

The Drowned World



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J. G. BALLARD

Ballard's father was a chemist at a British textile firm who became the managing director of the firm's subsidiaries in Shanghai—so Ballard was born and raised in Shanghai. In 1943, Ballard and his family were interned in the Lunghua Civilian Assembly Center, an internment camp for Allied civilians. He spent the remainder of the war there, and his experience in the camp inspired his most famous novel, *Empire of the Sun*. After the war, Ballard moved to England with his mother and his sister. He began studying medicine at King's College in 1949 with the intention of becoming a psychiatrist. However, while at school, Ballard wrote a great deal of avant-garde fiction, some of which was published in university magazines and newspapers. He soon abandoned his medical studies, completed a year at Queen Mary College to study literature, and after leaving the program, joined the Royal Air Force. He trained in Canada, where he was introduced to American science fiction. After marrying his wife in 1955 and returning to England, he published several short stories in the magazine *New Worlds*. He published his first novel, *The Wind from Nowhere*, in 1960 after deciding to write fulltime. He published *The Drowned World* next, in 1962, which established him as a prominent figure in New Wave science fiction. His wife died suddenly in 1964, and Ballard raised their three children alone after her death. Ballard continued to write until his death from prostate cancer in 2009.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The term "New Wave" was coined in the early 1960s to describe science fiction writers like Ballard. Many of them were born around the time of World War II and as they came of age they rejected the linear and formulaic plotlines of Golden Age science fiction. Many New Wave science fiction writers were inspired by the art movements of the '50s and '60s (Ballard in particular was involved in the Pop Art movement and even exhibited some collages of his own) and wanted to see the same kind of experimentation taking place in literature. It's also worth noting that *The Drowned World* was published the same year as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which was an important game changer in the way that people and governments thought about climate change and the environment. *Silent Spring*, however, focuses on actual, recorded, manmade environmental destruction caused by pesticides, whereas in Ballard's book climate change seems not to have been brought about by human activity. Furthermore, the book was written and published at about the same time as the Cuban missile crisis

was unfolding, not long after the world witnessed the effects of the first nuclear bombs, so it's reasonable to assume that the threat of global nuclear catastrophe may have influenced Ballard's vision of a future in which solar radiation has ravaged human civilization.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Other notable New Wave figures were the editor Michael Moorcock (of the magazine *New Worlds*) and the author Brian Aldiss (*Hothouse*, *Greybeard*). Ballard wrote about the world's destruction from several angles throughout his life. While environmental catastrophe in *The Drowned World* is *not* manmade, in his novel *The Burning World* (which was later expanded and republished as *The Drought*), industrial waste runoff causes an atmospheric condition that prevents rain from falling, leading to a worldwide scarcity of water. More recently, Nathaniel Rich's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013) imagines a future in which natural disasters brought about by climate change threaten to destroy New York City.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Drowned World
- **When Written:** 1962
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** 1962
- **Literary Period:** New Wave
- **Genre:** Dystopian fiction; Science fiction
- **Setting:** London, 2145
- **Climax:** Kerans destroys Strangeman's dam, re-flooding London
- **Antagonist:** Strangeman; nature
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

A Musical Influence. J.G. Ballard's work has inspired a number of musicians. *The Drowned World* inspired Madonna's song "Drowned World," while the songwriters for The Buggles's hit song "Video Killed the Radio Star" credit Ballard's short story "The Sound-Sweep."

"Terrifyingly Ordinary." Neil Gaiman met Ballard at a party in 1985 after spending his entire life reading and loving his work. However, he was shocked by how very ordinary Ballard was, a sentiment echoed by others who knew or interviewed him.



PLOT SUMMARY

Dr. Kerans stands on the balcony of the Ritz Hotel and watches the sun, which is an ellipse, rise. It's already hot and he's spent the morning dawdling instead of working. He wonders if he should contact his commander, Colonel Riggs, but remembers that his radio's battery is dead. Finally, Kerans hears Riggs approaching. He dresses and runs down to the dock where Riggs invites himself up for a drink. As they drink, Riggs tells Kerans that the unit has received a command to move north to Camp Byrd permanently. Kerans is shocked. Riggs asks for help convincing Beatrice to leave the city and asks Kerans how he's been sleeping. Kerans says he slept fine.

As Kerans and Riggs float through the lagoons that cover the city, Kerans watches the giant iguanas in the windows. Kerans is uninterested in the contents or the history of the cities. His fellow biologist, Dr. Bodkin, is old enough to remember living in the cities. Seventy years before the present, solar storms damaged the earth's atmosphere, leaving it vulnerable to solar radiation. The planet warmed rapidly, and plants and animals mutated due to the radiation. Bodies of water expanded as the ice caps and glaciers melted, entirely altering the landscape of the globe. Now, people only inhabit the Arctic and Antarctic circles. Kerans and Riggs take the elevator up to Beatrice's top floor apartment, where she's lounging by the pool. She brushes off Riggs and Kerans's attempts to convince her to leave. When Riggs leaves, Kerans remains for the afternoon. He studies paintings by Delvaux and Max Ernst and tells Beatrice that if they stay, they stay for good.

Later, Kerans returns to the base and sneaks into the armory. He studies the weapons and explosive gas but steals only a **broken compass**. He leaves the armory for the sick bay, where Dr. Bodkin and the bedridden Lieutenant Hardman are in a private room. Bodkin is running a heater and Hardman is listening to drumming on a set of headphones. Finally, Bodkin stops the record player and turns the heater off. He tells Hardman how to operate a set of alarm clocks and Hardman insists that he has begun dreaming even when he's awake. Kerans lets slip that they're leaving in three days, which makes him feel like he's losing control of his motives. Kerans and Bodkin paddle to the testing station. In their lab, the doctors sit and Bodkin explains his theory of neuronics to Kerans: that the entire world, humans included, are following a backwards journey, and the terrifying dreams that many are now experiencing are actually ancient biological memories that mean a person is moving backwards in evolutionary time. Kerans thinks it's a valid theory. He pulls out the compass and thinks about the idea of "south."

Lieutenant Hardman disappears the next day. Kerans acts as though he's going to leave with Riggs, though he hasn't fully decided what he'll do. He goes to see Beatrice first thing and finds her in her very hot apartment. He fixes her air conditioner

and tries to make her pour her drink out, but she insists she needs the drink after dreaming. Riggs's helicopter arrives and signals to Kerans that Hardman escaped. Kerans boards the helicopter and joins the search team, and eventually tells Daley, the pilot, that they should look south. Riggs agrees, and Kerans spots footprints leading to an apartment building in a southern lagoon. The men search the building, where Kerans stumbles upon Hardman. Hardman jumps out the window and tries to move his makeshift raft back into the water and seems unaware that he's surrounded. When he finally realizes he is surrounded, he shoots Wilson, one of his orderlies. The group follows Hardman to a town square above the water level, where Riggs allows Hardman to escape south.

That night, Kerans has his first dream: the sun makes a drumming sound, and the lagoon is filled with snakes and eels. Giant lizards roar at the sun, and Kerans feels like he's part of the lagoon. When he wakes, he finds Bodkin in the testing station gallery. Bodkin explains that about half the men experience the dreams. Riggs arrives to discuss departure plans, and when he leaves, Kerans and Bodkin discuss staying. That night, Kerans and Bodkin sink their testing station into the water and go to Beatrice's apartment. The next morning, Riggs arrives in the helicopter and tries to talk to them, but they don't listen. Riggs and the crew leave later that day, and Kerans realizes that he, Bodkin, and Beatrice will drift apart as their dreams consume their minds.

Six weeks later, Kerans wakes to see a man speeding around in a white hydroplane. Kerans gets in his catamaran and paddles closer. He climbs on top of a building and watches as three boats follow the hydroplane, along with several thousand alligators. Kerans tries to go back to his catamaran, but finds that the alligators destroyed it. He struggles on foot to Beatrice's apartment, where the two watch from her windows as Bodkin flags down the visitors. Kerans insists they have nothing to fear from these looters and goes to wave down the hydroplane.

Strangeman hosts Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice on his ship. He's perplexed that they want to stay in London and immerse themselves in their dreams. Kerans notices that Strangeman is albino, while his entire crew is black. Strangeman introduces them to the Admiral, his second-in-command, and offers to show them his treasure ship. The storerooms are filled with art and statuary. Kerans says that the treasures are like bones, and Strangeman rudely sends his guests away. Over the next two weeks, Kerans sees Strangeman often. Bodkin spends his time paddling the waterways looking for places he remembers from childhood, and Strangeman becomes convinced that he knows where there's hidden treasure. Strangeman hosts a diving party in the hopes of finding this treasure. He sends crewmembers down to the submerged **planetarium**, and then sends Kerans down. Kerans is entranced by the womb-like auditorium and the "stars" in the dome created by light shining through holes,

but passes out when his air supply is cut off. He wakes on the deck, where Strangeman insists that Kerans tried to commit suicide.

A while later, Strangeman invites everyone to a party where there will be a surprise, and insists that it'll stop Kerans's "crazy time machine" (referring to the dreams). On the deck, Strangeman has a lavishly set table, in front of a Renaissance painting of Esther and King Xerxes. Kerans assumes that Strangeman intends for Beatrice to recognize herself in Esther. After dinner, Kerans asks about the surprise and Strangeman insists he's missing it. Kerans notices that the water level is going down: Strangeman has dammed the lagoon and is pumping the water out. Kerans and Beatrice are horrified, but Bodkin is entranced. When the water is gone, Strangeman's crew sets off looting and Kerans, Beatrice, and Bodkin walk the streets. They find the planetarium, which Kerans thinks looks like a sewer now that the water is gone. Kerans remains close to Strangeman for the next few days as he senses that Strangeman is becoming more dangerous. Bodkin tells Kerans to leave with Beatrice and soon disappears, but Kerans thinks he himself can't leave.

Strangeman's crew has little success finding treasures in London. One night, Strangeman tells Kerans that his crew thinks he' (Strangeman) is dead because he's albino. Big Caesar sings for Kerans, but Strangeman interrupts him when he sees that Dr. Bodkin is trying to blow up the dam. Strangeman's crew chases after Bodkin, throws the bombs into the neighboring lagoon, and shoots Bodkin, killing him. When they return to Kerans and Beatrice, the crew seizes Kerans.

Strangeman's crew ties Kerans to a throne and tortures him for two nights. They leave him in the sun during the day and he barely survives. On the third night, they put the throne in a cart and wildly parade Kerans around the city. The cart rolls out of control and dumps Kerans facedown in the street. Sure that Kerans is dead, Strangeman and the crew leave. Kerans frees himself from the throne and manages to escape. Kerans hides in a building for a day before returning to the Ritz. The suite is destroyed, but Strangeman's men didn't find Kerans's gun in the safe. That night, Kerans sneaks onto Strangeman's ship and finds Beatrice in Strangeman's private chambers. Beatrice tries to make Kerans leave without her, but Big Caesar interrupts their fight. Kerans shoots him, and pulls Beatrice down the gangway and off the ship. They try to hide, but realize that Strangeman has them cornered. As Kerans is about to give himself up, Colonel Riggs and the army suddenly appear with machine guns.

Kerans speaks with Riggs the next day. Riggs insists that technically, Strangeman did nothing wrong and will likely be honored by the UN for draining the lagoon. When Kerans asks Riggs to re-flood the lagoon, Riggs acts as though Kerans is crazy and insists that all of them except for Strangeman and his crew are going to Camp Byrd tomorrow. The next day, Riggs

and Strangeman make peace and Strangeman throws a party. Kerans attends but leaves early. When he sees that Riggs and Beatrice are leaving the party, Kerans plants bombs on one of the dams. Sergeant Macready sees Kerans do this and shoots Kerans in the leg. Kerans yells for Macready to get out of the way, but he dies in the explosion. The water rushes into the lagoon, sweeps over Strangeman, and upturns his boat. Beatrice runs to Kerans and tells him to leave. Riggs and Sergeant Daley chase Kerans, but Kerans escapes into the next lagoon on a raft. The helicopter searches for him the next day, but Kerans successfully hides. When it finally leaves, Kerans reaches an inland sea that will take him south.

Kerans travels south for several days as his gunshot wound gets worse and more infected. When he reaches the end of the sea, he tries to disassemble his raft and reassemble it, but cannot find more water to follow. He enters the jungle on foot and travels through the rain. Finally, he reaches a narrow valley with a rundown church in it. He discovers Lieutenant Hardman sitting at the altar, looking at the sun as it sets. Hardman is emaciated, blind, and doesn't recognize Kerans. Kerans cares for Hardman for three days and on the third morning finds that Hardman is gone. Kerans waits for several more days before moving on. He comes to another lagoon and stays there, in an apartment building, for a day. He thinks about his past and remembers Beatrice. Before he leaves, he scratches a note in the wall that he's okay. He knows nobody will read it. He heads south, and the narrator deems him a second Adam looking for forgotten paradises.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Dr. Robert Kerans – Kerans is the protagonist of *The Drowned World*. He's about 40 years old with a bleached white beard and tan skin that's sunken because of malaria. He was born and raised at Camp Byrd, a city in the Arctic Circle, and doesn't remember a time when the cities of the world were inhabited by humans. He began conducting ecological surveys of the changing planet in his early 30s. He works primarily with Dr. Bodkin to chart the evolutionary changes of plants and animals in Europe's cities, though he understands that doing so is somewhat useless since they're just confirming the predictions of 20 years ago. Throughout his three years in London, Kerans has been involved in a romantic relationship with Beatrice. Kerans is one of the last characters to begin experiencing the dreams that his colleagues have been experiencing, in which vivid scenes of prehistoric earth transport the dreamer back to a distant evolutionary past. Kerans ultimately decides to stay behind in London because of the dreams, which seem to make him wholly uninterested in the enterprise of human civilization. As the dreams become more intense, Kerans isolates himself more and more. Strangeman's arrival in the lagoon disrupts

Kerans' inward journey, and Kerans dislikes him from the start though he often humors his invitations to dinner. When Strangeman gives Kerans the opportunity to dive and explore the underwater **planetarium**, Kerans almost dies when his air is cut off, and afterwards he struggles to understand whether it was a suicide attempt or not. Kerans is aghast when Strangeman drains the lagoon, as he finds the city obscene—a symbol of a past to which he knows it is impossible to return. After flooding the lagoon, he escapes and travels south along the system of lagoons. It's implied that he dies soon after the end of the novel from an infected bullet wound he sustained as he fled London. Kerans's overall character arc is one of gradual disenchantment with the project of dominating nature in order to re-civilize the planet, culminating in his escape southward—which, although suicidal in nature, is not characterized by feelings of self-loathing or dread, but rather by a seemingly instinctive desire to submit to the natural progression of evolution and a knowledge that resisting such an unstoppable process is futile.

Strangeman – Strangeman is a pirate and a looter who travels through the drowned European cities collecting lost treasures. Because he's albino, he amasses a cult-like following of African crewmembers who worship him because they believe he's dead. Strangeman magnifies his unsettling image by wearing white much of the time. He also seems to have a peculiar control over a large posse of giant alligators who follow his hydroplane but never harm him. Strangeman develops a way to drain the lagoons that have covered the old cities by using and a system of dams. Draining the cities allows him to loot on foot and collect all manner of treasures. Kerans instinctively dislikes Strangeman. He finds him untrustworthy and believes him to be dangerous. Strangeman is fond of throwing parties during the cool nights in the hopes of attracting Beatrice, but cancels them when Beatrice refuses to come. He doesn't understand why Beatrice, Bodkin, and Kerans give into the dreams, as he says he's far more interested in the 20th century than he is in what happened millions of years ago. He proves himself violent and dangerous when he shoots Bodkin for attempting to re-flood London. After this he captures and holds Beatrice captive, and ties Kerans to a throne while he encourages his crew to torture him. When Colonel Riggs returns to London, he says that Strangeman technically did nothing wrong and can't even be prosecuted for killing Dr. Bodkin. Riggs insists that the UN will certainly grant him a reward for draining the cities. After learning this, Kerans blows up the dam. The ensuing flood kills Strangeman and his crew. If Kerans and his friends represent the supreme and undeniable power of nature, Strangeman represents blind human ambition, as he clings to power by propagating a myth about himself (i.e., that he is dead) and attaches value to the artifacts he loots, suggesting he believes in the possibility of a future for mankind on earth.

Dr. Alan Bodkin – Dr. Bodkin is one of the senior biologists in

the unit in London. At 65, he's one of the last people on Earth who remembers living in the cities that are now flooded, and he spends much of his free time paddling around alone and looking for remembered landmarks. He develops the theory of neuronics, which seeks to explain the disturbing dreams people experience by suggesting that people instinctively remember the entire evolution of the world. Now that the world is in a similar state that it was in during the Triassic period, humans subconsciously remember what the world was like at that point. He decides to stay behind in London with Kerans and Beatrice. When Strangeman arrives and drains London, Bodkin is at first awed by this feat and takes advantage of being able to revisit his memories on foot. However, he soon becomes disturbed by the possibility that Strangeman is going to try to return to the world to the way it was in the 20th century and tries to destroy one of the dams. Strangeman and his crew kill him before he succeeds.

Beatrice Dahl – Beatrice Dahl is the only woman living in London. She lives at the top of an apartment building where her rich grandfather used to live. There, she lives a life of luxury, drinking, spending her days by the pool, and seeing Kerans romantically. She refuses to leave London when Colonel Riggs and the unit receive orders to leave, choosing instead to stay behind with Kerans and Dr. Bodkin. During this time, she continues to maintain her doll-like appearance, though she seldom sees Kerans or Bodkin. When Strangeman arrives in London, she becomes an object of great desire, though she generally declines his advances. After Strangeman kills Bodkin and takes Beatrice captive, Kerans is able to rescue Beatrice from Strangeman's private quarters in his boat. Despite Beatrice's desire to not head north for Camp Byrd, she ends up going north with Colonel Riggs after Kerans escapes and heads south. Just as other characters remain attached to relics from life before the floods, Beatrice's obsession with maintaining her image—as well as her obsession with the jewels Strangeman gives her—are symbolic of her inability to accept the fact that human civilization as she knows it is over.

Colonel Riggs – Colonel Riggs is one of the military men leading the biological testing station through Europe, though his job also includes rescuing people who are still trying to live in the drowned cities. He's kind and jovial. Although he admits that their work of mapping the changing water and landmasses is somewhat futile, he speaks as though he truly believes that humans will someday recolonize the flooded cities. He doesn't experience the dreams and thus finds it very hard to understand or empathize with Beatrice, Kerans, and Dr. Bodkin when they choose to stay behind, or with Lieutenant Hardman when he disappears to head south. He insists that Strangeman be rewarded for draining the lagoon, as that was part of the government's plan for the next ten years.

