

# The Shadow of the Wind



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CARLOS RUIZ ZAFÓN

Zafón was born in Barcelona in 1964. Although his parents weren't particularly artistic, his father loved books and always stressed that literature was very important. He went to military school and later studied Information Sciences at university. He began his career working in publicity, and eventually rose to become creative director of an important Barcelona publicity agency, but in 1992 he gave up this job to pursue literature. His first novels were directed towards children and published throughout the 1990s, until he wrote his first novel for adults, *The Shadow of the Wind*, in 2001. He has since written two sequels, *The Angel's Game* and *The Prisoner of Heaven*. Zafón lives in Barcelona.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War broke out when the Nationalists, a group of conservative military leaders under the fascist General Francisco Franco, attempted to overthrow the country's moderate republican government. In response, civilian-led anarchist and socialist coalitions took control of several cities, including Barcelona. Fighting continued across the country for three years, during which the anarchist and socialist groups lost power and the Republican forces became dominated by the Soviet-controlled Communist party. The international community believed that the war would be the definitive struggle between communism and fascism (although it was soon overshadowed by World War II), and although most countries did not officially intervene, tens of thousands of foreigners flocked to Spain to fight for the Republican cause (including famous authors George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway). Purges within political parties were frequent, and civilian casualties were high; Barcelona in particular endured prolonged periods of guerilla fighting in the city streets. The fall of Barcelona in 1938 marked the war's turning point in the Nationalists' favor, and by 1939 Franco was in control of the entire country. He ruled Spain as a dictator until 1975; his rule was highly repressive and culturally conservative, and he was known for killing or jailing those who opposed him. The Civil War is an extremely traumatic event in Spanish history, both because violence towards civilians was so rampant and because divided loyalties tore apart towns and families. After Franco's death, the country transitioned peacefully to democracy and pardoned most of his collaborators. However, leftist groups and the families of Franco's victims still protest the lack of consequences for those they considered criminals. Mass graves containing the bodies of Spanish civilians and soldiers are still

being discovered in rural areas and town outskirts today.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Although Zafón wrote in the 21st century, his novel takes place largely in the 1950s; he creates an atmosphere similar to those of midcentury authors like Dashiell Hammet and Raymond Chandler, who wrote literary detective novels in which hard-boiled heroes operated in seedy neighborhoods of famous cities. Stylistically, Zafón's prose recalls the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez, whose novels also take place in the real world while including elements of the supernatural, and who also includes frequent notes of absurdity despite the overall seriousness of his work. Readers who wish to learn more about the Spanish Civil War might consult George Orwell's [Homage to Catalonia](#), a memoir of his time as a Republican soldier that gives an excellent view of the infighting between different political parties and the purges, betrayals, and chaos that characterized the war.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Shadow of the Wind
- **Where Written:** Barcelona, Spain
- **When Published:** 2001
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Mystery/Thriller, Magical Realism
- **Setting:** Mid-20th-century Barcelona, Spain
- **Climax:** Daniel and Carax fight and kill Inspector Fumero in the Aldaya mansion
- **Antagonist:** Inspector Javier Fumero
- **Point of View:** First-person limited and third-person limited

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Old-Fashioned.** Zafón has declined several offers to turn *The Shadow of the Wind* into a movie, saying that it would be "redundant, irrelevant, and totally unnecessary."

**Slow Seller.** *The Shadow of the Wind* has been translated into dozens of languages and is believed to be one of the best-selling books in the world, but after publication it took a year to become popular even in Spain, Zafón's own country.



## PLOT SUMMARY

In 1945 Barcelona, a second-hand bookseller, Mr. Sempere, takes his son Daniel to the [Cemetery of Forgotten Books](#) for

the first time. The Cemetery is a secret library about which only the city's booksellers and literary figures know, that protects books at risk of fading away into oblivion in the real world. The young Daniel is awestruck by the size and scope of the library, and the possibilities for learning it contains. When told he can choose a book to take home, he wanders the library and finds Julián Carax's *The Shadow of the Wind*, unsure if he's guided by "chance or its more flamboyant cousin, destiny."

Daniel sees on the book jacket that Carax is a native of Barcelona, but even his father has never heard of the author. When they consult another bookseller, the wealthy and well-connected Gustavo Barceló, he tells them that while no one knows exactly who Carax is, his books are becoming increasingly valuable because they have a habit of disappearing. Barceló offers to buy the book, but Daniel declines. In order to examine it, Barceló invites Daniel to his house, where Daniel meets, befriends, and falls in love with Barceló's blind niece, Clara. In order to spend time around her, Daniel spends all his afternoons reading aloud to her in the apartment. His father, as well as the Barcelós' kindly maid, Bernarda, are skeptical of his overwhelming devotion to an adult woman he will never be with.

Several years later, Daniel plans a sixteenth birthday party to which he invites Clara, but she never shows up. Upset, Daniel leaves the house to wander the city streets, where a terrifying stranger approaches him and demands to know where his copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* is. Daniel is worried that the stranger will hurt Clara, at whose house he left the novel, so he goes to retrieve it. Once in the apartment, he discovers Clara in bed with her music teacher, Adrian Neri, and feels incredibly betrayed. He brings the novel back to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books and hides it.

Freed from his passion for Clara, Daniel has more time for the normal activities of adolescence, like spending time with his best friend, Tomás. He and his father also take on another employee for the bookshop, a homeless man named Fermín who turns out to be an excellent salesman and good at finding rare books. Daniel begins to investigate Julián Carax's past, visiting his childhood apartment building and pressing the caretaker and administrator for details about his family, as well as Nuria Momfort, the secretary of Carax's publisher, who says she doesn't know much about him. Meanwhile, a sinister police officer named Inspector Fumero turns up at the bookstore looking for Fermín, who was a political prisoner during the Spanish Civil War.

Daniel encounters Tomás's older sister Bea at her university and is enthralled by her, even though as children they were enemies. She's engaged to a young fascist soldier named Pablo, but seems unexcited about the prospect of marriage and agrees to meet Daniel. On their evening together, Daniel tells her everything he's learned about Carax and shows her the Cemetery of Forgotten Books. He falls in love with her,

although he knows her father would forbid a relationship with him.

Needing his investigative talents, Daniel confides his growing obsession with Carax to Fermín, who's also interested. Fermín uncovers that Nuria was lying when she said she didn't know Carax well. On Fermín's initiative, they visit Carax's school, where they meet his old friend Father Fernando. The priest tells them that Carax grew up in an abusive home and was mentored by the wealthy and powerful Mr. Aldaya, who took an interest in him and paid his private school tuition. Carax was friends with Aldaya's son Jorge and fell in love with his daughter Penélope, even though this was forbidden by their different social classes. Javier Fumero, the son of the school's caretaker, was also in love with Penélope, and tried to kill Carax when he discovered their affair.

Bea helps Daniel get inside the old Aldaya mansion, which her father's real estate company owns. She figures out that the house was built by an eccentric millionaire, Salvador Jausà, whose servant and lover Marisela poisoned him and killed his wife. For the rest of his life, Jausà remained convinced that Marisela's spirit lived in the house and tried various means of contacting it, giving the house its reputation for being cursed. Soon after, the Aldayas bought the house and moved in. After relating this tale, Daniel and Beatrice have sex in the house.

On advice from Father Fernando, Daniel and Fermín visit the hospice where Penélope's devoted old governess Jacinta lives. Jacinta tells them that she's always been guided through life by Zacarías, a supernatural spirit who appears in her dreams and predicts what will happen in her life. He guided her to the Aldayas, and Jacinta considered Penélope a daughter. Jacinta helped Penélope carry on a secret affair with Carax and explains that, with the help of Carax's best friend Miquel, they planned to elope to Paris. However, right before the elopement, Mr. Aldaya found out about the affair and learned that Penélope was pregnant. He had Jacinta locked in a mental asylum, and when she's finally released she can't find any trace of Penélope.

On the way home, Daniel and Fermín run into Fumero, who beats up Fermín and warns them to stop looking into Carax's past. Daniel takes his friend to the Barceló apartment to recover and tells the whole story to Barceló, who agrees to help him investigate. The next day, Daniel returns to the Aldaya mansion for another rendezvous with Bea. She promises to call him the next day, but he doesn't hear from her for a week. When he finally calls the house, he realizes that her father has found out about their affair and is threatening to kill him.

In order to find out what Nuria really knows, Daniel visits her and announces he knows she's been lying, but she won't tell him anything. That night, she is mysteriously murdered, and the newspapers claim that a known criminal matching Fermín's description committed the crime. Daniel's father finally realizes that he and Fermín have gotten themselves into trouble, and he

reproaches Daniel for having a role in Nuria's death.

Nuria's father gives Daniel a manuscript from her, which explains the truth about Carax. She met him in the 1930s and became his lover, even though he told her he would only ever love Penélope. She also met his friend Miquel, who fell in love with her, although she didn't reciprocate. Miquel and Nuria became lovers out of their mutual loneliness and obsession with Carax.

Miquel told Nuria that Mr. Aldaya locked Penélope in her room for the duration of her pregnancy and forced her to give birth unassisted, after which she died. Miquel never told Carax this, because he knew it would upset him and he would try to fight Mr. Aldaya. Miquel spoke to Carax's mother, Sophie, who confessed that she had an affair with Mr. Aldaya long ago and that Carax and Penélope were brother and sister.

Meanwhile Jorge, the only surviving member of the Aldaya family, sank into ruin. He fell in with Fumero, who used him as a pawn to entrap Carax and convinced him to duel with Carax in Paris, thereby driving Carax to kill Jorge and flee to Barcelona. When Nuria and Miquel heard about this from one of Carax's friends, they waited anxiously for him to arrive and then begin searching the city for him. One night, Miquel found him at the old Aldaya mansion, but the police were on their trail as well. Miquel took Carax's passport so that the police would shoot him instead, and was killed.

Afterward Carax becomes lovers with Nuria again but searches the city for Penélope until he discovers that her body is buried in the crypt under the Aldaya house. In rage and grief, he burns down the publisher's warehouse that stores his books. In the fire, his facial features are burned and disfigured. He adopts an alter ego which he calls Láin Coubert, the name of the **devil** in one of his books. As Coubert, he tracks down and destroys all remaining copies of his work, as well as stealing to support himself and Nuria.

Carax/Coubert discovers Daniel's copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* and admires the integrity he displays by refusing to give it up. As Daniel grows up, Carax keeps tabs on his activities, feeling that Daniel is like a young version of himself.

After reading the manuscript, Daniel is determined to find Bea and fight for her. He visits her house, where Tomás says angrily that she's pregnant and has run away. Daniel finds her at the Aldaya mansion, where she's already met and befriended Carax. However, Fumero soon shows up and Daniel and Carax have to fight him, eventually impaling him on the arm of an angel statue in the garden.

Daniel spends weeks in the hospital as a result of a gun wound sustained during the fight. Afterwards he marries Bea, who soon gives birth to a son named Julián. Ten years later, Daniel has settled down to run his father's bookshop with Bea's help. Carax has escaped to Paris and begun to write again under a new pseudonym. Fermín becomes the keeper of the Cemetery

of Forgotten Books. In the last chapter, Daniel takes his own son to the Cemetery for the first time, just as his father brought him so many years ago.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Daniel Sempere** – The novel's protagonist, Daniel grows from a child to an adolescent and comes of age over the course of the book; in its epilogue he appears as a middle-aged man and a father. Daniel becomes fascinated with the author Julián Carax after taking one of his novels from the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**. As Daniel grows up, he learns more about the author's past and finds that his own life starts to resemble Carax's. At first he's flattered and excited by the similarities, but when he finds that Carax's life was derailed by tragedy he realizes he needs to differentiate his own narrative from Carax's, which he accomplishes when they kill their mutual enemy, Inspector Fumero. For some time, Daniel chafes against his close relationship with his father, Mr. Sempere, searching out other mentors who are more powerful and traditionally masculine, but he ultimately admires his father's kindness and is happy to grow into a man like him. Although Daniel is an intelligent and creative boy who grows up with aspirations to be a writer, he achieves a more subdued happy ending as a husband to Bea, a father, and an owner of a struggling bookshop. Daniel's modest and realistic tone as an adult contrasts with his romantic impulses and penchant for Gothic narratives as a boy.

**Mr. Sempere** – The kind and humble owner of a secondhand bookshop, Mr. Sempere is Daniel's father. While the novel's fathers are often dogmatic and controlling, using their children to fulfill their own ends, Mr. Sempere is unusually loving and understanding, and he and Daniel have a close relationship. Still, Daniel sometimes finds it hard to relate to his father, who has never completely recovered from his wife's death and prefers to live among his memories than in the present. Mr. Sempere contrasts with Daniel's other figures, like Fermín, Barceló, and Carax, who seem like more worldly and powerful men; Daniel also keeps his investigations secret from his father as long as possible, which makes them distant from each other. However, at the end of the novel they reconcile, and Daniel follows in his father's footsteps as a bookseller. Daniel's ultimate resemblance to his father, and his decision to bring his son to the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books** just as his father once brought him, is a vindication of Mr. Sempere as a man and a father.

**Fermín** – Daniel meets Fermín when he's a homeless man living near the Barceló apartment; on a hunch Daniel offers him a job at the bookshop, and Fermín turns out to have an encyclopedic knowledge of literature and a rare ability to track down books. Flamboyant, excitable, and enthusiastic, Fermín soon becomes

a father figure to Daniel, a fun-loving alternative to the sad and serious Mr. Sempere. Daniel asks Fermín for assistance in his investigations long before he confides in his father, which causes some tension with Mr. Sempere. Fermín is particularly loquacious when giving Daniel unwanted advice on his love life, often making troubling generalizations about women and how best to seduce them. However, his hypothetical misogyny is somewhat balanced by his genuine love for Bernarda, the Barcelós' maid, with whom he eventually settles down. Well acquainted with Barcelona's seedy underside, Fermín is always introducing Daniel to hidden corners of the city. He reflects and represents the city's manifold energies and resilience; however, like the city, he's also shaped by the trauma of his experiences during the Civil War, when he was jailed as a political subversive.

**Julián Carax** – Julián Carax is a brilliant but little-known author whose work Daniel discovers by chance in the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**. While he's a native of Barcelona, he's left no trace of his life in the city; as Daniel becomes fascinated with him and digs into his past, he realizes that Julian's life was shaped by his illicit love for his wealthy friend's sister, Penélope Aldaya, and that he's spent most of his life hiding from the Aldaya family and from Inspector Fumero, who was also in love with Penélope. More disconcertingly, Daniel finds that his own life starts to parallel Carax's, from his upbringing above a Barcelona shop to his enmity with Inspector Fumero to his forbidden love for a girl from a different social class. One of the novel's major questions is whether these parallels are the result of fate or arise from Daniel's growing obsession with the author. After Carax discovers Penélope's death, he adopts the alias Laín Coubert, the name of the **devil** in one of his books. As Laín, he can express the hatred and violent impulses he can't in his ordinary life; it's never clear to what extent Coubert is part of Carax's persona, and to what extent he becomes his own entity.

**Inspector Javier Fumero** – Fumero is an amorphous and monstrous villain who appears at various points of the story, from Carax's school to Daniel's neighborhood. Seemingly cruel and twisted by nature, he's obsessed with Penélope and tries to murder Carax when he realizes that she loves him. As a young man, Fumero works as a hired killer for the various parties that control Madrid during the Civil War, moving seamlessly among opposing forces while others are purged or fall out of favor; the fact that only the worst villain can thrive within them is an indictment of all the regimes that exist during that time. By the time Daniel encounters Fumero, he's entrenched within the Fascist regime, enforcing the government's brutally repressive agenda while using government power to pursue his own vendettas. Although Fumero is never explicitly linked to the **devil**, as are characters like Laín Coubert or Zacarías, he's the most demonic and unequivocally evil character. Notably, Fumero voices disdain for literature and a passion for cinema;

he quickly internalizes and regurgitates Fascist propaganda. His mediocre and conventional mind represents the kind of banal evil that rises to the top of authoritarian governments.

**Nuria Monfort** – Nuria meets Julian Carax while working as a secretary for his publisher, Cabestany. She falls in love with Carax by corresponding with him and reading his work, becoming driven to aid him even before she meets him in real life. She has a brief affair with him in Paris and becomes friends and lovers with Miquel Moliner out of their mutual love for and obsession with Carax. Like Miquel, she's devoted to protecting Carax after his return to Barcelona and willingly gives up her life for him, but her feelings are complicated by her unrequited passion for Carax and jealousy of Penélope, whom she sees as an otherworldly and unbeatable rival. Composed, intelligent and beautiful, she's entrancing to Daniel, who sees her as a femme fatale.

**Beatriz ("Bea") Aguilar** – Beatriz is Daniel's lover, whom he meets through her brother, his best friend Tomás Aguilar. Like Penélope Aldaya, Carax's secret lover, Beatriz is the pampered and sheltered daughter of a wealthy family; when she meets Daniel she's preparing to marry Pablo, a young Falangist handpicked by her controlling father. Unlike Penélope, Beatriz is pragmatic, capable, and much more successful at escaping her father's clutches. Although Daniel claims to love her for her confidence and independence, she's immediately submissive to him even though he's younger than she is, and she quickly sublimates herself in his quest to find Carax. At the end of the novel, although she's gained some relative independence, she's settled down as a conventional wife and mother. Notably, Beatriz shares her name with the woman the Italian poet Dante loved in real life and wrote about in his *Divine Comedy*. Dante's Beatrice is also a woman characterized through a man's desire, as well as a character, like many in *The Shadow of the Wind*, who exists on both the page and in real life.

**Penélope Aldaya** – Penélope is the Aldayas' young and sheltered daughter, who falls in love with Julián Carax (who is actually her half-brother, though neither know this) at first sight. While Carax's search for her dominates his life, she always appears as a distant and ethereal girl with little characterization. After Mr. Aldaya finds out about her affair and resulting pregnancy, he locks her in her room and forces her to give birth unaided, after which she dies. Her gruesome death at her own father's hands represents the brutal consequences of the male desire to completely possess the women they love. Like Bea, her counterpart in Daniel's narrative, Penélope shares her name with a literary heroine, Odysseus's enigmatic wife in the Greek epic *The Odyssey*.

**Clara Barceló** – Daniel meets Clara, his first love, because she's the niece of Gustavo Barceló (who is Mr. Sempere's colleague and friend). Notwithstanding the fact that she's much older than him, Daniel is immediately infatuated, partly because of her helplessness (she's blind), and he befriends her by reading

to her for long hours. Their friendship and his devotion continue for several years until he discovers her in bed with her music teacher, Neri, which he considers a personal betrayal even though she wasn't committed to him in any way. At the end of the novel Clara is a bitter and reclusive middle-aged woman; Daniel links her unhappiness to a desire for the adoration that she never valued in him. While Clara always appears dressed in white and is frequently described as angelic, she's a very sharp and earthy character, certainly much less conventionally pure than an **angel**. This contradiction is a reminder that appearances—especially ones that characterize people as uniformly good or bad—are likely to be deceiving.

**Jorge Aldaya** – Jorge Aldaya is Penélope's brother, the arrogant and unintelligent eldest son of the Aldaya family. He's too weak to interest his father, and comes to resent the extent to which Mr. Aldaya ignores him. Although he's initially close to Carax, Jorge comes to blame him for his father's disregard, his sister's death, and the demise of the family fortunes that immediately follow. Jorge is a foil to Tomás, Daniel's best friend and Bea's brother. They both share a perhaps overblown sense of possession over their sisters and hostility to the men who threaten to take them away from the family. However, while Tomás eventually comes around to Daniel and Bea's relationship, Jorge's pride and hatred lead him to become Fumero's pawn and entrap his old friend.

**Ricardo Aldaya (Mr. Aldaya)** – Father to Penélope, Jorge, and Julián, Ricardo Aldaya is a wealthy, cruel, and philandering industrialist. He runs his family autocratically and his relationship with his children is based on total control and the extent to which they bolster or threaten his own pride. For example, he favors Carax, his illegitimate son, because he's clever and entertaining; but when Penélope subverts his authority by taking a lover and becoming pregnant, he locks her away and allows her to die. Mr. Aldaya is a foil to Mr. Aguilar, who shares his bluster but lacks his actual cruelty. Mr. Aldaya represents a brand of fatherhood and masculinity that is completely based on power and control, rather than love or understanding; as a parent and a man, he's a contrast to the less traditionally masculine but much kinder Mr. Sempere.

**Isaac Monfort** – Isaac is the keeper of the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**, as well as Nuria's father. He's grouchy and affectionate towards Daniel, but his estranged relationship with his daughter is one of many strained parent-child relationships in the novel, and a reminder of the importance of valuing and accepting one's own family.

**Don Federico** – Don Federico is the neighborhood watchmaker who's known to be gay and moonlight as a drag queen. Even though the neighborhood is relatively narrow-minded and conservative, everyone likes Don Federico for his gentle temper and rallies to take care of him after the secret police arrest and torture him. While they can't openly defend Don Federico from the repressive government, their tacit support

shows their dislike of dogmatic regimes.

**Antonio Fortuny** – Fortuny is the father with whom Carax grows up, although Fortuny knows even before his birth that he's not Carax's biological father. Fortuny is a narrow-minded and dogmatically religious man who tries to mold Carax in his own image and quickly becomes embittered when it's clear that Carax is a very different person. As a man, he should be his family's most powerful figure, but his wife Sophie subverts him by sleeping with another man, and his son's intelligence and creativity places him out of his control; Fortuny takes out his spite by frequently beating his wife. It's only as an old man, when he learns to see fatherhood not as an exercise in control but in unconditional love, that he reconciles with Carax. After his son returns to Barcelona, Fortuny redeems himself by helping him search for Penélope and sheltering him from the police.

**Gustavo Barceló** – Don Gustavo is a much more prosperous friend and colleague of Mr. Sempere. He takes an early interest in Daniel, allows him the run of his house and library, and swoops in to help him when he's in over his head with Fumero. Don Gustavo is a more powerful and well-connected father figure than Daniel's own father, but it's important that Daniel doesn't embrace these advantages entirely, remaining loyal to his humble origins and the man who raised him.

