Pelagia forgives Antonia for smoking and wearing pants. In 1967 and 1973, Pelagia lives briefly with Antonia when officials lock up Alexi for no reason. She even understands Antonia's desire to participate in feminist demonstrations and feels as though it's partly her fault, as she taught Antonia to think. However, Pelagia resents Antonia for not having a baby. Drosoula dies in her rocking chair in 1972 and Pelagia takes over the taverna.

*The fact that Pelagia shakes her head at Antonia's interest in feminism and understands her participation suggests that Pelagia continues to recognize that by teaching Antonia to think, she raised a daughter who will naturally think differently from her. Again, she doesn't see this as a bad thing since she knows Antonia will eventually change.*



Alexi becomes a socialist about this time, though he anxiously realizes that his success has turned him into the type of bourgeois person he publically professes to hate. At age 34, Antonia finally gives in and allows herself to become pregnant. She gives birth to a little boy. Pelagia begins to call him Iannis and speaks to him only in Italian. Alexi decides he needs something to pass on to his son, so he builds vacation rentals and updates Drosoula's tavern for Pelagia.

*Alexi's decision to build vacation rentals so he has something to pass on to Iannis is proof that Pelagia was right and he is becoming more conservative in his middle age, given that communism would not have supported that kind of wealth.*



## CHAPTER 70. EXCAVATION

By the time Iannis is five, he can say "hello" and "isn't he adorable?" in six languages because he spends so much time with Pelagia at the taverna. Alexi and Antonia, meanwhile, invest in building more apartments and opening souvenir shops in a number of towns. Iannis secretly keeps score of how many beautiful foreign women have kissed him. When Iannis is ten, Pelagia hires a bouzouki player named Spiridon. He plays with such spirit that even the stony-faced Germans dance. Both Pelagia and Iannis worship Spiridon; he reminds Pelagia of Corelli.

Secretly, Iannis wants to become one of the many young Greek men who entertain foreign girls and have lots of sex. He yearns for sexual maturity and notices that women love Spiridon, so one day he asks if Spiridon will teach him to play the bouzouki. Spiridon suggests that Iannis learn the mandolin, as Iannis isn't big enough to play the bouzouki. Both Antonia and Alexi agree to buy Iannis a mandolin in Athens or Naples when they're there next, but they promptly forget. Pelagia suggests that they dig up Corelli's old mandolin.

Alexi refuses to send construction workers to the old house, so Iannis pesters Spiridon to help him. They arrive at the site and look at the rusted communal oven, the broken stones, and the deserted village. Iannis explains that he comes here when he's angry or unhappy, and Spiridon points at the ancient olive tree. The two swing on a branch and then get to work in the rubble. Spiridon finds a used condom and attempts to sidestep a conversation about sex with Iannis. Over the next two days they clear a space over the trapdoor and Iannis starts a pile of treasures, including a photo of two "funny drunks" and a complete photo album.

Spiridon attempts to open the trapdoor but it won't budge. He realizes he'll need a crowbar when Velisarios, now 78, catches them. Iannis tells Velisarios what they're doing and notices that the old man has a red rose with him. Velisarios puts the rose by the olive tree and tells Iannis that under it is buried a huge Italian man. Iannis is exhilarated and secretly wants to dig up the skeleton, but Velisarios insists that Carlo deserves his rest. Spiridon expresses doubt that Velisarios can open the trapdoor, but Velisarios lifts it easily and leaves.