Lieutenant Hardman – Lieutenant Hardman is Colonel Riggs' primary helicopter pilot. He was once very tall and strong,

though the reader never sees him this way because he has become bedridden by the beginning of the novel. He's one of the first characters to experience the disturbing dreams, and in the views of his companions, the dreams drive Hardman crazy. After spending several weeks ill, supposedly with malaria, in the sick bay, he makes a desperate escape to run south the day before Riggs and his crew are scheduled to leave for Camp Byrd. When it becomes apparent that Hardman will not allow himself to be forced to go quietly north, Riggs lets him go. Kerans finds him months later when he makes his own journey south. By then, Hardman is blind from looking at the sun, has cancer in his eyes, and doesn't recognize Kerans. He continues his journey alone after Kerans gives him water and tends to his eyes, but surely dies soon afterwards.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sergeant Macready – Kerans describes Sergeant Macready as Colonel Riggs' watchdog. He has an overactive conscience, which Kerans sometimes uses to his advantage. While Kerans is blowing up Strangeman's dam, Macready tries to interfere and dies in the process.

Sergeant Daley – Sergeant Daley is Lieutenant Hardman's second-in-command. He takes over flying the helicopter when Hardman falls ill, though it takes him until the end of the novel to become truly proficient.

Wilson – A young man who was once Lieutenant Hardman's orderly. Hardman shoots him while he's trying to escape.

The Admiral – The Admiral is one of Strangeman's African crewmembers. He wears a big white hat and is Strangeman's second in command.

Big Caesar – Big Caesar is another of Strangeman's African crewmembers. He's impressively strong and tall and only has one eye.

the novel stem from characters doing battle with each other, the overarching conflict concerns the various ways in which the characters are forced to battle against an increasingly hostile environment.

Throughout *The Drowned World*, Ballard describes the natural environment as though it were a character in its own right, with its own consciousness and agency. When characters describe the "humped backs" of silt deposits, covered in a "fur" of giant bamboo, the earth itself takes on the characteristics of an animal. In the Ritz Hotel, where Kerans takes up residence, molds and fungi become living parts of the elaborate and rich furnishings, while the ever-present iguanas watch the platoon from the windows of abandoned buildings. In this way, the environment seems to conspire to defeat the novel's human characters and the man-made world. It's worth keeping in mind that although *The Drowned World* is a book about climate change, it was published in 1962, before the emergence of modern day climate science showed that human activity would be the single greatest driver of climate change in the 20th and 21st centuries. Unlike the climate change the earth is experiencing today, the dramatic increase in global temperatures that Ballard writes about wasn't brought about by human activity. Rather, the changes began with solar storms that destroyed the earth's barrier against solar radiation, something decidedly beyond human control. In this way, the novel portrays humans as the helpless victims of a changing climate as they attempt to adapt to the new landscape.

This idea that nature is beyond the control of humankind is reinforced in the way the characters talk about the science they conduct. Rather than attempting to change or reverse what's happening, Dr. Bodkin and Kerans are supposed to simply observe the many changes that are occurring as a result of the changing climate. Further, when Kerans hears that the officials at Camp Byrd have issued an order for the platoon to leave London and move north permanently, it represents a concession on the part of humans to the natural world, as it means that mankind has effectively been forced to surrender the city. All of this culminates in an overwhelming sense that humans have little control over their environment in the novel. They are at the mercy of nature and can only hope to survive its changes.

The characters' sense that they lack control over nature is challenged when Strangeman arrives in London. Interestingly, Strangeman doesn't appear to be plagued by the dreams that Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice experience, in which humans are no longer the dominant species on the planet. Rather, he seems to be unaffected by the dramatic changes that have taken place in the physical environment. Strangeman, then, represents the only character who truly confronts nature and believes himself capable of altering it. By draining the lagoon over part of London, Strangeman shows that he can actively shape the natural world to be the way he wants it to be. When



THEMES

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MAN VS. NATURE

At its heart, *The Drowned World* is a story about humans fighting to survive in a wild and dangerous landscape. The story takes place on a planet that is rapidly changing and will soon no longer be able to support human life, both because of increasing global temperatures and the rapid evolution of massive lizards that prey on humans when given the chance. Although some of the main conflicts of

Strangeman drains the lagoon, he returns London to a state in which man-made structures and buildings dominate the landscape. For the relatively short time that the lagoon remains empty, the characters have the opportunity to experience what the world was like 75-100 years ago, when humans ruled the world. However, this state is soon challenged by both Dr. Bodkin and Kerans: Dr. Bodkin unsuccessfully attempts to blast open one of Strangeman's dams, and Kerans later completes Dr. Bodkin's attempt. For Dr. Bodkin and Kerans, the only way to exist in the new world is to accept the superiority of nature over humans. Draining the cities is a direct threat to the future they see in their dreams, which is one where humans accept their subordinate position in the kingdom of life. By re-flooding the lagoon, killing Strangeman, and heading south, Kerans insists that things progress according to nature's laws, not those of humankind, suggesting that the idea that humans could ever hope to truly exercise control over nature is extremely misguided. Rather, humans must accept their inferiority and understand that the very idea of "man versus nature" is a farce from the very beginning, since nature will triumph in the end with little regard for any life form, humans included, that can't keep up.



MEMORY VS. THE FUTURE

The novel introduces the reader to a world where civilization as we now know it is merely a memory: global water levels have risen and all cities south of the Arctic Circle are underwater. The year is 2145 and few people remember what the world was like when humans lived in the cities of Europe and America. However, Dr. Bodkin suggests that all humans share a biological or evolutionary memory, which is encased in the human spine. He theorizes that the entire history of the world and of human evolution is instinctively "remembered" by all humans. Bodkin therefore believes that as the earth effectively returns to the way it was during the Triassic period, humans will also regress as memories surface of a time when they weren't the dominant species. The novel creates an opposition between this idea of a shared evolutionary memory and the vastly different worldview of characters like Colonel Riggs, who seeks to protect the supremacy of human beings and ensure a future in which humans continue to rule the earth.

The platoon in London is there for a very specific reason: to observe the changing plant and animal life, as well as changes to the various bodies of water that now occupy London, so that humans have the necessary information to later recolonize the cities. This represents a hopeful view of the future, as it shows that the governing bodies believe that humans will indeed be able to conquer the changing environment and remain the dominant species on earth. Dr. Kerans and Dr. Bodkin appear to share some of this hope, at least initially: their field notes from their early days in London are dense and detailed, showing

their dedication to their project. However, their belief in a human-centric future is challenged when they begin experiencing dreams of the very distant past, when lizards ruled the world and mammals, including humans, weren't the dominant life forms. Dr. Bodkin theorizes that these dreams are triggered by the intense heat of the new climate, which is similar to the earth's climate during the Triassic period. Furthermore, he believes that the dreams are not simply dreams, but are instead actual memories of a very distant evolutionary history. The dreams are horrifying at first, but after a few nights of experiencing them, the dreamers become entranced by, and ultimately accepting of, these ancient memories. This shift causes Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice to decide to stay in London rather than return to Camp Byrd, and even brings about a mental breakdown for Lieutenant Hardman. Most importantly, the dream memories create a desire in those who experience them to move south, and in doing so, to return to the very distant past they experience in their dreams. The dreamers become disenchanted with the possibility of a civilized future and instead, give themselves over to their "biological memories."

The conflict between memory and the future comes to a head when Colonel Riggs returns to London to save Kerans and Beatrice from Strangeman, the mysterious looter. The narrator states that looters and pirates are common in the drowned cities, but Strangeman takes the act of looting to another level: rather than just dive for treasure, he actually drains one of the lagoons that covers London, exposing the city and allowing him to loot on foot. It's important to note that draining the drowned cities represents both a return to the past as well as a vision of the future. Exposing the city allows Dr. Bodkin, who grew up in London, to visit landmarks from his past. Although it initially transfixes him, he soon joins Beatrice and Kerans in their horror that the world as they see it in their dreams is being returned to a civilized state. For them, the ancient memories they experience in their dreams have become so powerful that they can't stand the idea of the world returning to its recent past. When Colonel Riggs insists to Kerans that Strangeman will be honored for draining London, Kerans understands that there's no way to bridge the gap in understanding between those who experience the dreams (such as himself) and those who don't (like Colonel Riggs). For Kerans, re-flooding London and heading south is a final testament to the power of the biological memories he experiences. By accepting what they see in their dreams as both past and the inevitable future, Kerans and the other dreamers show that the history of the world isn't linear: it's cyclical. Thus, the novel shows that the only way for the characters to truly move forward is to accept that, for humans, the future might resemble a return to the past.



SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY

The characters in *The Drowned World* have a highly scientific way of thinking about the world around them. The story follows Dr. Bodkin, a biologist, and Dr. Kerans, a biologist and sometimes-medical doctor who are stationed at a military base in London. Their job is to map the changing landmasses and waterways, as well as to observe the new lifeforms of plants and animals that thrive in the newly tropical climate of London, with the hope that humans will be able to recolonize the drowned cities in the next ten years. However, both Kerans and Bodkin begin to question the role science can and should play in the new world as they're confronted with psychological problems and questions that science simply can't answer, as well as the overwhelming sense that the hope of recolonizing the cities is at best far-fetched—and at worst impossible.

The novel is quick to reveal that both Dr. Kerans and Dr. Bodkin aren't convinced that the fieldwork they conduct is at all useful. Ballard describes the doctors' scientific notes on the walls of their testing station as having been dense and detailed at the beginning of their three years in London, but in the present, the notes are few and lazily scrawled. Kerans explains the reason for this: the world simply did exactly what scientists predicted it would do twenty years before the present. Kerans and Dr. Bodkin's job for the three years prior to the start of the novel was, in essence, to confirm that prior hypotheses about global climate change were indeed correct. This instills the sense in both doctors that at this point in the world's history, science has become useless. They see that there's nothing they can do to stop what's happening or plan appropriately for a human-centric future, and thus they see little use in trying to document or make sense of the present.

Once the characters accept that the natural world is beyond their control and isn't worth attempting to understand scientifically, they turn their attentions inward. The characters focus on the more pressing psychological issues that plague the base—namely, the terrifying, recurring, and exhausting nightmares of a watery landscape filled with massive reptiles. Dr. Bodkin develops a new field of psychology to explain these dreams, which he terms "neuronics." Dr. Bodkin insists that evolution is somewhat reversible, and this becomes the central tenet of his theory of neuronics. He proposes that the dreams are triggered by "innate releasing mechanisms" that cause a person to instinctively remember a time when the world last looked like it does now. The dreams are then indicative of a return to the "archaeo-psychic past," and by allowing the dreams to take over the mind, the person will re-experience each moment in human evolution. Initially, Dr. Bodkin attempts to make neuronics empirical and scientific: he conducts experiments with Lieutenant Hardman, who is nearly driven mad by the intensity of his dreams. Once again, however, simply naming and understanding what's happening isn't enough to

actually change what the characters experience. Dr. Bodkin doesn't propose a way to stop the dreams; rather, he simply tries to make it easier for Hardman to accept the reality of his dreams. When Hardman allows the dreams to take over his mind, he finds a sense of peace with the world and the change it's undergoing, but this ultimately leads to him fleeing London to go south, the logic behind which eludes nearly all of the people posted in London.

Hardman's escape—and later, Kerans' escape—both represent a rejection of the future that the government hopes for (i.e. mankind's return to the cities, facilitated by science). Going south alone symbolizes an acceptance that the future predicted in the dreams isn't something that can be changed or altered, it's just an inevitable reality that can either be accepted or ignored. In this way, the novel shows the characters rejecting the idea of science as a human-centric framework for understanding the world. Instead, they embrace science and psychology as tools for helping them understand and accept that humans *aren't* at the center of the new world order, and act accordingly.



BIRTH, RENEWAL, AND DOOM

The characters of *The Drowned World* find themselves at a crossroads in human history. Some characters, such as Strangeman and Colonel Riggs, believe that human civilization will go on in much the same way that it used to, but in cities north of the Arctic Circle. Other characters, however, believe that human civilization in this new world is doomed. Kerans and Dr. Bodkin have a decidedly fatalist view of the future of the world, as they see the human birthrate dropping and the temperatures rising too fast for humans to expect to survive. This opposition between the possibilities of renewal and doom fuels much of the novel's central conflict, as many of the characters fight against annihilation, but also fight to discover what birth and renewal might truly mean for the human race in light of the circumstances.

The conflict between birth and doom is frequently represented through references to Biblical imagery: at one point Kerans laughs to himself that soon, a new Adam and Eve will find themselves in a new and horrific Garden of Eden; at another point, Strangeman's African followers "crucify" Kerans (though Kerans survives the ordeal). The imagery of Adam and Eve in the new Garden of Eden is extremely fatalist, as it implies that this Adam and Eve will be the last people on earth, not the ones who will be responsible for reinvigorating the population. As Beatrice is the last woman in London, she becomes an Eve-like figure, while Kerans (as her romantic and sexual partner) becomes her Adam. The fatalist symbolism of these new Adam and Eve figures is confirmed by the fact that even after an implied three-year-long sexual relationship, the two haven't conceived a child.

The novel explores ideas of birth and renewal through symbols of femininity. This includes the character Beatrice, as well as the language that Dr. Bodkin and Kerans use to describe the water in the lagoons. For them, the water is "amniotic" and certain buildings—particularly the submerged **planetarium**—are "womb-like." By referring to the water as amniotic, Dr. Bodkin recasts the role that water plays in the earth's changing landscape. He chooses to see it as a life-giving entity, rather than the thing that's responsible for destroying human civilization. This suggests that this period of change for the globe and its various species is not so much a death as a gestation period that will eventually give rise to a new chapter for life on earth. In this way, the book suggests that humans are still evolving, and indeed, that *all* life is embryonic and constantly evolving, with the world itself acting as a womb.

In short, Dr. Bodkin chooses to apply hopeful and generative language to a situation that appears doomed. Rather than mourn the end of the human race, Dr. Bodkin, Kerans, and Beatrice choose to view the world's changes as a process of rebirth and regeneration which may or may not have anything to do with the human race. Although Bodkin portrays it as a form of rebirth, accepting the instinctual desire to move south is as much a decision to embrace an evolutionary renewal as it is to embrace one's own death. Thus, the novel portrays death and birth as inextricably linked events in the larger cycle of evolution—and in this way, what some characters see as doom becomes, for others, a process of rebirth.



SYMBOLS

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



THE BROKEN COMPASS

When Kerans steals a compass from the armory—an action that the narrator says is out of character for him—it's the first clue that something isn't quite right with him, and that the way he thinks about himself is changing. The compass itself is broken, such that it points south instead of north. Because of this, the compass becomes a symbol for the characters' seemingly irrational desire to head south despite the inhospitable nature of the climate south of London. On a deeper level, the broken compass symbolizes the new world order, in which humans are no longer the dominant species on earth. The compass suggests that the characters must break from their normal ways of thinking and accept that science as they know it is no longer useful. Instead, they must adopt new ways of thinking, like Dr. Bodkin's theory of neuronics, to guide them—and, eventually, follow the needle of the broken compass south.



THE PLANETARIUM

The planetarium is one of the buildings that Dr. Bodkin remembers from his youth living in London, and Strangeman believes that Bodkin has treasure of some sort hidden there. While the lagoon is full, the planetarium is a symbol of potential and rebirth. It holds the potential for treasure, and for Kerans during his dive, it holds the potential for him to die, embrace what he sees in his dreams, and descend into the "time seas." However, after Strangeman drains the lagoon, the planetarium takes on the exact opposite symbolism. The sight of it filled with mud is one of the major reasons why Kerans is horrified by the new world before him, as it's no longer an incubator for life, but proof that Strangeman's hope for the world is in direct opposition to Kerans's vision of a future in which humans have ceded their spot as the dominant species.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Liveright Publishing edition of *The Drowned World* published in 2013.

Chapter 1 Quotes

●● The biological mapping had become a pointless game, the new flora following exactly the emergent lines anticipated twenty years earlier, and he was sure that no one at Camp Byrd in Northern Greenland bothered to file his reports, let alone read them.

Related Characters: Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator explains that Kerans is disconnecting from his work in particular because there's little work to do, given that organisms are doing exactly what scientists predicted they'd do. This is one of the first indications that science as humans know it isn't as useful as it once was. At this point in time, they're using it only to confirm prior hypotheses, not make new ones or change the outcome of the rampant processes of mutation and evolution that are taking place. Because of this, doing the work at all feels pointless and redundant, not least because it appears that nobody cares whether he does the work. This all creates a sense of doom, as it appears that it's not just Kerans who feels this way. At

this point in the novel, it seems as though the government is persisting in making it look as though they're doing something by accepting the reports and posting the platoon to London in the first place, though it seems like they're not doing anything but accepting reports that aren't necessarily helpful or enlightening.

... the somber green-black fronds of the gymnosperms, intruders from the Triassic past, and the half-submerged white-faced buildings of the 20th century still reflected together in the dark mirror of the water, the two interlocking worlds apparently suspended at some junction in time...

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Kerans is observing the lagoon from his balcony in the mid-morning. With this, Ballard paints a very clear picture of the landscape Kerans observes. It's one where the plant life, which appears to be directly out of the Triassic era, competes with 20th-century manmade structures that are no longer inhabited. The buildings in particular give the sense that humans are losing this battle, as their vacancy indicates that have had to give up trying to live here (at least for the most part—the novel's characters excepted). It seems the Triassic era is returning, and this is shown through the plant life as well as the many descriptions of mutant animals throughout the book. The way that Kerans describes the view indicates that this land is in a state of change. Describing them as "interlocking worlds" suggests a fight between the manmade world and the natural world, in which it seems as though nature is winning.

Sometimes he wondered what zone of transit he himself was entering, sure that his own withdrawal was symptomatic...of a careful preparation for a radically new environment, with its own internal landscape and logic, where old categories of thought would merely be an encumbrance.

Related Characters: Strangeman, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator has just explained that Kerans is isolating himself from others in London, and that this process makes Kerans wonder what kind of evolutionary journey he's embarking on. This foreshadows the changes that humans, including Kerans, will undergo throughout the novel—and, more specifically, the process that is begun when the characters start experiencing the dreams. Even before he knows exactly what the dreams are like or what they mean, Kerans already instinctively understands that he's going to fundamentally change to adapt to the new environment. Further, he recognizes that his change isn't necessarily going to alter his appearance (like the rapid pace of evolution is changing the size and appearance of the plant and animal life around him)—rather, it's going to alter his mind.

All this detailed mapping of the harbors for use in some hypothetical future is absurd...the whole place is nothing but a confounded zoo.

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

As Riggs and Kerans move through the lagoon, Riggs admits that the work they're doing is useless to prepare the world for a future in the cities again. Riggs's word choice shows that he's a fundamentally un-scientific man: he has no way to understand what's going on and doesn't appear to see that the changes to the plant and animal kingdoms are occurring as predicted. He sees the world as being entirely out of the control of humans—beyond trying to pin down or understand.

However, Riggs doesn't use this mindset to give into the changes happening in the world like Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice do. Instead, Riggs concentrates on preparing the world north of the Arctic Circle for sustained human life, and later supports Strangeman's attempts to drain the lagoons with the hope of being able to recolonize the cities. This shows that Riggs believes himself to be entirely separate from the natural world, not a part of it, and that he believes that he can triumph over the natural world in significant ways. Essentially, for Riggs and other characters like him, the natural world is an antagonist and can be seen in no other way, while for Kerans, this flooded world is an

incubator for a new life.