**Miquel Moliner** – Miquel is Carax's best friend at San Gabriel's School. Miquel is one of the few rich characters who aren't corrupted or weakened by wealth. Rather, he's intelligent and eccentric, displaying an interest in philosophy and psychology. Miquel recognizes Carax's genius and sympathizes with his forbidden love, so much so that he devotes most of his life and fortune to financing the publication of Carax's unsuccessful books and sheltering him from his many enemies. He's even content to play second fiddle in regard to Nuria, whom he loves even though she nurses a passion for Carax. Eventually, Miquel sacrifices his life for Carax. While most of the novel's male characters are at least somewhat egotistical, Miquel's life is a parable in unselfishness and unconditional love.

**Tomás Aguilar** – Tomás is Bea's brother and Daniel's best childhood friend, a large but timid boy whose inventive genius is stifled by his overbearing father. Tomás is a foil to Jorge, the wealthy friend in Carax's narrative. Unlike Jorge, Tomás has great integrity; he never turns on Daniel and, despite his initial reluctance, helps him realize his dream of being with Bea.

**Mr. Aguilar** – Mr. Aguilar is Bea and Tomás's overbearing father. He's determined to send his son to the military and force Bea to marry an appropriate fascist. But unlike Mr. Aldaya, his counterpart in Carax's narrative, he doesn't succeed in destroying his children's lives and in fact eventually comes around to Bea's marriage to Daniel.

**Sophie Carax** – Sophie is Julian Carax's mother, a shy woman made timid and afraid by her abusive husband. While she loves

her son, she's unable to help him against his domineering father, leaving him to fight his own battles from a very young age. She also keeps secret the fact that Mr. Aldaya is Carax's biological father, even when she finds out about her son's involvement with his own half-sister.

**Lain Coubert / The Stranger** – Lain Coubert is originally the name Carax gives to the **devil** in one of his novels. Later, it's the alter ego he adopts after learning of Penélope's death and beginning the quest to burn all his work. Although Daniel originally fears Coubert, once he realizes it's actually Carax he admires and protects him. On the other hand, Nuria makes a sharp distinction between Julian Carax, with whom she fell in love, and Coubert, who is defined by hatred and capable of violence, such as his casual murder of Sanmartí. Like Zacarías, Coubert is a figure associated with the devil but neither wholly bad nor good. He's also a disturbing reminder that one individual can be capable of both great brilliance and love and great violence and hatred.

**Zacarías** – Zacarías is a creature who appears in Jacinta's dreams and possibly in her real life. Dressed in black, accompanied by a cat, and sometimes covered in scales, he seems distinctly **demonic**, but in fact he's neither good nor bad; he tells Jacinta about the bad things that will happen in her life, but he also guides her towards her best experience: her relationship with Penélope. Notably, he shares his name with one of the Biblical prophets, underscoring his ability to predict the future. Zacarías is a supernatural counterpart to Lain Coubert, Carax's alter-ego who is deadly and devil-like but still retains Carax's human character.

**Jacinta Coronado** – Jacinta is Penélope's devoted governess. She had a deep spiritual and emotional connection to her charge, believing her to be the daughter she could never have. After the discovery of Penélope's affair, the Aldayas throw Jacinta out of the house and she never sees her again. Later Jacinta gives Daniel many details on Penélope and Carax's youth. She's convinced that the events of their lives, including Penélope's tragic death, are dictated by a predetermined destiny, which manifests itself to her as the spirit Zacarías.

**Mrs. Sempere / Daniel's Mother** – Never named in the novel, Daniel's mother dies when he is very young. Daniel loves and misses her, but is ashamed that he can't remember much of her or share in Mr. Sempere's life-altering grief. The loss of Mrs. Sempere, about which Daniel and his father often think but rarely speak, mirrors the national trauma of the Spanish Civil War, which is a constant but unspoken presence in everyday life. For Daniel personally, his mother's elusive memory represents the seductive but irretrievable nature of the past.

**Irene Marceau** – Irene Marceau is the crusty but kind owner of a Paris brothel. She rescues a starving and sick Julián Carax from the street and hires him as a pianist. Later, she plans to marry him so that he can inherit her money, but Carax's duel

with Jorge Aldaya prevents the wedding.

**Enrique Palacios** – Palacios is one of Fumero's hired thugs, helping him kill Nuria and trailing Daniel at various points. However, he lacks Fumero's appetite for brutality and is clearly dubious about his job; his reticence in the final combat at the Aldaya mansion facilitates Fumero's death. Palacios's ambivalence blurs the line between hero and villain and is a reminder that even government "oppressors" can be ordinary and conflicted individuals.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Toni Cabestany** – Cabestany is the publisher who printed Carax's novels even though they sold terribly. This is because Miquel Moliner financed all the editions.

**Bernarda** – Bernarda is the Barcelos' incredibly religious maid. She acts as a mother figure to Daniel, taking care of his clothes, and later becomes engaged to Fermín.

**Pablo Cascos Buendía** – Pablo is Beatriz Aguilar's fiancé, an ardently conventional and stupid Fahmmlangist who fulfills all her father's criteria for an acceptable man. He's a direct contract to the artistic, eccentric, and leftist Daniel.

**Doña Encarna** – Doña Encarna is Fermín's landlady. Although she puts on a tough front, she has a soft spot for her eccentric tenant.

**Father Fernando** – Father Fernando is a friend of Carax during his time at San Gabriel's school. Later, he becomes a priest and works at the school.

**Professor Javier Velázquez** – Professor Velázquez is a fascist professor at the university where Bea studies, as well as a client of Mr. Sempere.

**Doña Aurora** – Doña Aurora is the gossipy and voyeuristic caretaker of the building that houses the defunct Fortuny hat shop and Carax's childhood apartment.

**Mr. Molins** – Mr. Molins is the lewd administrator of the building that houses Carax's childhood apartment. While he lacks any interest in the case, he inadvertently helps Daniel find out that Nuria controls the PO box associated with Sophie Carax's fake lawyer.

**Viçeneta** – Viçeneta is a neighbor of the Fortunys and Sophie's only friend during her marriage.

**Salvador Jausà** – Jausà is the eccentric millionaire who designed the mansion that later belongs to the Aldayas. His wife's lurid murder at the hands of Marisela, his maid and lover, gave the house its reputation for being cursed, which he amplified by attempting to track Marisela's spirit via film.

**Marisela** – Marisela is Jausà's maid and lover, who eventually destroys the house and kills Jausà's wife, presumably out of jealousy over her pregnancy, before committing suicide. Many people believe Marisela still haunts the house, and her

presence may or may not have manifested itself while the Aldayas lived there.

**José María Requejo** – Requejo is the fictitious lawyer Nuria contrives to control the Fortuny apartment.

**Mrs. Aldaya** – Mrs. Aldaya is Penélope and Jorge’s mother, an aloof high-society socialite without a shred of maternal instinct. She shows her lack of feeling for her daughter by failing to protect her from Mr. Aldaya’s rage after her affair with Carax is discovered.

**Manuel Fonseca** – Fonseca is the city morgue employee who tells Barceló of the unique circumstances surrounding Carax’s supposed death and the identification of his body.

**Fructuós Gelabert** – Gelabert (a real-life inventor and screenwriter) is the cinematographer hired by Jausà to track his dead lover’s spirit through the house.

**David Aldaya** – David is the illegitimate, stillborn son of Carax and Penélope Aldaya. His family keeps his brief existence a secret because his parents’ relationship was incestuous, and Carax only finds out about him years later.

**Pedro Sanmartí** – Sanmartí is the lecherous owner of a publishing company where Nuria works. On the orders of Fumero, his close friend, he fires Nuria, after which Carax kills him in revenge.

**Mercedes Prieto** – Mercedes is Nuria’s colleague and friend at the Sanmartí publishing house.

**Julián Sempere** – Julián is Daniel and Bea’s son. He’s a foil to the son Carax was never able to have. His happy childhood, and introduction to the [Cemetery of Forgotten Books](#) at the novel’s end, show that Daniel has fully differentiated his own life from Carax’s tragedy.

**Boris Laurent** – Laurent is Julián Carax’s alter ego when he moves to Paris at the end of the novel and begins to write again.

**Adrian Neri** – Neri is Clara’s music teacher and Daniel’s rival for her affections. Daniel’s first youthful disillusionment comes when he discovers Neri in bed with Clara and the musician punches him.

**Merceditas** – Merceditas is one of the Sempere’s neighbors, whom Daniel suspects of having a crush on Mr. Sempere. Although Merceditas is conservative and religious, she’s deeply sympathetic to the gay Don Federico’s plight when he’s arrested by the police, showing the neighborhood’s solidarity in the face of government oppression.

**Don Anacleto** – Don Anacleto is a schoolteacher who lives near Daniel and Mr. Sempere. Pompous but well-meaning, his garrulous speeches give color to the neighborhood.

**Monsieur Roquefort** Clara’s tutor in France. He stumbles upon a novel written by Carax, and becomes obsessed with both the novel and Carax more generally.



## THEMES

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



### DUALITY AND REPETITION

In *The Shadow of the Wind*, history always repeats itself, in ways both personal and political. Daniel Sempere, the novel’s protagonist, acquires a copy of Julian Carax’s eponymous novel *The Shadow of the Wind* as a young boy, and becomes fascinated by the thrilling book and the mysterious author, about whom no one seems to know anything. As Daniel digs into Carax’s past, he discovers that the events of Julian’s youth are uncannily similar to his own experiences. This pattern then mirrors the widespread sense of political repetition in Spain at the time; during the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, the country has swung wildly between Republican and Fascist regimes which are ideologically very different but practically alike in their authoritarian nature and brutal tactics. Inspector Fumero, a hired thug for both regimes and the personal enemy of both Daniel and Julian, is the human link between these personal and political cycles of repetition. By the end of the novel, Daniel realizes the necessity of escaping this cycle. By killing inspector Fumero, Daniel keeps himself from suffering the same sad fate as Julian and achieves a modest happy ending with Bea; however, Franco’s unjust regime persists despite Fumero’s death, and Daniel and Bea still have to live within it. Ultimately, the novel remains ambivalent about the possibility of escaping history’s disastrous cycle of repetitions. Although humans may strive to right the wrongs of the past, their personal efforts will always be outweighed by larger political shifts and failures.

As he learns about Carax’s troubled past, Daniel finds himself repeating many of the events that led up to Carax’s disastrous flight from Barcelona and disappearance. Carax’s father is a shopkeeper with whom he has a troubled relationship, and his mother is an abused and cowed wife. While Daniel loves his father (who is also a shopkeeper), he often feels distant from him, and his dead mother is similarly absent from the narrative. Carax falls in love with his rich friend Jorge’s sister, Penelope; their father Mr. Aldaya’s violent reaction to the affair forces him to flee the city. Likewise Daniel falls in love his best friend’s Tomas’s sister, Beatriz (even having sex with her for the first time in Penelope’s abandoned house), whose father Mr. Aguilar threatens him with violence when he finds out about their romance. Carax also goes to school with Javier Fumero, a budding young sociopath who nurses a twisted passion for Penelope. When Javier discovers that Penelope prefers Julian to him, he spends the rest of his life plotting to kill Julian. Daniel

makes an enemy of Fumero by sheltering fugitives from the fascist regime, like his friend Fermín Torres, and by seeking to uncover the truth of Carax's past.

While characters rarely discuss politics, political instability forms the constant undercurrent to everything that happens in the novel. The novel depicts the world of politics in Spain as a senseless cycle of violence and brutality. During and after the Spanish Civil War, Spain (and especially key cities like Barcelona) endured constant political instability and violent regime changes. In the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, Barcelona was briefly controlled by a populist anarchist government, but it was eventually taken over by the increasingly totalitarian Communist party, which was in turn defeated by the Fascists in 1939. The following decades, in which Franco consolidated his power, were characterized by suppression of free speech, authoritarianism, and political purges.

While a few characters, like Fermín, are highly politically minded, most are working-class civilians who seem bewildered by the rapid and violent changes that have occurred in their country in the last decades. For example, Daniel's father Mr. Sempere retreats into the ostensibly apolitical world of literature in order to protect himself, and advises Daniel never to attract the attention of the government. Most people in the Sempere family's neighborhood perceive government and authority as inherently hostile and dangerous forces against which they must protect each other. Don Federico, who is gay, garners the sympathy of the relatively conservative neighborhood simply because he is pursued by the secret police.

Fumero's career emphasizes the senselessly repetitive nature of political violence. Lacking any principles and driven by his appetite for violence, he carries out dirty work for whichever party holds power. Clara Barceló tells Daniel that he "flirted with the communists and the fascists, tricking them all, selling his services to the highest bidder." Although the various political parties who dominated Barcelona espouse radically different ideologies, Fumero's ability to assimilate into all of them undermines their claims of difference and suggests that each regime simply repeats the injustices of the last, displaying the same brutality towards its opponents and callousness toward civilian casualties.

As the similarities between Carax and Daniel increase in number, it seems more and more likely that Daniel will repeat Carax's personal tragedy. However, in the novel's climactic scene, Carax, Fermín, and Daniel unite to destroy Fumero, which means all three are liberated from Fumero's dogged pursuit of vengeance. Thus, the cycle of repetition according to which Daniel's life echoed Carax's is broken. Moreover, while Carax is forced to leave Barcelona without Penelope, who dies in childbirth with their son, Daniel marries Bea, cajoles her family into accepting their union, and has a healthy son, whom

he names Julian. However, Daniel's personal triumph against the repetitive tendency of history doesn't change the fact that he still lives out his adult life in a repressive and authoritarian regime—just as Carax did.

Daniel describes his adult life as being characterized by a realistic balance of contentment and sadness. This realism is a departure from the heightened tone of the rest of the novel, which swings between extremes of ecstasy and despair, and it reminds the reader that not everything is right in the world. Daniel describes his father and Bea as often "marooned" in silence, contemplating the inscrutable past. They can't get away from the desire to make sense of their troubled history, even though they have achieved relative happiness and security. Although Fumero is dead, the regime that enabled his cruelties lives on. Franco's government will dominate Spain until his death until 1975, and his secret police will continue to wreak havoc on civilian families by imprisoning or killing anyone deemed subversive to the regime.

Although Daniel manages to exit the pernicious cycle of repetition in his personal life, he can't do anything to change the political regime under which he will live forever. Thus, *The Shadow of the Wind* delivers an ambivalent meditation on the relationship between individuals and political history. While characters like Daniel can make strong and successful efforts not to succumb to the ravages of their eras, they still have to live within a wider system of political injustice. Because of this, they remain emotionally entangled in the past even though on a more personal level they may have effectively escaped it.



### POSSESSIVE AND OBSESSIVE LOVE

Throughout the novel, the love of literature is linked to the love of women. The novel's male characters spend most of their time fighting for control of books and women. The novel characterizes some of these conflicts as heroic and thrilling quests, while denigrating others as the expression of an unhealthy desire for power. The close juxtaposition of these "positive" and "negative" quests for ownership creates doubt as to whether they are different at all. Ultimately, while the obsessions of the protagonists, Carax and Daniel, result in seemingly positive outcomes, the novel is also a meditation on how easily love and passion can transform into destructive obsession.

The novel's various villains are all driven by their desire to exercise total control over the people and things in their lives. Mr. Aldaya and Jorge claim to love Penelope, but they manifest this love by jealously guarding her and controlling her every move. When they discover Carax's love for her, they treat him as a thief, showing they see her as a possession more than an independent person. When her pregnancy makes it clear that the men in her family can't control her choices, Mr. Aldaya imprisons her in the house and lets her die by giving birth to her baby unassisted. The novel characterizes the Aldaya men as

louts and tyrants, crushing a beautiful love affair in order to satisfy their desire for control.

In Daniel's parallel narrative, Mr. Aguilar hits Bea when he suspects her of meeting with a lover. He takes it for granted that he will decide the direction of her life, just as he would deal with any object he owned. Like Mr. Aldaya, he is portrayed unsympathetically, and the novel celebrates Daniel and Bea's marriage as a triumph of love in the face of overbearing parental authority.

Fumero, the two protagonists' archenemy, becomes a brute through his desire for control. He falls in love with Penelope Aldaya and unjustly tries to kill Carax, her preferred suitor. Later, he becomes similarly obsessed with policing the behavior of citizens under the fascist regime. For example, his incessant persecution of Don Federico for being gay mirrors Aldaya's and Aguilar's attempts to interfere in the private affairs of others. Fumero's obsessive quest to destroy those he cannot control shows how personal obsessions can translate into different kinds of destructive and oppressive behavior.

The protagonists (Carax and Daniel) also display what could be considered obsessive or possessive behavior, but rather than warping their characters or leading them to commit crimes, this behavior makes them into heroes and propels them towards happy endings. Early in the novel, Daniel refuses to give up his copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* when Barceló offers to buy it at an extravagant price. His preference for ownership of a beloved object over money demonstrates his integrity, and wins him Barceló's respect and patronage.

This episode is linked to Daniel's obsession with Clara Barceló, which develops as he reads to her from the precious tome. Although Daniel is much younger than Clara and has no real chance with her, the novel presents his infatuation as a serious passion, and treats Clara's affair with Neri as a serious betrayal. Daniel's anger with Clara's behavior is very similar to Aldaya and Aguilar's attempts to control their daughters' behavior, but the novel is very sympathetic to Daniel's feelings, portraying Clara as vulgar and caricature-like when Daniel catches her in bed, and Neri as a thug who persecutes Daniel unfairly when he's quite justly enraged at all this interference in his affairs.

Carax attributes all his books to the inspiration of Penelope, his true love and muse; his passion for his work is dependent on his passion for Penelope. He begins his quest to burn all his work right after he finally realizes that Penelope's family will always prevent them from being together. Because he can never possess Penelope in marriage, he achieves ultimate possession over the next best thing, his books, which he obliterates so no one else can control them.

While Daniel is originally horrified by the mysterious person destroying Carax's works, he comes to see the author's quest as misdirected but romantic and understandable, and becomes very sympathetic towards him. In fact, Carax's obsessive

behavior mirrors other men's attempts to possess women completely. It's also disturbing that Carax behaves so violently towards the objects that represent a real woman he supposedly loves; his behavior emblemizes a wider pattern wherein men turn savagely on even beloved women if those women can't be owned completely.

The various characters' obsessive desire for ownership leads to bad outcomes for both women and books. Because of his obsession, Carax almost destroys every book he wrote. It's only through Daniel's efforts that the author returns to his senses and the books are saved from destruction. While Carax's books can be saved, Penelope Aldaya's life cannot. Her gruesome death in childbirth is the novel's horrifying centerpiece. The fact that her father, who acts out of a desire for control, and Julian, who acts out of love, behave rather similarly shows the fine line between passionate obsession and destructive possessiveness.

Bea's happy ending is one way in which Daniel's story diverges from Carax's tragedy. At least superficially, Bea is the antidote to the wrongs suffered by Penelope. She's characterized as headstrong and independent; Fermín says that she saved their lives in the ultimate battle with Fumero. However, the main action she takes in the novel is to marry Daniel, thereby effectively transferring herself from her father's ownership to Daniel's. While she exerts independence to take on an illicit lover, she submits to Daniel immediately and completely. During their tryst in the Aldaya house she tells him to "do what you like to me," and in the novel's final chapters, she assimilates completely into Daniel's life without pursuing any goals of her own. Even under the best of circumstances, Daniel's urge to feel ownership over the women he loves, and Bea's acceptance of this, limit the possibilities of her life.

Also hovering at the edge of the epilogue is Clara Barceló, who experiences a series of disastrous love affairs and becomes a lonely spinster. Her fate suggests that spurning Daniel's obsession earns her punishment, and that women who don't accept possessive love won't achieve any happiness at all.

While the novel is full of clearly defined protagonists and antagonists—men who are "good" fighting against men who are "bad"—nearly all the male characters display similarly disturbing behavior towards women. The desire to possess women at all costs is a sinister thread that unites all the novel's men, and reminds the reader that Daniel and Julian aren't quite as different from the villains as they claim to be. Although Daniel doesn't suffer as a result of this behavior, and in fact achieves a fairly ideal ending, Bea's more subdued fate and Clara's sad spinsterhood serve as a reminder that this kind of behavior is always destructive to someone, no matter what positive or negative repercussions it may have to the man in question.



## FATHERS, SONS, AND MASCULINITY

*The Shadow of the Wind* portrays many pairs of fathers and sons, almost all of whom have troubled relationships. For the most part, sons struggle against domineering fathers who have a rigid idea of what a man should be, and who want to exercise undue influence over the direction of their sons' lives. Misunderstanding and strife between fathers and sons precipitates many of the novel's crises.

Most of the sons in the novel suffer due to traumatic relationships with fathers who can't connect with them emotionally and who try to mold them without understanding their character. For example, Tomas Aguilar, a gifted inventor, remains cowed into silence by the unappreciative Mr. Aguilar, who would rather see his son develop into a soldier or a statesman. Jorge Aldaya is another minor character whose father explicitly disapproves of him; disgusted by his son's decadence and lack of business acumen, Ricardo Aldaya publicly belittles him.

Carax has a horrible relationship with the man he believes to be his father, Antony Fortuny. Fortuny is dismayed to find that Carax is nothing like him, as it reminds him that his wife, Sophie, conceived Carax by another man. Out of spite, Fortuny tries to suppress Carax's creativity and gift for storytelling. To free himself from his oppressive father, Carax plunges into the elite world of his private school and forms the relationships that eventually ruin his life and force him to flee the city. After discovering that Carax is actually his own illegitimate son, Mr. Aldaya finances his education and acts as his mentor. However, he does so not out of genuine love for Carax, but rather because he's fed up with his other son, Jorge, and believes Carax may be more intelligent. Effectively pitting the two boys against each other, he does nothing to create closeness with his son. The inauthentic affection he shows toward Julian crumbles into shame and rage when he finds out that Carax has no interest in his business and is involved with Penelope, his own half-sister. Aldaya drives Carax out of the city violently.

Rather than loving their children unconditionally, both of Julian's father figures reject him when he fails to become the kind of man they want him to be. Meanwhile, Daniel enjoys a comparatively tranquil and loving relationship with his own father, a humble widower and bookseller. In their case, it's Daniel who sometimes finds Mr. Sempere inadequate and seeks other father figures. Daniel says his childhood home is defined by his father's overwhelming grief for his dead wife. Daniel's father is a gentle man, content to earn a living wage, raise his son, and nurse his broken heart.