*Spiridon's resemblance to Corelli again proves Dr. Iannis's assertion that history very nearly repeats itself, as it allows her to relive parts of her youth. Iannis's choice to keep track of his kisses suggests that he already understands the power of making connections with people; in this case, he gets tipped for it.*



*Antonia and Alexi's treatment of their son only makes the novel's assertion that chosen family is more reliable than blood family seem more true, as Pelagia—who isn't related to Iannis by blood—is the only one who is truly willing to help him obtain a mandolin. The connection between relationships and music is also reinforced here when Iannis understands that music is a way to impress girls.*



*When Iannis and Spiridon swing in the olive tree, they do just what Mandras did decades ago. This continues to bring the story back around to its beginning, as does the pile of treasures. When Iannis takes these treasures back to Pelagia, she'll be able to bring the occupation to life for him and teach him more about his history, while also revisiting that time for herself.*



*The revelation that Velisarios brings the roses every year begins to call the existence of Corelli's ghost into question as well, as Pelagia seems to believe that the ghost and the rose are part of the same supernatural being. Velisarios's insistence on continuing to honor Carlo shows just how close the two men became and offers another look at a type of chosen family.*



Everything inside is in perfect condition. Spiridon and Iannis find a German gramophone, a big crocheted **bedcover**, Italian writing, a rifle, and a beautiful mandolin missing a few strings. Spiridon tells Iannis that the mandolin is extremely valuable, but Iannis isn't paying attention. He waves around Mandras's rifle and pulls the trigger. Iannis is so surprised and scared when the gun goes off and kicks back into his forehead, he bursts into tears.

*Iannis's experience with Mandras's rifle again makes it very clear that weapons and explosions are never benign or simply fun: they have the power to hurt people and scare them, just as the mine hurt so many villagers and Italian soldiers instead of providing simple entertainment.*



## CHAPTER 71. ANTONIA SINGS AGAIN

Alexi adds the rifle to his collection and Iannis is shocked when Pelagia weeps at the sight of the mandolin. She cries over every item and then repeats the process, again and again. She plays the Marlene Dietrich records and Iannis tries to comfort her. He patiently looks on as she flips through the photo album pointing out Weber, Mandras, Carlo, Kokolios and Stamatis, and Corelli. Iannis is struck by the realization that the present captured in those photos is gone, and realizes that someday, he'll die.

*For Pelagia, discovering these items allows her to connect to her past and remember the good times. Iannis's realization that he'll die shows that the past is a valuable tool, as it reminds individuals of their mortality and encourages them to keep living. By playing the mandolin, Iannis will be able to keep Corelli's memory alive for Pelagia.*



Eventually, Pelagia recovers and buys Iannis mandolin strings. Spiridon cleans the mandolin and begins teaching Iannis to play. Iannis is hooked immediately and cares for the mandolin as though it's the most precious thing he'll ever own. By the time he's thirteen, Iannis has mostly given up on trying to impress girls, who seem more like aliens than people.

*Iannis's shift away from trying to use the mandolin to achieve his goals in turn encourages him to use the mandolin to connect with himself and leads him towards coming of age.*



## CHAPTER 72. AN UNEXPECTED LESSON

At age 14 in October of 1993, Iannis goes up to the old house to play his mandolin in private. He's startled when an old man with a strange accent interrupts his practice to tell him he's doing something wrong. The man repositions Iannis's fingers and says that he's been a professional mandolinist for most of his life. Iannis asks the man to play and offers him the mandolin. Iannis listens in disbelief as the man plays but suddenly, the man stops short and says that the mandolin is his Antonia. Corelli realizes that Iannis's grandmother is Pelagia.

*When Corelli and Iannis meet each other and are able to make the connection to Pelagia because of the mandolin, it stands as a final example of the ways in which music can bring people together and help them form relationships. Corelli's appearance also makes it clear that whatever ghost Pelagia saw wasn't real; rather, it's something she let herself believe to help herself feel better.*



Corelli asks if the mandolin had missing strings and tells Iannis that the strings are in his ribs. He says too that the buried skeleton is Carlo, who saved him from a firing squad. Iannis is deeply impressed. Corelli asks after Pelagia and Iannis's grandfather, which Iannis finds confusing. He explains he has no grandfather. As Corelli and Iannis head down the hill together, Iannis falters and asks if Corelli is the ghost.