Chapter 2 Quotes

Looking up at the ancient impassive faces, Kerans could understand the curious fear they roused, rekindling archaic memories of the Paleocene, when the reptiles had gone down before the emergent mammals, and sense the implacable hatred one zoological class feels towards another that usurps it.

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

Kerans and Colonel Riggs are moving through the lagoon and Kerans observes the strange environment around him. The specific language used here foreshadows Bodkin's later theory of neuronics, particularly Kerans's thought regarding "archaic memories." In this passage, Kerans reframes the "man versus nature" conflict as being not between man and nature, but between different zoological classes (in this case, reptiles versus mammals). Under this logic, the natural world is one vast arena for living things to do battle with one another as they try to adapt to their environment. This also shows that the "mammal versus reptile" struggle is one that has played out on a large scale before—thereby once again alluding to the cyclical nature of world history as a whole and the conflicts that take place in it.

... the genealogical tree of mankind was systematically pruning itself, apparently moving backwards in time, and a point might ultimately be reached where a second Adam and Eve found themselves alone in a new Eden.

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

After the narrator explains the changes the earth's climate has undergone and the resulting low human birthrate, Kerans thinks this thought about a new Adam and Eve to himself. Throughout the novel, religious references are used to describe the apocalyptic environment on planet earth. In this case, Adam and Eve are invoked as symbols of the *end*

of mankind, not the beginning, and therefore give Kerans a way to conceptualize a future for humanity that closely resembles the most ancient, mythological past.

Kerans's invocation of Adam and Eve constitutes an assertion that mankind is moving backwards, which serves as a starting point for his character development: Kerans will gradually become more and more disenchanted with the enterprise of human civilization until he himself wanders off into the wilderness alone. This passage foreshadows the final lines of the book, in which Kerans is portrayed as a doomed voyager searching for "forgotten paradises" much like the lost paradise of Eden.

For a few moments Kerans stared quietly at the dim yellow annulus of Ernst's sun glowering through the exotic vegetation, a curious feeling of memory and recognition signaling through his brain.

Related Characters: Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

At Beatrice's apartment, Kerans studies the early-20th century paintings by Ernst and Delvaux on her walls. These moments of recognition foreshadow Kerans's later mental shift when he starts experiencing the dreams. At this point, this feeling is something he can't quite name or make sense of, which suggests that he's in a liminal, changing state.

The fact that Kerans experiences these thoughts while looking at a painting that's about 150 years old by the year 2145 also seems to reinforce Bodkin's later theory of neuronics, which states that the dreams are ancient biological memories. Because of this, Ernst's painting isn't just a painting of a glowing sun and imaginative, exotic plants. Instead, it's possible to see it as a representation of Max Ernst's own latent biological memory.

Chapter 3 Quotes

Is it only the external landscape which is altering? How often recently most of us have had the feeling of déjà vu, of having seen all this before, in fact of remembering these swamps and lagoons all too well.

Related Characters: Dr. Alan Bodkin (speaker), Dr. Robert

Kerans, Lieutenant Hardman

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

Dr. Bodkin is explaining his theory of neuronics to Kerans after Kerans experiences his first dream. Bodkin insists that the dreams people begin experiencing are triggered by the environment's return to roughly how it was during the Triassic period, and that people actually instinctively remember how the world was at that time.

This theory suggests that all of history, including what happened in the world before humans even existed, is stored as a memory in the human body. Further, that memory continues to function long after these events pass—they're part of the present as well as the past. In this way, Ballard insists that time is both cyclical (as the world returns to how it once was) and also that the past is inseparable from the present or the future.

●● A more important task than mapping the harbors and lagoons of the external landscape was to chart the ghostly deltas and luminous beaches of the submerged neuronics continents.

Related Characters: Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

After Dr. Bodkin explains his theory of neuronics to Kerans, Kerans decides that it makes far more sense to explore what's happening to people psychologically than to concentrate on mapping the rapidly changing external environment. This is the final step for both Kerans and Bodkin in accepting that the way that they'd been using science up to this point is truly futile. Not only is the external environment following a path that scientists predicted decades earlier, it's also changing so fast that there's barely any hope for a future generation that will be able to put the documentation to good use. Furthermore, the science that Bodkin and Kerans are conducting is simple observational science—it's not science that's meant to create change or correct the course of the changing environment, which is something that would need to happen in order for humans to inhabit the cities again.

Neuronics, however, is a far more pressing subject of inquiry for Kerans. Half or more of Colonel Riggs's crew is experiencing the dreams, and Bodkin is presumably the first person to come up with any theory as to what the dreams mean or symbolize. Therefore, while observational science of the outer landscape seems like little more than a trivial game, the project of trying to understand how the mind functions in this new environment promises to provide people with the tools they would need to come up with a new and better way forward.

Chapter 4 Quotes

●● "Colonel, there isn't any other direction."

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans (speaker), Sergeant Macready, Lieutenant Hardman, Colonel Riggs

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

As Kerans, Riggs, and Macready search for the escaped Hardman from a helicopter, Kerans realizes that Hardman could only have gone south. This realization marks a turning point in Kerans's development, specifically in his understanding of how human psychology is changing with the new environment. Even before Kerans begins experiencing the dreams himself, Bodkin's theory of neuronics is enough to explain that they cause a person to accept the inevitability that the earth is returning to its Triassic state—and further, that accepting this means accepting one's own death and regression through neuronics time by heading south.

Chapter 5 Quotes

●● Nor had he tried to follow up any of Bodkin's or Riggs' oblique remarks about the dreams and their danger, almost as if he had known that he would soon be sharing them, and accepted them as an inevitable element of his life...

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans, Colonel Riggs, Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

After Kerans experiences his first dream, he understands how the dreams function in the new world order and within the greater scope of the new psychology (i.e., neuronics) necessary to understand the world. Notably, Kerans realizes here that even though he hadn't experienced the dreams before this point, he was instinctively aware of their power. This can be attributed to Bodkin's belief that the dreams are actually memories. This suggests that even if a person isn't actually experiencing the dreams at a given time, they still hold some amount of power over a person. At this point, Kerans also accepts the inevitability of his fate and the fate of humanity in general. He accepts that the dreams are also visions of the future (because of the cyclical nature of life and time on earth), and he accepts that they'll lead to a reality that resembles a past when lizards ruled the world and mammals were few and, most importantly, powerless.

☞ Distantly in his ears he could hear the sun drumming over the sunken water. As he recovered from his first fears he realized that there was something soothing about its sounds, almost reassuring and encouraging like his own heartbeats.

Related Characters: Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

Kerans recovers the morning after his first memory dream, when Bodkin explains exactly how the dreams function within his theory of neuronics. Kerans's observation about his heartbeat and the soothing nature of the thrumming sun suggests that mankind and the nature he experiences in his dreams aren't in opposition to each other. Rather, man and nature will become one as the earth continues to change and more humans give into the power of the dreams. It's this realization that leads Kerans to conclude fully that the government's hope of one day reoccupying the drowned cities is futile, as it causes him to understand that humankind must accept their fate in the earth's trajectory.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ By and large, each of them would have to pursue his or her own pathway through the time jungles... Although they might see one another occasionally... their only true meeting ground would be in their dreams.

Related Characters: Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

After Riggs and the unit leave Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice behind in London, Kerans realizes that by accepting the future they see in their dreams, he is also accepting that their futures will be solitary. This shows how accepting the earth's future as foretold in the dreams naturally includes beginning to move away from the organized structures of civilization. The journey through these "time jungles" is a journey concentrated on becoming one with the earth, not on cooperating with other people, and this aspect of the dreams is what causes Kerans to feel little remorse in blowing up Strangeman's dam at the end and heading south without Beatrice. Following the dreams becomes far more important than doing things that keep people happy and society functioning.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ "Dr. Bodkin, did you live in London as a child? You must have many sentimental memories to recapture, of the great palaces and museums." He added: "Or are the only memories you have pre-uterine ones?"

Related Characters: Strangeman (speaker), Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Robert Kerans, Dr. Alan Bodkin

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

Upon Strangeman's arrival in the lagoon, he hosts Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice on his depot ship and asks about the intersection of lived memories with the biological memories of the dreams. This question first shows how adaptive Strangeman is: he picks up quickly on the vocabulary and the concepts of neuronics and uses that to try to get information on what he thinks might be important. Strangeman is only interested in treasures and art objects and sees Bodkin as a possible ally or enemy in this endeavor, since Bodkin did indeed live in London and would therefore

presumably know where some of its treasures are. However, Strangeman's mocking tone of voice betrays that he finds Dr. Bodkin's theory silly. Strangeman privileges human achievements over the power of the natural world and sees little value in considering what the natural world is doing or why it's doing it. Thus, this creates a sense of distrust between Strangeman and the platoon in London, as neither side sees the point in what the other side values.

☞ "The trouble with you people is that you've been here for thirty million years and your perspectives are all wrong. You miss so much of the transitory beauty of life. I'm fascinated by the immediate past--the treasures of the Triassic compare pretty unfavorably with those of the closing years of the Second Millennium."

Related Characters: Strangeman (speaker), Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

When Bodkin insists that the recent past isn't interesting, Strangeman insists that it's far more interesting than the prehistoric past. In doing so, Strangeman shows that he places little value in the work of climate and earth scientists. For him, what the earth does is of little consequence. He has the power and resources to travel the world collecting treasures from the drowned cities. As long as he can continue doing that, the world itself is simply a massive treasure chest. Therefore, Strangeman values the things that humans made: art objects, sculptures, buildings, and entire cities. He wishes to make sure that these things are kept and remembered, not just swept away with the tide. If they're remembered, they can influence later generations and instill in them an appreciation for human achievement.

☞ Kerans managed to take his eyes off Strangeman's face and glanced at the looted relics. "They're like bones," he said flatly.

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans (speaker), The Admiral, Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin, Strangeman

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

Strangeman shows Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice his treasure ship. The ship is filled with items that Bodkin and Kerans find visually unappealing. For Kerans, the relics are reminders of the recent past, which he sees in retrospect was populated by a society that simply didn't know it was doomed. Many of Strangeman's relics are from the Renaissance, and represent a golden age of artistic achievement and spectacular feats of engineering. The treasure ship signifies Strangeman's investment in preserving and moving forward with the enterprise of human civilization. For Kerans, now that he's spent six weeks living nearly exclusively in his dreams, this is an unpleasant reminder that there are those who do still value this recent past instead of the prehistoric one he sees in the dreams. For him, the objects are dead and mean nothing going forward, hence his calling them "bones."

Chapter 9 Quotes

☞ For some reason the womb-like image of the chamber was reinforced rather than diminished by the circular rows of seats, and Kerans heard the thudding in his ears uncertain whether he was listening to the dim subliminal requiem of his dreams.

Related Characters: Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin, Strangeman, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Kerans is on his dive during Strangeman's diving party, walking down into the auditorium of the submerged planetarium. Kerans's experience in the watery planetarium reinforces the idea that the water is amniotic and life-giving. In the auditorium, Kerans feels connected to the natural world and to the water in much the same way he does in his dreams. The experience becomes almost a waking dream, though perhaps less menacing due to the absence of the massive, roaring lizards. The seats in the auditorium suggest that Kerans isn't the only one undergoing this experience. Rather, this transformation and acceptance of the future affects all humans (who could fill the seats and join Kerans in this womb) whether they realize it or not. The passage

makes it clear that although this experience is a private one for Kerans, it's something that all humans will at some point have to reckon with, even if the seats are empty at this point in time.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☛☛ Yet he had a further neuronomic role, in which he seemed almost a positive influence, holding a warning mirror up to Kerans and obliquely cautioning him about the future he had chosen.

Related Characters: Strangeman, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

After Strangeman invites Kerans to a party where he promises there will be a surprise, Kerans thinks about the role Strangeman plays in his life. Kerans begins to understand that Strangeman represents a future that's the exact opposite of the one that Kerans expects and desires to see come about. Strangeman would like to see humans prosper once again on earth (since otherwise all his looting will have been without purpose) while Kerans believes such a wish is foolish given the rising temperatures and what he sees in his dreams. Strangeman's jokes up to this point have made it clear to Kerans that his choice to accept the logic of the dreams will indeed end in his death, even if he himself chooses to see it as a sort of rebirth. It forces Kerans to reckon with the human consequence of accepting his death: other individuals will experience his loss like he himself felt Hardman's loss.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☛☛ No longer the velvet mantle he remembered from his descent, it was no a fragmenting cloak of rotting organic forms, like the vestments of the grave. The once translucent threshold of the womb had vanished, its place taken by the gateway to a sewer.

Related Characters: Strangeman, Beatrice Dahl, Dr. Alan Bodkin, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

After Strangeman drains the lagoon over London, Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice walk the streets and find the planetarium. Upon approaching it, Kerans comes to realize that when the planetarium is no longer submerged, it doesn't seem to have the same religious and womb-like qualities it did when he visited it underwater. During his dive, it brought about a transformative experience for Kerans that nearly took his life and merged him with the "amniotic" water. Without the water, the planetarium is merely a reminder that people once built and inhabited these buildings before the natural world took over and made them magical. Now that they've been returned to how they looked in the past, they become empty and ugly, like Strangeman's looted relics. They symbolize a world long gone, and a world that's in direct opposition with Dr. Bodkin's theory of neuronics and the future promised in the dreams.

☛☛ Dimly he realized that the lagoon had represented a complex of neuronomic needs that were impossible to satisfy by any other means. This blunting lethargy deepened, unbroken by the violence around him, and more and more he felt like a man marooned in a time sea, hemmed in by the shifting planes of dissonant realities millions of years apart.

Related Characters: Strangeman, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

After several days of wandering around the drained streets of London, Kerans finds himself struggling to maintain a sense of reality. This shows how deeply the dreams have infiltrated his thoughts and instincts. The dreams showed Kerans a future that was first and foremost watery. Now, without the water, Kerans is deprived of the life-giving element that promised to change him and make him a part of the natural world. He finds the exposed world of the recent past unbearable because it represents a time in which the earth was dominated by humans and the things they built, but Kerans feels that both humans and their creations stand in direct opposition to the future he knows

is coming.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☛☛ "Colonel, you've got to flood it again, laws or no laws. Have you been down in those streets; they're obscene and hideous! It's a nightmare world that's dead and finished, Strangeman's resurrecting a corpse!"

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans (speaker), Strangeman, Colonel Riggs

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

As Kerans and Colonel Riggs discuss how things are going to proceed going forward, Kerans is shocked to discover that Riggs believes not just that draining the lagoons was a good thing, but that Strangeman should drain the other lagoons as well. Kerans's shock shows how fully he has accepted the fact that humans aren't going to be a driving force in the new world order—in fact, they *can't* be, since he understands that they can't hope to compete with the power of nature. Riggs's revelation creates the final gulf between Kerans, who believes in the future he dreams about, and Riggs, who doesn't have the same dreams. They're working on entirely different sides, even if they were once friends and colleagues. Because Riggs continues to insist on a future for humans on earth despite the increasingly inhospitable environment, Kerans can't help but see Riggs as his enemy.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☛☛ Obscured by the events of the past week, the archaic sun in his mind beat again continuously with its immense power, its identity merging now with that of the real sun visible behind the rain-clouds.

Related Characters: Strangeman, Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

Kerans is watching as Riggs and Beatrice leave Strangeman's farewell party and board the helicopter.

These observations about Kerans's mental state show again the power of the sun and the dreams. The beating of the sun is intense enough to spark Kerans to action, re-flooding the lagoon. Further, it seems as if Kerans is beginning to truly merge the sun he sees and hears in his mind with the real sun in the sky. This mirrors his experience when he was diving, when he felt as though he was truly becoming a part of the water. In this way, Kerans understands that accepting the dreams means accepting that he must give up his mind and his identity in favor of actually becoming a part of the natural landscape. As he moves south, it seems that the sun will truly become a part of him.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☛☛ So he left the lagoon and entered the jungle again, within a few days was completely lost, following the lagoons southward through the increasing rain and heat, attacked by alligators and giant bats, a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun.

Related Characters: Dr. Robert Kerans

Related Themes: 

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Explanation and Analysis

Kerans has just left a note in an apartment building before heading south. This final sentence places Kerans once again in the role of Adam searching for paradise in the new, horrific, dangerous Eden that is the world. Although Ballard makes it very clear that Kerans certainly will not survive this journey south, by situating his death in terms of life and rebirth (as represented by Adam and paradise), it suggests that this is not a bad thing, per se. Instead, it's just part of the natural course of life on earth.

Ballard's use of "sun" here can be read as a homophone; it can be read as Adam searching for the "reborn son." This turns the sun into a Christ-like figure and the savior of humans on earth, which again situates Kerans's death as being part of a sacrifice for the one thing that's going to save humanity. Although humans are certainly not going to survive much longer in this rapidly changing world, considering their demise in these terms reframes the end of humanity into something good (at least in Kerans's eyes) because it involves submitting to nature and its will. Ballard suggests that for those who are able to relinquish the human desire to control or subjugate nature, there is some type of salvation even if it means death.



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.

1. ON THE BEACH AT THE RITZ

The novel begins by stating that soon, it will be too hot. Dr. Kerans stands on the balcony of the Ritz hotel and watches the sun (which is now an ellipse in the sky) rise over the giant trees that grow on the roofs of department stores across the lagoon. Kerans starts to sweat in the heat. He usually wakes at 5:00am to do several hours of work before the heat becomes intolerable. This morning, however, he dawdled in his air-conditioned hotel suite and busied himself with small tasks until now, when Colonel Riggs normally passes the hotel in his patrol boat. Riggs is often ready to chat and drink for an hour, but today he's late.

Kerans wonders if he should try to contact Riggs, but remembers that his radio is buried under a stack of books and has a dead battery. The narrator notes that Riggs is aware that Kerans is trying to sever links with the military base by refusing to use the radio, and that Riggs accepts and tolerates this.

On the balcony, Kerans watches a thermal storm whip across the lagoon. When it passes, Kerans tells himself that staying in was smart, as he can avoid the increasingly frequent storms. The narrator says that Kerans actually didn't go in to work today because he accepts that there's little to do: mapping the changing flora and fauna is pointless, as all the species have evolved precisely as hypothesized 20 years ago. Furthermore, the unit has reason to believe that nobody at Camp Byrd, a city in northern Greenland, reads their reports. To test this, Dr. Bodkin, Kerans's assistant, had sent a report with an "eyewitness description" of a giant lizard that looked shockingly like a Pelycosaur, an early reptile. Had anyone read the report, Camp Byrd would have sent ecologists to the base, but Bodkin received only a signal of acknowledgement.

Kerans wonders what European city he's even in. The narrator explains that at the end of the month, Colonel Riggs and the rest of the unit will finish surveying the city and tow their testing station north. Kerans can barely believe it. He's privately satisfied that he'll be the last guest at the Ritz. Kerans loves the lavish furnishings at the hotel and lives in a suite that was originally designed for a Milanese financier. The air-conditioning still works and the financier left in a rush, leaving behind handsome clothes and a fully stocked bar.