Although Daniel loves his father, he often seeks out bonds with men who can introduce him to a world of adventure and power. He becomes very close to the well-connected and blustering Gustavo Barceló, and his greatest friend and mentor is Fermín,

who becomes his partner in uncovering Carax's history, as well as coaching him through the emotional crises of adolescence and introducing him to womanizing. While he shares everything with Fermín and seeks help from Barceló when he's in too deep with Fumero, Daniel does everything possible to keep his father ignorant of his exploits, only explaining them at the very last minute when he has no choice. Daniel says he does this to protect his father, whom he describes as easily flustered and having no head for politics. However, given that Mr. Sempere is actually very intelligent and calm in times of crisis, it's likely that Daniel desires to distance himself from his father and the dreary life he leads. Mr. Sempere is by far the novel's least traditionally masculine man, and it's also possible that Daniel wants to become a different sort of man, one whose identity is predicated on action and power rather than art and emotion.

However, Daniel eventually reconciles with his father and willingly steps into his shoes. In doing so, he adopts a less conventional image of masculinity. Daniel confides in his father, explaining his dangerous investigations into Carax's past and his resulting enmity with Fumero. He finds his father much more capable and understanding than he expected, and realizes that men who don't perform their masculinity through swaggering aggression can be competent and powerful allies in unexpected ways. In the epilogue, Daniel has taken over the bookshop and takes care of his ailing father. In other words, he's chosen to pursue a life very similar to his father's. The one difference is Daniel's happy marriage to Bea, which shows that he can preserve his father's values without needing to take on his sadness.

In the novel's final scene, Daniel takes his young son, Julian, to pick out his own tome at the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**. In doing so, he reproduces his own father's action at the beginning of the novel, down to the very conversation he has with his son. While the novel's other fathers and sons repeat the same patterns of negative filial behavior, Daniel manages to differentiate himself and to create a more positive pattern—one that is worth repeating.



## REALITY AND THE WRITTEN WORD

*The Shadow of the Wind* is a novel about people who love books. Books and written texts are central to the novel, not only as objects of interest and passion but as sources of knowledge and insight that can't be found in other artistic mediums or in everyday life. Moreover, the events of Daniel's life mirror those he reads about in Carax's work or in written accounts of Carax's youth. In a sense, these books within the book are more trustworthy guides for Daniel than the shifting and unreliable actions of those around him. Ultimately, the great extent to which books reflect and relate to "real life" in the novel is a testament to the enduring and incorruptible nature of literature, especially in a dangerous and unreliable world.

While no medium can convey pure, unqualified truth, books and written texts are the novel's most reliable and trustworthy sources of information. When he first reads *The Shadow of the Wind*, Daniel feels that through reading the book he has accessed a truth that is both eternal and directly relevant to his life. Characters from the book proceed to appear in his real life, such as Lain Coubert, Julian Carax's **demonic** alias, reinforcing the idea that literature can be viscerally present in one's lived experience. The sense of the reliability of literature only heightens as the novel progresses. When Daniel interrogates people verbally about Carax, he usually finds them deceitful or evasive, wishing to hide information or cast events in a false light. However, when he eventually coaxes them into telling the truth, their confessions are related in an italicized, mini-novelistic format, as if Daniel is reading a novel within the novel. This stylistic trick creates a strong association between truth and writing, even within the world of the book itself.

The strongest example of this pattern comes from Daniel's interactions with Nuria Momfort. When he first speaks with her she completely misleads him, trying to protect Carax. Her eventual confession comes in the form of a typed manuscript which she sends Daniel just before her death. The written truth is totally different and much more trustworthy than the oral version with which she presents Daniel when he first meets her. Daniel's instinctive affinity for the written word, combined with Zafón's habit of presenting characters' sincerest and most insightful thoughts in manuscript form, suggests that for Zafón, written literature is often more reliable or "true" than the things people do or say in reality.

The novel's portrayal of literature as truthful (even when it's fictional) is especially important given that other popular art forms are easily manipulated to disseminate untruths or serve political purposes. Fermín and other characters often reference the newly invented television (which Fermín calls the "Antichrist") not just as a challenge to the book business, but as something that threatens human development rather than facilitating it. News disseminated through newsreels and radios is known to be controlled by the government. Entertainment provided by radios consists of soap operas that allow people to "gaze at their navels" or propaganda programs designed to encourage patriotism or piety, like the game show *With a Little Help From the Lord*. Notably, Fumero uses the fascist-controlled newspapers to obscure the circumstances of Nuria Momfort's death and frame Fermín for her murder. This untruth contrasts starkly with the unbiased truth Nuria presents in the manuscript she sends Daniel, which proves crucial to understanding Carax's past.

Ultimately, *The Shadow of the Wind* doesn't just praise books for the personal enjoyment and fulfillment they provide, but also because they are a source of comparative truth in a world that is often profoundly untrustworthy. The shifting narratives that different characters provide Daniel about the past and Carax's

youth mirror the shifting social and political narratives that emerged in the decades after the Spanish Civil War, each one serving a different agenda and biased in its own way. Therefore, truthfulness in literature is shown to be an antidote to the political confusion that has overtaken Spain.

At the end of the novel, Daniel's bookshop is holding on but not quite thriving. Bea says that "the art of reading is slowly dying." While the novel is elegiac about the possibilities and revelations offered by literature, it's not optimistic that people will continue to make use of them in years to come. Already other mediums like television are in ascendance, delivering narratives that are more palatable and uncomplicated.

In *The Shadow of the Wind*, the literature characters read has an uncanny ability to affect what they do and what happens to them. This trend isn't meant to mirror how people actually interact with literature; there are no Lain Courberts jumping off the page to stalk avid readers. Rather, literature's influence on real life, and its strong association with truth-telling, hold up the art form as something on which to rely when events of the world or other media disseminate incomplete or biased forms of truth.



## COINCIDENCE AND DETERMINISM

Like most thrillers and detective novels, *The Shadow of the Wind* relies on a series of coincidences, events that fall into line too neatly to seem realistic.

The consistent occurrence of coincidences excites Daniel and builds a sense of destiny, as if the events are preordained and leading toward some fixed endpoint or objective. However, the final coincidence that Daniel discovers—that is, the fact that Carax and Penelope were half-siblings and their romance thus doomed—is a tragedy of no one's design, with no greater meaning. After this discovery, Daniel realizes that the coincidences tying him to Julian don't mean he's part of any predetermined sequence of events but are only bringing him perilously close to tragedy himself. In his climactic act of killing Fumero, the villain who haunts both his and Carax's lives, Daniel puts an end to these coincidences and forges ahead with a modest life that doesn't pretend to be part of any grander dramatic pattern. While the idea of predetermined events seems alluring at the beginning of the novel, by the end it's clear that subscribing to ideas of predestination incurs only unhappiness and tragedy.

Though Daniel and Fermín prove astute detectives, they are mostly guided by a series of almost unbelievable coincidences that lead deeper and deeper into Carax's past, as if for a specific purpose. For example, Daniel speaks of his decision to take Carax's novel from the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books** as inspired by chance's "more flamboyant relative, destiny," implying that his introduction to Carax's saga is not at all random. Isaac Momfort offhandedly suggests that Daniel talk

to his daughter Nuria, a former receptionist at Carax's publisher, thinking she can tell him more about Carax's work. Coincidentally, Nuria has also had a years-long affair with Julian and proves a goldmine of information about his childhood and flight from the city. Referring to the way in which Carax and Daniel's lives coincide, Nuria herself states in her final letter to Daniel that "we are all linked together in a strange chain of destiny." Similarly, Bea's father just happens to be the president of the company that owns the old Aldaya house. Bea's chance recollection of this fact allows Daniel to access the property and discover the secret tomb of Penelope and her stillborn son.

The fortuitous coincidences that guide Daniel's investigation suggest that the events of his life are already determined, leading him to further discoveries in the service of some greater purpose. This is a comforting prospect, since it suggests that human events or human tragedies are not random; rather, everything builds up to something that will be worthwhile in the end.

However, the final coincidence Daniel discovers—Carax's incestuous affair with Penelope and her horrible death—shows Daniel that these coincidences are ultimately meaningless. Daniel eventually learns that, unbeknownst to Carax, Mr. Aldaya is actually his father, and Penelope his half-sister. This explains both Mr. Aldaya's seemingly random selection of Carax as a ward and his thunderous rage when he discovers his affair with Penelope. As a child, Julian views his chance absorption into the Aldaya family and his fateful encounter with Penelope as signs that they are "meant" to be together. Both he and Penélope claim to have dreamed of each other before they met. He spends his whole life believing that their destiny would've been fulfilled but for Mr. Aldaya's intervention. However, it's clear that Julian and Penelope could never actually be together, because they are related by blood.

In order to cover up the scandal, Mr. Aldaya locks Penelope in a room to give birth to her inbred son unaided, effectively dooming her to die in childbirth. Her gruesome death is not only a strong indictment of his personal character but also a statement that coincidences are not evidence of any predetermined cosmic order. Penelope's romance is a fluke tragedy, and her death the result of petty human anger and chance misunderstanding. While she's an alluring and enigmatic character at the beginning of the novel, the object of a "fated" passion, by the end it's clear that her life is the result of sordid individual actions, rather than part of any determined scheme.

Ultimately, the novel's rejection of determinism reflects a broader contemporary disillusionment with ideas of grand political destiny. In the 1930s and 1940s, Spain was controlled by various political parties, from anarchists to communists to fascists. Each party had divergent but strong ideology, and each asserted that their ideology represented a world order that would bring prosperity, stability, and political success to the

nation. Fascist regimes in particular promulgated the claim that people were "destined" for a better future and entitled to wage war to achieve it. In the 1950s, the Spanish people found themselves trapped in a repressive authoritarian regime. Moreover, they remained a lonely and stubborn Fascist country even after the rest of the world had seemingly vanquished Fascism in World War II.

Spain suffered enormous civilian and military casualties during the Civil War, and in the decade after World War II horrifying stories about the atrocities that occurred were slowly becoming common knowledge; for example, Clara Barceló remarks that her father was killed for remaining loyal to friends who ultimately betrayed him during a regime change, his political integrity proving meaningless. Moreover, the postwar years delivered not the promised glittering future, but an era of poverty and austerity, evident in the Sempere's struggling bookstore, the Aldayas' lost fortune, and Fermín's years as a beggar. These factors made people painfully aware of the dangers of subscribing to strong ideas of national destiny.

While the novel is in many ways a thriller, it ultimately celebrates small triumphs—saving Don Federico from the secret police, or keeping a small bookstore afloat against the odds. Any ideas about a grander destiny, or convictions that human lives are predetermined to fit within a grander scheme, whether personal or political, emerge as unreliable and dangerous to believe in.



## SYMBOLS

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



## ANGELS AND DEVILS

Imagery of angels and devils appears frequently in the novel, and many characters are associated with one or the other creature—though these associations often contradict their actual behavior. With their scales, claws, and leathery faces, Laín Coubert and Jacinta's apparition Zacarías have the appearance and accessories of demonic creatures. However, while Zacarías predicts unpleasant truths and Coubert is disposed to violent revenge, neither are particularly evil. In fact, Jacinta comes to view Zacarías as a guardian spirit, and Coubert is revealed to be part of Julián Carax's very human persona. Fumero, unequivocally the novel's vilest character, is often aligned with death but never with the Devil.

Daniel and Carax frequently describe their respective love objects, Clara and Penélope, as angelic figures. Both are ethereal women who always appear dressed in white, but neither of them provides the spiritual support and guidance expected of angels. While Daniel idolizes Clara, she turns out to be a worldly woman, taking lovers and ultimately sinking into a

bitter and very human middle age. On the other hand, Penélope is almost too angelic; she's an unobtainable and distant spirit who warps Carax's life long after her own death, while to Nuria she's a cold and distressing image of otherworldly perfection. The Aldaya mansion is also filled with sinister references to angels. Its seemingly innocuous nickname, "The Angel of Mist," is actually quite ominous considering the many tragedies and deaths that occur in the house. A door carved with angels obscures the cellar where Penélope's body is hidden, and a statue of an "avenging angel" in the garden eventually spears Fumero and kills him.

Characters often believe in angels or attribute everyday misfortune to the Devil, and Zafón gently pokes fun at this religiosity, at one point describing a radio game show that asks ridiculous multiple-choice questions about the Devil's appearance. It's worth remembering that the Franco regime was highly religious, so any stabs at religion are an implicit attack on government conservatism. On another level, the idea of angels and devils interceding in ordinary life is so appealing because it's evidence that events follow a divine, predetermined order. By juxtaposing angelic and demonic descriptions with actual character, Zafón undermines this idea and suggests that such an order cannot really exist, and humans are responsible for their own actions.



### THE FOUNTAIN PEN

As a child, Daniel becomes fascinated by a fountain pen said to have belonged to Victor Hugo, which Mr. Sempere eventually buys for him. Later, he finds out that in fact Nuria found the pen in Paris and bought it for Carax, her lover at the time. The fountain pen demonstrates Daniel and his father's unconventional but enduring relationship. Mr. Sempere's initial inability to afford it shows that for him fatherhood isn't defined by wealth or power, as it is for many of the novel's other men. His purchase of the pen years after Daniel's initial interest shows a kindness and thoughtfulness that fathers like Fortuny, Mr. Aguilar, or Mr. Aldaya never possess. The gift also shows that Mr. Sempere values and supports his son's creative eccentricities, while other fathers view these things as signs of weakness or femininity in their sons. It's important to note that while Daniel sometimes chafes at his family's humble life or searches out more worldly father figures, he's ultimately very loyal to his father; he never reproaches him for not being able to buy the pen, and years later the gift draws them together after a quarrel. The pen is thus an endorsement of Mr. Sempere's brand of fatherhood.

The pen also forms a link between Daniel and one of his other father figures, Carax. On one level, their mutual fascination with the pen shows how invested they both are in the world and history of literature, a character trait that makes them very similar. Moreover, the fact that they were both drawn to it in

pawnshops in separate cities shows that the likeness between them and the coincidences that draw them together are too manifold to be random. Even after Daniel puts an end to the similarities between him and Carax by killing Fumero, thus extricating himself from Carax's tragic narrative, Carax appears mysteriously in the hospital and Daniel gives him the fountain pen as a sign of friendship. Years later, Carax sends Daniel his new novel with an inscription written in the fountain pen. Even as Daniel is settled in a highly realistic adulthood, the fountain pen reemerges as a symbol of the Gothic intrigue and sense of fate that dominated his adolescence.



### THE CEMETERY OF FORGOTTEN BOOKS

When Daniel is a young boy, Mr. Sempere introduces him to The Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a clandestine Barcelona institution where booksellers preserve old books that are in danger of fading away in the real world. On his first and all subsequent visits, Daniel is awestruck, and feels that the library contains depths of knowledge and truth which he will never be able to fully understand. The secret and sacred library establishes books and literature as both precious and distinct from other forms of art and media, able to store and transmit complex truths that normally elude people, yet vulnerable to destruction in the petty and vulgar real world. The Cemetery also shows the extent to which literature draws people together in the novel. Daniel brings Bea there as a sign of his serious feelings for her; the final scene, in which Daniel brings his own son Julián there for the first time, is not only a moment of bonding between father and son but also a link back to Daniel's relationship with his own father.



### QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *The Shadow of the Wind* published in 2005.

#### The Cemetery of Forgotten Books Quotes

●● Every book, every volume you see here, has a soul. The soul of the person who wrote it and of those who read it and lived and dreamed with it. Every time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down the pages, its spirit grows and strengthens.

**Related Characters:** Mr. Sempere (speaker), Daniel Sempere

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Sempere has just brought Daniel to The Cemetery of Forgotten Books for the first time, and is explaining to him its almost sacred nature. Even though humans create works of literature for their own pleasure and education, Mr. Sempere characterizes literature as fundamentally outside human control. Using the word “spirit,” he speaks as though books themselves are conscious and can act in the world, rather than just existing as products of human actions. It’s important that the “spirit” Mr. Sempere describes isn’t just derived from the thoughts of the writer, but also includes those of generations of owners and readers. Rather than being static reflections of one mind, books have the potential to connect and synthesize disparate experiences and worldviews.

☹☹ After a while it occurred to me that between the covers of each of those books lay a boundless universe waiting to be discovered, while beyond those walls, in the outside world, people allowed life to pass by in afternoons of football and radio soaps, content to do little more than gaze at their navels.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

Left on his own to wander the stacks of the Cemetery of Forgotten Books for the first time, Daniel is awed by the quantity of books and the endless knowledge they seem to represent. He describes the world of literature as infinitely expansive and rewarding, contrasting it both with other forms of media, like radio shows, and the general banality of everyday life. This is an interesting contrast which will appear over and over during the novel. As an art form, literature is theoretically derivative from real life and the real world that human writers observe; therefore, it should be shallower than human life, imperfectly imitating the world. Here, however, Daniel turns this expectation on its head; his observation shows the ability of art in general and

literature in particular to be more intense and exciting than the real-time experience of the world and people that produce it.

☹☹ It might have been that notion, or just chance, or its more flamboyant relative, destiny, but at that precise moment I knew I had already chosen the book I was going to adopt, or that was going to adopt me.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

To mark his first visit to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, Daniel gets to choose a volume to take home. Here, Daniel reflects on the moment he notices and chooses *The Shadow of the Wind*, a book which will shape the course of his life. Looking back, Daniel suggests two reasons he could have chosen the book: it was either a random coincidence, or it was an event destined to occur. Daniel doesn’t know which possibility is true, and in fact the rest of the novel will be characterized by uncertainty as to whether events and fates are determined by chance or destiny. Daniel’s description of the two forces as “relatives” shows how tangled they are, and how difficult it is to determine which is at play. Importantly, Daniel remains ambivalent rather than expressing a leaning toward either one.

## Days of Ashes: Chapter 5 Quotes

☹☹ I could not blot out Clara’s story about her father’s disappearance. In my world death was like a nameless and incomprehensible hand, a door-to-door salesman who took away mothers, beggars, or ninety-year-old neighbors, like a hellish lottery. But I couldn’t absorb the idea that death could actually walk by my side, with a human face and a heart that was poisoned by hatred, that death could be dressed in a uniform or a raincoat, queue up at a cinema, laugh in bars, or take his children out for walk...and then, in the afternoon, make someone disappear in the dungeons of Montjuïc Castle.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Clara Barceló

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 35

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Daniel is returning home troubled by a visit to Clara Barceló, who tells him how she grew up in exile during the Spanish Civil War, while her father remained in the city and was killed during a political purge. After hearing this story, Daniel reflects on the contradictions that make the war difficult to understand. For example, since the war pitted people from the same cities or societies against each other, it was both banal and brutally violent at the same time; its soldiers were familiar, almost boring men who could nevertheless transform into larger-than-life villains in the context of the Civil War. Although Daniel doesn't yet know Fumero, his description of "death" is remarkably reminiscent of the policeman, who is personally mediocre and uninteresting (and partial to the cinema) but also capable of terrible crimes. The dualities of Fumero's character show how the horrors of the war are both beyond human comprehension and deeply informed by human nature.

☝☝ Going over all this in my mind, it occurred to me that perhaps the papier-mâché world that I accepted as real was only a stage setting.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Mr. Sempere

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 36

### Explanation and Analysis

Since Mr. Sempere prefers not to talk about the troubled past, Clara's stories are Daniel's first conscious interaction with the war that ended just before he was born, and they mark the first time he realizes that the impoverished and repressed society in which he grew up has been deeply shaped by the brutal events of the recent past. To Daniel, this makes the world around him seem illusory, like a bland "stage setting" behind which its unpleasant history is concealed. Although Daniel is not explicitly talking about literature here, the sudden unreality of what he's always perceived as the "real" world contrasts with his characterization of literature, and especially the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, as intensely authentic and substantial.

## An Empty Plate: Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ I couldn't help thinking that if I, by pure chance, had found a whole universe in a single unknown book, buried in that endless necropolis, tens of thousands more would remain unexplored, forgotten forever. I felt myself surrounded by millions of pages, by worlds and souls without an owner sinking into an ocean of darkness, while the world that throbbed outside the library seemed to be losing its memory, day after day, unknowingly, feeling all the wiser the more it forgot.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 76

### Explanation and Analysis

Returning *The Shadow of the Wind* to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books to hide it from the mysterious stranger, Daniel revisits Mr. Sempere's speech during their first visit there, when he spoke about the "soul" within every book. That day, Mr. Sempere was optimistic, suggesting that literature contained its own indestructible world, thus capable of preserving the memories of those who write and read it. While Daniel is still impressed by the depth of the literary world, he's very worried about its potential to fade away or even be physically destroyed. Describing the Cemetery as a "necropolis" (essentially another word for cemetery, and thus reinforcing the place's original pessimistic name), he stresses the fact that its books are languishing unread and their lessons going unheeded. As Daniel grows older, his childish confidence in books is replaced by a more complex and urgent relationship in which he values their teachings but no longer sees them as invincible.

## City of Shadows: Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ Sophie refused to reveal the identity of the child's father...Antoni Fortuny decided that it must be the devil, for that child was the child of sin, and sin had only one father: the One. Convinced in this manner that it had sneaked into his home and also between his wife's thighs, the latter took to hanging crucifixes everywhere...

**Related Characters:** Julián Carax, Ricardo Aldaya (Mr. Aldaya), Sophie Carax, Antonio Fortuny

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 126

### Explanation and Analysis

Trapped in a loveless marriage, Sophie conceives Julian in an extramarital affair with Mr. Aldaya. This passage describes Fortuny's absurd reaction to his wife's pregnancy and his attempt to interpret it through conventional religious dogma. Fortuny twists religious principles to suit his own interests and fuel his grievances; moreover, his reductive conclusions about sin and his wife's culpability contrast sharply with the actual story of Sophie's affair, in which she's a flawed but deeply sympathetic character. Fortuny's approach to sin also contrasts with the novel's many devil figures, such as Laín Coubert and Zacarías—highly ambiguous characters who have both positive and negative attributes. Throughout the novel, Zafón uses imagery of devils to mock simplistic concepts of wrongdoing and argue that human nature is infinitely more complex.