*The way that Corelli speaks to Iannis suggests that his love for children hasn't at all diminished over the years; he's still as enchanted by them as he always was. By playing to Iannis's childishness, Corelli is able to bring the past to life for him and help him learn about Pelagia in a new way.*



## CHAPTER 73. RESTITUTION

Pelagia shrieks and curses at Corelli as he dodges frying pans and her broomstick. He insists that he returned for her in 1946, but when he saw her with a baby he figured she was married. He came back every year but was too bitter to say anything. She hurls insults at him until he asks if they can go for a walk. Two hours later, they sit at the beach. Corelli explains the postcards written in Greek; he was so ashamed after the war that he moved to Athens and is now a Greek citizen. Pelagia admits that she was so ashamed of being Greek that she wishes she were Italian.

Corelli says he wrote three concertos and "Pelagia's March" is the main theme of one of them. They discuss the earthquake; Corelli had joined the Italian fire brigade and volunteered for the relief effort. Neither of them got married and Pelagia laments that she's old and ugly now. She reminds Corelli that Antonia could've been the product of rape and tells him about shooting Mandras. Corelli shows Pelagia the handkerchief he used to wipe the blood off her face when they were looking for snails.

They head back to the taverna and Pelagia gives Carlo's papers to Corelli to read. Corelli says he wishes that he hadn't read them and feels bad for how the boys used to make Carlo visit the brothel. He notes that he tracked down Weber, now a pastor, but Weber was a pathetic mess. Pelagia admits that she still has trouble being nice to Germans, and they both discuss that the world is apologizing for past crimes. Pelagia ignores Corelli's personal apology and turns the conversation to Iannis and music. Corelli says he knows Spiridon because Spiridon is somewhat famous.

Corelli asks if he can buy the old house and fix it up. Pelagia isn't sure if she even owns the land and sidesteps giving him permission. She tells him that Lemoni is now a grandmother and very fat, but she still talks about Corelli and the **mine**. Corelli promises to return the next day with a gift and leaves Pelagia with a Walkman and a cassette. Later, Pelagia figures out how to use it and spends the entire night listening to "Pelagia's March" over and over again. She listens to the entire occupation in musical form and tells Iannis that Corelli is going to rebuild the old house.

*When Corelli chose to move to Athens and become a Greek citizen, it was a way for him to distance himself from what the Italians did during the war. This is one way for him to try to atone for his role in the atrocities and a way for him to also feel more human. By aligning himself with the people who were his true friends during the war, he's able to find some peace.*



*The comment about "Pelagia's March" suggests that it's very possible that Pelagia did hear it on the radio at some point. The realization that Corelli didn't get married either suggests that without Pelagia, his other dreams of having children didn't come true and he wasn't able to have the family he desired.*



*Even if Carlo's story makes Corelli uncomfortable, it still stands as one of the more truthful accounts of what it was like to be a soldier in the war during that time. Essentially, it still serves its purpose by adding nuance and greater understanding to the narrative of the war. Corelli's mention of Weber suggests that unlike Mandras, Weber is trying to atone for what he did in life.*



*Telling Iannis that Corelli is going to buy the old house suggests that Pelagia's introduction to the final concerto has allowed her to connect to Corelli in such a way as to look past the years he didn't come back for her. Instead, she's able to understand that he did love her and did what he could to show her, by putting that music out into the world.*



The next day, Corelli arrives at the taverna with a goat. He reminds Pelagia that he promised her a goat after hers was stolen and tells her that he got this one from Alekos on Mt. Aenos. Pelagia warms to the goat and agrees to keep it. The next day, he shows up with a rented motorcycle. Pelagia refuses to ride it but tries not to smile when she notices he's wearing the waistcoat she made. Finally, she agrees to ride with him. He's just as bad a driver as he was in his youth. A gray moped with three girls, all in skimpy white dresses, passes them. Corelli feels a melody starting in his heart as he watches the beautiful young girls zoom by.

*The fact that Alekos is still alive suggests that there's still an outside observer who will be able to look down on Greece and see that it's beautiful from afar. By recreating an experience from their past that's also connected to music, Corelli and Pelagia are able to forgive each other for the years apart and begin to move forward with their relationship from where they left off.*





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