Dr. Kerans's observation of the lagoon and the surrounding landscape give the impression that the natural world is entirely overtaking the built, human one. However, humans aren't entirely done fighting. Kerans and the rest of his platoon have developed techniques for surviving in a hostile environment. For instance, Kerans has air conditioning strong enough to keep up with the intense temperatures outside.



At this point, Kerans is caught between wanting to care for and engage with others at the base and wanting to be isolated. Notably, his attempts to isolate himself are generally passive attempts (like letting his radio die) rather than active ones; he's not trying very hard—yet.



This passage establishes that, in the apocalyptic world of the novel, humans like Kerans are on the verge of giving up completely on the enterprise of human civilization: Kerans has stopped working because he doesn't believe there's any point. Nature has already won. The fact that his joke report about the Pelycosaur went undetected confirms, in his mind, that nobody else truly believes that the scientific work he is doing is worthwhile, either—perhaps because others have also ceased to believe in a future for mankind on earth. Nevertheless, the people around Kerans continue to insist, throughout the novel, on keeping up pretenses and going through the motions—even if they're pointless.



When Kerans wonders where he is, it shows again that he's disconnecting. In this case, he's disconnecting specifically from the past by not bothering to use what's at this point a very old name (i.e., London). However, this contrasts with Kerans's love of the Ritz hotel, something that's old and importantly, named. For Kerans, the recent past is something to visit, enjoy, and then leave, not something to remember or hold onto.



A giant mosquito darts across Kerans's field of vision, heralding the coming heat of the day. Kerans finds the early morning light beautiful. He likes the juxtaposition of the Triassic-era vegetation with the remaining buildings of the 20th century breaking the water. Kerans hears a diesel engine in the distance and reluctantly goes inside to shave. Chemicals in the water have bleached Kerans's beard snowy white, though he's only 40. He's tan with leathery, sunken skin as a result of the new strains of malaria. As he shaves, Kerans thinks that he's more relaxed and detached than he's ever been.

Kerans selects a silk shirt and pressed slacks from the financier's wardrobe and seals his room behind him. He reaches the landing dock in time to meet Colonel Riggs's cutter (a type of boat). Riggs greets Kerans and asks him to take the day off from the testing station to help him with a job. Kerans says that he's already taken the day off. Riggs technically supervises Kerans and Dr. Bodkin, but after working together for three years, Riggs lets the scientists do their work as they please.

Riggs regularly calls on Kerans to help evacuate the last people who inhabit Europe's drowned cities. Kerans is also a medical doctor, and his skills are often required in these evacuations. Kerans finds Riggs to be intelligent, sympathetic, and funny, though he has never told Riggs about the joke Pelycosaur. As Sergeant Macready ties up the cutter, Kerans smells the stench from the lagoon and thinks that it's little more than a swamp from this vantage point. Kerans invites Riggs to his room for a drink.

When the men reach Kerans's room, Riggs asks if there are any vacancies at the Ritz. Kerans deadpans that Riggs should check with the Hilton. The narrator explains that although Kerans finds Riggs pleasant, he tries to see little of him. In general, Kerans tries to not speak to anyone, and most of the other members of the unit follow the same protocol. Riggs is the only one who seems sociable. Kerans thinks that the withdrawal and isolation in the crew reminds him of how animals behave when they're about to go through a major metamorphosis. Kerans wonders how he's changing. He believes his isolation means that he's instinctively preparing himself for a new environment.

The changes the world is experiencing are also taking a toll on Kerans—in the form of his bleached hair, malaria, and the sunburn which will make him more susceptible to skin cancer. Nevertheless, he seems to have grown fond of his surroundings, even taking pleasure in the sight of a city overgrown with mutant vegetation.



Again, the luxury of the Ritz makes it a kind of playhouse for Kerans. He can play at being a part of the past without actually having to care about preserving it. This attitude about the past will in many ways free Kerans later in the book to look forward to the future, even if at this point he gives little indication that he cares much about the future.



The natural landscape is far more appealing when viewed from a luxurious, air-conditioned interior, which suggests that this eye-level view of the lagoon is probably a more accurate one. The hotel suite masks the lagoon's unsavory qualities and makes it easier to ignore that the world is a hostile, dangerous place for people.



Going forward, it's important to keep in mind how friendly and engaged Riggs is in comparison to everyone else. For now, he doesn't seem nearly as caught up in his own thoughts as Kerans is, and instead is more engaged with the real, tangible world outside. When Kerans thinks of his own isolation as being a way of preparing himself for a metamorphosis, it suggests in turn that the highly engaged and attentive Riggs may not adapt to the new environment.



As Kerans gives Riggs a drink, Riggs asks Kerans if he ever listens to his radio. Kerans insists that there's no point, since they already know what's going to happen for the next three million years. Riggs says that's not true, and says that it came through that in three days, the unit is leaving for Camp Byrd permanently. Riggs continues that Russian and American units are also being recalled, and temperatures at the equator are nearly 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Noticing Kerans's expression, Riggs asks Kerans if he's not glad to leave, and asks if Kerans secretly wants to stay behind. Kerans refills his glass and thinks that he's been surviving here by rejecting normal systems of time.

Kerans collects himself and says that he simply didn't think they'd be leaving so soon, and he prefers the finery of the Ritz to Camp Byrd. Kerans realizes what Riggs needs help with. Riggs explains that "she" (Beatrice) is refusing to leave and doesn't realize that once this unit leaves, there won't be anyone else to save her. Kerans smiles and agrees that Beatrice can be difficult. He says that she lives on many levels and will behave like she's insane until the levels synchronize.

Kerans and Riggs head downstairs and board the cutter. Riggs mutters that the work they've been doing is absurd, and that much of Europe is a "confounded zoo." He continues that Beatrice will be truly insane if she stays, and asks Kerans how he's sleeping these days. Kerans is perplexed. He says he sleeps soundly, and Riggs turns his attention to Macready.

2. THE COMING OF THE IGUANAS

A screeching bat, confused by the webs of giant wolf spiders, flies at the cutter. As it passes a building, a giant iguana plucks it out of the air before shrinking back into the window. Giant iguanas perch in all the windows along the lagoon. The narrator says that the lagoons would've been beautiful if it weren't for the iguanas. Kerans thinks that the iguanas rekindle archaic memories of the Paleocene period, when mammals first became supreme.

The cutter moves through the central lagoon. Only the commercial and financial areas of the city survived the floods, while the residential areas were completely wiped out. Giant forests grow on massive silt flats, and the only way to navigate the city is through the water. Kerans remembers his northward journey through the cities of Europe as they were taken over by vegetation. The military base is in the third lagoon of the city, and Kerans watches the cliff-like buildings as the cutter moves through the water.

Kerans's comment that he already knows what's going to happen is an early suggestion that he views time as something cyclical: the earth will do again what it did during the Triassic period, and he knows what will happen because it's happened before. Riggs, however, disrupts Kerans's assumption that everything will continue as predicted when he announces the unit is being moved north. He seems to already suspect that Kerans is detaching himself from the enterprise of human civilization.



Beatrice seems to be clinging to her past life in London, willfully blind to the fact that it's not going to exist much longer. Beatrice is characterized throughout the novel as being somewhat out of touch with reality, but Kerans's claim that she's essentially insane is also consistent with a more general attitude toward women at the time Ballard was writing—as Riggs and Kerans speak about Beatrice as though she's hysterical.



Even Riggs accepts that planning for the future in these drowned cities specifically is a fool's errand, which gives Kerans's assessment (that the cities are zoos) more weight. At least in the south, nature is undoubtedly winning this war.



Again, Kerans wants to see the lagoons as beautiful (and he can, from the Ritz) but the reality of the situation keeps him from maintaining his rosy view. He also places the idea of past and future in a cycle again, which suggests that the iguanas of 2145 are part of a return to a point in time millions of years ago.



Here, the buildings are described as being almost like landmasses rather than structures built by humans. This adds to the sense that the natural world is taking over and pushing out the manmade world. Kerans also notes that it's the vegetation as much as the water that's doing most of the taking over. The earth is undergoing a process of rebirth that may or may not include a future for humans.



Kerans is entirely uninterested in the contents or the history of the cities, while Dr. Bodkin, who is 65, actually remembers living in some of the cities. He spends his spare time rowing around the city, searching for remembered places. Kerans grew up in Camp Byrd, north of the Arctic Circle. He came south for the first time nearly ten years ago when he joined the ecological surveys. Men like Bodkin are the only ones who remember living in the cities, though even when they were children, the cities were flooding rapidly.

Seventy years earlier, solar storms began to erode the earth's atmosphere, leaving the earth unprotected from solar radiation. Temperatures rose by a few degrees each year and people began moving north to escape the heat and radiation. "Freak botanical" forms were observed within the first 20 years, brought about by the radiation. Plants and lizards thrived. The polar ice caps melted, as did glaciers. As they melted and the rivers expanded, the rivers carried away the topsoil and completely altered the landscape. The American Midwest is now a gulf that opens into the Hudson Bay, while Europe is a system of lagoons. Now, people only inhabit the Arctic and Antarctic circles, where temperatures are around 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The radiation also affected fertility among mammals, such that only one in ten human couples are able to conceive. Kerans notes that at some point in the future, there will be a new Adam and Eve alone on Earth. He smiles to himself at this thought.

Kerans notices Dr. Bodkin throwing berries to small monkeys from the testing station, while iguanas watch impatiently from 50 feet away. Macready steers the cutter towards an apartment block. Riggs and Kerans take the elevator, which still works, to the roof. Apartments surround a rooftop pool on three sides, while the open side looks onto the lagoon. Beatrice lies on a deck chair by the pool flipping through a magazine, dressed in a black bikini with big sunglasses. Kerans thinks she looks sullen and annoyed.

Riggs pauses to admire Beatrice from the rail until she notices him and reminds him she's "not a strip show." Riggs and Kerans walk down to the pool and sit next to her. Riggs reminds Beatrice that he has a responsibility to her. Beatrice curses, turns up her radio, and asks Kerans why he's here. He replies that he missed her, but adds that Riggs has made it very clear that they all need to leave in three days, and that they can't stay behind.

While Kerans is relatively unattached to the manmade environment and the past it represents, for Bodkin the recent past is something alive, important, and worth hanging onto. Here, Bodkin's nostalgia gives him something to do in his spare time, while in contrast, Kerans doesn't have any such memories of life in cities to preoccupy or ground him.



In this description of the last seventy years, radiation from the sun is the single most important factor: it's what's negatively affecting the human birthrate, and it's also what's giving the strange plants and the giant animals their advantage in this new, tropical world. The sun is therefore portrayed as a symbol of power as it ravages the earth. Kerans continues to take a grim view of the future, which shows that he doesn't have much faith in the ability of humans or science to find a way out of this dire situation. This Adam and Eve, it's suggested, won't be there to populate the earth—rather, they'll be the last people alive in humanity's twilight.



For a contemporary audience, Beatrice in her bathing suit in this particular environment is especially ironic: Ballard just explained how dangerous the sun is now, but here Beatrice is willingly exposing her bare skin to it. In many ways this suggests that she has a fatalist view of the future like Kerans does. Rather than resisting, she has given into the sun and its destructive effect on the planet and humans.



Mobilizing for the near future is difficult when that future seems precarious anyway. However, Kerans's insistence that they cannot stay behind shows that, at this point, Kerans does still see a future for himself, and knows that that he can only hope to survive further north, in the Arctic Circle.



Beatrice asks if Kerans's use of "they" means that he might stay with her. Kerans brushes this off and says they must prepare to leave. Riggs reminds Beatrice of the rising temperatures and the shrieking iguanas, and says that she certainly won't be able to sleep once the unit is gone. Kerans wonders whether there was more to Riggs's inquiry about his sleep when he hears this. Beatrice insists she'll be fine, but Kerans angrily insists that Beatrice must leave. When Beatrice insists that it's their duty to stay and refuses to get Riggs a drink, Riggs leaves Kerans and Beatrice.

Kerans lies back on his chair, and Beatrice sits at his feet. Kerans apologizes for losing his temper and says that the order to leave took him by surprise. Beatrice asks Kerans if he's actually going to leave. Kerans pauses and says that he's trying to find a more valid reason for leaving. He wonders if the lagoons remind him of his "uterine childhood," but says that there's no hope against the rain and coming malaria.

Kerans asks Beatrice why Riggs asked her how she slept. She says that she's had several nightmares, but insists they're common and tells Kerans that he could stay with her if he decided to stay. Kerans reminds Beatrice that although she's tempting, she's also the only woman here. Beatrice asks if Riggs's urgency is justified, and Kerans insists that it is.

Near noon, both Kerans and Beatrice go inside. Beatrice lounges on a sofa and Kerans admires a painting of dancing, naked, skeleton-like women by the surrealist artist Delvaux. He turns to a painting by Max Ernst of a self-devouring jungle. Kerans feels like he remembers something about the painting. He asks Beatrice for her attention and tells her that if they stay, they're staying for good.

3. TOWARDS A NEW PSYCHOLOGY

Kerans berths his catamaran (a type of boat) alongside the base and lets himself in. He waves at Beatrice before he closes the door, but she turns away. Macready steps out from the guard's cubicle and asks about Beatrice, and Kerans says that he thinks Beatrice will come with them. Macready doesn't seem to believe this. The narrator says that Kerans had decided to act as though he's going to leave, even if he ends up staying. He needs to spend the next few days stealing equipment and knows that acting distraught will attract attention.

Ballard is creating suspense here as to what could possibly be going on with Beatrice's sleep. This suggests that it's not just the outside environment that's becoming hostile—people's own minds have begun giving them grief. The relationship between Kerans and Beatrice is suggestive of an Adam-Eve relationship within the environment of the Eden that is London.



Again, Kerans sees that the future is undeniably bleak and hoping to survive is vain. Despite this though, part of him does want to stay, specifically to reconnect with his "uterine childhood." This phrasing shows that he looks at the world and himself right now as being in a stage of development within the womb of the world, rather than in a process of death or decline.



Although Kerans himself doesn't yet experience these nightmares or know what they are, Riggs seems to be concerned about them, and possibly even sees a link between the nightmares and the characters' desire to stay behind in London.



By 2145, these paintings would be about 200 years old: they're relics from a truly distant cultural past. Kerans's possible memory of the jungle suggests that artwork has the power to trigger latent memories, while the violence of the painted jungle mirrors the violence of the actual jungle outside Beatrice's windows.



Once again, Kerans's unwillingness to commit and make an active decision mirrors the novel's portrayal of humans as powerless in the grand scheme of the world. However, accepting that he has to steal supplies and make some preparations is evidence that there's some semblance of a concrete plan beginning to take shape, or at least that Kerans accepts that he needs to make one if he wishes to survive.



Macready tells Kerans that Dr. Bodkin needs his help with Lieutenant Hardman. Kerans thinks he needs to escape Macready, so he asks him about the plan to put up more mosquito netting. Macready has a "Presbyterian conscience" that makes him highly susceptible to guilt trips, and he assures Kerans that he'll get started on the project. Kerans leaves him and walks through the base to the armory. He thinks of his Colt .45 (a type of gun) in his drawer at the Ritz, which he has never fired. He scans the weapons, all locked to the walls, and the cartons of explosive gas. Kerans gets down to inspect the gas further and picks up a **broken compass**, which points south.

Kerans leaves the armory with the **compass**. A sudden thought enters his mind of blowing up the base and testing station, and he steadies himself. He heads for the sick bay, where he finds Dr. Bodkin and Lieutenant Hardman in a private room. Hardman is the senior helicopter pilot and serves as Riggs's deputy. He's an amateur naturalist and keeps notes of the changing plants and animals, organized by his own taxonomical system that Kerans finds questionable. Hardman's demeanor has kept the relationships among those at the base loose and fragmentary, which Kerans appreciates. Recently, Hardman began complaining of insomnia, and then retired from flying duty with malaria. As Hardman grew increasingly ill and solitary, Kerans thought little of it and left him alone, though Dr. Bodkin viewed things more seriously.

Kerans enters the private room. Not only is the air conditioning off, but Bodkin has a heater running. Hardman has on headphones, and the light from the heater makes it look like Hardman has a halo. Kerans can hear a slow drumming coming from the headphones. Bodkin makes a few notes, switches off the record player, and unplugs the heater. Hardman tells Bodkin that what they're doing is a waste of time, as he can't make any sense of the records. Bodkin says that the records are an "aural Rorschach," and finally addresses Kerans. He turns back to Hardman, motions to a contraption that looks like two connected alarm clocks, and tells Hardman how to keep the clocks set and running to keep the dreams at bay. Hardman says that it sometimes seems as though he has the dreams continuously, even during the day.

Kerans realizes that Hardman still looks emotionally well despite his illness. Bodkin says that Hardman might be right, and that there are various views on what consciousness and "being awake" actually mean. Kerans expresses agreement with Bodkin and says that Hardman will surely improve once they leave the lagoons in three days. Hardman looks surprised, but turns back to his books. Kerans is angry to realize that he tipped off Hardman deliberately, and thinks he's losing control over his own motives.

Because the novel relies so heavily on psychological concepts, it's important to note that everything Kerans does or thinks is reflective of an instinct or thought that Kerans himself may not be conscious of. Here, taking the broken compass (something objectively useless for navigation by normal standards) foreshadows Kerans's eventual southward journey, and symbolizes a psychological attraction to the idea of south and the sun more generally.



Kerans's disturbing thought about blowing up the base is proof that latent thoughts and drives are coming to the forefront of his mind. Ballard's introduction of another character with issues relating to their sleep provides further evidence that whatever dreams Beatrice is experiencing aren't unique to her. Hardman's unique taxonomical system shows a character using new methods to make sense of the new environment. This constitutes a departure from science as Kerans knows it, while Kerans continues to observe the world around him using tried and true scientific methods.



The halo created by the heat momentarily turns Hardman into a religious figure, which suggests that it's possible that he holds some key or piece of information that will help guide other characters on a similar "spiritual" journey. Finally, Ballard explains more about the dreams: the bedridden Hardman experiences them all day. This suggests that the dreams change how people experience consciousness, and this change is undeniably exhausting and difficult for those who undergo it.



Bodkin confirms that the dreams alter consciousness, but sees these changes as just another of the many mysteries of consciousness and psychology. This shows Bodkin using old systems to describe and make sense of new phenomena. Again, Kerans is very much aware that his thoughts are taking on a life and a will of their own—his own consciousness is changing too.



Kerans and Dr. Bodkin take Kerans's catamaran to the testing station. The men enter their laboratory, the walls of which are covered in notes from their three years here. The notes from the beginning are dense, while the most recent ones are sparse and incomplete. They sit at their desks, and Kerans traces the shape of a **compass** on the surface of the desk while he waits for Bodkin to explain what he was doing with Hardman.