## City of Shadows: Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ I imagined Julián Carax at that age, holding that image in his hands...and for a moment I thought there were no more ghosts there than those of absence and loss, and that the light that smiled on me was borrowed light, real only as long as I could hold it in my eyes, second by second.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 147

### Explanation and Analysis

After visiting the Aldaya house, Daniel imagines himself as Carax, looking at the photograph of Penélope taken in the courtyard. Already, Daniel is becoming conscious of the parallels between himself and the author, and is starting to model himself after Carax, if only in his mind. Importantly, Daniel bonds with Carax by imaginatively partaking in his fascination with Penélope. As in many places in the novel, women like Penélope are less characters in their own right than objects over which men lust and fight or, as in this case, through which they can connect.

It's also interesting that although the photograph offers Daniel a preserved slice of the past, he's most conscious of its fleeting and ephemeral nature. While art, and especially

literature, represented permanence to Daniel as a child, as he's growing up he's becoming doubtful of this, and more convinced of the futility and impossibility of preserving memories from the past.

## City of Shadows: Chapter 20 Quotes

☝☝ Julián lived in his books. The body that ended up in the morgue was only a part of him. His soul is in his stories. I once asked him who inspired him to create his characters, and his answer was no one. That all his characters were himself.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Julián Carax, Daniel Sempere

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 166

### Explanation and Analysis

When Daniel visits Nuria for the first time, he questions her about her relationship to Carax and her knowledge of his works. While he later finds out that Nuria has been lying to him in order to protect Carax, she's fairly honest in describing Carax's character and relationship to his works. Her insistence that Carax's books are as integral to his identity as his actual mind mirrors Mr. Sempere's early assertion that books are capable of containing the "souls" of their authors. Carax's books are both intensely rooted in the real world, in that they're all inspired by his experiences, and larger than real life, in that they preserve his "soul" after his body is (supposedly) in the morgue. Carax's close personal identification with his works is especially important in light of Daniel's eventual discovery that he's been burning his own books; his actions as Laín Coubert aren't just the fruits of insanity or grief but a very conscious and strong sense of self-hatred.

## City of Shadows: Chapter 28 Quotes

☝☝ He didn't tell me any of that because he knew that the miracle happened only once...A thousand times I've wanted to recover that first afternoon with Bea in the rambling house of Avenida del Tibidabo...

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Fermín, Beatriz ("Bea") Aguilar

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 241

### Explanation and Analysis

After Daniel loses his virginity with Bea in the Aldaya mansion, he reflects that even in his constant stream of unsolicited romantic advice, Fermín was unable to prepare him for this experience. Daniel's reaction to his first sexual experience is remarkably similar to his feelings on seeing the photograph of Penélope in the courtyard; in both cases he notes the transcendent beauty of the moment and the lurking knowledge of its ephemerality. While he's often conscious of the way he repeats the lives of other characters, like Carax, here Daniel is both happy and sad in his conviction that he will never repeat this moment. Ironically, it's almost exactly the same as Carax's first sexual encounter with Penélope. Both men are consummating illicit affairs with women from higher social classes, and in both cases they conceive a child; in fact, both episodes take place in the same house. Daniel's thoughts contrast the repetitive nature of history with the highly individual relevance of specific events and personal experiences.

Daniel finally discovers that Carax and Penélope were brother and sister, he knows that their romance was doomed from the start. This revelation seriously undermines Jacinta's placid confidence in the benevolent workings of destiny.

“Look, the one thing that really pisses me off is people who stir up the shit from the past!” Fumero cried out. “Things from the past have to be left alone, do you understand?”

**Related Characters:** Inspector Javier Fumero (speaker), Fermín, Daniel Sempere

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 282

### Explanation and Analysis

After leaving Jacinta at the hospice, Daniel and Fermín run into Fumero, who's incensed that they're digging into Carax's past and therefore his own. Fumero's petulant demand that they not “stir up the shit from the past” strangely echoes Mr. Sempere's cautious injunction that it's better to let past events be, and his general refusal to discuss history. However, while Mr. Sempere speaks out of an instinct to protect himself and his son, Fumero wants to obscure his manifold crimes and shameful origins. The two men's different motives, and Fumero's intense anxiety that the events of the past remain obscure, show that examining history can be both dangerous and redemptive. On the one hand, doing so means that Daniel could die by Fumero's hand, just as many other characters have. Alternatively, by exposing the crimes of the past, namely Fumero's, Daniel can ultimately prevent history from repeating itself and put an end to Fumero's villainy.

## City of Shadows: Chapter 31 Quotes

“Nobody had noticed, nobody had paid attention, but as usual, the essential part of the matter had been settled before the story had begun, and by then it was too late.”

**Related Characters:** Jacinta Coronado (speaker), Daniel Sempere, Julián Carax, Penélope Aldaya

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 265

### Explanation and Analysis

Interred in the macabre Santa Lucia Hospice, Penélope's former governess Jacinta relates her life story to Daniel, including the moment when Carax and Penélope first meet. Jacinta believes firmly that the course of her life has been predestined since her birth; indeed, she experiences visions of a demonic figure named Zacarías who correctly predicts what will happen to her, including her arrival at the Aldaya house. The only character to describe firsthand Carax and Penélope's courtship, Jacinta presents it as the inevitable result of fate, mentioning that both lovers dreamed of each other long before they met. With her accounts of dreams and visions, Jacinta makes a compelling case that Carax and Penélope were meant to be together and only Mr. Aldaya's villainy turned their story into a tragedy. However, when

## City of Shadows: Chapter 33 Quotes

“I looked at that man whom I had once imagined almost invincible; he now seemed fragile, defeated without knowing it. Perhaps we were both defeated.”

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Mr. Sempere

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 296

### Explanation and Analysis

After Fumero attacks Fermín outside the hospice and Daniel brings his friend to the Barceló house to recover, he returns home to find Mr. Sempere asleep in a chair, having dozed off while waiting for him. For the first time, Daniel sees his father as weak, both because he's starting to show the signs of old age and because, after the dangerous incident with Fumero, Daniel knows his problems are no longer within his father's capacity to solve. Daniel's realization here is a sign that he's growing up, and that his filial bond is shifting into a relationship between two adults. Most of the novel's filial relationships don't survive the child's disillusionment with the parent's powers. In contrast, it's notable that Daniel perceives his father's failings not with scorn but with tenderness, empathy, and a mature kind of sadness. His final remark, linking his father's "defeat" to his own, shows that even though he's starting to consider himself an adult and strains for more independence, he still considers himself intimately bound to his father—as if they are on the same side in a battle against time and the worst parts of humanity.

### Nuria Monfort: Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ It didn't occur to him for an instant that Julián secretly despised him, that his affection was a sham, only a pretext to be close to Penélope. To possess her wholly and utterly. They did resemble each other in that.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Ricardo Aldaya (Mr. Aldaya), Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 383

#### Explanation and Analysis

In the manuscript she leaves to Daniel, Nuria describes the details of Carax and Penélope's courtship, and his fraught relationship with Mr. Aldaya, as Carax later related them to her. While Carax doesn't yet know that Mr. Aldaya is his biological father, he accepts him as a mentor and father-figure, if only to be closer to Penélope. This passage shows both the differences and troubling similarities between the two men, and is a notable contrast to Daniel's relationship with Mr. Sempere. Daniel idolizes his father (if not his humble passivity); Carax reviles Mr. Aldaya and is conscious that Mr. Aldaya is using him to boost his ego, while he in turn is using the older man to be closer to Penélope. Daniel generally strives to imitate his father and is often troubled to find that his character is actually quite different; Carax's one shared trait with his father is a disturbing one, an

obsessive desire for control over Penélope. While the text doesn't support or condemn this statement here, it implicitly points out that Mr. Aldaya's villainy and Carax's romantic passion spring from essentially the same motive. It's especially interesting that this analysis comes from Nuria, the novel's most important female speaker.

### Nuria Monfort: Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ He revered mosquitos and all insects in general. He admired their discipline, their fortitude and organization. There was no laziness in them, no irreverence or racial degeneration...In his opinion, society had a lot to learn from insects.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Inspector Javier Fumero

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 388

#### Explanation and Analysis

Describing Fumero and his reunion with Jorge Aldaya, Nuria slips into the policeman's mind and explores his ideals. In idolizing the behavior of insects, Fumero is essentially endorsing a highly repetitive mode of behavior and arguing that society should be organized around these repetitions. While repetitions can be a source of pride and happiness – for example, propagating the generational link between Daniel and his father and son, or linking Daniel to his idol, Carax – they can also create a nightmarish conventionalality or contribute to the mindless adherence to an oppressive regime. Notably, Fumero's vision of an obedient and regulated hive, lacking any evidence of individuality (which he describes as "irreverence" and "degeneration") contrasts with Daniel's childhood neighborhood, populated by unique and unconventional characters who band together to protect each other from the government, rather than support it.

☝☝ Fumero found old men revolting – as he did crippled men, Gypsies, and queers – whether or not they had muscle tone. Sometimes God made mistakes. It was the duty of every upright citizen to correct these small failings and keep the world looking presentable.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Inspector

Javier Fumero

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 389

### Explanation and Analysis

Continuing to inhabit Fumero's mind, Nuria outlines his bigoted views. Here, Fumero emerges as almost ridiculous in his evil; the quip that he dislikes old men "whether or not they had muscle tone" exposes his stupidity and a petty preoccupation with superficialities. However, its absurdity is also deeply disturbing; Fumero's rapid ascent to power during the Spanish Civil War shows that this is the kind of thinking that succeeds in oppressive regimes. Fumero's cruel dismissal of minorities, the elderly, and the disabled is unlike Daniel's empathy in the face of other people's vulnerabilities or differences. His thoughts here are a direct contrast to Daniel's tender description of his father's journey into old age, or of Fermín's recurring nightmares. This contrast shows that the mindset of Fumero and his associated regimes is antithetical to the individual, human connections among family and friends that the novel values above all else.

☝☝ Fumero was very keen on movies and went to the cinema at least twice a week. It was in a cinema that he had understood that Penélope had been the love of his life. The rest, especially his mother, had been nothing but tarts.

**Related Characters:** Inspector Javier Fumero, Nuria Monfort (speaker), Inspector Javier Fumero, Penélope Aldaya

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 390

### Explanation and Analysis

It's very important that Fumero is a film aficionado. This fact establishes him as a mediocre intellect, since Daniel and Fermín routinely degrade cinema as an inferior and thoughtless art form; it also highlights the fact that the cinema (at least in the world of the book) regularly disseminates false narratives and allows people to persist in simplistic and destructive thinking. In Fumero's case, the cinema convinces him that his feelings for Penélope are laudable and that he's entitled to her love, a fact with which no other characters (least of all Penélope) agree. Moreover, it leads him to develop a reductive and misogynist concept

of female sexuality in general. Fueled by movie narratives, Fumero categorizes all women as either paragons of purity (such as Penélope) or whores ("tarts"). Although Daniel's behavior toward women isn't perfect either, it's much more nuanced than Fumero's and less predicated on the objectification of sexual purity.

## Nuria Monfort: Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ The latter...had no doubt that Penélope was that love in his son's life. Without realizing it, he thought that if he helped him recover her, perhaps he, too, would recover some part of what he had lost, that void that weighed on his bones like a curse.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Penélope Aldaya, Julián Carax, Antonio Fortuny

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 407

### Explanation and Analysis

When Carax returns to Barcelona after fleeing Paris, he finds an unlikely ally in his adopted father, Fortuny, with whom he's always had a tense or even antagonistic relationship. When Carax was a child, Fortuny tried to mold him in his own image and groom him to take over the hat shop; when this proved unsuccessful, he lost interest in his son. Now, he's helping his son search for Penélope to prevent him from suffering his own fate, namely his loneliness after his failed marriage with Sophie. While Fortuny once tried to force on Carax an unhealthy and destructive repetition of the past, now he's trying to evade repetition in order to liberate his son. At the end of his life, Fortuny finally realizes that mindless repetition can destroy lives, while confronting the past often leads to a better future. Moreover, his belief that aiding Carax will lead to his own redemption shows that, no matter how troubled their relationships might be, the happiness of parents and children is very often inextricably linked.

## Nuria Monfort: Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ He hated the man who had caused this calamity, this trail of death and misery: himself. He hated those filthy books to which he had devoted his life and about which nobody cared. He hated every stolen second and every breath.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 420

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Nuria describes Carax's violent reaction when he finally discovers Penélope's tomb in the basement of the Aldaya mansion. While for most of his life Carax believed that he and Penélope were meant to be together, and that by pursuing her at all costs he was following the dictates of destiny, the revelation of her death causes him to blame himself for their mutual tragedy. Penélope's death is a pivotal episode, not just because it's very sad, but because it causes Carax (and Daniel) to transition from viewing life as predetermined by destiny to being the result of human choice and random chance. Thus, it's a moment of deep disillusionment for both protagonists.

It's also notable that Carax immediately expresses his grief and self-recrimination in hatred for his books. This shows that he considers his work an immediate extension of his own identity, which he must hate if he hates himself.

## Nuria Monfort: Chapter 13 Quotes

☝ I discovered that Laín Coubert, impersonating Julián, had been roaming through the city and visiting the Aldaya mansion.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Laín Coubert / The Stranger, Julián Carax

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 440

### Explanation and Analysis

When Laín Coubert (the name of the devil in the novel-within-the-novel version of *The Shadow of the Wind*) first calls her publishing office, and Carax is disfigured in the warehouse fire on the same night, Nuria immediately knows that the author has taken his own character as an alter ego, even though she doesn't discuss it with him personally. Preferring to think she can control and protect her wounded lover, she becomes truly concerned only when she finds out that as Laín Coubert, Carax has been stealing at night and has even killed the employer who sexually harassed her. Faced with the violent tendencies of the man she loves, Nuria chooses to separate the crimes from the man completely and refer to Laín Coubert as a criminal and separate person altogether. Her reaction creates the

impression that characters from books really can become actors in real life, further blurring the line between fiction and reality. However, by refusing to confront the fact that the man she loves is capable of wrongdoing, she's also evading the truth by turning her own reality into a fiction.

☝ I was afraid of listening to Julián and starting to believe, as he did, that we were all bound together in a strange chain of destiny, afraid of recognizing in you the Julián I had lost.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Daniel Sempere, Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 445

### Explanation and Analysis

In the final lines of her manuscript, Nuria addresses Daniel directly, telling him how Carax noticed him as a young boy and tracked his development, his acquisition of *The Shadow of the Wind*, and the beginnings of his investigations. This shows that Carax and Nuria have been conscious from the start that Daniel is repeating the patterns of the author's life. Moreover, they (or at least Carax) interpret this repetition not as a random event but as a sign of "destiny." While Carax and Nuria used to embrace destiny, they've been embittered by their tragic lives; Nuria prefers to distance herself from the past rather than relive it. Nuria's "recognition" of Daniel as Carax's counterpart mirrors Daniel's strange attraction to her when they first meet, despite the fact that she's much older than him, as well as his fascination with Penélope. Recognizing himself as participating in the same story, Daniel becomes attached to the women Carax loves, and they in turn become attached to him.

☝ Of all the things that Julián wrote, the one I have always felt closest to my heart is that so long as we are being remembered, we remain alive...Remember me, Daniel, even if it's only in a corner and secretly. Don't let me go.

**Related Characters:** Nuria Monfort (speaker), Daniel Sempere, Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 446

**Explanation and Analysis**

In the last lines of her manuscript, Nuria gives Daniel advice about how to proceed while also asking him to not forget about her. At this point, it's very clear that Daniel needs to resolve Carax's enmity with Fumero and cut the ties that bind him to the author's life; after all, Nuria has just died for her involvement with Carax. At the same time, Nuria is afraid that if Daniel distances himself too successfully from the past, she will disappear along with it. Her plea for remembrance is a poignant end to her generally pragmatic narrative, contrasting the perils of remaining enmeshed in past narratives with the tragedy of forgetting them completely. This dilemma is also reminiscent of Daniel's struggle to remember his dead mother as a child. While he has to forget about her to some extent in order to be healthy and happy, he's deeply disturbed by the loss of memories that seem to tie his mother, however tenuously, to life.

statue in the garden subverts expectations of angelic purity by impaling Fumero. In this episode, angels and devils are complex characters, while the only unequivocally evil person is the very human Fumero.

**Postmortem Quotes**

☝☝ I can't remember his exact words, or the sound of his voice. I do know that he held my hand and I felt as if he were asking me to live for him, telling me I would never see him again. What I have not forgotten is what I told him. I told him to take that pen, which had always been his, and write again.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 471

**Explanation and Analysis**

After the confrontation with Fumero at the Aldaya mansion, Daniel spends weeks in the hospital recovering. One day, he wakes up to find Carax sitting at his bedside. Although they barely speak to each other, they are able to communicate exactly what they're feeling, showing their intense and almost mystical connection after a lifetime walking in the same footsteps. At their second face-to-face meeting, the similarities between Daniel and Carax are stronger than ever, and by returning the fountain pen, Daniel reinforces the connection between them. At the same time, it's also an act of distancing. In parting with his childhood talisman, Daniel shows that he's ready to become his own man. He's also showing his knowledge that he and Carax are very different people; Carax is a gifted writer, while Daniel isn't and no longer wishes to be one. This moment is both the culmination and the end of Daniel's relationship with Carax.

**The Shadow of the Wind: Chapter 4 Quotes**

☝☝ It was Laín Coubert, just as I'd learned to fear him reading the pages of a book, so many years ago...I saw how the hand of the angel pierced [Fumero's] chest, spearing him, how the accursed soul was driven out like black vapor, falling like frozen tears over the mirror of water.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Inspector Javier Fumero, Laín Coubert / The Stranger, Julián Carax

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 465

**Explanation and Analysis**

In the climactic confrontation at the Aldaya mansion, Fumero shoots Daniel, who watches confusedly as Carax subsequently kills him. Daniel identifies the author as Laín Coubert, seeming to agree with Nuria that the alter ego has taken on a life of his own, and strengthening the sense that literature and its characters can be active in real life. Moreover, this moment marks the culmination of the novel's frequent references to angels and devils. Throughout the novel, devil characters have appeared surprisingly sympathetic, while angels have been exposed as less pure and flawless than they seem at first. Here, Laín Coubert, an alias for the devil, emerges as a hero by killing Fumero, the ultimate source of all evil in the novel. Moreover, the angel

**Dramatis Personae Quotes**

☝☝ Bea says that the art of reading is slowly dying, that it's an intimate ritual, that a book is a mirror that offers us only what we already carry inside us, that when we read, we do it with all our heart and mind, and great readers are becoming more scarce by the day.

**Related Characters:** Daniel Sempere (speaker), Beatriz ("Bea") Aguilar

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 484

### Explanation and Analysis

At the novel's end, Daniel has inherited his father's bookshop and runs it with Bea's help. The shop is surviving, but not very prosperous, as reading doesn't seem to be very popular. On one hand, the novel's conclusion represents a happy ending for Daniel, because he's married to his true love and is pursuing his passion for literature. On the other

hand, Bea's predictions about the death of reading demonstrate a marked pessimism about society as a whole. Throughout the novel, characters like Fermín have bemoaned the prevalence of inferior art forms like cinema, which in fact have inspired and fueled evil characters like Fumero. This pattern seems likely to repeat itself, given that this kind of media is so much more popular than the more educational and intense act of reading. While the novel ends on a note of personal success, it's more ambivalent about the prospects of society as a whole to rehabilitate and improve itself.



## 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.

## THE CEMETERY OF FORGOTTEN BOOKS

The novel opens in Barcelona in 1945, as Daniel Sempere walks with his father to the mysterious **Cemetery of Forgotten Books** for the first time. Mr. Sempere warns Daniel never to speak to anyone of what he will see inside. When Daniel asks if he can tell his mother, Mr. Sempere says sadly that “we keep no secrets from her.” This is because Daniel’s mother died in a cholera epidemic just after the end of the Spanish Civil War.

Mr. Sempere owns a bookshop he inherited from his father. He and Daniel live over the bookshop in a small apartment which Daniel feels is still permeated by the sadness of his mother’s death. Daniel says he spent his entire childhood making “invisible friends” among the characters in old books. He also treats his dead mother like an invisible friend, talking out loud to her before he falls asleep.

On the morning in question, Daniel wakes up at dawn “screaming” because he can no longer remember his mother’s face. After comforting him, Mr. Sempere says he has something to show him and leads him through the sleepy city streets. Stopping at a large, forbidding door, Mr. Sempere knocks until a small man named Isaac answers. Mr. Sempere introduces Daniel as his son and the future inheritor of his bookshop.

Daniel discovers that within the building is a round hall and myriad labyrinthine passages, all crammed with books. Browsing through them are several men Daniel recognizes as other booksellers and colleagues of his father. Mr. Sempere tells Daniel that “every volume you see here has a soul” and preserves the thoughts and feelings both of the author and those who read it. He says no one knows exactly how the **Cemetery** originated, but the men who know its secret now make sure that books without a home or at risk of fading into oblivion are stored here, waiting to be appreciated by new readers.

*The novel starts—and ends—with a ritual of father-son bonding. That this ritual takes place at a literary landmark demonstrates how central books are both to their relationship and Daniel’s process of growing up. As are most of the novel’s mothers, Mrs. Sempere is immediately established as a passive and ghostly presence at the narrative’s sidelines.*



*Right away, Daniel compares his love for books to his love for the women in his life. Both play a strong and mysterious but ultimately passive role in his development.*



*Daniel is upset because he’s losing the memories that link him to his mother. The Cemetery of Forgotten Books is a solution to this not just because it’s a good distraction for a child, but because it’s a repository of memories and truths at risk of perishing in the real world, tacitly assuring Daniel that his mother’s memory won’t ever disappear.*



*Mr. Sempere’s narrative suggests that the world of literature, although ostensibly created by humans, is also outside human control and somehow coincident with human development. He makes clear that books also interact with and influence reality, rather than just reflecting it.*



Daniel is awed and amazed. Best of all, to commemorate his first visit to the **cemetery**, he gets to choose a book to take home with him. As he walks deliberately through the passageways, he muses that each book contains a “boundless universe” that is infinitely more expansive than the worlds of people, who while away the time in “football and radio soaps.”