Kerans apologizes for telling Hardman that they're leaving, but suggests that the knowledge might jolt him out of his lethargy. Bodkin says that the prospect of leaving seems to have done nothing for Kerans, which Kerans agrees with. He asks Bodkin what he was doing with Hardman. Bodkin looks critically at Kerans, and Kerans realizes that he's as much a research subject to Bodkin as a colleague.

Bodkin asks Kerans to summarize their findings of the last three years. Kerans says that with the rising temperatures and the radiation, flora and fauna are becoming much as they were during the Triassic period. Bodkin praises this summary and continues that although they've carefully documented the "backwards journey" of plants and animals, they've neglected to study man. Kerans asks jokingly if humans will turn into pre-humans, and Bodkin turns to face a caged marmoset. He says that biological processes aren't completely reversible: humans might return to the jungle, but they'll never become apes again.

Bodkin continues and says that many on the unit have felt the sense that they actually remember the swamps and lagoons. He insists that nothing endures in the unconscious mind longer than fear, and that's the reason why humans irrationally fear spiders and snakes: humans subconsciously remember when spiders, snakes, and reptiles were the more dominant species, and therefore frequently posed serious lethal threats to humans.

By tracing the compass, Kerans shows that he's thinking, at least subconsciously, about north versus south (remember the compass he stole points south), suggesting a deep preoccupation with the transformation the globe is undergoing (which is more extreme to the south).



Bodkin makes an important point: the promise of change in the near future hasn't really changed how Kerans, or Beatrice for that matter, are thinking about the future. They're both thinking that they won't participate in that promised future because they don't see the point, or no longer believe in it.



Bodkin makes an interesting point here, given the overarching message of the book as a whole. He points out that, despite all the documentation they've been doing, they've largely ignored the changes that humans might be experiencing—which is ironic considering that the science he and Kerans have been conducting is focused on securing a future for humans on earth.



Bodkin's idea ties evolutionarily developed mechanisms to memory. He suggests that animals (humans included) don't just fear something because a parent taught them to or because they learned the fear themselves—rather, our deepest fears are evolutionarily engrained memories.



Kerans asks if the increased heat and radiation are triggering these fear responses in the human mind, but Bodkin says that these memories aren't of the mind. He posits that every person contains the memories of the entire evolution of the world in their spines and central nervous system. By traveling down the spine, one can go back into the "archaeo-psychic past" to find dormant thoughts and drives. Dr. Bodkin says that he's calling this theory "neuronics" and believes that as they move back through the archaeo-psychic past, people will recognize the land around them. Further, Bodkin says that the memories aren't harmless: if allowed to take control of a person, that person will be swept backwards in time. He says that with Hardman, the experiments with the heat seem to have made him more accepting of the dreams and less disturbed by them. He says the alarm clocks will keep Hardman awake as long as possible.

Kerans gets up to look out the window and watches Macready and Riggs talk on the gangway of the base while he considers Dr. Bodkin's theory. He thinks it's a valid theory, and thinks that that the UN's policy of keeping life going like before within the Arctic and Antarctic circles is silly given the rising temperatures and water. Kerans thinks it's probably more important to map the mind than the outer world. He begins to suggest that Bodkin draft a report for Camp Byrd, but he finds that Bodkin is gone.

Kerans sits at his desk and pulls out the **compass**. He wonders why he took it, as he knows he'll be found out and humiliated later. As he looks at it in his hands, he becomes entranced by the idea of "south."

4. THE CAUSEWAYS OF THE SUN

The next day, Lieutenant Hardman disappears. Kerans wakes early, spends an hour gazing at the lagoon, and then dresses in his drill uniform to give the appearance that he's going to leave with Riggs. He realizes he's still undecided on this matter, but he hasn't made any real plans or taken any precautions or preparations to stay. However, Kerans does already have a month's worth of canned food stored at the Ritz, and Beatrice has three months' worth of frozen delicacies at her apartment. The fuel situation is somewhat more serious, as there's only enough fuel to last a month.

Bodkin is creating a new structure and set of guidelines to make sense of the dream phenomena: the old systems of thinking about dreaming aren't useful to understand the dreams. The language that Bodkin uses to talk about what they're supposed to do with these memories suggests that although he is trying to keep Hardman awake to stave off the dreams, there's really no way to make them stop. This shows that it's impossible for things to continue as they have in the past. The dreams are inevitable and must be accepted. They have immense power and, as Bodkin just noted, will eventually cause man to "return to the jungle"—though not as he once was.



Kerans's personal questions about his own mind make this a particularly intriguing theory for him. This foreshadows how the story's main characters will gradually shift their attentions from the outside world to the inner world of their own psychology.



The earth to the south of London is, notably, an inhospitable environment. This creates the sense that accepting neuronics as a valid theory means accepting the end of a human race on earth.



By including the reader in a more big-picture view of what's going to happen, Ballard continues to create the sense that the future is foretold and that the characters are moving towards something that's already determined, even if it's not known to them. That Kerans spends so much time staring at the lagoon shows again that he takes a reverent view of nature as something to admire, not to fight against.



Despite all this, Kerans isn't anxious. He leaves his thermostat at the usual 80 degrees and thinks for a moment that this means he'll go with Riggs, but as he navigates his catamaran towards the base, he realizes that he's indifferent because he has decided to stay behind. He understands that by staying he's giving in to Bodkin's theory of neuronics, and food and clothing will matter little as he goes back in neuronics time.

When he reaches the third lagoon, Kerans stands and watches Macready tow the testing station towards the base. Rather than join the crew, he paddles to Beatrice's apartment. He can see her moving inside through the blinds, and she finally comes outside, looking tired and withdrawn. Beatrice makes herself a drink and goes back inside. When she doesn't return, Kerans goes inside to find her. The air inside is hot and stuffy, and he realizes this is probably the reason for her bad mood.

Kerans finds Beatrice lounging in bed. He turns down the thermostat and tries to take her whiskey from her. She informs him that the cooling system is broken, and after her dreams last night, she doesn't want to be lectured about her drinking habits. Kerans tells Beatrice to shower and asks her about the nightmares. She mumbles something about "jungle dreams," and tells Kerans that he'll soon be dreaming them too. Kerans again tells her to pour her drink out and goes to fix the generator.

When Kerans returns, Beatrice seems fully recovered and is painting her nails. He tells her that the timing device on the generator's engine was running backwards, but is interrupted by loud noises coming from the base below. Kerans grumbles that Riggs is probably going to leave today in an attempt to catch them off guard, but when he and Beatrice look over the railing, he sees the helicopter circling and a party, including Dr. Bodkin, preparing to get into three boats. When they notice Kerans, Riggs picks up a megaphone and calls for him across the lagoon. Kerans can't make out anything but his name, but the helicopter pilot signals in Morse code to Kerans. Kerans translates for Beatrice that they're picking him up on her roof, and that Lieutenant Hardman has disappeared.

Now that the decision is made in Kerans's mind, he can go forward with taking active steps to prepare. Further, deciding to stay is a decision to embrace a future that closely resembles the ancient past. Following the theory of neuronics, history isn't just a cycle: the past, the present, and the future all happen simultaneously through the experience of the dreams.



Beatrice's crabby mood shows that the heat in this new environment is the most consistently dangerous element. It doesn't just cause cancer via direct sun exposure, it causes people to withdraw and feel irritable. This suggests that even if Kerans is going to accept his fate, figuring out how to deal with the high temperatures will be very important to maintaining his sanity.



Beatrice talks as though she believes the dreams themselves are inevitable in the new environment—though they seem to be destroying her rather than preparing her for a new life. However, calling the dreams "jungle dreams" reinforces what Bodkin said about them: Beatrice is dream-remembering the jungles of the Triassic period.



The timing device mirrors Kerans's broken compass: it's doing the exact opposite of what it's supposed to do. The timing device in particular ties back to the theory of neuronics, as the device appears to also be going backwards in time. Here, again, heat is associated with temporal regression. Notably, the cooler temperatures return Beatrice to her normal self. This recalls Bodkin's statement about biological processes being somewhat reversible. Though she still descends through time at night (via the dreams), she can be brought back to the present during the day if the temperatures are cool enough.



As the helicopter travels over the lagoons, Kerans, Riggs, and Macready scan the water and vegetation below for signs of Hardman. Kerans realizes that they'll be hard-pressed to find Hardman, as the waterways are hard to see from the helicopter. The narrator explains that Hardman's disappearance was discovered at 8:00am, but Riggs believes he left the night before. Riggs thinks that Hardman likely lashed fuel drums together, since none of the small boats are missing. Though crude, such a craft could get him ten miles away from the base by daybreak.

Riggs finally declares that searching by air is useless. The helicopter lands on top of a cinema. Looking out on the water, Kerans is reminded of how people described Egypt during times of flood. Riggs opens a map and the helicopter pilot, Sergeant Daley, suggests that they conduct searches over specific small areas. Riggs asks Kerans what he thinks, and Kerans says he has no clue as to Hardman's motives. He trails off, lost in thought, as Riggs, Daley, and Macready discuss routes. He waits for Daley to finish saying that Hardman would've gone north before saying that Hardman would've gone south. When Daley says that Hardman would cook going south, Kerans only says that there is no other direction.

The group hesitates for a moment before getting back in the helicopter and heading south. After searching the southern lagoons for 20 minutes, Riggs concedes that if Hardman wants to evade them, he knows how. Kerans's eye is drawn to a half-submerged apartment building and what he realizes are footprints in the silt leading to it from the water. He gets Riggs's attention and points to the footprints.

On the ground, Riggs and Macready find Hardman's makeshift raft, made with two old tanks and a bed from the sick bay. Riggs praises Kerans for his insight and assures him that Hardman will be glad to see them, but Kerans reminds Riggs that they have to catch him first. Riggs shouts orders at two men to keep an eye on the water and makes a plan for the rest to search the building. Everyone is armed, which Kerans asks about. Riggs explains it's to ward off alligators, and that Hardman has a gun with him too. Riggs yells for Hardman in the megaphone. He yells that Kerans is here, and Kerans's name echoes off of two clock towers several hundred yards away. The sound and the still clock faces are suddenly terrifying for Kerans.

Although Hardman's escape presents a man versus man conflict, as Kerans, Riggs, and Macready search for him, they end up fighting the new environment that seems intent on keeping things hidden. From Hardman's perspective then, the environment is actually a help and not an obstacle, which suggests that, for those who give over to the dreams, the changing environment is not something to resist, but to embrace.



Kerans understands now that embracing nature and thinking of it as an ally, as Hardman is doing, means accepting that going north to civilization is unacceptable. The fact that Riggs, Daley, and Macready don't understand this line of reasoning shows that they're still very much thinking of the world as human-centric. They still hope for a civilized future for themselves, so willingly choosing death is inconceivable to them.



That Hardman is discovered by his footprints entering a man-made structure continues to develop the opposing relationship between the built world and the natural world. Although the built world is providing shelter, it's not shielding Hardman like the natural world would. The built world, it seems, is no longer his ally.



Kerans is aware that he currently occupies a liminal space between past and future, and between old systems and new systems of thought. Because of this, he has the insight into Hardman's motives, whereabouts, and desires. However, by using this knowledge to assist Riggs in this attempt to recapture Hardman, he denies Hardman the ability to embrace the future represented in his dreams. Kerans's fear shows that he's afraid of being in this timeless state of limbo more than anything, and suggests that he'll have to fully commit soon.



Riggs, Macready, and Kerans begin to search the building from the lower floors up. With only two floors to go, Riggs's patience is thin. They stand for a minute and try to catch their breath in the 120-degree heat. Kerans moves off down the hallway to find someplace to sit and he walks into the first apartment. He gazes at the clock faces across the water and notices that one of them is set to 11:35, which is almost the right time. Kerans wonders if the clock is working, and thinks that Riggs sometimes sets clocks before they abandon cities. He watches the clock and sees that it's not actually moving, but wonders if it's just an exceptionally slow clock. Kerans notices a cemetery near the clock tower and remembers a horrific cemetery they found in another city.

Kerans turns away from the window and notices a tall man with a black beard standing in the doorway behind him. The two men regard each other for a minute. The bearded man is wearing a medical orderly's jacket and an intense expression on his face. Kerans reaches a hand out to him and says "Hardman." Suddenly, the man (Hardman) throws himself at Kerans, just misses colliding with him, and swings over the balcony railing. Riggs enters the apartment moments later and curses. Riggs, Macready, and Kerans run downstairs.

Riggs pauses at water level and incredulously notes that Hardman is trying to drag his raft back into the water. He's failing miserably in the wet silt. Riggs, Macready, Kerans, and two soldiers surround Hardman in the silt as Hardman continues to wrestle with his raft. Kerans approaches Hardman with Wilson, who used to be Hardman's orderly, when suddenly the helicopter engine roars to life.

Hardman finally seems aware of the group surrounding him. Suddenly, Hardman fires his gun and shoots Wilson in the elbow. Hardman runs for the jungle, pursued by Macready, while Riggs and Kerans help Wilson. When Wilson is stabilized, Kerans runs after Hardman. He follows the soldiers into a small square that's still above water level, and Hardman runs into an open courthouse. Kerans pursues him slowly.

The stopped clocks are symbolic of the fact that human time no longer has meaning in this new world. Keeping time using hours and minutes in a forward direction is silly and useless if people are descending millions of years backwards through their memories. This then becomes another example of an old system that has no place in this new world. Rather, the clock towers act as a monument of sorts to how human life used to function—and a reminder that the old world is lost.



Hardman's reaction here confirms for Kerans that Hardman certainly has no intention of returning to Camp Byrd. This reaction is far too out of character for the dutiful Hardman that Kerans once knew, which shows that the new thought patterns and latent biological urges are turning Hardman into a wholly unrecognizable person. He has experienced his own type of rebirth through this process.



Again, Hardman's desperation to continue his odyssey south suggests that returning to human-centric life at the military base is impossible for him given his new thought patterns. Approaching with Wilson is perhaps an attempt to remind Hardman of old connections and relationships.



Shooting Wilson is a loud and clear declaration that Hardman in no way intends to return to his recent past. It's possible too that Hardman has completely lost hold of his recent memories and doesn't even remember who Wilson is, which would be a further testament to the power of the dreams and the biological memories.



The helicopter appears overhead and the noise and the heat beat at Kerans's brain. The helicopter begins to lose altitude, spins, and the tail rotor hits the courthouse. Daley looks stunned as the helicopter lands on the cobbles. The group settles in the shade, waiting for the high sun to fade. Ten minutes later, Kerans looks out at the square to see Hardman standing in the middle. Macready and Riggs seem like they're asleep and don't notice. Hardman quietly leaves the square and heads for the silt banks, and Kerans finally calls for Riggs's attention. When Macready looks ready to pursue him, Riggs says to let him go. Kerans thinks that Hardman looks like he's walking directly into the sun.

The group sits for two hours on the museum steps in the square. Kerans tries to sleep but can't. A group of iguanas lurks around the square and brays at the men. Their brays fill Kerans with a deep-seated fear that persists even after he's safe at the base. At the base, Kerans finds Dr. Bodkin and briefly mentions the sounds of the iguanas. Bodkin says that Kerans might hear them again, but says nothing about Hardman. Kerans spends the night in the testing station, thinking about Hardman's journey south.

5. DESCENT INTO DEEP TIME

That night, Kerans dreams that he walks to the deck of the testing station. The sun is giant and pulsing. The water is filled with writhing snakes and eels. As the sun gets closer and drums loudly, vegetation suddenly whips back from limestone cliffs to reveal the heads of giant lizards. The lizards roar at the sun in syncopation with the rhythm of both the solar flares and Kerans's pulse. Kerans feels a magnetic pull to the reptiles and he steps into the lake, feeling the barriers between his body and the water dissolving.

When Kerans wakes, he has a splitting headache. He can still hear the beating sun, and he realizes it's beating in time with his heart. He's unable to shake the sound, and he wonders what exactly is going on in his mind. He pulls himself together when he remembers that Beatrice has these dreams too, and realizes how courageous she is. He also realizes that he's been minimizing mentions of other people's dreams as though he knew that he'd soon dream them too.

In Daley's hands, the helicopter is just as dangerous and destructive as the natural world: Daley must grow into his new role as primary helicopter pilot in order to put humans and their tools back at the top of the food chain. The fact that Hardman seems much less bothered by the heat than Kerans and the rest of the crew suggests that the memories change how people experience heat. This opens up the possibility that the biological memories don't just change a person's mind—they might actually alter one's physiology.



Iguanas as they are today can grow quite large, but they certainly don't bray. The fact that they do after exposure to radiation confirms that the world's changes have indeed shifted the evolutionary path of animals—including, potentially, humans. Kerans's fear again recalls Bodkin's assertion that fear is rooted in instinct, suggesting that Kerans "remembers" when fearing reptiles was important for survival.



Although the lizards in the dream aren't iguanas specifically, they certainly recall the iguanas Kerans heard in the town square. The synchronization and merging imagery of the dream creates the sense that Kerans is truly becoming a part of the environment, which further discredits the idea that humans are separate from or opposed to nature.



Kerans gives the overwhelming sense that experiencing the dreams is something inevitable. Further, he suggests that it's something he accepted he would experience long ago, even if he didn't realize it. The passage shows that subconscious thought processes influence Kerans's actions consistently.



Bodkin is sipping coffee in the gallery when Kerans enters. He tells Kerans that he's "one of the dreamers now" and asks if the dream was a deep one. Kerans asks how many experience the dreams. Bodkin says that Riggs doesn't, but about half his men and Beatrice do. Bodkin continues that he's been having them for three months, and it's the same recurrent dream every night. He shares that Kerans held out a long time, which is testament to the "strength of his preconscious filters." Smiling, Bodkin says he never discussed the dreams with anyone but Hardman. He asks Kerans if he picked up on the relationship between the pulsing sun and his own pulse, and explains that the record he played for Hardman was a recording of his own pulse.

Kerans looks out the window. Sergeant Daley is standing on the deck and Kerans wonders if he just woke up from the dream too. Kerans can still hear the drumming sun. He begins to find the drumming soothing, but still thinks that the reptiles were horrifying. He thinks that the divisions between phantoms and reality are indistinguishable.

Kerans asks Bodkin for Hardman's alarm clock and mentions taking medication before bed. Bodkin firmly tells Kerans not to take anything, as it makes the dreams worse. He reminds Kerans that he was actually dreaming an ancient, organic memory. Bodkin continues that the releasing mechanisms in Kerans's body have been triggered, and that Kerans actually remembers the swamps and lagoons. He says that Kerans won't be scared after a few nights, and explains that the dreams are the reason why Camp Byrd has ordered them to move north. Kerans asks about the joke Pelycosaur, and Bodkin explains that nobody took their report seriously because their "Pelycosaur" wasn't the first to be reported.

Riggs enters the room and good-naturedly waves his baton at Kerans and Bodkin. He tells Kerans he looks glassy and then begins explaining his plans for their departure tomorrow. Kerans stops listening and thinks that Riggs doesn't understand since he doesn't have the dreams. Bodkin seems to be ignoring Riggs as well. When Riggs leaves, Kerans and Bodkin sit silently for a moment before Kerans shares that he might not be leaving. Bodkin pulls out cigarettes and asks Kerans if he knows what city they're in. When Kerans doesn't, Bodkin explains that they're in London, and that he (Bodkin) grew up here.

Again, the dreamscapes are intrinsically linked to the bodies of the dreamers, which suggests that a merger between the body and the environment will happen in the real (i.e., non-dream) world at some point in the future. Bodkin talks as though the dreams themselves are all the same between dreamers, though the dreams are private experiences that go unspoken as a general rule. This begins to call into question the role of interpersonal relationships in relation to the dreams, and sheds some light on Hardman's shot at Wilson because it suggests that Hardman's private experience was more important to him than his relationship to Wilson.



The repeated drumming of the sun is its own cycle, which echoes the idea that time itself is cyclical. Kerans's inability to distinguish between phantoms and reality suggests that he has begun to lose touch with reality, perhaps in a way that is similar to Hardman's loss of touch with reality.



Bodkin makes it very clear that there's no way around experiencing the dreams. The only way forward is to accept them, as any attempts to stop them will be futile. This adds extra weight to the idea that Camp Byrd is aware that the dreams are severely altering the minds of people in the south. In this way, the dreams are at once a group problem and a private experience. Those at Camp Byrd, however, seek to control the dreams by moving north, something that Bodkin seems to believe isn't going to work.



For Bodkin, his unwillingness to leave is complicated because he possesses memories of his early life in this particular city in addition to the biological memories that were actually experienced by others. For now, these two types of memories seem to work in tandem to keep Bodkin in London. This sets the novel up to question how these types of memory differ, particularly since Bodkin's actual memories don't seem to have the same kind of controlling power as the biological ones.



Bodkin continues that he rowed to the University quarter yesterday where his father used to teach. He mentions that he saw the **planetarium**, the shell-like dome of which is still underwater. Bodkin says the sight of it seemed to bring his childhood closer, and that this city is the only home he's ever known. Bodkin stops abruptly, but Kerans asks him to go on.

The "shell-like" planetarium dome creates the feeling that this part of town was sheltering and safe for Bodkin as a child. This reinforces the idea that the world right now is in an incubatory state: Bodkin, Kerans, and everyone else are in a process of rebirth or transformation.



6. THE DROWNED ARK

That night, Kerans and Bodkin silently move along the deck of the testing station. Kerans carefully frees the testing station, and he and Bodkin pole it through the water away from the base and into an inlet. When they have the base centered over a submerged cinema with a flat roof, Kerans goes to the bottom level of the station and opens the port into the water. Water begins to fill the base, and Kerans heads back upstairs to the laboratory. He releases the marmoset and climbs up to the top deck, where Bodkin is watching them sink. The station comes to rest on the cinema. Kerans and Bodkin sign a note and pin it to the door. They get in Kerans's catamaran and paddle away.

By sinking the station, Kerans and Bodkin make it impossible for Riggs and those at Camp Byrd to even try to use any of the scientific data they've collected. Essentially, they insist that Riggs accept their line of thinking that says that trying to understand the world according to old systems isn't worth doing. By putting the station on a submerged cinema, they put it on something that once could show images of an idealized world. Now that the cinema is underwater, the idealized world it once showed is underwater and unreachable.



The next morning, Kerans and Bodkin watch from Beatrice's apartment as the helicopter tries to land on the roof of the building. Earlier, Bodkin and Kerans piled kerosene drums on the roof to deter the helicopter from landing. Daley turns the helicopter so the open hatch faces the windows. Two soldiers hold Riggs as he yells into the megaphone, but Beatrice and Kerans can't hear him. When he's finished, the helicopter heads back to the base.

Now, Kerans and Bodkin are not only passively resisting but actively fighting Riggs and his men. Riggs's actions make it abundantly clear that he's not yet experiencing the dreams. He still believes that going north is the only reasonable action because he still believes in a future for humanity on earth.



Earlier that morning, Riggs had tried to refloat the testing station. He sent the cutter to Beatrice's apartment, only to find the elevator out of order, which culminated in his attempt to reach Kerans and Bodkin via helicopter. After trying to speak to them, Riggs and the base leave the city.

Kerans and Bodkin take advantage of the heat and of Riggs's dependency on creature comforts like elevators to deter him from reaching them. In doing so, they let go of their last chance to escape north with Riggs.



Beatrice expresses her relief that Riggs is gone, while Kerans realizes that he'd been dependent on Riggs's good humor. He realizes it's up to him to keep up the confidence in the remaining residents of the city. He and Beatrice go to find Bodkin in the lounge and continue making plans. They discuss how long the air conditioning and the food will last. Beatrice tells Kerans to shut up and stop acting like a military man. Kerans salutes her and turns to look at the painting by Ernst. He thinks that the scene in the painting, the landscape outside, and the dreams they all have are becoming very similar.

When Beatrice tells Kerans to stop acting like a military man, she's insisting that they move away from regimented, "civilized" systems of organization and instead allow the dreams and their neuronc journeys run their course. The Ernst painting represents the past, while the view out the window shows the present, and their dreams represent the future—though, in the swirl of the changing planet, the linearity of time itself is disrupted.



Kerans realizes that the unity of the group won't last. He understands that they're entering a new way of being, and they need to each live alone in order to descend through the "time jungles" of their dreams.

Kerans catches Beatrice's meaning: they must give up old systems of organization in order for the neuronc dreams to take them into the future.



7. CARNIVAL OF ALLIGATORS

Six weeks later, Kerans is abruptly awoken by loud sounds outside his window at the Ritz. He steps onto the balcony to see a white hydroplane speeding around the lagoon, disturbing the water and the spiders. It's piloted by a man dressed all in white who seems to be having a grand time. Kerans hears signal gunshots, and the man steers the plane into the next lagoon. Kerans is disconcerted by the appearance of the visitor in the lagoon, as he's spent the last six weeks mostly alone in the hotel. Temperatures at noon are now 130 degrees and don't subside until Kerans is ready to return to bed in the late afternoon.

After six weeks, Kerans's prediction is proving correct: it seems as though Kerans has spent much of the time alone. This is a result of the dreams and of the process of their neuronc journeys backwards through time, which are deeply private psychological experiences. The external environment is still changing and heating rapidly, which suggests that London will soon be inhospitable to human life.



Outside, the plant life is taking over the buildings now that Riggs and his crew aren't around to cut it back. Silt accumulates in the small waterways surrounding the lagoon, and Kerans spends his days following his dreams, all of which center around a lagoon. He wants to reach the end of his descent through time, but he knows that when he reaches the end, the real world will be unbearable. Bodkin and Beatrice seem similarly wrapped up in their own private dream worlds. Bodkin is entirely lost in his mind and spends his days paddling around looking for places he remembers from his childhood. Beatrice and Kerans, however, seem to "understand their symbolic roles" and aren't as estranged from each other.

The "symbolic roles" point back to Kerans's earlier comment about the last Adam and Eve on earth, roles that he's now mentally giving to himself and to Beatrice. In that situation, Bodkin is truly superfluous, which explains why he's been even more distant. However, Bodkin's neuronc journey is complicated by his memories of the more recent past. The memories are, notably, memories of Bodkin's major growth period in childhood, which ties in with the fact that he's in a similar transformational period right now.



Kerans sees more signal shells over the far lagoon where Beatrice's apartment is, and then more from further off. Kerans understands that the hydroplane is a scout vehicle, and there are likely more groups of invaders. He dresses, goes downstairs, and steers his catamaran into the water. When he reaches Beatrice's lagoon, the hydroplane is circling by an inlet. Kerans berths the catamaran and climbs onto a department store to watch. Kerans begins to notice a sound like low animal roar drawing nearer, as well as the sounds of engines. Suddenly, boats like the one that Riggs drove burst through a dam and into the lagoon. They're all manned entirely by black men.

These invaders seem organized: they're still organizing themselves to exist together in this new world, not isolating themselves to accept the changing world like Kerans and Beatrice are. This suggests that the invaders have no intention of giving in to their own neuronc odysseys and instead, are prepared to fight nature for their place in the world. Their use of motorized speedboats shows their dominance over the natural world.



Kerans notices that hundreds of massive alligators accompany the boats. They arrange themselves around the hydroplane, where the pilot gazes at the alligators. The pilot motions to his crew to anchor in the lagoon as the alligators swim in a clockwise spiral around the hydroplane. There are at least 2,000 alligators. Suddenly, the pilot shouts and starts the hydroplane, which moves off across the writhing alligator bodies to a creek that leads to the next lagoon. The alligators follow, though Kerans can see that some were killed by the hydroplane's quick departure.

Kerans rushes down the building's fire escape to the catamaran, but finds that the churning water has unmoored it. He watches as the alligators notice it and destroy it. A caiman notices Kerans in the water and heads towards him. Kerans runs back to the fire escape and narrowly escapes the caiman. He throws a brick at it and it returns to the group. Kerans spends the next half hour fighting iguanas as he crosses the 200 yards to Beatrice's apartment.

When Kerans finally steps out of the elevator, Beatrice embraces him and asks if he's seen the alligators. He tells her that one nearly ate him and goes to stand at the window. The hydroplane is circling in the central lagoon, and Kerans comments that the alligators must be their guards. Beatrice comes and stands nervously by Kerans. She has continued to tend to her appearance for the last six weeks, but this new development appears to shake her composure. Kerans comforts Beatrice, telling her that they have nothing to give these looters.

A big paddleboat enters the lagoon, loaded with gear and cargo. Kerans thinks that this is the group's "depot ship." He figures that this crew is likely pillaging the drowned cities for heavy machinery. Such looting is technically illegal, but the authorities are usually happy to pay for the things looters pillage. Beatrice points to Dr. Bodkin down below on the testing station, who is hailing one of the crewmen. Kerans suggests that if they show themselves, the invaders will leave soon. He sees the hydroplane returning to Beatrice's lagoon and suggests that the pilot might give them a lift.

The invaders aren't just fighting nature, they're actively taming it as evidenced by their following of alligators. For Kerans, this is especially disturbing as it shows that humans are capable of changing nature and of using it for their own means. Alligators as a symbol are powerful and exceptionally dangerous creatures, and controlling those animals in particular suggests that these people know something about nature that Kerans doesn't.



Alligators are part of the same zoological class as the iguanas; they're both lizards. Now that the lagoon is teeming with both alligators and iguanas, the lagoon is truly returned to the age of lizards and a semi-Triassic state.



The arrival of these intruders introduces the possibility of a conflict between men, not just between men and nature. However, Kerans's insistence that he and Beatrice have nothing to give is possibly false: as the story will show, Beatrice herself (because she is a beautiful woman) will prove highly desirable to the newcomer.



Again, human systems are breaking down even in the world government, as evidenced by the authorities purchasing looted items. Accepting these looters as possible friends shows that Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice returning to the present from their neuronomic journeys. They're accepting both a sense of community and a forced return to the present and its pressing issues.



8. THE MAN WITH THE WHITE SMILE

Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice sit with the hydroplane pilot, Strangeman, who has changed into a crisp white suit. He sits in a gold Renaissance throne and Kerans thinks he has a disturbing and menacing air to him, despite his show of kindness to them by giving them food. Strangeman presses his guests to tell him when they plan on leaving London, and is extremely perplexed when Kerans and Bodkin explain that they hope to stay on forever, and believe that they're "re-assimilating their own biological pasts."

Strangeman's mood seems to shift quickly between curiosity, irritation, and boredom. Suddenly, he turns to Dr. Bodkin and asks if he grew up in London and seeks to recapture memories, or if his only memories are "pre-uterine." This question alarms Kerans, but Bodkin absentmindedly waves a hand and declares that the recent past isn't interesting. Strangeman replies that he's fascinated with the immediate past, which he finds far more interesting than the Triassic era. Turning to Beatrice, Strangeman notes that she looks melancholic and tired. Beatrice insists that they're often tired, and that she doesn't like the alligators. Strangeman assures her that the alligators won't hurt them.

Kerans notices that Strangeman's face is very white: he's albino, and the fact that he's still so white is an anomaly, as Kerans's sunburn has made him nearly as dark as Strangeman's black crew. Strangeman introduces the Admiral, one of his crewmembers, to the group and insists that if they ever can't find him, they can speak with the Admiral.

Strangeman then invites them to see his treasure ship. As they approach the ship, Kerans thinks it was probably once a gambling establishment. Now, it's filled with crates and cartons and fragments of statuary. Strangeman leads them into an inner storeroom, which is filled with altarpieces, bronze statuary, small treasures, and other gold items. Strangeman points to several items and says they came from the Sistine Chapel, but Bodkin mutters to Kerans that the "treasures" are ugly, and don't even have a high gold content. He wonders what Strangeman is actually up to.

Even if Strangeman doesn't fully grasp the reasoning behind Kerans and Bodkin wanting to stay in London, he's certainly met others in the lagoons and is aware that the heat in particular affects people's mental health. The Renaissance throne is an ostentatious piece, and an indicator that Strangeman places value on displays of wealth and luxury objects.



Strangeman grasps that there's some conflict between Bodkin's biological memories and his lived memories. By insisting that the recent past isn't interesting, Bodkin shows that even if he does find value in his childhood memories, those ingrained, instinctual memories are far more important. They are the ones that will lead him on his neuronal journey, not the memories of London. Strangeman confirms that he values material goods; this again shows that he's invested in a future for mankind.



The sun and heat don't just trigger the biological memories—they're also homogenizing the population by darkening skin across the board. This turns Strangeman into an almost supernatural figure (because of his albinism) as he alone seems to have the power to resist the sun's rays.



Again, many of the pieces Strangeman collects, and particularly those from the Sistine Chapel, are from the Italian Renaissance, a time of prolific artistic production. Strangeman doesn't just value human accomplishments as a whole; he values items that symbolize and reference the golden age of humanity. In the greater scheme of the earth, however, these pieces are meaningless—hence Bodkin's suspicion.



As he watches Strangeman show Beatrice the treasures, Kerans thinks of the Delvaux painting of skeletons. Instantly, Kerans begins to dislike Strangeman. Strangeman turns and asks Kerans what he thinks of the treasures, and Kerans replies that they're like bones. Strangeman is incredulous, and the Admiral begins dancing and chanting about bones. Kerans turns to leave, and Strangeman pushes him out. Kerans, Beatrice, and Bodkin leave in a small boat five minutes later. The crew is still chanting and dancing, and Strangeman waves coolly at the retreating boat.

Now both of Beatrice's paintings have manifested in the real world. Kerans's dislike may have been triggered by the painting, but what he's already seen of Strangeman makes it very clear that Strangeman stands for a future that's in direct opposition to the one he himself hopes for. Strangeman then becomes the enemy, particularly since he's so upset about Kerans's bones comment.



9. THE POOL OF THANATOS

Over the next two weeks, Kerans sees Strangeman frequently while Strangeman drives his hydroplane through the lagoons and supervises his crews of divers as they search for treasure. Kerans doesn't pay much attention, as his dreams now occupy his waking time as well as his nights. He occasionally engages with the real world when Strangeman calls, but is otherwise constantly preoccupied. Strangeman makes fun of Kerans, joking that leaving the sea two hundred million years ago was a bad idea. His crew paints "TIME ZONE" on a building visible from the Ritz.

Strangeman seems to be the embodiment of the attitude that people should "live for today." Though he's interested in a comparatively shorter-term future than Kerans is, he's actively working to build a future that's by humans, for humans, and reveres humans of the past. Kerans, on the other hand, seeks a future devoid of humans—he exists in an altogether different zone of time from Strangeman.



Strangeman invites Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice to a diving party. He has already begun to court Beatrice, but she habitually refuses his invitations to midnight parties. Strangeman has also noticed that Bodkin spends much of his time paddling around the old University quarter, leading Strangeman to assume that Bodkin is after treasure. After an unsuccessful attempt to catch Bodkin diving at night, Strangeman had decided to throw the diving party to expose Bodkin's treasure. When Strangeman invites Kerans and mentions Bodkin's "search for treasure," Kerans assures Strangeman that Bodkin is only after old memories. Strangeman laughs.

Strangeman's suspicions about Bodkin show that he truly only cares about finding treasure. Memories of the mind with no associated object (like a statue or a painting of value) simply have no meaning for him. However, this also shows that, even though he's working against Kerans and Bodkin, he's similarly disconnected from other people. Strangeman is nevertheless unable to empathize or understand that Kerans and Bodkin have different values.



At 7:00am, the Admiral collects Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice and takes them to the depot ship. Kerans is skeptical of Strangeman's assurance that the lake is free from reptilian pests, but he sees that the lake is completely clear of iguanas and alligators. Kerans looks down through the clear water at the **planetarium** below. He remembers that he hasn't been in the water in ten years, and he reminds himself of the swimming he does in his dreams. Kerans sees an albino python swimming and Big Caesar, another of Strangeman's crew, wrestling with an alligator at the edge of the lagoon. Kerans thinks that there have been a surprising number of albino creatures since Strangeman's arrival.

Water is an important motif throughout the novel. It's dangerous and even deadly because of the lethal reptiles and the risk of drowning, but it's also life giving: life began in the water and evolved from there. When Kerans tries to remember the swimming from his dreams, it shows that the dreams truly have the power to change how people act during their waking hours. In this sense, the dream state is much like an altered waking state.



Strangeman watches the struggle between the alligator and Big Caesar as though he wants the alligator to win. He turns Beatrice to watch as well, and seems disappointed when his crew hoists the alligator's decapitated head high in the air.

Two crewmembers make a preliminary dive down to the **planetarium**. A third goes down in a suit with a telephone transmitter, which he uses to describe walking through the pay-box and then "the church." Strangeman declares the diver a fool and sends others down as Kerans, Beatrice, and Bodkin sip cocktails. Beatrice asks Kerans if he's going to dive. He assures her that the big suit is perfectly safe, but she looks worriedly at the sun. Kerans follows her gaze and realizes that the lagoon is heating up as the day progresses, and the divers underwater almost seem to pulse like they're in his dreams.

Kerans leans over to Bodkin and whispers that Strangeman is looking for his treasure. Strangeman notices them whispering and stalks over to them. Kerans makes a joke about the treasure, which seems to anger Strangeman. Strangeman insists that Beatrice dive. She refuses, but Strangeman says that she'll be "a Venus descending into the sea." He tries to take her hand, but Beatrice flinches. Kerans takes her arm and offers to go down instead. Strangeman is suddenly magnanimous and orders the Admiral to prepare a suit for Kerans. Dr. Bodkin warns Kerans that the water will be very warm.

Kerans dons the diving suit and Strangeman tells him to try to get into the auditorium. He continues, saying that the suit makes Kerans look like a man from "inner space," but jokingly warns him that the suit won't protect him if he goes down far enough to reach the unconscious. Kerans waves as he descends the ladder into the water. The water is oppressively hot, so Kerans lets himself sink to the bottom where it's cooler. Kerans hears only the rhythm of his breath in his helmet as his air pump works, reminding him of his dreams.