At that moment, drawn by “chance, or its more flamboyant relative, destiny,” Daniel notices an unfamiliar title called *The Shadow of the Wind*, by Julián Carax. He selects this book and leaves the **cemetery**, feeling that the book has been waiting for him since before he was born.

Back in their apartment, Daniel begins reading *The Shadow of the Wind* and is immediately hooked. The novel is about a man searching for his biological father, whose identity his mother divulges only as she is dying. The protagonist is also haunted by his “lost youth” and the “shadow of a cursed love.” The novel is especially interesting because it’s composed of various nested narratives, the literary equivalent of “Russian dolls.” Daniel stays up all night reading.

Daniel recalls a customer remarking that nothing is more influential to a reader than “the first book that finds its way into his heart.” Daniel believes this is true, and that the “enchanted” themes and images he first encounters in Carax’s novel accompany him through the rest of his life.

## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 1

Daniel is tempted to share the secret of the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books** with his best friend, Tómas Aguilar. Tómas is a gifted classmate who spends his free time thinking up eccentric inventions. Instead, Daniel asks his father about Carax’s life and bibliography, planning to read his other novels as soon as possible. However, he discovers that his well-read father has never even heard of the *Shadow of the Wind*. Intrigued, Mr. Sempere examines the book and sees it was printed in Barcelona in 1936, with a first edition printed the year before in Paris. The book’s local origins make it even more puzzling that Mr. Sempere doesn’t know it.

*For Daniel, books are the antidote to everything that seems boring and petty about daily life. In this way the novel seems to elevate the world of literature above reality, establishing reading as an experience that is sometimes more complicated and rewarding than living.*



*Chance coincidences abound throughout the novel, but Zafón often uses the language of destiny to describe them, giving the impression that they are controlled or predetermined by some larger force.*



*Carax’s novel is concerned with the same problems – the relationships between fathers and sons and the tragedy of romantic love – that will come to dominate Zafón’s. Daniel doesn’t know it yet, but for the first time he’s experiencing the duality between books and his life. Moreover, the reader experiences a sense of duality because the book within the book is suspiciously similar to and even shares a name with the novel itself.*



*The novel establishes acts of reading as equivalent to conventional milestones of life. In Daniel’s case, this phenomenon is exaggerated because the events of his life will go on to directly mirror the events of the book to which he’s so drawn.*



*The novel’s closeness to Daniel’s home, Barcelona, strengthens his connection with it. However, its mysterious nature and his expert father’s lack of information destabilize Daniel’s sense of familiarity with the city. As the novel progresses, this will make Daniel question many of his assumptions about his environment.*



Mr. Sempere decides to consult his prosperous and connected colleague Gustavo Barceló. Barceló owns a huge bookstore which he finances with his inherited industrial fortune, and he has an “elephantine” memory for books and their authors. The Sempere family finds Barceló at his habitual after-work haunt, the cafe Els Quatre Gats, where coincidentally Daniel’s parents met. Mr. Sempere introduces Daniel as his son who is starting to grow into a young man.

*It’s important that Mr. Sempere proudly introduces Daniel as a young man here. His growing interest in literature coincides with the first milestones of adolescence. At the same time that he learns about the world of books as it exists outside the Sempere family shop, he’s inducted into the world of professional men and his father’s friends.*



After examining the book, Barceló smiles icily and demands to know where Daniel found it, although Daniel won’t divulge the secret of the **Cemetery**. Barceló offers Mr. Sempere a large sum to buy the book, but Mr. Sempere says it’s Daniel’s decision. Daniel declines the offer, even when Barceló raises his price. Daniel asks to know more about Carax’s past, and Barceló says that if he visits him the next day and brings the book, Barceló will tell him all he knows. Barceló remains preoccupied the rest of the evening, looking at the book, and Daniel’s afraid he’ll somehow take it from him.

*Wealthy, intelligent, and sometimes sly, Barceló expresses his masculinity by exercising power and implying his ability to take the things he wants if he can’t buy them. This makes him a marked contrast to the mild Mr. Sempere, who declines to exercise control over his son even though, as a father, he could easily do so. Although Daniel will have close relationships with both men, they emerge as models of two very different kinds of masculinity.*



## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 2

The next day, Daniel sets off to the Ateneo library to find Barceló. He finds the collector seated next to a woman dressed in white who looks like an **angel**. Barceló begins to examine the book, telling Daniel that *The Shadow of the Wind* is Carax’s last novel. Moreover, this is the only copy remaining, since the rest have been burned.

*Imagery of angels and demons occur throughout the novel, with important women frequently appearing angelic. However, it’s important to note that this characterization is based largely on appearance, not behavior.*



Barceló introduces the woman as his niece, Clara, who is an “expert” on Carax. He scuttles into another room with the book, leaving Daniel to talk to Clara. She says that Daniel has earned Barceló’s respect by refusing to part with the book for money.

*Even though he’s still a child, Daniel’s first act of moral courage hints at what kind of man he will become, and how much he will prioritize his esteem for books.*



Clara is blind, and Daniel is entranced both by her beauty and the fact that he can observe her without her noticing. Even though she’s twenty-six and he’s eleven, he’s immediately attracted to her. Clara runs her hands over Daniel’s face to “read his features,” and Daniel blushes.

*Although Clara will emerge as an intelligent and strong character, her blindness lends her an air of passivity and helplessness. It’s important and a little disconcerting that this is what first attracts the much younger Daniel.*



## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 3

That afternoon, Daniel falls in love with Clara Barceló. He characterizes this passion as disastrous, a “curse on his skin” from which he won’t escape for years.

*The language with which Daniel describes his passion mirrors the reference to a “cursed love” in Carax’s novel. This is one of the first instances in which Daniel’s life seems to mirror his book.*



Clara explains that she became acquainted with Carax as a child in Provence, where her father sent her and her mother to wait out the Spanish Civil War. Friends thought her father was paranoid, but based on his understanding of history, Clara's father knew that Spain was in for upheaval and tumult, for he knew that "the future could be read much more clearly in the streets...than in the morning press." After hostilities broke out, he was jailed and eventually murdered in Barcelona's infamous Montjuïc Castle, betrayed by friends to whom he had remained loyal. Clara punctuates this story with an injunction to "never trust anyone."

Clara continues that in France, she and her cousin Claudette had a mediocre tutor, Monsieur Roquefort, who pretended to have high literary taste. He stumbled upon Carax's novel *The Red House* during a trip to Paris; the biographical notes stated that Carax was of Spanish origin but currently living in Paris and working as a pianist in a hostess bar (meaning a brothel). Roquefort bought the novel because it seemed gothic and salacious.

Actually, the novel is about a man who steals dolls from shops and museums to pull out their eyes and store them in his house. One night, he breaks into the house of a man made rich by questionable activities during the industrial revolution. There, he runs into the man's daughter, a gloomy and intellectual girl who falls in love with him. Driven by curiosity, the girl investigates the reason for the man's bizarre obsession with dolls, eventually discovering a "horrible secret" about her own father's collection of dolls. The novel ends tragically, but Clara doesn't specify exactly how.

Immediately hooked, Roquefort read the entire thriller on the train ride home. He called Carax's publisher for more information, but the receptionist didn't even know his address. However, she told Roquefort that *The Red House* had sold exactly 27 copies and had been panned by critics. After years of searching, Roquefort never found another Carax novel. In 1935, a bookseller friend related a scandalous story: after years of being a poor pianist, Carax published a well-reviewed novel and was on the verge of marrying a wealthy woman, only to become involved in a duel in the P ere Lachaise cemetery. He has never been seen since then, and no one knows whether he died or fled the city. Eventually, a new rumor spread that he returned to Barcelona and died there as a pauper.

*Like almost all the narrative Daniel will hear, Clara's is rooted in the Spanish Civil War, which shows how much the country's brutal history defines contemporary life. Ostensibly a thing of the past, it manifests itself often in the events of the present. Importantly, Clara's father casts doubts on the truthfulness of popular media like newspapers, whose unreliability will often contrast with the supposed trustworthiness of literature.*



*Like Daniel, Clara became acquainted with Carax's books by chance. Her recollection of Carax's biography provides Daniel with his first details of the author's life. His Spanish origins establish him as similar to Daniel, but his current occupation makes him seem much different.*



*Although Clara stumbled on *The Red House* coincidentally, the protagonist's bizarre habit of collecting doll eyes is reminiscent of her own blindness, suggesting that something besides chance led her to the book. Like *The Shadow of the Wind*, *The Red House* addresses issues – forbidden love affairs and the terrible secrets hiding within families – that will surface in Daniel's actual life as well.*



*Although all the characters who read Carax are fascinated with him, his books sell poorly and are at risk of fading into oblivion. This is exactly the kind of work *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books* exists to protect: clearly brilliant and valuable, but unable to survive in the real world. In this way, Carax's work also shares characteristics with Daniel's memories of his mother, which he prizes tremendously but can't entirely preserve. Thus, Carax's work is linked to the most important institutions and people of Daniel's life.*



## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 4

*The Red House* was completely different from anything Clara had read before. She compares the experience of reading it to the excitement of a first kiss. It made her realize she could live “intensely” despite her lack of sight. By this time, Daniel is spellbound by Clara’s charm and barely listening to what she’s saying.

Clara spent years looking for Carax’s work in shops and libraries, without success. Later, Roquefort heard a rumor about a strange person obtaining copies of Carax’s work by any means necessary and immediately burning them.

In the meantime, the Civil War had ended, and Clara returned to Barcelona with her mother. The city was not the place they remembered, haunted by the brutality of the war and the memory of Clara’s dead father. Clara’s mother hired an investigator to look into his death, and the detective discovered that he was killed by a man named Javier Fumero, who worked as a hired thug for the anarchists, communists, and fascists, changing his loyalty to align with whichever party was in power. Now, Fumero is a feared and respected police officer. Clara’s mother faded away in grief and now Clara’s home is with her uncle, whom she adores.

Daniel volunteers to read out loud to Clara and is surprised when she accepts. Daniel believes she knew he was in love with her and wonders why she befriended him. He concludes it was because of their shared love of literature and to alleviate her loneliness and sense of loss. Barceló returns with the book, and Daniel offers to return the next day and read a few chapters to Clara. Barceló laughs at his impertinence, but Clara accepts the offer.

## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 5

Daniel reveals that when he was younger, he dreamed of being a novelist. His ambitions centered around a fantastic **fountain pen** he saw in a shop. Daniel is convinced that this pen is capable of creating superlative literature or even of writing letters to “that unknowable” place where Daniel’s mother has gone. The shopkeeper tells Daniel and Mr. Sempere that the pen belonged to Victor Hugo; because of this, it’s incredibly expensive. Mr. Sempere tells Daniel they can’t afford such a luxury, but promises that when Daniel is old enough to write, they’ll return and buy it.

*For Clara as well as Daniel, acts of reading are just as intense and moving as milestones in real life. This is especially true for Clara because books allow her to participate in aspects of life usually denied to her because of her blindness.*



*Most information about Carax comes in the form of rumors, which different speakers retell and reshape throughout the novel. Rumors are a form of storytelling and thus potentially of literature; although they’re often misleading, each contains a grain of truth that leads Daniel to discover more about Carax.*



*Clara continues to emphasize how much the Civil War altered life in Barcelona for the worse. It’s important that in his first appearance, Javier Fumero is a man who thrives in circumstances that harm other characters. His chameleon-like nature and lack of any principles (demonstrated by his shifting allegiances) contrast unfavorably with Clara’s father’s loyalty and the stolid integrity young Daniel has already displayed.*



*Although he’s only met her twice, Daniel presents Clara as aware of and somewhat complicit in his “love” for her, which is really more of a schoolboy crush. To Daniel, Clara exists more in his imagination and fantasies than she does in real life.*



*Daniel believes that the fountain pen will allow him to write things he otherwise couldn’t. This is clearly naïve, but it reflects a belief he’ll carry into adulthood—that even though the literary world proceeds directly from human imagination, it is also an external sphere somewhat independent of human design. Daniel also equates the possibility of writing great books to the possibility of contacting his dead mother, again showing the connection between his feelings for books and the women in his life.*



If the **fountain pen** is longer there, Mr. Sempere says, they'll have the watchmaker, Don Federico, make a copy. Don Federico is known throughout the neighborhood for his mechanical talent, as well as for being gay and occasionally dressing up in drag.

Daniel returns to see the **pen** every weekend, reporting on its status to his father. He tells Mr. Sempere he wants to use it to write to his mother, and is unconvinced when his father insists that his mother isn't lonely because she's with God.

In the meantime, Daniel starts writing stories with an ordinary pen. He writes about a strange pen, possessed by the soul of a dead author, which reproduces his last work no matter who writes with it. However, Daniel is soon frustrated with his style and "anemic creativity." He thinks he can only write something good with the **fountain pen**. Eventually, he grows out of his writing phase, turns to other toys, and forgets about the pen. However, he always remembers his father's perceptible sadness at not being able to buy his son the one thing he craved.

Daniel returns home from Barceló's house preoccupied. When Mr. Sempere asks what he's thinking about, he answers, "the war." Daniel has never questioned postwar Spain's atmosphere of "stillness, poverty, and hidden resentment." But contemplating the death of Clara's father, he's astonished that the fearsome men who committed murder during the war are now probably ordinary citizens with children and jobs.

Daniel tells Mr. Sempere that he has befriended Clara and promised to read to her, without commenting on his sudden passion. To change the subject, Daniel asks if it's true that people often disappeared in Montjuïc Castle during the war. Mr. Sempere only says that after a war "it's best to leave things alone," and that Daniel's mother made him promise never to talk about the war with Daniel.

*Although postwar Barcelona is a conservative and repressive society, Don Federico's homosexuality is known and even supported in the neighborhood. Throughout the novel, seemingly minor human relationships emerge as the antidote to cruel and oppressive governments.*



*Daniel's belief in the power of writing is stronger than his belief in conventional religion. Even as a child, his beliefs conflict with those of his government, which was highly religious and habitually censored and repressed art.*



*Like Carax's work, Daniel's attempts at writing clearly reflect the events and concerns of his own life. Moreover, while wealth and the ability to buy coveted things are central to other men's identities and approaches to fatherhood, this is one characteristic Mr. Sempere decidedly lacks.*



*Daniel's thoughts reflect the disturbing duality of civil war: people who commit crimes during conflicts can also be ordinary and even sympathetic citizens in peacetime. In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, everyone in Barcelona has to confront and come to terms with this duality, even those like Daniel who can only imagine the actual fighting.*



*Mr. Sempere always quells talk of the past, seeking to avoid repeating it (or revisiting its trauma) by ignoring it. In contrast, Daniel will attempt to resolve the past by investigating it exhaustively.*



After dinner, Daniel looks out the window and sees a person standing on the street smoking a cigarette. He makes eye contact with Daniel, nods, and limps away. Daniel is frightened because he remembers reading about an identical scene in *The Shadow of the Wind*, in which the protagonist finds that a stranger was watching him from the street every night and smoking a cigarette. In the novel, this man turns out to be the **devil**.

*This is the first instance in which Daniel explicitly notices that his life mirrors his fascinating book. It's also important that Carax's books actually personify the devil, which corresponds to Zafón's frequent use of angel and devil imagery to describe Daniel's life.*



## DAYS OF ASHES: CHAPTER 6

After a good night's sleep, Daniel convinces himself that he imagined the sinister stranger. That afternoon, he puts on his Sunday clothes and walks to the Barceló house, where he's greeted by the kind maid, Bernarda. The apartment seems palatial compared to Daniel's humble home; it's packed with the rare books, statues, and paintings that Barceló collects. Daniel finds Clara in a parlor overlooking the street, playing piano badly and serenely. Clara remarks that Barceló has hired a well-known music teacher, Adrián Neri, to fix her playing. Daniel is irritated by Clara's obvious admiration for this man.

*Barceló provides Daniel with his first glimpse of a wealthier and more powerful life than his own, continuing to act as a contrast to Mr. Sempere. Notably, Daniel's anger at Neri as an interloper implies that he's somehow entitled to Clara's love or established in her affections, when in fact he's a child with a crush that she can never really reciprocate.*



After a snack, Daniel begins to read out loud, gradually relaxing and becoming subsumed in the narrative. Clara says the novel reminds her of Carax's other works, and Daniel volunteers to return the next day and read again. Soon, he's in the habit of visiting every day, except when Clara has music lessons with Neri. Daniel becomes accustomed to every object in the apartment and goes for walks with Clara, describing for her all the things she can't see.

*Daniel and Clara bond over their shared participation in literature; Daniel's worship of Clara is linked to the books they devour together. But while Daniel's insistence on owning *The Shadow of the Wind* is a sign of integrity, his desire to possess Clara is more inappropriate and troubling.*



Clara confides that once when she was alone in the street, a stranger approached her and started asking questions about Barceló and Daniel. When she touched his face, it felt like a leather mask. Daniel doesn't quite believe her.

*Clara's report coincides with Daniel's sighting of the stranger outside his window, implying it's not just a coincidence.*



Daniel feels tortured by his passion for Clara, since he has no hope that she'll ever reciprocate it. Still, he remarks that people always love "those who hurt us the most." He dreads the start of the school year, when he won't be able to spend all his time with Clara.

*Daniel says that Clara "hurts" him, implying that her lack of reciprocation is a choice rather than a simple fact of their age difference or her feelings. In doing so, he subtly faults Clara for his tragic passion, although she's really not responsible for it.*



Meanwhile, Daniel befriends Bernarda, who pities his motherless state. She's from an abusive family in a provincial town, but Barceló has taken her in and taught her to behave like a refined city maid. She goes to church every day and confesses "three times a week, four in warm weather," having frequent arguments with the agnostic Barceló. Bernarda ensures that Daniel gets haircuts, has clean clothes, and uses toothpaste. She also tells Daniel that he's too obsessed with Clara, referencing radio stories about boys who fall in love with teachers and are cursed, but he doesn't listen to her.

Mr. Sempere also disapproves of Daniel's devotion to Clara, and says he ought to spend more time with friends his own age. Daniel informs his father that he "doesn't know anything about women." Daniel fights with his father after he loans *The Shadow of the Wind* indefinitely to Clara. He also gripes about his large share of work in the bookshop, and he misses the "intimacy" and "small world" they shared in the years after his mother's death. He concludes that his father is "hurt" that he spends so much time in the Barcelós' luxurious orbit, and that he treats Bernarda like a mother figure, while Mr. Sempere never even thinks of remarrying.

Daniel becomes increasingly pained by his love for Clara, but refuses to address it. Whenever she tells him they need to talk, he makes excuses to leave the room.

*Bernarda is defined by her religiosity and her reliance on news and stories delivered by the radio. Zafón mocks both of these things, and in doing so implicitly mocks the Spanish government, since it relied on religion to advance its agenda and often disseminated propaganda through radio news or soap operas.*



*As he grows up and forms other relationships outside his childhood home, Daniel's close relationship with his father is tested. In particular, Daniel is enticed by the wealthy and secure atmosphere of the Barceló house, while his father's home is humble and often sad, haunted by his mother's death. Most of the novel's parent-child relationships are characterized by conflict, but Daniel's acute understanding of the conflict shows his true respect for his father and hints that they will overcome these issues.*



*By this point, even Clara has clearly attempted to defuse Daniel's ill-conceived passion. However, Daniel's refusal to address it makes clear that she's no longer responsible for resolving his feelings.*



## AN EMPTY PLATE: CHAPTER 7

For his sixteenth birthday, Daniel decides to throw a dinner party, inviting only Barceló, Clara, and Bernarda. Mr. Sempere thinks it's a bad idea and that they won't come, but Daniel doesn't listen to him. By this point, Daniel no longer reads to Clara and she avoids their intimate visits by making sure her friends are around when he comes over. Her music teacher, Neri, hangs around more and more and doesn't hide his dislike for Daniel.

On the night of the party, Mr. Sempere cooks an enormous dinner, but Barceló has to leave town for a business trip and Clara says that she has a music lesson. Only Bernarda comes. Enraged, Daniel runs out of the apartment and starts wandering the streets down to the port. Lost in memories of the days when he rode pleasure boats with both his parents, he only notices after some time that a limping stranger in a dark suit is following him. Suddenly, the man greets him by name and offers him a cigarette.

*Daniel's dinner party seems contrived to establish the Barcelós as his family, broadening his world and disassociating himself from his humble and depressed father. Notably, while Mr. Sempere disapproves of this, he never explicitly restricts Daniel's actions.*



*Of course, Daniel has to confront the fact that the Barcelós don't consider him family or feel even a fraction of the loyalty that his father does. Daniel's first moments of conscious nostalgia show him maturing into adolescence, finally old enough to look back on and long for his youth.*



The stranger says he knows a lot about Daniel and abruptly offers to buy *The Shadow of the Wind*, but Daniel refuses to sell it. Daniel realizes the stranger smells like burned paper. The stranger ominously mentions Daniel's friendship with Clara, and Daniel realizes that this is the man who approached her in the street. He worries that the man might hurt Clara in order to get the book. To throw the stranger off, Daniel says that Neri has the book and that he'll ask him about it.

*Daniel's refusal to sell the book echoes his earlier refusal of Barceló's offer; but now he's facing a much more dangerous buyer. While his dinner party fiasco seemed immature and ill-conceived, Daniel can also be quite clever and astute at evaluating the stranger's motives and perceiving the risk to Clara's safety.*



Daniel asks the stranger if he's a collector. The stranger responds that Carax is his "specialty" and that he collects the books to burn them. When he strikes a match to make his point, Daniel sees that his face is completely scarred over by leathery burns, and he has no nose or lips. The stranger walks away laughing.

*By actively seeking to destroy books, the stranger establishes himself as diametrically opposed to *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books* and those like Daniel and Mr. Sempere who value it. He's a threat not only to Daniel but to the complex truths that literature helps preserve.*



## AN EMPTY PLATE: CHAPTER 8

Daniel decides he has to warn Clara, whom he knows is home alone, and take the book away from her house, where it's stored. He runs to their apartment and unlocks the door, ignoring a homeless man who begs to sleep in the lobby.

*Even though Clara has just insulted him, Daniel still feels protective of her, which shows both his good nature and his exaggeratedly romantic ideals.*



Daniel enters the apartment and walks through the many rooms towards Clara's bedroom, the apartment flashing in the lightning. He retrieves the book from its usual shelf in the conservatory, thinking that he will give it to the stranger to ensure his and Clara's safety. As Daniel passes Clara's bedroom, he hears a deep voice. Thinking it's the stranger, he opens the door.

*Although books are important to Daniel, human relationships clearly supersede them. This differentiates him from many of the novel's other men, to whom possessions or ideals value more than anything else.*



## AN EMPTY PLATE: CHAPTER 9

Instead Daniel finds Clara naked in bed, having sex with Neri. He stands paralyzed for several seconds until Neri catches sight of him and, without telling Clara what's wrong, gets up and drags Daniel out of the room. He throws Daniel out of the apartment and threatens to beat him up if he ever talks to Clara again. Then Neri punches him and takes away his keys to the apartment.

*By refusing to tell Clara what he sees, Neri disempowers her and establishes his quarrel with Daniel as a conflict over ownership of a woman, rather than a competition for her attention or regard. Importantly, Neri wins this argument through brute force, rather than reason or appeal to the woman in question herself.*



Outside the building, Daniel encounters the same homeless man he met on the way in. The man gives Daniel some wine to help him compose himself and introduces himself as Fermín Romero de Torres. He immediately launches into a complicated story of his past career in Cuban “high espionage,” which was only derailed when Franco came to power. Deducing that Daniel is suffering “woman trouble,” he declares that all Spanish women are “a sanctimonious, frigid lot” and not worth the trouble. As he keeps talking, Daniel can tell that the man is longing for friendship and conversation even more than material comforts.

Daniel takes his leave from Fermín and walks to the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**. While he waits for someone to answer his knock, he rereads *The Shadow of the Wind*'s first sentence, in which the protagonist's mother exhorts him to search out his real father. He recalls the first time he read the book, feeling the same wonder and fascination now.

When Isaac answers the door, Daniel confides that he needs to hide the book from someone who wants to burn it. Although he's grouchy, Isaac takes Daniel into his office to warm up by the stove and clean off his cuts. He says if Daniel behaves, he'll give him some information on Julian Carax.

*This is Daniel's first encounter with the man who will become his most important father figure besides Mr. Sempere. With his flamboyant conversation and blatant anti-government attitude, Fermín is a contrast to the cautious and understated Mr. Sempere. It's also important that while Daniel characterizes Fermín as lonely and naturally craving friendship, Fermín forges his connection with Daniel by making crass generalizations about women, a troubling brand of male bonding.*



*Although the novel is obviously a work of fiction, it provides Daniel a connection to the reality of his own childhood – a reality that, after this disappointing night, seems far away.*



*Although he tries to be cranky, Isaac behaves tenderly toward Daniel. This demonstrates a solidarity among people who read and love books, even if they're very different otherwise. When Isaac explains his relationship with his own child, it will become clear that his behavior toward Daniel is similar to that of many of the novel's fathers, who are kinder to other people's children than to their own.*



## AN EMPTY PLATE: CHAPTER 10

In his office, Isaac says that he first heard of Carax from his friend Toni Cabestany, a Spanish publisher who bought the rights to Carax's books when they weren't selling well in Paris. Even though Carax's books failed on the Spanish market as well and didn't make money, Cabestany continued to publish them. Eventually, Cabestany died and his sons inherited the company. One day, a man named Laín Coubert arrived and offered to buy all the copies of Carax's work at a generous price. Daniel notes that this is the name Carax gives to the **devil** in *The Shadow of the Wind*. The greedy son asked for more money, but instead the man burned down the entire warehouse the next night. However, just before the warehouse burned, the company secretary saved a copy of each of Carax's books. The secretary is Nuria, Isaac's daughter, and Isaac says she has “a fondness for lost causes” and was friends with Carax.

*It seems clear that the mysterious man who burned down Cabestany's warehouse is the same person as the stranger who frightened Daniel earlier that night. Since the man shares his name with a character in Carax's novel, Daniel knows it's not a coincidence that their encounter resembled a scene in the novel. It's unclear whether Laín Coubert is actually the character from Carax's novel or the alias of a man inspired by the book. This confusion highlights the extent to which literature can influence and become entwined with the events of real life.*



Daniel asks about Carax's family, and Isaac says that the parents were separated for unknown reasons. His mother moved to South America and Carax was estranged from his father, Fortuny, who owns a hat shop, by the time he moved to Paris.

Daniel suggests that if he wasn't close to his family Carax might have visited Nuria when he returned to Barcelona, but Isaac says he wouldn't know. Because Nuria won't say much about her friendship with Carax, he suspects that they were sleeping together; he thinks Carax is a "scoundrel" for this reason.

The books that Nuria took from the factory are now hidden at the **Cemetery**, because a few days after she stole them she noticed a strange man following her and deduced that it was Coubert. She hid the books without telling anyone where they were, intending to retrieve them once she located Carax. However, she has never come back for them.

Daniel asks if he can talk to Nuria, and Isaac admits that his own relationship with his daughter is rocky. He believes she's married to someone named Miquel, but she never told him personally or invited him to the wedding. Daniel wonders aloud if Nuria still thinks about Carax, and Isaac says that while he doesn't know, he himself often thinks of his first love, who died of tuberculosis before they could marry. He believes Carax hurt his daughter, and will never forgive him for that.

Daniel enters the labyrinth to hide the novel, imagining Nuria doing the same thing years ago. Isaac advises him to make notches in the wood shelves to remind himself where the book is, and Daniel eventually hides it among a dusty collection of philosophical treatises. As he leaves he feels sad for the loss of the book and thinks about the enormity of knowledge contained in the **Cemetery**, which can never be fully understood.

When Daniel returns home, he finds Mr. Sempere still dressed and smoking in his armchair. Daniel refuses to say exactly where he's been all night, but his father seems resigned and urges him to open his birthday present. He has bought Daniel the **fountain pen** that he craved so much as a child. Daniel is touched both by the thoughtfulness of the gift and by his father's evident happiness at seeing him open it.

*Like Daniel's mother, Carax's is a mysterious and faraway presence who doesn't play a very active role in her son's life. On the other hand, Carax's estrangement from his father contrasts to Daniel's close (although sometimes strained) relationship to Mr. Sempere.*



*Isaac's antipathy towards Carax is based on his assumption that Carax slept with his daughter, rather than anything Nuria said on the subject. Evidently, he considers it normal and just to dislike a man who is sexually involved with his daughter, regardless of Nuria's feelings on the matter.*



*Daniel is doing exactly what Nuria did several years ago – hiding Carax's books at the Cemetery to preserve them from the stranger called Coubert. This act of repetition connects Daniel to Nuria, even though he doesn't actually know her yet.*



*It's evident that Isaac has a troubled relationship with his daughter; it's also evident that the trouble stems from his hostility towards her relationships with men. Nuria's behavior suggests that she found his insinuations about Carax meddlesome or inappropriate, and that she's responded by excluding him from any involvement in her love life.*



*This is one of many moments in which Daniel notes that he's repeating someone else's action; these moments build the sense that Daniel's narrative has already happened before. Whenever Daniel goes to the Cemetery, he's struck by the impression that the world of literature is much deeper and more complex than the everyday world, even though it's produced by writers and readers who themselves are products of that world.*



*Unlike Isaac, who has an overweening desire to know exactly what's going on in his daughter's life, Mr. Sempere respects Daniel's privacy even when it causes him worry. His gift of the long-desired fountain pen demonstrates his unconditional love for his son, a rare parental emotion in this novel.*



## TRUE TO CHARACTER: CHAPTER 11

After the dramatic night of his birthday, Daniel finds it surprisingly easy to wean himself off Clara and focus on other things. He's particularly distracted by his work at the bookshop, which is unusually busy. Mr. Sempere muses that they need to hire a third person, someone who appreciates literature and is savvy enough to track down elusive books. Hearing this, Daniel tracks down Fermín in the stone arch where he lives, reading news stories about the greatness of the Fascist party and denouncing them. Daniel takes him home for lunch.

On their way, Fermín begins talking about his “nemesis,” Inspector Fumero, who put him in jail after the Civil War and from whom he is constantly on the run. Daniel recognizes the name of the man who killed Clara's father, and notices that Fermín turns pale when he talks about him.

Despite Fermín's shame at his shabby appearance, Daniel introduces him to Mr. Sempere, who receives the homeless man artfully, offering him a bath and a clean suit of clothes. Daniel and Mr. Sempere see that Fermín's wrists, ankles, and back are covered with thick scars.

Daniel rustles up one of Mr. Sempere's old suits, and when he returns the two men are chatting comfortably, Fermín explaining that he's always loved poetry but was pressured into joining the civil service by his “pigheaded” father. At lunch, Mr. Sempere offers Fermín a job at the bookshop, and Fermín is so grateful that he bursts into tears.

Fermín turns out to be a lively and flamboyant character, wearing a large hat and galoshes and charming everyone he knows with an unending stream of talk. Mr. Sempere finds him a room in the boardinghouse of a sympathetic friend who lets Fermín live there without registering, reducing the chances that he'll be found by the police. Most importantly, Fermín proves a superb book sleuth, fulfilling obscure requests almost instantly.

*Daniel recovers from what he now considers an unhealthy obsession with a woman and her feminine world by immersing himself in the highly masculine (in this specific case) world of the bookshop and professional life. At this point in his life, romance and women are less important than and possibly even antithetical to personal development and a normal adolescence.*



*Like Coubert, Fumero is a malevolent figure who has played a role in multiple characters' pasts. His manifold but always sinister appearances create a sense of repetition, and connect Fermín's tumultuous past to Clara's childhood tragedy.*



*Fermín's earlier speech and demonstrated fear suggest that the scars are the work of Inspector Fumero. The policeman's brutality contrasts to the gentle and tactful manner with which the Sempere family bathe and care for Fermín.*



*Although Fermín's father is inconsequential to the narrative, he's one of many examples of fathers who feel entitled to total control of their children's destinies. This example again highlights Mr. Sempere's lenient and supportive behavior toward his own son.*



*Just as the neighborhood accepts and shelters the illicitly gay Don Federico, Fermín's landlady helps him stay under the police's radar. This isn't because she's particularly politically active, but because most citizens seem to recognize the government and its agents as inherently threatening and antagonistic.*



However, a few months later, Fermín's landlady, Doña Encarna, calls in the middle of the night to say that he's screaming suicide threats in his room and refusing to come out. Daniel and Mr. Sempere hurry over and placate the annoyed landlady. Mr. Sempere sends Daniel for Dr. Baró, the seedy but effective neighborhood physician, while he goes into the room to calm Fermín. When they return they find Mr. Sempere holding a raving Fermín, who has completely trashed the room. Dr. Baró sedates Fermín, concluding that he's suffering from recurring memories of his time in prison.

While she attempts to seem strict, Doña Encarna willingly accepts Fermín's apology for the disturbances, pitying him as a "dispossessed" person like herself. Daniel and Mr. Sempere start including Fermín in family activities so he feels less lonely.

Daniel and Fermín start going to the cinema together, even though Fermín derides film as mindless compared to literature. They both enjoy ogling the beautiful heroines. Fermín also tries to draw out Daniel's thoughts on women, making a number of generalizations about them in the process.

One day at the cinema, while Fermín is buying candy, Daniel is horrified to see Coubert sitting close to him. Coubert leaves so quickly that Daniel isn't sure if he imagined the whole thing, but he's still shaken when Fermín returns, and he knows Coubert is still looking for the book.

## TRUE TO CHARACTER: CHAPTER 12

Released from his heavy workload at the bookstore by the arrival of Fermín, Daniel devotes himself to investigating Julian Carax and spending time with his old friend Tomás Aguilar. Although Tomás is thoughtful and gifted, he looks like a bully, and in fact he first met Daniel after beating him up for making fun of his older sister. After Daniel refused to tell on Tomás, the two became friends.

Despite his gifts and good temper, Tomás's narrow-minded father Mr. Aguilar believes he's "fainthearted and mentally deficient." He bullies Tomás and plans to send him to military service to toughen him up.

*Fermín has a sprightly and optimistic attitude, but his nightmares show that he's also trapped in repetitions of his past. Fermín's trauma shows that people often can't thrive when they're living in their own history. Instead, they have to relinquish the past in order to move on. However, this is clearly easier said than done, especially when the past is traumatic and haunted by a brutal civil war.*



*Without knowing his whole story, Doña Encarna understands that Fermín lost everything during the war and the rise of the Fascists. That she considers herself connected to him by this fact shows that even citizens who weren't jailed or actively participating in the war feel themselves shaped and traumatized by it.*



*Throughout the novel movies appear as a contrast to literature—they are presented as narrowing the mind and preventing people from thinking critically. This is evident even in Daniel and Fermín, two very thoughtful characters, who only care about the movies for their sex appeal.*



*While the cinema is at best an escape from real life (in the novel's world), literature is viscerally tied to reality, so much so that its characters seem to be able to wander into the real world at will.*



*Tomás is important because Daniel's strong friendship with him will emerge as one of many parallels between his life and Carax's. Although Tomás appears and sometimes acts traditionally masculine, his inner character is much more complex and not limited to traditional gender roles.*



*Because Tomás isn't as masculine as his father would wish, Mr. Aguilar assumes that something is wrong with him. Like many parents in the book, he blames his child for failing to conform to his conventional expectations.*



Daniel dislikes Tomás's glamorous older sister, Bea, who looks like a movie star and has a rich Falangist boyfriend named Pablo Buendía, a soldier who likes to talk about "the genetic and spiritual superiority" of the Spanish. Daniel believes Beatriz is amused by her boyfriend's "inanities," but she never corrects him publicly.

*Unlike Tomás, Pablo is every inch a conventional man. He's also intolerant and stupid, a figure of ridicule to the much more intelligent Daniel. Here, Zafón shows his disdain for characters who conform too rigidly to social and political expectations.*



## TRUE TO CHARACTER: CHAPTER 13

As teenagers, Daniel and Tomás are increasingly worried about being drafted. Fermín, who hates the government, decides they must think of a ruse to keep the boys out of the army. But his plans are put on hold when Bernarda visits the shop one day to buy a book for her niece. Fermín is instantly smitten and bombards her with hyperbolic compliments, taking her around the bookstore. He eventually persuades her to accompany him to tea.

*The threat of military service hovers over all the novel's young male characters, and will be another connection between Daniel's life and Carax's. By herding thoughtful young men into the brutally masculine world of war, the highly conservative Spanish regime attempts to transform them by force into something less individual.*



Daniel closes the bookstore once they're gone, but he soon hears noises in the shop. When he goes to investigate, the intruder is gone but has left behind a half-burned photograph of a young couple smiling at each other. A shop window behind the couple says "Sons of Antonio Fortuny." Daniel immediately remembers that Carax's father's surname was Fortuny, and that he ran a hat shop. Daniel knows that the man in the picture is Julian Carax, "unable to see the flames that were closing in around him."

*The shop window shows that like Daniel, Carax was the son of a Barcelona shopkeeper. It's clearly not a coincidence that the picture arrived in the shop. Rather than wondering who left it there, though, Daniel immediately focuses on Carax's feelings, identifying himself with the young man. Just as the young Daniel felt guided to his novel by "destiny" rather than chance, he feels a connection with the author that transcends worldly problems.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 14

The next day, Daniel delivers an order of books to a Professor Javier Velázquez because Fermín is too disgusted with the customer's fascist leanings to go himself, claiming his money is "stained with the blood of innocent virgins." It's a beautiful day, and Daniel notices the cars that are becoming more common in the city and posters announcing the arrival of the television in Barcelona. Daniel is intrigued, although Fermín always says that television will be the end of civilization and cause humans to go back to "living in caves" and "medieval savagery."

*While the world of literature seems deeper and often more interesting than the human world, television is presented as even worse than the cinema, a threat not just to the human mind but human civilization as a whole. Throughout the novel Zafón denigrates modern artistic media and methods of communication, suggesting they're less trustworthy than the tradition of literature and shouldn't be relied on.*



When he arrives at Velázquez's office, he finds the professor ogling and talking with a young student. Daniel starts to look her over as well, only to realize when she turns around that it's Bea Aguilar. Beatriz jokes with the professor about how Daniel once insulted her. However, when Velázquez leaves them alone, she asks Daniel if he really doesn't like her, and suggests that he's projecting onto her all his animosity for her father. She adds that Tomás is more comfortable among Daniel's family than his own.

*Daniel is forced to reevaluate his dislike for Bea by his abrupt realization of her beauty. Daniel's worship for Clara was also predicated on her beauty, and his behavior now suggests he hasn't learned much from the collapse of that relationship. On the other hand, Bea shows her maturity by acutely pointing out that men often express conflicts among each other by their behavior towards the women they perceive as "belonging" to other men.*



Daniel asks about her boyfriend, and Bea says that she's getting married and moving to the remote city of El Ferrol once Pablo finishes military service—but she doesn't sound particularly excited. Daniel starts making fun of El Ferrol and she gets annoyed and walks away, but Daniel chases after and confesses that he only wants to be friends with her. He convinces her to meet him on Friday so he can show her something about Barcelona she hasn't seen yet.

*Bea is poised on the brink of conventional and conservative womanhood. While she's obviously depressed about this prospect, she lacks the confidence and resources to strive against it. By accepting Daniel's friendship, she attempts to escape the influence of one man by turning towards another.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 15

Daniel visits the Fortuny hat shop, which is abandoned and dusty. The building caretaker, Doña Aurora, knows a lot about Carax. She tells him that Carax went to Paris between 1918 and 1919 to escape his father, Fortuny, who wanted to put him in the army. Daniel asks about his return to Barcelona, but the caretaker says that after a letter arrived for him in Barcelona, Fortuny told her that Carax died in Paris that year. She's happy to hear that he might be alive, because he was a good child and used to fascinate the neighborhood kids with the wild stories he told.

*Just like Daniel, the young Carax lived under the threat of military service, although Carax's father seems more similar to Mr. Aguilar than the mild Mr. Sempere. If Carax did die in Paris, the similarities between his life and Daniel's seemingly lead to a dead end. However, it's important that this information comes from his estranged father, certainly not the most reliable source.*



Doña Aurora also divulges that Fortuny beat his wife regularly, and that the wife, Sophie, told one of her neighbors that Julian wasn't Fortuny's biological son. She says Fortuny was a "mean old bastard."

*Sophie's revelation makes Carax very similar to the protagonist of his own novel, whose mother tells him to search out his biological father.*



Doña Aurora isn't sure if the man in the photo is Carax, and she doesn't recognize the woman. But she does remark that during school Julian fell in with the son of the famously rich Aldaya family, as well as a "scatterbrained" boy named Miquel.

*Miquel is also the name of Nuria's husband; he's another character beginning to make appearances in seemingly disparate narratives.*



The apartment is now entrusted to the care of Sophie's lawyer, whom Doña Aurora believes visits the apartment at night, possibly with women. A mysterious police "inspector" also once visited the apartment.

*Clearly Fumero, the inspector who haunts many other characters' pasts, is also interested in Carax, probably not benignly. This fact means Carax is connected to Daniel's life and those of his friends not just by his books but by his real-life enemies.*



Daniel tempts the voyeuristic caretaker into visiting the empty apartment, which turns out to be stuffed with old dusty possessions and infested with birds. They find a pile of childhood photos of Carax, which reminds Doña Aurora that Carax used to tell her daughter he had a secret sister who lived with **Satan** at the bottom of a lake. The door to Carax's room is locked, but Daniel stumbles on the key hidden in a music box and opens the door.

*Doña Aurora's recollection of Carax's storytelling as a child is especially interesting given that the devil is also a prominent character in Carax's adult novels. This suggests that Carax repeats the events and preoccupations of his childhood in his literary works.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 16

Carax's room is "infested with crucifixes" which hang all over the room and are even scratched on the furniture and the tiles. On the desks are many notebooks, but they only contain math problems and doodles. In one of them Daniel finds a photograph of the same girl from the first picture, captioned "Penélope, who loves you."

As they leave, Daniel remembers the letter that came for Carax and secretly pockets it, taking it from the cabinet where Doña Aurora left it many years ago. She confesses that she read it and that it was a love letter just like the ones in radio dramas, "only sadder [...] because it sounded as if it was really true."

After leaving Doña Aurora, Daniel visits Mr. Molins, the decrepit building administrator, who immediately launches into a monologue about Doña Aurora's beauty as a young woman and his own erstwhile sexual prowess. He gives Daniel the name of Sophie Carax's lawyer, José María Requejo, as well as his office address and the PO box where they send his mail. After consulting a map, Daniel finds that the lawyer's address doesn't exist, although Mr. Molins is too lazy to be perturbed about this.

Mr. Molins describes Fortuny as "ascetic" because he declined the administrator's invitation to "go whoring." He also repeats the rumor that Carax wasn't Fortuny's biological son. Daniel convinces him to explain everything he knows about the family, and a nested narrative begins, with Mr. Molins as the narrator.

According to Mr. Molins, Fortuny met Sophie Carax when he was getting old and impatient to be married. He chose Sophie, a poor girl without family who gave piano lessons, because she was young and seemed easy to control and likely to conceive. When they returned to Barcelona from their honeymoon, the couple was already on bad terms. Sophie's friend, Viçeneta, later divulged that when Sophie tried to initiate sex on their wedding night, Fortuny called her a whore and rejected her. A few months later, Sophie told him that she had conceived a child by another man.