Strangeman checks in with Kerans over the radio, and Kerans begins to move towards the **planetarium**. Inside, Kerans sees that, aside from rust, it's entirely untouched by the outside world. As Kerans goes to fetch a hacksaw to attempt to get into the auditorium, he notices a door behind the ticket booth. He's easily able to bust the door down, and finds himself in a control room. Kerans suddenly feels alarmed as he notices that someone is working his air pump at a slower rate. He reasons that this is an exceptionally cruel way for Strangeman to kill him, and he probably wouldn't go through with it unless he was also planning to kill Beatrice and Bodkin.

Strangeman's attitude towards the alligator complicates his belief in humans and their superiority, as it suggests that there are times when he wishes that nature would indeed triumph over humans.



Although Strangeman is derisive of the diver with the telephone, the diver's decision to call the planetarium a church foreshadows the spiritual experience of sorts that Kerans will have there. When combined with the intense heat, the water becomes less welcoming. Although both heat and water are vehicles for evolutionary change, Kerans's body is still very much a human body. The pulsing of the divers again reinforces that Kerans's dreams are crossing over into real life.



The legend of Venus states that she was born from the sea and ascended from it. This puts Strangeman's description of Beatrice's dive in a sinister light, given how unpredictable Strangeman's mood is. However, the suggestion that she return to the sea does bring in the larger evolutionary cycle that threads through the novel. Returning to the sea is a very possible end of the neuronic journey, as it would mean the return of an evolved creature to where it came from.



Once in the water, Kerans finds himself very much in a dream state: his breath pulses rhythmically, the cool water is soothing, and he's truly a part of nature. Strangeman's comments suggest that he might be aware that the dive will trigger this kind of an experience, which suggests an ulterior motive. This again shows that he's seemingly incapable of understanding other people, even if he prefers the human world over the natural world.



There's a push-pull effect between the water and the air here. Although Kerans understands that the water is going to be one of the things that changes him and ushers him along in his neuronic journey, he also still needs to breathe air. The auditorium of the planetarium in particular is a place where groups of people gathered to observe images of the natural world. Now that it's part of the natural world, it's a place for Kerans to see the limitations of his own human form.



Suddenly, Kerans sees another suited man and yells for Strangeman. He realizes that it's only his reflection in a mirror, and explains where he is to Strangeman. Strangeman asks him to find the safe, but Kerans ignores him and sits down in a chair overlooking the **auditorium**. He thinks the auditorium looks like a womb, and Kerans can't decide if he's listening to his own breathing or the booming of his dreams. Disconnecting the telephone cable, he descends into the auditorium, which is significantly warmer. The cracks in the dome seem like stars, and Kerans is entranced by this vision of the sky.

Kerans begins to feel as if nothing is more important than preserving the "sky" he sees in the **dome**, which he supposes might be the sky seen during the Triassic period. He begins to walk back to the control room when the line that is supplying him air is suddenly yanked from him. Kerans angrily yanks it back and tethers it to the door handle. He walks back into the dome and tries to memorize the constellations on the dome. Suddenly, Kerans realizes his intake valve isn't working. He dizzily tries to untie his airline, but falls backwards.

Looking up at the **dome**, Kerans feels as though the water pressure is soothing and that his blood is merging with the amniotic water. As he loses consciousness, he lets his mind move towards the stars in the dome. Passing out, Kerans dreams that he's drifting in the "time-sea."

Kerans regains consciousness on the bright deck, where the Admiral performing CPR on him. Strangeman's face comes into view, and as Kerans sputters that Strangeman is responsible for what happened, Strangeman insists that he didn't try to kill him. Beatrice tries to comfort Kerans and assures him it was an accident, but Strangeman insists that Kerans tried to commit suicide so he could "become part of the drowned world."

As Kerans returns to the Ritz later, he thinks about his experience in the **planetarium**. He wonders if he did indeed try to commit suicide, or if Strangeman had tried to hurt him. Kerans thinks about this for the next few days, and eventually connects it to Hardman's escape south, which he realizes is suicidal and an acceptance of the truth of neuronics. Finally, Kerans, as well as Beatrice and Dr. Bodkin, repress their memories of the dive.

When Kerans observes that the auditorium resembles a womb, he begins to think of it as being life-giving to him. The booming he's hearing shows that the division between his dreams and the real world is quickly dissolving. By severing his communication with those above water, Kerans is able to insist that this experience be a wholly personal one, like his dreams.



Kerans's actions here show that he prioritizes the Triassic past over the present or his future—as he's willing to make a scene in order to spend a while longer gazing at the past. When his airline fails, Kerans is forced to reckon with the dangerous aspects of the water. Focusing so intently on the past has disastrous consequences in the present.



This moment confirms that following a neuronics journey to the end means embracing one's own death. It means giving in so Kerans becomes part of the past, both in mind (because of the dreams) and in body after his death.



Strangeman's observation is correct: becoming part of the new world means dying as a result of accepting it. Strangeman's word choice indicates that he understands that Kerans sees this end result as not an end, but a beginning. Even though it is death and the end of Kerans's life, it's the beginning of being truly part of the natural world.



When all three repress their memories and the truth that they learned, it shows that they're not yet ready to make this step to full acceptance of the truth of neuronics. This shows that something else will have to happen to them to trigger this final acceptance, just as something happened to Hardman that triggered his escape south.



10. SURPRISE PARTY

Kerans is rudely awakened by Strangeman yelling from a lower floor of the Ritz. Kerans has begun falling asleep at odd hours and spends more time sleeping than he used to. Kerans manages to splash water on his face by the time Strangeman has let himself into the room. Strangeman has brought coffee and aged cheese. Kerans avoids Strangeman's query about how "deep time" is, and asks Strangeman why he's come. Strangeman asks Kerans to come to dinner and says there will be fireworks and a surprise. He says that the surprise might stop Kerans's "crazy time machine."

Kerans asks how the diving is going, and Strangeman admits that it's not going well. Kerans wonders whether he has enough energy to attend a party, especially since he hasn't seen Dr. Bodkin or Beatrice since the diving party. Strangeman calls regularly on Beatrice, though from what Kerans can ascertain Strangeman is making little progress wooing her. Kerans finds coffee cups and Strangeman comments that they know each other well enough that he thought Kerans wouldn't mind the short notice for the party. Kerans wonders if he knows Strangeman at all, but understands that Strangeman is the only thing keeping him from heading south. Strangeman continues to pester Kerans until he agrees to come.

When Kerans heads to Strangeman's boat that evening with Big Caesar, the decks are strung with colored lights. Kerans asks Big Caesar how long he's known Strangeman. Big Caesar says twenty years, and agrees with Kerans that Strangeman's moods change quickly and unpredictably. Strangeman meets Kerans, Dr. Bodkin, and Beatrice at the gangway. Beatrice is dressed in a turquoise gown and wears turquoise mascara, while both Kerans and Bodkin look somewhat disheveled. Strangeman has set a luxurious dinner table with gold and silver dining ware, and decorated the deck with bronze statuary and a Renaissance painting depicting the marriage of Esther and King Xerxes. As Kerans studies the painting, he notes that Esther bears a shocking resemblance to Beatrice. He also picks out a wedding guest who resembles Strangeman.

The wedding in the painting is set on a galleon (a type of boat), and Kerans thinks that Strangeman's party mimics the canvas. He points out the resemblance to Beatrice and suggests that Strangeman wants her to "subdue the floodwaters" in a manner similar to how Esther subdued King Xerxes. Strangeman bows to Beatrice and confirms Kerans's interpretation. Beatrice insists she doesn't want the role, and Kerans again asks Strangeman what the surprise is. Strangeman insists they eat first. At the end of the meal, they watch a fireworks display as Strangeman smiles broadly.

The promise of a surprise and a party is a tantalizing reason for Kerans to remain actively involved in the present and the near future, rather than remain fixated on the long-term future or the distant past through his dreams. Kerans's sleeping habit—and the dreams he experiences while asleep—show that he's continuing to fall more deeply into neuronics and into Bodkin's prediction of the future.



The fact that Strangeman isn't having any luck with Beatrice, coupled with her voluntary isolation, shows that Strangeman's courtesy and friendship aren't enough to keep her or her friends from the worlds they experience in their dreams. However, Kerans is aware that Strangeman is the only thing keeping him from his final descent. This suggests that Strangeman himself is a symbol of the human-centric present, and his presence is enough to keep that past alive in Kerans's mind.



Big Caesar's replies show that Strangeman has a great deal of power over his crew—he's even been able to keep Big Caesar around for twenty years. Strangeman evidently used his exceptional leadership skills to put together his crew. Beatrice's turquoise dress is a nod to the tropical water, and perhaps also to the blue that the Virgin Mary is often depicted wearing. This confirms her role as a symbol of fertility and regeneration. The Renaissance painting is again suggestive of human achievement, which indicates that whatever surprise Strangeman has planned will also be a feat of human ingenuity.



The particulars of the painting and the way the characters interact with it mimic how Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice have been interacting with the idea of deep, distant time (using it as a roadmap to define their daily lives). In this case, however, Beatrice rejects the role she's been given: like Bodkin, the recent past and the idea of a human-centric future aren't interesting or things she wants to be a part of.



Kerans tries to ask again what the surprise is, but Strangeman declares that Kerans is missing it. Kerans suddenly becomes aware of the sound of air pumps. He looks into the lagoon and sees the water looking lifeless, and yells for Bodkin and Beatrice to come see: the water level is going down. They watch buildings appear slowly out of the water. Beatrice grabs Kerans and asks him to make it stop. Kerans can barely understand what's going on and fears he'll have to reacclimatize himself to the world as it was before the flooding, though he still hears the sun pounding in his head. Bodkin mutters that this is fantastic.

Strangeman and Dr. Bodkin discuss how Strangeman managed to drain the lagoon by damming it, but Strangeman's good mood disappears when Dr. Bodkin recognizes where they are in the city. Beatrice watches Strangeman leave the deck and tells Kerans that he's insane. Kerans thinks that Strangeman's true evil character has come out now that the water is gone. Kerans studies the painting again and understands that Beatrice performed the way Strangeman wanted her to. Kerans hypothesizes to Beatrice that Strangeman will leave in a week and then the rains will come to fill the lagoon again.

Beatrice says that the city is hideous and like Hell. Kerans suggests that they go south and asks Bodkin if he'd join them. Bodkin is still entranced by the city appearing around them and says he must stay, even when Kerans gently reminds him that soon, Strangeman will turn on them. The boat finally hits bottom and Strangeman and his crew debark.

11. "THE BALLAD OF MISTAH BONES"

Beatrice, Kerans, and Dr. Bodkin walk the streets a half hour later. Strangeman and his crew dart off ahead, some of the crew chanting "Mistah Bones" at Kerans. Bodkin mutters that he hopes Strangeman finds something that will satisfy him as they watch the group charge through the streets. After several hours of wandering, Kerans and Bodkin walk to Beatrice's apartment building before continuing their tour.

Kerans notices some of the silt, which creates the dams around the lagoon, piled up on the streets. Kerans, Beatrice, and Bodkin approach the **planetarium**. Kerans is almost afraid to approach it. When they reach its doors, Kerans peers in cautiously. The floors are covered in thick mud, and Kerans thinks it now looks more like a sewer than a womb. He says that the magic is gone.

Remember that Kerans doesn't remember a time when the cities weren't underwater. He has no lived memories to guide him through a world without water, while Bodkin does. For Kerans then, this regression to 75 years in the past is jarring—and, importantly, will be a return to a manmade environment rather than the natural, dangerous environment he's both grown up in and has prepared himself to handle in the future.



When Strangeman begins draining the lagoon, he makes it clear that he has the power to exercise a great degree of control over the natural environment. He can actively reverse at least some of the effects of rampant climate change, something that Riggs and government agencies seem to have been trying to figure out how to do for quite a while. Kerans's suggestion shows at least an attempt to trust that nature will prevail and undo what Strangeman has done.



Bodkin is surely aware that Strangeman is dangerous, but when he prioritizes his childhood memories over his bodily safety, it shows that those memories are what he's living for. Revisiting those memories is more important than living to see the future.



The characters are truly walking through the bones of a once-great city, as it's devoid of the human residents that gave it life before the floods and the aquatic animals gave it life underwater. Further, if Strangeman is only looking to loot, he won't be returning life to the city—he'll just be depriving it some of its more beautiful "bones."



The water was the only thing that made the planetarium appear womb-like, which reinforces the amniotic, life-giving qualities of the water. This in turn reinforces the way Kerans sees the city as lifeless now that the water is gone. In Kerans's mind, the water was a vehicle for change.



On their way back, the group gets lost and stumbles upon a small caiman. It pursues them onto an open street. Beatrice slips as the angry caiman approaches, but Strangeman appears with the Admiral and Big Caesar and shoots it. Strangeman pulls an algae-covered rhinestone necklace out of his pocket and offers it to Beatrice. He fastens it around her neck and rushes off again.

Over the next several days, Kerans feels increasingly disoriented. He wanders at night, unable to escape the memories of the lagoon but entranced by the empty city. He realizes that the lagoon was essential to his neuronomic journey, and begins to feel like he's lost in the time sea. The beating in his mind is almost loud enough to mask the sounds of looting and shots fired by Strangeman's crew. Kerans doesn't try to return to the Ritz, as he finds it safer to remain close to Strangeman.

Kerans visits Bodkin after a few days, and Bodkin seems similarly distraught and isolated. He can't remember Beatrice's name, but tells Kerans to take her away to another lagoon. Kerans tells Bodkin he's right, but insists that he can't bring himself to leave yet. Bodkin says ominously that time doesn't exist in the lagoon now.

Strangeman's crew discovers a shop full of eveningwear preserved in airtight tins, and they all dress in tuxedos and bowties. Strangeman is only interested in art objects and soon identifies a museum, but is disappointed when he finds it empty except for a single mosaic. Strangeman's lack of success makes Kerans nervous. He tries to warn Bodkin, but finds that Bodkin has abandoned his hideout in the testing station. Beatrice spends her days in a reverie similar to the one that consumes Kerans, but joins Strangeman in the evenings. He drapes her in jewelry and tiaras, and though he seems to respect her, he also seems to dislike her. Kerans asks Beatrice if she saw Bodkin before he left, but she replies by asking Kerans how many suns he thinks are drumming.

Strangeman's offering shows that he'd like to use these forgotten treasures to bring Beatrice to his side. However, rhinestones are a manmade stone, unlike real diamonds, which are made by the earth. This detail shows again that Strangeman values the manmade over the natural.



Kerans finds himself in a situation that mirrors Bodkin's before the lagoon was drained. Kerans is caught between his lived memories and the new world before him, and it's becoming apparent that the two worlds cannot truly exist together. Further, the dreams and the distant past almost seem to be protecting Kerans by masking the sounds of the shots—or, alternately, blurring his perception of reality.



The city surely isn't what Bodkin remembers, which suggests that draining the lagoon hasn't truly allowed him to revisit his memories. The draining of the lagoon, then, leaves Bodkin completely stranded in time: he doesn't have the watery lagoon as a reminder of his ancient memories, nor does he have the London of his past.



London isn't able to satisfy either Bodkin or Strangeman, as it doesn't contain the treasures that either desires. The clothing and jewels that the crew and Beatrice wear create the effect that this all a show or a performance—one that places humans above the natural world. It seems that Kerans is drifting farther away each day from his friends, which is signified by Bodkin's sudden unreachability and Beatrice's answer the Kerans's question (which is not really an answer at all).



One night, Strangeman confides in Kerans that his crew fears him because they think he's dead. Strangeman laughs, and when Big Caesar approaches wearing an alligator head, he encourages Big Caesar to sing "The Ballad of Mistah Bones" to Kerans. Big Caesar does, dancing and gesturing wildly. Suddenly, Strangeman interrupts him and points at the wall of the lagoon, where Bodkin can be seen carrying a small box with a fizzling wire—a bomb. Strangeman sends the Admiral and Big Caesar to stop Bodkin from exploding the dam. Everyone except for Kerans and Beatrice runs after them. Kerans watches Bodkin leave the bomb in the middle of a dam and then make his way back.

Kerans finally runs after Strangeman's crew and watches Strangeman kick the bomb into the neighboring lagoon. The crew then chases after Bodkin, and Kerans can hear shots being fired. He wanders back to Beatrice and hears footsteps behind him. Strangeman, Big Caesar, and the Admiral are there, and the rest of the crew fans out behind them. Strangeman says that Bodkin was stupid, and that he can't trust "mad biologists."

Beatrice throws herself at Strangeman and promises that she and Kerans won't hurt him. She tears her jewels off, throws them to him, and asks him to leave them alone. Strangeman is about to gesture for Big Caesar when a tremor moves through his cheek. He can't control the tremor for a moment but when he gains control, he nods at Beatrice. The crew abruptly descends upon Kerans. Kerans tries to evade them, but someone shoves a cushion in his mouth and begins to drum on the back of his neck.

12. THE FEAST OF SKULLS

Kerans is tied to a massive throne. Crewmembers dump a pile of human bones at his feet, and Big Caesar throws a pile of kelp at Kerans's head. The entire crew, including Strangeman, are dancing and drinking, and the beat of their drums nearly overpowers the beating in Kerans's mind. He moves in and out of consciousness due to the pain. The crew's torture of Kerans has been going on for two nights now, though Kerans realizes that Strangeman is reluctant to kill him. The dancers begin beating the bones like drums before Strangeman signals the end of the party for the night. Kerans is left in the empty square, tied to the throne.

Kerans yells for Beatrice. It was a miracle that Kerans survived full exposure to the previous day's noon sun, and even Strangeman had commented on the miracle. As Kerans sat in the sun, he thought of Hardman and the mysterious power that seemed to make him able to survive the heat.

Bodkin's bomb is an attempt to return the lagoon to its watery state and bury the recent past again. This is proof that Bodkin's memories of the city weren't enough for him. He's willing to die to recreate the watery future he sees in his dreams. It's worth noting that Bodkin's behavior is, from an outside perspective, entirely irrational—since the city is much more hospitable to life when it's drained than when it's a lagoon. However, Bodkin's neuronc dreams have made him prize nature over civilization.



Bodkin's attempt to destroy the dam that keeps water out of the city has made Strangeman and his crew suspicious of Kerans, too—since Bodkin and Kerans seem to be losing their minds in similar ways. Strangeman's distrust of Kerans indicates that perhaps Kerans himself will try to destroy the dam.



The uncontrollable tremor shows that Strangeman isn't entirely in control over natural occurrences and processes, since his body is, at times, beyond his control. However, he is still in control of the people around him. The beating on Kerans's neck mimics the pulsing sun of his dreams, which suggests that what's to come is something entirely outside Kerans's control.



The torture of Kerans is a crucifixion of sorts: he's tortured and derided for the worldview he represents and promotes. When the drums almost cancel the beating sun, it shows that this kind of organized human cruelty is superior and more effective in altering the mind than nature and the heat of the sun are. When the bone imagery continues here, it shows that the crew believes (rightfully) that Kerans is promoting a future that spells death for humans.