*Religion often seems laughable in the novel; here, through the profusion of crucifixes in the abandoned room, it's distinctly sinister. Just as "angels" like Clara and "devils" like Coubert are more complex than the conventional imagery suggests, crucifixes don't suggest an affinity for religion, but instead imply that it's a largely negative force.*



*Doña Aurora's comment shows popular reliance on radios and soap operas to provide ideals and stories to emulate. However, while literature can be as intense and complex as real life, radio ultimately provides a pale reflection of reality and doesn't live up to its strong emotions.*



*For Mr. Molins, misogyny is the currency of male bonding, apparently his preferred method of cementing a new friendship. While his behavior seems obviously crude and unlikeable, it's important to note that he's an exaggerated version of much more sympathetic characters like Fermín, who bonds with Daniel by making sweepingly denigrating comments about women.*



*While Mr. Molins is unreliable and crass as a man, his narrative (italicized in the novel to differentiate it) is essentially a small literary manuscript, in which he's eloquent and has impressive insight into Carax's family saga. When they communicate through literature, even deeply flawed characters can access a thoughtfulness and truthfulness not available to them in everyday life.*



*Fortuny chooses Sophie for all the wrong reasons, so it's no surprise their marriage is a disaster. His love for his wife is entirely predicated on his ability to possess and control her, and evaporates completely when he realizes she has even the most basic of independent sexual desires. On the other hand, Sophie's straightforward confession of her infidelity suggests that she's not bound by the same regressive expectations for female behavior.*



Having grown up in an abusive household himself, Fortuny immediately started beating Sophie, who in turn refused to name the baby's father no matter how much he hit her. Fortuny decided the father must be the **devil**, because "sin had only one father," Satan. To combat the supposed presence of the devil in his home, he hung crucifixes everywhere, throwing Sophie violently out of the apartment and breaking her arm when she objected.

Sophie delivered the baby with the assistance of neighbors, and begged Fortuny to treat him as a son. He assented, but treated his wife as a servant, rarely having sex with her and feeling consumed with self-disgust every time he did. Although he tried to interest the boy in his own pursuits—religion and hat-making—the young Carax was unreceptive and uninterested in anything except making up fantastic stories. Fortuny interpreted his son's creativity—including a desire to be a painter and his habit of composing his own music on the piano—as a sign of deviance, and gave up on trying to mentor his son.

At the age of twelve, Carax began working his way through the local library's stock of fiction and poetry. Fortuny was convinced that Carax was a useless idiot and asked God why he had been punished with such a son. Meanwhile, Sophie chafed inside her loveless marriage but saw no way to leave, especially with her son to care for. No matter how often Fortuny resolved to be a better man than his own father, he hit Sophie every time they fought, and the troubled family "became strangers living under the same roof."

Mr. Molins's narrative ends and Daniel returns to the bookshop, where Fermín immediately starts teasing him about dating a young woman. After some confusion, Daniel finds out that Bea had stopped by the shop while he was away to say she would see him on Friday. Daniel points out that Bea is engaged, and is his friend's sister, but Fermín is unconvinced. To distract him, Daniel asks about Bernarda, about whom Fermín talks lasciviously but seems to have good intentions. He says he'll make her happy "if it's the last thing I ever do."

Before Fermín leaves to meet Bernarda for the afternoon, Daniel asks him to find out who owns the lawyer's PO box. Fermín agrees without even asking why Daniel needs the information.

*Fortuny is a terrible husband, but Zafón is careful to point out that this is partly due to his own upbringing. Male misogyny and mistreatment of women often stems from the negative and abusive relationships men have with each other. Fortuny interprets religious teachings in a highly literal and simplistic manner, with the result that they're not very helpful to him.*



*Just as he only loves Sophie when he thinks he can control her, Fortuny is only interested in Carax when it seems possible that the boy will come to resemble him. His behavior highlights the extent to which conventional family relationships revolve around the ego of the dominant man. Fortuny is highly reminiscent of Mr. Aguilar, who is hostile to Tomás's creativity and does his best to repress it.*



*While Fortuny is frustrated that his marriage doesn't live up to unrealistic expectations, Sophie is much less self-absorbed, committed to a bad marriage because there's no other way to care for her son. Their miserable dynamic shows the different repercussions of a failed marriage for men and women.*



*Daniel's reticence in talking about Bea differentiates him even from sympathetic characters like Fermín, who sexualize women in order to gain standing among other men. However, Zafón suggests Fermín's bragging is balanced out by his tenderness toward Bernarda and desire to make her happy rather than possess or control her.*



*While he's older than Daniel and acts like a mentor in some ways, Fermín's unquestioning acquiescence to his request shows that he considers himself more like a friend than a father. This makes him a more appealing confidant than Mr. Sempere.*



When Daniel is alone in the bookshop, a strange man arrives and browses languidly, while informing Daniel that reading is for women, who have “nothing to do” with their time. The man giggles and warns Daniel that he and Mr. Sempere are harboring “undesirable characters” in the shop, subsequently alleging that Don Federico visits the shop to buy gay pornography. He shows his badge and identifies himself as Chief Inspector Francisco Javier Fumero. It turns out he’s less interested in Don Federico than Fermín, whom he knows by various aliases and has tracked to the bookstore. Scared but stalwart, Daniel denies he knows him and Fumero leaves, threatening that Daniel has to cooperate with him or suffer the punishment.

To relieve his anxiety, Daniel goes for a walk. He decides not to tell Mr. Sempere and Fermín about this development, thinking that making them anxious would be playing into Fumero’s game. He runs into Don Federico, a kind and gentle man who gives him an alarm clock to replace Mr. Sempere’s broken one at home. Daniel is uncertain if he should warn Don Federico, but says nothing.

When he gets home, Daniel falls asleep until the middle of the night, when he gets up and opens the envelope from the Fortuny apartment. It’s from 1919, and the sender is Penélope Aldaya. In the letter, she tells Carax that she knows he’s left Barcelona and that he probably thinks she betrayed him, since nothing worked out as they planned. However, she has loved him since the first day she met him and will continue to love him forever. She’s writing in secret, since someone named Jorge has promised to kill Carax if he ever turns up at her house again.

## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 17

Daniel reads the letter several times before dawn and then leaves the house and takes the train out of the city to the return address written on the letter, 32 Avenida del Tibidabo. The neighborhood is full of grand but decaying mansions obscured by walls and hedges. At the Aldaya house, Daniel tries unsuccessfully to peer through the overgrown vegetation around the gate, only making out a defunct fountain and several broken statues.

*In Daniel’s first encounter with Inspector Fumero, the policeman is confusingly interested in many characters, from Don Federico to Fermín to the Sempere themselves. His involvement in so many narratives heightens the sense that events in the novel are liable to repeat themselves. Moreover, Fumero starts to emerge as a sort of universal villain, representing evil without seeming to need much motive. While the mysterious Coubert shares his name with Carax’s devil, it’s Fumero who really emerges as a devil-like figure.*



*Daniel’s determination to handle this new problem by himself shows his growing conception of himself as a man, as well as his desire for Fermín and Mr. Sempere to perceive him that way. However, Don Federico’s mild helpfulness indicates that strength and independence aren’t the only important characteristics for an adult to have.*



*Daniel learned from Doña Aurora that Carax fell in with the rich Aldaya family; now he knows that Carax was in love with the Aldaya daughter, Penélope. This is remarkably similar to Daniel’s growing fascination with Bea, the daughter of his own friend’s rich family. Therefore, it’s an ominous sign that Carax’s romance with Penélope clearly ended in tragedy and disaster.*



*The Aldayas’ neighborhood shows that they were clearly wealthy, before circumstances somehow turned against them. Their unexplained demise is a reminder that no one’s position in this novel is static. Rather, everyone participates in some kind of cycle.*



Daniel meets the caretaker of the neighboring house, who has worked in the neighborhood since 1920, and pumps him for information about the Aldayas. The caretaker says the Aldayas lost their Spanish fortune during the anarchist period of the Civil War and moved, with their son Jorge, to a property in South America. When Daniel asks about Penélope, the caretaker says he must be mistaken, because the Aldayas didn't have any daughters.

The caretaker says the house will probably be demolished, which is a good thing since the Aldayas were “a shady lot.” Now that the house is abandoned, the neighbors claim that some strange presence haunts the house, sobbing. The son of the caretaker's employer went in the house one night and claims to have heard voices.

Before he leaves, Daniel takes a last look at the house, imagining Penélope having her picture taken in the courtyard and Carax looking at the photograph, “contemplating a future as wide and luminous as that avenue.”

*Now Daniel knows that the man threatening Carax in Penélope's letter was her older brother, Jorge. The Aldaya family's structure is remarkably similar to that of the Aguilar. Because of this, Carax and Jorge's enmity is a bad omen for Daniel and Tomás's friendship.*



*The mysterious presences haunting the Aldaya house are similar to the noises Doña Aurora hears in Carax's childhood apartment, linking the two houses together in spite of their very different characters.*



*Once again, Daniel identifies himself with Carax by reliving moments of the author's life. Notably, Daniel strengthens his bond with the author by coming to perceive Penélope as a love object in the same way Carax does.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 18

Daniel retrieves Nuria Monfort's address from his keepsake box and spends the morning working in the shop while Fermín teases him about his imminent meeting with Bea. Their neighbor Merceditas—whom Daniel believes Mr. Sempere likes, and who definitely likes him—drops by with some apples for them.

While they're chatting, there's an uproar in the street and the pompous schoolteacher, Don Anacleto, arrives to announce that Don Federico was arrested by the State Police the night before when they raided a gay club. At the police station, Inspector Fumero left him for a night in a cell with “a select group of thugs.” After expounding on Don Federico's virtues for so long that the rest think he has died, Don Anacleto reveals that the watchmaker was returned home by the police, raped and beaten to within an inch of his life.

*Between his ongoing investigation and his flirtation with Bea, Daniel feels his life starting to change. He wants his father's life to move forward as well, so he imagines a romance between Mr. Sempere and Merceditas. However, Mr. Sempere is much more resistant than Daniel to any actions that would draw him into the future and separate him from the memory of his beloved wife.*



*Fumero appears as the antagonist even in the novel's secondary conflicts, creating the sense that all these conflicts are repetitions of each other. Fumero's omnipresence reflects the government's manifold and frightening intrusions into private life. It also makes him less of an individual character than a generalized representation of evil.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 19

Everyone is horrified at this turn of events—even the conventionally uptight Merceditas, who says the police are evil. Fermín counters that they are morons, which is even worse because morons are more sanctimonious and have less ability to reason. He begins to fight with Merceditas about the hypocrisy of religion until Mr. Sempere orders Fermín to go to the pharmacy and buy things for Don Federico.

Feeling that Fumero tortured Don Federico in order to demonstrate his power over Fermín, Daniel tells Mr. Sempere about the inspector's visit, but his father just tells him to keep quiet and not frighten Fermín. Mr. Sempere tries to inquire about Daniel's meeting with Bea, but he won't reveal anything. Eventually, he tactfully gives Daniel the afternoon off.

Before his date with Bea, Daniel goes to visit Nuria Monfort, finding her apartment building in a shabby neighborhood and her name listed on the mailbox along with that of Miquel Moliner. After knocking on her door without success, he finds Nuria reading in the courtyard. She's a graceful woman with a careworn face. Daniel says he was sent by her father to find out about Carax, but she is immediately suspicious and only reluctantly invites him inside.

## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 20

Nuria's apartment is cramped and "adrift in shadows." Nuria says that her husband is in prison for politically subversive activities, but that Daniel shouldn't repeat this to Isaac. Meanwhile she supports herself with difficulty by doing translation work.

Nuria tells Daniel that she met Carax when she was working for Cabestany's publishing house in Paris. She says that although Isaac has probably said she chased Carax "like a bitch in heat," they were just friends, even when she stayed at his apartment during a business trip to Paris. She didn't think he was happy in France, but he wouldn't reveal much about his personal life. Nuria confirms the basic details about the Fortuny family related by Mr. Molins, including that Fortuny wasn't Julian's real father. Nuria says Carax didn't hate his father, but lost all respect for him. Daniel notes that the family's situation seems similar to that of his friend Tomás's family.

*Even though Merceditas is very conservative and probably frowns on homosexuality in the abstract, her instinctive distrust of the government makes her sympathetic to Don Federico. Her reaction shows that for ordinary people, fear or dislike of authority can supersede traditional dogma.*



*When presented with a potential threat, Mr. Sempere is resolutely passive, unlike most of the novel's men who rush to action without thinking at all. His response to Fumero corresponds to his attitude toward Bea and his refusal to press the reluctant Daniel for details.*



*Although Nuria will prove the novel's most independent woman, she first appears only in relation to several other men – her father, Carax, the unknown man listed on her mailbox. This demonstrates the extent to which the novels' female characters generally function as appendages to men.*



*It's immediately clear that Nuria and Isaac have a tense relationship, and that Nuria's romantic relationships, real or hypothetical, aggravate these tensions.*



*Nuria's crude description of Isaac's thoughts highlights her father's disturbing sense of entitlement to information and control over his daughter's sexual and romantic life. Daniel's statement of the similarity between Carax's family and Tomás's demonstrates that many families repeat the same troubled parent-child dynamic; although he doesn't remark on Nuria explicitly, her evident tensions with Isaac show that she's included in this pattern as well.*



Daniel asks about Penélope, but Nuria denies having ever heard of her, even when Daniel shows her the pictures. She says she never heard of him having any girlfriends, and that he once told her “he had no right to love anyone.” She had heard that Carax was supposed to marry a wealthy woman before his involvement in a duel, but doesn’t know any more particulars.

Nuria doesn’t know why Carax returned to Barcelona. She only knows that his body turned up at the morgue in 1936, shot through the heart. Fortuny refused to take charge of the affair, so he was buried in a common grave. She wasn’t able to find out anything more, especially since this all occurred during the chaotic beginning of the Civil War, when many people disappeared for a variety of reasons. At one point, Inspector Fumero visited her and warned her not to ask any more questions.

When asked about Laín Coubert, Nuria theorizes that this is the alias of Jorge Aldaya, whom she believes once called her anonymously to ask for Carax’s Paris address, but which she didn’t give. She never saw Laín Coubert, but she heard his voice and thinks it’s the same as Jorge’s. She theorizes that Jorge wants to burn the books out of spite, since they’re a part of Carax.

Nuria tells Daniel he reminds her of Carax, and strokes his hand while he covertly examines her body and fantasizes about kissing her. But she only kisses his cheek and gently ushers him out of the house. As he walks home, Daniel imagines her sitting lonely in her apartment, crying over her memories.

## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 21

As dusk falls, Daniel makes his way to the university to meet Bea. As he approaches he worries that she will stand him up, but then he finds her waiting for him in the beautiful cloister. She declares that she’s only meeting him to prove that he’s wrong, and she’s dying to marry Pablo and move to El Ferrol. However, she also admits that she was scared to come in case Daniel proves right. Daniel suggests that she’s only marrying Pablo to escape the overbearing Mr. Aguilar.

*By recapitulating old details without giving any new information, Nuria creates a sense of frustrating repetition. Her seeming lack of knowledge about Penélope corresponds to the caretaker’s account; the evident secrecy that surrounds her suggests that Penélope is a very important character.*



*Nuria doesn’t seem to consider Fumero central to her own narrative, but this information is important to Daniel. Fumero’s presence in Carax’s life as well as Daniel’s seems to suggest that the two men are connected by something stronger than just Daniel’s admiration or curiosity.*



*Nuria’s theory seems convincing, and it roots Coubert firmly in reality, a real person imitating a character rather than a character come to life. However, it’s important that the only person backing up this hypothesis is Nuria herself.*



*Nuria seems like an active and stoic woman, not at all given to sitting around crying. Daniel’s strange reverie indicates a desire to see women as more sentimental or traditionally feminine than they really are.*



*Daniel and Bea have an instant connection, sharing secrets and analyzing each other even though they’ve only been on speaking terms for a few days. Their quick intimacy suggests that they’re “meant” to be together, rather than two acquaintances coincidentally developing romantic feelings.*



They walk to a café and share fried potatoes while Daniel tells Bea the entire story of his obsession with and investigation into Carax. Bea demands that he take her to the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**, so they walk there, and Daniel convinces a skeptical Isaac to let Bea in. Daniel shows Bea the place where he has hidden *The Shadow of the Wind*. Tasked with picking out her own book, Bea chooses *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and says she feels like it's been waiting for her. Touched that she shared his reaction of many years ago, Daniel kisses her.

Daniel and Bea walk back to her house in silence. Daniel says he wants to see her again, and she says she'll find him when she has an unguarded moment. Daniel thinks this has been the best day of his life.

*It's interesting and ominous that the book Bea feels she was destined to choose—*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*—is about a young woman whose life is destroyed following a forbidden sexual encounter. Repeating Daniel's reaction from many years ago, Bea strengthens the sense that she and Daniel are connected by some predestined order.*



*While most of the novel's romantic relationships are male-dominated, it's initially unclear whether Daniel or Bea has more power. As a man, Daniel is free to roam the city at will; but the very fact that she's so sheltered and guarded means that Bea gets to decide when and where to see her new lover.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 22

When Daniel gets home, Fermín is waiting to question him about his date, telling him sagely to “never trust girls who let themselves be touched right away.” He diagnoses Daniel as being seriously in love.

Then Fermín asks if Daniel thinks he could be a good father, ideally a supportive and thoughtful one like Mr. Sempere. He wants to become a better man and start a family with Bernarda. Daniel assures him that he'll be an excellent family man.

Fermín goes on to say that he talked to a friend at the post office, and tells Daniel that the lawyer they've been tracking, Requejo, doesn't exist, and that Nuria Monfort picks up the mail from the PO Box. Astonished and confused, since this revelation means Nuria lied to him, Daniel tells Fermín the entire story. Fermín says that if Nuria lied about one thing, she probably lied about everything. He suggests that they visit Carax's alma mater, San Gabriel's School, and ask about his relationship to the Aldayas.

*Fermín's advice is particularly repulsive given that he also brands all women who don't want to be “touched” as prudes. Although Daniel doesn't seem to take him seriously, his speech shows how regressive stereotypes can shape men's approach to romance.*



*Fermín's sudden seriousness indicates that he doesn't really stand by his crude comments, redeeming him somewhat. Although he often strives to project an aggressive masculinity, at heart he seems to want to emulate the mild-mannered Mr. Sempere.*



*Daniel confides in Fermín long before his own father. Even when he's confused and needs help, he still wants to preserve a sense of liberation and independence from his childhood relationships. To Daniel, extricating himself from paternal control, no matter how mildly expressed, is essential to growing up.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 23

Daniel hangs around the bookshop the entire next day in case Bea drops by, while Fermín lectures him that a man must take the lead in courtship. Instead, Tomás arrives. Ignorant of Daniel's relationship with his sister, he confides that when Bea came home late, Mr. Aguilar screamed that she was a tart all night and she has stayed locked in her room all day. Moreover, their father has promised to break the legs of whatever man she was out with.

When they're alone, Daniel tells Tomás that Bea was with him the night before. Tomás isn't upset, but seems worried that Bea will get into trouble hanging out with him. He leaves Daniel with a grave injunction not to hurt her. Daniel worries that he has lost his best friend.

*Mr. Aguilar's reaction shows how entitled he feels to control Bea's movements and relationships, and that his love for her is conditional on her obedience and chastity. He's a man who takes seriously the comments Fermín makes as jokes, showing how damaging to women this kind of hyper-masculine speech can be.*



*Although Tomás isn't as controlling as his father (or Jorge, who threatened to kill Carax for his involvement with his sister), it seems impossible that Daniel can be both Tomás's friend and Bea's lover. Tomás seems to perceive Daniel as intruding on his property, even though his own relationship with Bea is obviously platonic.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 24

The next morning, Daniel and Fermín meet at a café to plan their day's investigations. Fermín theorizes that Carax and Jorge were best friends, like Daniel and Tomás, until a problem arose—in the form of Penélope. Penélope's letter suggests that when Carax left for Paris she was a prisoner in her own house, and Carax and Jorge were enemies. However, since he never got the letter, Carax must never have found out what happened to his lover. His life remains a mystery from that point until his supposed engagement to the wealthy woman and the subsequent duel.

Fermín points out that all they know after this is that Carax probably died in Barcelona in 1936, and that shortly afterwards a mysterious figure with some resemblance to Jorge named Laín Coubert appeared, bent on destroying all of Carax's work. Daniel feels nauseous, and throws up his entire breakfast in the bathroom.

Fermín and Daniel take a cab out of the city to the school, which is housed in a large Gothic building with a garden decorated with statues of **angels**. Although it's decrepit today, San Gabriel's used to be Barcelona's most elite boys' school before the Civil War. Only the sons of old and prestigious families were admitted, which would have made Carax an anomalous scholarship student.

*Fermín puts into explicit words the growing parallels between Carax's relationship with Penélope and Daniel's with Bea. This parallel adds urgency to Daniel's investigation; he needs to find out exactly what went wrong in Carax's story, so he can prevent it from happening to himself as well.*



*While Daniel was previously happy to discover parallels between himself and an admired author, the possible consequences of any connection to Carax's tragic fate now occur to him. He's realizing that it's usually not a good thing when history repeats itself.*



*Like the Aldaya house and family, San Gabriel's used to be very prosperous but lost its status with the Civil War. This again marks the Civil War as a point of serious upheaval and transition, but not necessarily of lasting change. The fact that the Aguilar family mirrors the Aldayas shows that the same narratives take place in modern times, just to different people.*



The first person Fermín and Daniel meet is Father Fernando Ramos, who just happens to have been the classmate and friend of Carax and Jorge. Fermín asks for any information he might have about their school days. Father Fernando remarks that Daniel looks like Carax, which inspires Fermín to lie that Daniel is Carax's illegitimate son searching for information about his father. Although he doesn't quite believe them, Father Fernando invites them inside.

*Daniel and Fermín's discovery of Father Fernando is pure luck and has nothing to do with their detective skills, just like Isaac's offhand advice to contact Nuria. So many coincidences guide Daniel towards information about Carax that it seems like he's destined to learn more about the author.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 25

Father Fernando says he first became friends with Carax because they were both from poor families. Fernando's father worked in the kitchens, and Carax obtained his spot through Mr. Aldaya, who was a customer of Fortuny's shop. This was in the days when family dynasties were incredibly powerful, unlike today, when nebulous political parties control the city.

*Ostensibly, Barcelona's politics shifted completely after the Civil War, transitioning from a quasi-feudal government to an authoritarian regime. However, both forms of government privilege an upper class while exploiting ordinary citizens, showing that they're really not so different.*



Carax's other early friend was Miquel Moliner, a wealthy, gifted, and extravagant boy. After graduating, Father Fernando drifted away from Miquel, who missed the departed Carax dearly. He is unaware that Miquel seems to be married to Nuria Monfort.