It seems that Kerans is becoming more powerful—or at least more able to withstand his brutal environment, suggesting he's preparing to survive in the heat and follow in Hardman's footsteps.



At the beginning of the third night, Strangeman is surprised to see Kerans alive. Eventually, Strangeman gives the order for the throne and Kerans to be lifted into a cart. They set off in a drunken procession through the streets. Kerans feels revived by the cool air but feels like a defeated Neptune. The crew begins to chant, and as they pass the **planetarium** Big Caesar puts the alligator head on Kerans's head. The cart gains speed again, rolls ahead of the group, and crashes into a wall. Kerans is flung facedown into the middle of the street without the alligator head. The group surrounds him for a minute, laughing. Strangeman leads the group away and seems sure that Kerans is going to die now.

Kerans takes inventory of his bruised body and realizes that the left arm of the throne broke, freeing that arm. He manages to slip his hand out of its tie and then frees his other hand. Kerans lies there for another five minutes before crawling out. He leans against a wall and notices two figures approaching, one of whom looks like Strangeman. Kerans slips into an arcade and waits near the rear entrance as Strangeman and Big Caesar discover that Kerans is gone. They curse, and Kerans escapes into the University quarter.

Strangeman doesn't send out search parties, and Kerans takes up residence in an apartment building. He finds water to drink and kills a small lizard to eat. He bars himself in an elevator service cubicle and sleeps through the day until evening. As the sun fades, Kerans paddles a handmade raft to the Ritz. He leaves the raft with other debris and enters the hotel. He finds his penthouse suite wrecked and the decoy safe opened, but is pleased to find that Strangeman's men didn't find the real safe in the bedroom. Kerans opens it and pulls out his gun. He loads it and puts the extra bullets in his pockets.

As Kerans surveys the damage in the room, he realizes he doesn't hate Strangeman. Rather, he thinks that Strangeman made it very clear that he needs to abandon London and move south. He realizes that Riggs represents the past and the demolished suite represents the present, and neither will keep Kerans alive or satisfied.

Just before midnight, Kerans quietly climbs up the paddles of the depot ship. He waits until all signs of life on the ship are quiet before climbing onto the deck. Kerans stops when he realizes that the Admiral is there, smoking in the dark. The Admiral surveys the deck and looks right past Kerans in the dark, but seems not to spot him. Kerans sneaks into Strangeman's saloon where he finds Beatrice in a mahogany chair, still wearing her ball gown.

The reference to Neptune (the Roman god of the sea) in this passage strengthens the link between Kerans and the natural world. He wants to bring the water back to London by re-flooding the lagoon—which is why Strangeman has tied him up and is now torturing him. Killing Kerans at this point and in this way would symbolize the victory of human achievement over the natural world and the power of the ancient past.



When Kerans escapes into the part of the city that was so dear to Bodkin, it shows that human connection was important to the two men: now, it's what might save Kerans's life. It's a major snub to Strangeman that Kerans escaped because one of Strangeman's beloved man-made objects broke and freed him. Human achievement faltered in this situation.



By not sending out search parties, Strangeman seems willing to allow Kerans to become little more than a memory for his men. Destroying the Ritz was likely intended to keep Kerans from taking anything valuable to help him survive going forward. When Kerans eats the lizard, it's a moment of primal behavior unlike anything readers have seen from him until this point, showing how he is becoming more a part of the natural world each day.



Kerans's indifference towards Strangeman and his decision to go south shows that he really has little use for emotions about people and feels that remaining immersed in a group or community is no longer an acceptable option for him.



Despite his rejection of humanity as a whole, Beatrice is still a draw for Kerans: as his Eve, they belong together in this new world. Because she's still in her ball gown, it suggests that Strangeman is trying to cultivate and maintain the illusion that the recent past is alive, perhaps to tempt her back from her dreams to the present.



Kerans quietly parts the beaded curtain and steps in. Beatrice pays no notice, and Kerans notices that there are chests surrounding her filled with jewels. He startles her out of her reverie. Beatrice tells Kerans to leave her, but Kerans refuses. He helps her up and reminds her that Strangeman is insane. When Beatrice tries to argue, Kerans shushes her and tells her that they're leaving. As he turns to leave with her, a whirling blade flies through the air at him. Big Caesar pushes through the beaded curtain, holding a long knife. Kerans and Big Caesar face off and Kerans shoots and kills him.

Grabbing Beatrice, Kerans leads her through the ship and declares that they'll have to leave via the gangway because of her voluminous skirts. When they're halfway down, they hear the Admiral shouting and gunshots behind them. Kerans steers Beatrice into the shadows and then into a side street. Beatrice realizes that Strangeman has them trapped, and tells Kerans to leave her. They make it back to the depot ship and hide in the shadow of the paddles. Strangeman calls for Kerans to give up and threatens to kill Beatrice.

Kerans gives Beatrice his gun and walks out to Strangeman. When Strangeman begins to charge at him, he tries to flee but slips in a puddle. He tries to get up but is suddenly grabbed from behind and pulled backwards. Kerans sees men in brown uniforms, headed by Colonel Riggs, advancing towards Strangeman and his crew. Riggs is wielding a machine gun. Although most of the crew backs off, a few try to approach. The machine gun shoots over their heads and they fall into line. Strangeman looks perplexed at all this. Kerans looks at the person who pulled him back and realizes it's Sergeant Macready.

13. TOO SOON, TOO LATE

Riggs is ready to speak with Kerans by 8:00 the next morning. Strangeman and his crew sit in the shade, supervised by Macready and his machine gun. Riggs explains to Kerans that he knew about Strangeman through his aerial patrols, and they guessed that he might cause trouble in London. Noticing the helicopter, Kerans comments on how much Daley's flying has improved. Riggs asks if Kerans has seen Hardman, and Kerans replies that Hardman is long gone. Riggs expresses sadness about Bodkin, and Kerans is surprised to realize he had already forgotten about him. Riggs's query about Hardman, however, reminds him of how important it is to go south.

That Beatrice is surrounded by offerings from Strangeman and the crew casts her as a goddess of sorts, which shows that Strangeman is still idolizing her and wants to win her over. When Kerans kills Big Caesar, he takes active steps to take down individuals who wish to deny or prevent the future he envisions.



The end seems imminent at this point. Strangeman has made it very clear that he is truly the most powerful person in London, as well as the most powerful entity in London since he has the power to shape the environment. Strangeman's threat to kill Beatrice preys on the fact that he knows Beatrice is the only person at this point that Kerans cares about.



Riggs demonstrates his loyalty to Kerans, Bodkin, and Beatrice by returning, which suggests that he's still not experiencing the dreams (and by extension, the desire for isolation caused by the dreams). Despite the fact that Riggs represents a worldview and a future that Kerans doesn't believe in any longer, he's still saved by Riggs's intervention and his brute military power.



Again, Riggs and Kerans are operating on completely different systems of time: Riggs is still thinking about the relatively recent past (for instance, Hardman and Bodkin) while Kerans is occupied primarily with the possibility of a future in the south devoid of any human life. That Kerans has so quickly forgotten about Bodkin shows that Kerans has completely detached himself, mentally and emotionally, from the world around him—he's ready to go south, like Hardman.



Kerans asks Riggs why he doesn't arrest Strangeman, and Riggs incredulously reminds Kerans that killing in self-defense is perfectly legal, and states that Strangeman will surely be rewarded for draining the lagoon. He continues that if Strangeman had killed Kerans, he wouldn't have been able to do anything. Further, if Strangeman complains, Riggs will be hard pressed to explain why he's holding him with machine guns. Kerans leans tiredly on the window and realizes that there's a huge gulf between himself and Riggs. Kerans finds that he can't even listen to Riggs anymore and reality seems fake.

Kerans asks about the looting, and Riggs says that Strangeman is doing humanity a favor by reclaiming abandoned works of art. He tells Kerans that he needs to forget Strangeman, and asks Kerans about his dreams. Kerans shudders and says that Strangeman is "like a white devil out of a voodoo cult," and asks Riggs when he's going to re-flood the lagoon. Riggs is bewildered and says he'll shoot anyone who tries. He reminds Kerans that reclaiming land by draining the cities is a top priority, and if Strangeman will empty the other two lagoons, he'll be pardoned and celebrated.

Kerans implores Riggs to re-flood the lagoon. He insists that the streets are obscene and dead, but Riggs cuts him off and says that everyone is leaving tomorrow, and he's not obsessed with the lagoons. Kerans, confused, says that Strangeman will still be here, and Riggs insists that Strangeman can and should stay if he can stand the heat and the rain, and if he's successful in draining the city, they might eventually reoccupy it. He insists that Kerans and Beatrice need to return to Camp Byrd, and tells Kerans to be grateful that he arrived on time. As Kerans leaves, he tells Riggs that in fact he came too late.

14. GRAND SLAM

Kerans observes the party going on on Strangeman's ship from an office building. Riggs is still at the party. He and Strangeman came to an agreement earlier that day and Riggs is successfully masking his distaste for Strangeman. Kerans watches Riggs and Beatrice leave the party and climb the testing station, which is serving as the landing pad for the helicopter. Sergeant Daley starts the engine. Kerans had put in a brief appearance at the party and tried his best to avoid Strangeman, but claimed he was feeling sick with malaria and left as soon as he could.

Riggs basically says that he's saving Kerans for purely emotional reasons, and that there are no law that allows him to hold Strangeman captive in this way. This again makes it clear that Riggs's mind is currently operating very differently from Kerans's. Kerans is entirely preoccupied with his vision of the future, and although he's surely thankful to be alive, the fact that Riggs doesn't understand his feelings about the lagoon makes Riggs as much an enemy as Strangeman.



Riggs's feelings about Strangeman continue to differentiate his mind from that of Kerans: he still values human achievement, human life, and a human-centric future, and sees little allure in Kerans's love of the watery world. When Kerans brushes off the question about his dreams, it shows that he's trying to protect this personal and intimate world from Riggs's prying eye.



Kerans interprets the exposed buildings of London as a blemish, not as a triumph to be celebrated. The buildings themselves are evidence that humanity failed once and will certainly fail again given how the earth is still changing to favor other creatures over humans. Riggs doesn't realize yet that although he technically has power over Kerans, Kerans is playing by a different set of rules and no longer sees Riggs as an ally.



It's worth noting that the politeness that Riggs and Strangeman are showing each other is because they recognize that they share a common goal. Riggs wants to use Strangeman to help him drain the cities of Europe so they can be re-civilized in the future. Kerans can barely stand to stay at the party because he sees that the future that these men believe in is contrary to the future that nature intends for the earth.



Kerans runs along a silt bank at the edge of the empty lagoon. He's near one of the original inlets to the lagoon, which is blocked by heavy logs. Kerans pulls out two bombs, pilfered from Bodkin's stolen stash. He lights them, hangs them on the logs, and is interrupted by Sergeant Macready yelling at him from the top of a nearby building. Macready notices the bomb, begins shooting at Kerans, and runs towards the dam. Kerans yells at Macready to go back as one of Macready's bullets hits Kerans in his lower leg. Macready stops right above the bombs as Kerans ducks for cover.

When the bombs go off, silt and water fly into the air, and water flows into the lagoon. Strangeman's party begins to panic as the water reaches the depot ship, and then the entire silt dam disintegrates and rushes into the lagoon with immense force. Kerans hears Riggs call his name and turns as a shot whizzes over his head. Riggs is running toward Kerans from the helicopter pad. Kerans fires his gun at Riggs. None of his shots hit Riggs, but Riggs stops chasing Kerans.

Beatrice suddenly rushes for Kerans. When she reaches him, she implores him to leave and escape Riggs. Kerans tells Beatrice to tell Riggs he's sorry for killing Macready. He looks out over the flooding lagoon and notices the depot ship floating upside down, though he can't see Strangeman or any of the crew. Beatrice asks Kerans where he's going and apologizes for not going with him, and Kerans explains that he's going south, "towards the sun." They embrace and then Kerans runs into the jungle. Daley and Riggs pursue him and shoot into the foliage, but Kerans evades their shots.

Kerans locates his makeshift catamaran and pushes off into the next lagoon as Riggs continues to shoot at him. When Kerans is able to steer the catamaran behind some buildings, he looks back and sees Beatrice waving from the top of a building. Kerans takes a final look at the Ritz and can even read Strangeman's joke, "TIME ZONE," written on a building. Kerans hides in a building while the helicopter circles overhead, and when it leaves, he navigates to the inland sea that will take him south. He sets his sails, attends to his leg, doses himself with morphine, and falls asleep.

When Kerans wakes, he notices that the helicopter is flying a mile away, shooting into the islands. Kerans hides. The helicopter patrols and shoots every half hour for most of the day. By late afternoon, Kerans is exhausted in the 150-degree heat. He lies on his back and hallucinates that the water is fire.

When Kerans uses bombs, something man-made, to ensure that the water can return to the lagoon, it's a final testament that man-made things aren't all bad. They can help bring about the future that Kerans knows is inevitable. Once Kerans violates civilized codes of conduct, other people turn on him and he suddenly becomes an enemy, just as the natural world has been an enemy to Riggs throughout the book.



Strangeman is punished here for hubristically believing that he was the most powerful individual in London, and for believing that he alone had the power to control the natural world. Kerans insists that the city return to its drowned state so it can continue to experience its rebirth and move forward into the drowned future.



Despite his near total descent into a primal mindset that makes him detached from the world of men, Kerans still cares about Beatrice, and he's still entrenched enough in civilization to feel remorse for Macready. This shows that his journey has truly just begun, and that he'll experience far more dramatic changes as he heads south towards the sun and his eventual death.



Now, the written "TIME ZONE" indicates that Kerans will truly enter a different zone of time as he heads south. Human systems of timekeeping don't apply anymore as he continues to descend into the neuronomic past. His pack of medical supplies shows that he's still mindful of the need for supplies to help him survive on this journey, which shows that he hasn't yet made the final leap to rejecting all man-made objects in favor of the natural world.



At this point, the heat is still affecting Kerans as though he's not one of the dreamers. The fiery world of his hallucination shows that on some level, he is aware that the heat will ultimately be what kills him.



15. THE PARADISES OF THE SUN

The next day, storm clouds move in, and at noon the temperature is about 95 degrees. The cooler temperatures revive Kerans, and he feels well enough to start the catamaran's makeshift engine. In the rain that night, he lets the rain pound on his skin. He eventually sees the southern edge of the inland sea, but his motor runs out of gas about a half mile from the shore. Kerans throws the motor overboard and paddles to the shore.

Kerans sleeps leaning against the catamaran that night, and the next morning he takes it apart and carries the kerosene drums up and over the silt slopes in the hope of being able to reassemble it and find the sea again on the other side. He often gets lost in valleys of dry silt and wanders through them before finding his way again. Finally, he abandons the drums and continues on foot through the jungles with a small pack of supplies.

Later, Kerans rests below a tree at the edge of the forest. He can hear bats and iguanas and notices that his ankle is swelling and the infection is spreading. He cuts a walking stick and continues into the jungle. The rains start again that night and Kerans is too afraid to stop for fear of being attacked by iguanas. He continues for three days like this and occasionally sees a river, though he can never reach it.

During one stop in the rain, Kerans enters a narrow valley. He stumbles into an abandoned church. The roof is collapsed, but Kerans walks through it looking for a place to spend the night. He hears a faint cry. He wonders if it's an iguana, but can't see anything. He hears it again, coming from in front of him where the sun is setting. Kerans steps around the altar to find an emaciated man sitting against the back of the altar. The man's face is sunken, but he raises a claw-like hand to point at the setting sun. Kerans realizes why this man hasn't noticed him: the sun has destroyed the man's eyes, which are covered in cancers. Kerans thinks the man can probably only see the sun.

Kerans kneels down next to the man and the man asks Kerans where he came from. He turns back to the sun, ignores the flies on his face, and says that the sun is gone. He asks Kerans to help him up to follow the sun. The man's hand opens to reveal a **compass**, and the man tells Kerans to sleep while he keeps watch. Kerans opens his medical kit and tells the man, who he realizes is Hardman, that they'll go together tomorrow. Kerans builds a shelter around Hardman and they spend the night there.

The process of running out of supplies mimics the downfall of humans on earth, but on a much smaller scale: there's only so much longer humans can maintain their fuel stores and food supplies in the newly inhospitable climate. Kerans, in this way, could be said to represent humanity as a whole throughout this final chapter.



Kerans's abandonment of the oil drums marks a further deterioration of his circumstances and his chances of survival. Day by day, he more completely leaves the world of men behind him, but it is unclear what type of future he thinks he is headed towards, ill-equipped as he is for surviving the harsh environment.



Kerans's injury suggests that, regardless of whether a journey south is necessarily doomed from the start, his journey is most certainly doomed: the tropical climate will make it easier for infections to develop, spread, and eventually kill him. This shows that even if he is trying to join the natural world, his only success may come with death.



Finding this man in a church reinforces the possibility that this meeting is foretold by a higher power and meant to happen. It shows Kerans his future: although he already knew the sun is a destructive force, the extent of this man's damage and illness makes it so Kerans can't ignore his own future. It's also important that the cancer has made it so that the sun is all this man can see. The cancer caused by the sun, then, ensures that this man will remain fixated on his journey towards the sun since it's all he can see.



Again, the physical world as experienced through bodily sensations matter little when compared with the power of the sun and of the dreams that are still telling Hardman to go south. The fact that he still has a compass (which he likely can't see) shows that he does have memory of civilized life in some form despite the deterioration of his mental state.



Kerans and Hardman remain at the church for three days. Hardman doesn't recognize Kerans, and Kerans feels as though Hardman's personality is buried deep in his mind. He believes that Hardman has been blind for about a month. Hardman begins to eat on the second day and is able to stand. On the third morning, Kerans wakes to find Hardman gone. He shouts for Hardman and gets no answer.

Kerans waits for two days before he continues to follow the sun south. Kerans rests for a day in an apartment building rising up from a massive lagoon. He tries to fix his ankle, but it's black and swollen. Kerans knows he has come more than 150 miles because of the increase in heat. He feels unwilling to leave this lagoon, and knows that Hardman will die soon. He knows that he likely won't survive much longer either.

Kerans lies back and thinks of his last years. He thinks of his "neuronic odyssey," of Strangeman, and of Beatrice. Finally, he scratches a message on the wall that reads it's his 27th day and all is well, even though he knows that no one will read it. He then follows the lagoons south. He's a second Adam, searching for forgotten paradises.

Hardman shows that giving in to the future foretold in the dreams means burying all the things that once made him the person he was. Now that he's devoid of memory or personality, he's little more than a symbol of the sun's ultimate power.



Kerans has now accepted wholly that everyone who gives into the dreams and heads south in search of the sun will die, either from damage caused by the sun or by trying to break free from civilization.



As a final act, Kerans leaves proof that a human was here, which shows that even if the world is doomed, making his mark on it in a human way is still something he believes is worth doing. Insisting that he's searching for paradise suggests that despite being alone, he's going to a peaceful death.





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