*This revelation means that Nuria must know a lot more about Carax than she was letting on. Daniel wanted to think of her as a typically sentimental and passive woman, but she's determined to play her own, independent role in this mystery.*



As Father Fernando relates the story of Carax meeting the Aldayas, another nested narrative begins, with Father Fernando narrating. In 1914, Don Ricardo Aldaya was one of the most powerful men in Spain, a titan of industry. One day he ordered several hats from Fortuny's shop, promising to recommend the shop to his powerful friends if the commission was executed satisfactorily. Mr. Aldaya then takes a liking to Carax, because he isn't afraid of him and talks back frequently.

*Father Fernando's mini-narrative is different from that of Mr. Molins, because he's lucid and unbiased even in his ordinary conversations. However, within this narrative he's able to tell accurately about events he never witnessed and make incredibly perceptive insights about his friend. Speaking through literature, Father Fernando can present a more complex truth than he could through mere conversation.*



Mr. Aldaya tells the disbelieving Fortuny that the boy is a genius and that he will secure him a place at San Gabriel's and pay his tuition. He whisks Carax away to show him his fancy car and library full of rare editions. Although he should be pleased with the social advancement, Fortuny senses that this turn of events will drag his son away from him. He takes out his rage by yelling at Sophie.

*Fortuny has always seen fatherhood as an exercise in control and power, and when it's clear that Mr. Aldaya has more control and power than he ever will, he feels defeated. This is a marked contrast to Daniel's relationship with his father, which is based on unconditional love and remains strong even though Daniel has various male mentors who are more conventionally powerful than Mr. Sempere.*



Carax is astonished by his sudden change of fortunes, by the palatial Aldaya compound, and by Mr. Aldaya's plans to buy him a new wardrobe and turn him into a banker. Mr. Aldaya also introduces Carax to his own son, Jorge. Mr. Aldaya speaks slightly toward Jorge, which Carax can tell upsets Jorge. Jorge takes to Carax, though, because he's not pretentious.

As Jorge is showing him around the house, Carax glimpses the thirteen-year-old Penélope, the most beautiful "vision" he's ever seen, although Jorge dismisses her as his "nutty" little sister. Carax can't think about anything else for the rest of the visit, and he concludes that his meeting with the Aldayas was fated. He believes he has dreamed of the same girl on the same staircase many times.

At his new school, Carax is an outcast among the wealthy boys, who disdain him, with the exception of Miquel, who stands up for him. Carax befriends him as well as Javier, another lower-class outcast with a strange habit of making complicated woodcarvings. Javier's father, Ramón, is a weak man married to an odious woman with "delusions of grandeur and the looks of a scullion" who calls herself Yvonne. Yvonne constantly plots for her son to ascend into the upper classes, and regularly embarrasses him in front of the other boys. Carax tries to include Javier in their games, but Miquel warns that Javier is obsessed with Carax and potentially dangerous.

In fact, Javier had also glimpsed Penélope when she visited the school one day with Mr. Aldaya and her governess, Jacinta. He was immediately enthralled by her, and stays out late making a carving of her face. When he finally gets home, his mother calls him a "little shit"—a moment that he remembers until the day he eventually shoots his mother, joins the secret police, and becomes Inspector Javier Fumero.

The nested narrative ends, and Daniel and Fermín are horrified that Fumero is so entwined in the story, although they deny knowing him to Father Fernando. Father Fernando says that he has read all of Carax's novels, but that one night someone entered his house and burned them.

Father Fernando believes the culprit is Fumero, since Fumero also tried to kill Carax during their last year of school after spying on him and observing him kiss Penélope in secret. Only a lucky shove from Miquel saved Carax. Daniel tells Father Fernando what they know about the identity of the book-burner Lain Coubert.

*Just as Fortuny was only interested in Carax when he thought he could mold the boy into his own image, Jorge's differences from his father have incurred Mr. Aldaya's dislike. Both fathers only love their sons as long as the boys help inflate their egos.*



*While Daniel only hints at a sense of destiny in his connection to Bea, Carax is convinced that his meeting with Penélope was destined to occur, even invoking the supernatural element of his dreams. The fact that their affair seems predetermined suggests that it's inherently positive and will lead to a happy ending.*



*Carax is very conscious of his status as a member of the working class, just as Daniel is, especially once he becomes involved with the much wealthier Bea. While most characters experience tension with their fathers, Javier's odd habits seem to be the result of his mother's inappropriate behavior instead. Notably, even the sympathetic and open-minded Miquel seems to believe that Javier is inherently threatening. His character is both the clear result of an unhealthy family life and something intrinsic to him that can't be changed.*



*Miquel's assertion of Javier's inherent malevolence is especially important given that Javier is actually Inspector Fumero, who appears throughout the novel as a general representation of evil. Importantly, both he and Carax have essentially the same reaction to Penélope, seeing her once and falling in love. Yet while this is presented as a legitimate passion for Carax, it's a dangerous obsession for Fumero.*



*Just as Fumero is a constant presence in many narratives, the book-burner Coubert seems to turn up everywhere. Although he shares his name with the devil, it's Fumero who seems more malevolent and threatening.*



*Father Fernando believes Coubert and Fumero are the same person. While they share an apparent antipathy for Carax, it's important to remember that they're separate men with separate motives.*



All three men realize they need more information about the mysterious Penélope. Father Fernando believes her governess, Jacinta, might be able to provide it. Jacinta currently lives at the Santa Lucía hospice. Father Fernando says no one saw Penélope after 1919.

*While most of the novel's active characters are men, Penélope takes female passivity to another level by seeming to literally disappear.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 26

On the way home, Fermín and Daniel stop at a café to talk over the day's events. Fermín manages to eat a spectacular amount of food, especially considering his skinny frame—he says it's a hereditary trait. Daniel asks if he misses his family, but Fermín just says cryptically that “few things are more deceptive than memories.” Fermín says he only remembers his mother's smell, while Daniel can't recollect anything about his own mother. Fermín suggests that Daniel's quest to “rescue [Carax] from oblivion” is really a way to prevent his mother's memory from slipping into obscurity.

*Neither Daniel nor Fermín knows much about their mothers. These women suffered banal deaths, while Penélope seems to have dramatically disappeared; but all three are helpless figures of mystery. Even though Daniel and Fermín sometimes objectify women in daily life, they identify strongly with these vanished female figures and seek to help them, showing that they're confused about how to behave towards women.*



When Daniel returns to the bookshop, Bea is waiting for him, having told Mr. Aguilar she was going to mass. Both are overjoyed to see each other, but Bea is worried lest they be seen together in public. Bea gives Daniel a card with an address and tells him to meet her there at four. It's only after she leaves and Daniel opens the card that he recognizes the familiar address of the Aldaya mansion.

*Bea's unexplained access to the Aldaya mansion is a gesture of friendship and love for Daniel, showing her investment in his quest. It also means that the house is a landmark cropping up in many narratives, connecting Daniel's life to Carax's.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 27

As a storm gathers in the late afternoon, Daniel boards the bus to the Aldayas' neighborhood. When he arrives at the house, the gate is open, and Daniel walks through the garden, noticing a statue of an avenging **angel** dumped unceremoniously in the empty fountain. Bea is waiting for him in the front hall and escorts him to the living room, where she lights a fire.

*Angels are often symbols of piety and gentleness. However, the ones in the Aldaya house are aggressive and threatening, lending the house an ominous aura. Moreover, the avenging angel appears toppled in the fountain, a distinctly undignified position. Whatever its erstwhile power, it doesn't seem able to fight anyone now.*



Bea reveals that her father's firm owns the property, which was how she was able to obtain the key. In fact, the house is nicknamed “The **Angel** of Mist” and was the Aldayas' summer house, while their main house was in the city center. “The Angel of Mist” has a reputation for being cursed, and has been impossible to sell for the past fifteen years.

*Mr. Aguilar's ownership of the house is another coincidence that's too good to be true, suggesting that a kind of destiny is guiding Daniel towards both Bea and the house. Given the angel statue in the garden, the house's moniker suggests a supernatural but not necessarily positive character.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 28

While they sit by the fire, Bea tells Daniel the history she has learned about The **Angel** of Mist. The house was built at the turn of the century for an eccentric and tyrannical tycoon named Salvador Jausà, who amassed a fortune in Cuba and returned to Spain with an American wife and a beautiful Cuban maid named Marisela, whom everyone believed to be his lover.

Jausà decided he wanted a neo-Gothic mansion just like those he had seen in New York. He designed an extravagant garden with statues full of **angels**. He hired a team of architects, sent them to New York to study the designs he wanted, and ordered the house built in six months. One month after the family moved in, the police arrived at the house to find both women dead and Jausà naked and handcuffed to his armchair.

The police believed that Jausà and his wife were poisoned by Marisela. Jausà survived, although he lost his powers of speech. After Marisela attempted to murder her employers, they believed, she cut her wrists and splashed her blood on all the house's walls. The wife had been pregnant and was discovered with a skeleton drawn on her stomach in red wax, so the police concluded that Marisela's motive was jealousy.

At this point, Jausà met Mr. Aldaya, whom he invited to his house to observe "a scientific and spiritual experiment." He had hired a cinematographer named Fructuós Gelabert to capture on film Marisela's spirit, which he was convinced still inhabited the house and was trying to speak to him. Gelabert claimed that his special process of developing the film revealed images of Marisela.

Mr. Aldaya assumed this was a ruse on Gelabert's part, but Jausà believed completely in the results. Mr. Aldaya knew that such a gullible and desperate man could be manipulated easily, so he encouraged him to continue experimenting while also convincing him to surrender control of his huge financial reserves. After this was accomplished, Jausà vanished mysteriously and Mr. Aldaya paid Gelabert to forget all about the episode.

*The Jausàs are similar to the novel's other wealthy clans, such as the Aguilars. The head of the family is a strong-minded man who expresses his power by subjugating or demeaning the other members of the family. In this case, Jausà does so by maintaining both a wife and mistress within the same household.*



*Jausà's extravagance demonstrates not only his wealth but his desire to control the circumstances and people around him. However, his power ultimately fails him; tied to the chair, he is literally subject to external control.*



*Marisela's drastic actions demonstrate not just jealousy but deep frustration with her role as Jausà's subjugated mistress. Through her, Zafón suggests that for women suffocated by male attempts to possess them, violence and rage often seem like the only solution.*



*At this point, it seems that Jausà is insane and Gelabert (who was a real-life inventor and screenwriter) a charlatan. Jausà's decline and obsessive behavior show the psychological consequences of giving too much credence to the supernatural.*



*It's ironic and perhaps fitting that Jausà, determined to demonstrate his control over everything around him, falls completely under Aldaya's spell and is easily swindled by him. His fate argues that it's both useless and unwise to aspire to an extent of control which can never be sustained.*



Mr. Aldaya soon moved his family into the mansion, where Penélope was born. Although Mr. Aldaya denied there was anything supernatural about the house, the family heard noises at night and felt drafts when there was no wind. The servants swore that small things like food and buttons always went missing and turned up in other parts of the house. When jewelry disappeared, Mr. Aldaya fired the maids, although many people thought he really did this because he had a habit of sleeping with them.

The house also altered the family's character; they were never happy there. Mrs. Aldaya felt isolated and frightened, while the children sometimes disappeared for hours in the house. Once Jorge turned up after eight hours and said he'd been with a black woman who said that "all the females of the family would die [...] to atone for the sins of the males," and told him the exact date of his mother's death, which occurred exactly when predicted in 1921. All her jewelry was missing and was later found in the courtyard pond next to one of Penélope's dolls.

In 1922, Mr. Aldaya decided to sell The **Angel** of Mist, but was unable because of its bad reputation. After bankruptcy, the mansion passed through the hands of several real estate firms and now belongs to a financial group directed by Mr. Aguilar.

Bea says that nothing happens by chance, and Daniel's discovery of *The Shadow of the Wind* led directly to this moment in the Aldaya mansion.

Bea produces a letter she's written to Pablo, telling him she wants to get married as soon as possible, and asks Daniel whether she should send it. Daniel throws the envelope into the fire. Bea tells him to "do whatever you want to me." Then he and Bea lay down on the carpet and have sex.

*Mr. Aldaya is firm in his denial that no traces of the Jausàs' awful fate linger in the house. However, Mr. Aldaya, with his unilateral decisions about the family's lodgings and his philandering among the servants, mirrors the very qualities about Jausà that led to his demise. The wealthy Aldayas share their structure and flaws not only with the Jausàs but other rich families like the Aguilar.*



*It's not just the Aldayas' and Jausàs' similarities in character or socioeconomic circumstances that led them to inhabit the same house or make the same mistakes. Rather, the house itself seems to interact with the families and influence their fate. By making the house an agent in the story, Zafón suggests that some supernatural element is at play in the families' lives, and that their destinies are determined by something greater than coincidence or worldly events.*



*Although the Aguilar's don't live in the Angel of Mist, Mr. Aguilar's ownership of it links him to the other two wealthy families, as does his tyrannical behavior towards his offspring.*



*While Daniel often thinks about the idea that events in his life are "destined" to occur, it's Bea who usually puts these thoughts into words. Coming from a trustworthy and sympathetic character, the idea their lives are predetermined by an external force seems more compelling.*



*By disobeying her father and turning her back on Pablo, Bea demonstrates independence and subverts the patriarchal control that has dominated her life. However, the fact that she can only do this by turning from one man to another shows her inability to conceive of a life free from male influence, and the novel's truly limited possibilities for female independence.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 29

Daniel and Bea plan to meet again at the house a few days later. As they separate, Daniel tells Bea that he loves her, but she only shakes her head.

*Daniel's ability to express his emotions shows his similarity to Mr. Sempere and differentiates him from most of the novel's other men, who view strong emotions as signs of weakness or femininity.*



The next morning, Fermín tells Daniel that he's made some inquiries about Miquel Moliner. Although Nuria claimed he was in prison, none of Fermín's contacts, who are well-informed of goings-on in Barcelona's prisons, have ever heard of him.

*Fermín's deep connections in Barcelona's seedy underbelly are a reminder of his past as a leftist operative, and strengthen the extent to which he contrasts with right-wing villains like Fumero.*



Fermín decides they should track down Jacinta, and that afternoon they travel to a badly-run hospice on the edge of the city, an old building which has served as an art studio, barracks, and brothel. Now it's closely guarded by nuns, and the inmates are generally mistreated and neglected. Daniel notices a disgusting smell permeating the air as they drive up.

*Like The Angel of Mist, the hospice is an old building that has seen many identities and inhabitants. In both cases, the buildings' long histories seem to manifest and repeat themselves in the lives of current occupants, usually with negative consequences.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 30

Daniel and Fermín are able to gain entrance to the hospice thanks to a confused nun who mistakes them for undertakers. Once they're left alone, they roam the corridors, asking inmates if they know Jacinta, but most are too senile and senseless to answer.

*It's interesting that Daniel and Fermín are looking for information about the past in a place where almost no one can remember anything. The inmates' forgetfulness mirrors Spanish society's general refusal to remember or confront its troubled past.*



At last, Daniel finds a relatively alert but bizarre old man who promises to lead him to Jacinta if Daniel will procure him a prostitute for one last romp before he dies. Bemused, Daniel agrees to do so in the future.

*The old man associates sex (even purchased sex) with being alive and strong, suggesting a concept of male identity deeply linked to possessing women.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 31

On the old man's instructions, Daniel and Fermín finally locate Jacinta. She's in very bad condition, but still remembers her beloved Penélope. They gain her trust by mentioning Father Fernando. Jacinta says that everyone has conspired to take Penélope away from her.

*Although Jacinta is weak, she still has a strong desire to talk about her past. Characters who are willing to explore and analyze history are always helpful in resolving the events of the past and preventing them from repeating.*



Another nested narrative begins, with Jacinta as the narrator. Jacinta grew up in Toledo, and as a child was plagued by nightmares due to a dangerous fever. A recurring figure in her dreams was Zacarías, an **angel** who smelled like sulfur. Zacarías accurately predicts deaths in her family, that Jacinta will never have children, and that her husband will leave her, which eventually turned out to be true.

Jacinta prayed fervently for God to grant her dearest wish, to become a mother. One day in church, Zacarías approached her in real life and whispered the word “Tibidabo,” at which point Jacinta had a vision that she would have a daughter without a man in her life and that she would find her in a city full of fantastica; buildings. Her parish priest listened to her account of the vision and said the city might be Barcelona, so Jacinta set off immediately.

In Barcelona, Jacinta eventually found work caring for the pregnant Mrs. Aldaya. Soon after, Jorge was born, and Jacinta cared for him, engrossing herself in the life of the family but still waiting expectantly for the promised daughter. Jacinta moved with the Aldayas to the cursed mansion, which she perceived to be inhabited by Zacarías but did not fear. When Penélope was born, Jacinta cared for her fiercely, especially given that Mrs. Aldaya was distant and aloof. Penélope grew up sharing all her secrets and thoughts with her nurse.

When Penélope became a beautiful teenager, she met Carax, and Jacinta noticed their immediate connection. Even though she recognized that Carax might be dangerous to her charge, Jacinta only desired what Penélope wanted, so she assisted their blossoming affair, passing notes between the young lovers.

In order to see Penélope and be around her in the house, Carax began to feign an interest in banking and to behave exactly as Mr. Aldaya wanted him to. In doing so he felt he was fundamentally changing himself and might not be worthy of Penélope if he could ever obtain her.

*Jacinta is the novel's strongest proponent of the idea that all characters' fates are predetermined. She asserts that destiny is real and active, anthropomorphized through the character of Zacarías. It's important that for Jacinta, destiny has elements of good and evil; Zacarías has the appearance of an angel, but he smells like sulfur, a characteristic associated with the devil and hell.*



*It's important that Zacarías appears to Jacinta in real life, as well as her dreams; this episode lends more credence to Jacinta's theory that her life and the lives of those around her are determined by supernatural forces. Although she's an elderly and weak woman, she's so mentally astute and sympathetic that her ideas seem very credible. Notably, “Tibidabo” is the name of the Aldayas' street, as Zacarías seems to predict Jacinta's future residence.*



*While most families (for example, the Aguilars) privilege sons above daughters, Jacinta provides Penélope the love that even her own mother can't or won't. Although they aren't biologically related, this is one of the few untroubled relationships between a parent-figure and a child, and the only one that centers around women instead of men.*



*Jacinta does differ from a parent in some ways. She's blindly loyal to Penélope without trying to guide or control her as even a mild-mannered parent might. Moreover, believing that events like the young lovers' “connection” are destined to occur, she watches them passively rather than trying to influence their course.*



*The brief period when Carax conforms to Mr. Aldaya's dogmatic mentorship is portrayed as a pretense that is deeply damaging to his sense of self. This is a direct contrast to Penélope and Jacinta's relationship, which, if not perfect, is much more loving and equal.*



Jacinta also noticed young Javier's growing obsession with Penélope. One day he stole a photograph of the girl out of her purse, and weeks later he gave Jacinta a disturbing carved figure of Penélope as a gift. Jacinta became close with young Carax, chatting with him when she picked Jorge up from school and even telling him that she saw the licentious Mr. Aldaya chatting up Carax's mother Sophie once.

Meanwhile, Sophie disliked Carax's increasing absorption into the Aldaya family and growing distance from his own. Fortuny was deeply bitter about this as well, and one day presented himself at Mr. Aldaya's office to reclaim his son and demand the Aldayas relinquish their hold on him, but Mr. Aldaya only laughed scornfully. Afterwards, Mr. Aldaya blacklisted Fortuny's shop among his wealthy friends and the business declined sharply.

Mr. Aldaya organized a huge party for Jorge's eighteenth birthday, to which Carax insisted Javier be invited. Javier declined the invitation, feeling he would be out of place among the wealthy guests, but his status-seeking mother humiliated her son by dressing him up in a sailor suit and dragging him to the party. Skeptical of their appearance, the guards kicked them out of the house while the other guests laughed. At the peak of his humiliation, Javier spied Carax and Penélope kissing against a window.

The next day, Javier brought a gun to school and attempted to shoot Carax, who was only saved because Miquel jumped on Javier and took away the gun.

By this time, graduation was approaching. Mr. Aldaya planned to initiate Carax into his firm, while Fortuny plotted to send him to the military out of spite. Carax was too preoccupied with Penélope to think about the future. He was also worried to discover that Sophie sometimes met secretly with Mr. Aldaya, although Mr. Aldaya claimed it was only to consult about Carax's future.

*While Javier's behavior is certainly strange, he's not terribly different from Carax, who also became enthralled with Penélope after a single meeting, slips her tokens through Jacinta, and deceives her family in order to be close to her. It's interesting that Javier is labeled as dangerously obsessive while Carax is merely gripped by passion.*



*The difference between Sophie's and Fortuny's reactions is important. While Sophie is sad that her relationship with Carax is growing distant, Fortuny is just angry that he's losing control over his son. Thus, his protest to Mr. Aldaya seems petulant and his resulting business failure fitting.*



*Carax is unmoved by Mr. Aldaya's determination to show off his wealth and status. He doesn't care that he's not getting a lavish birthday party, and even ensures that the school outcast is invited. His empathy and disdain for power set him apart from other male characters, especially Javier, who is bent on establishing himself as traditionally masculine. He's thwarted many times at the birthday party: when his mother treats him like a little boy instead of a man, when the other guests refuse to acknowledge him as a young man of their own social circle, and when he sees the object of his affection "possessed" by another man.*



*Javier's attempt to murder Carax is an aggressive, hyper-masculine reaction to what he interprets as many characters' attempts to reduce his masculinity and agency or take them away entirely.*



*Although Fortuny and Mr. Aldaya both have plans for Carax, neither have his best interests at heart. Fortuny seeks to punish his son for disloyalty, while Mr. Aldaya plans to reward him for conforming to his wishes. Both men's egos have corrupted their relationships with a boy they profess to think of as a son.*



Miquel encouraged Carax to elope with Penélope and offered to finance the venture, planning a detailed escape to Paris. After finalizing the plans, Carax hurried to tell Penélope, who agreed immediately. The only problem was that they had to deceive Jacinta, who would be too worried to go along with the plan.

Afterwards, Penélope and Carax had sex on the floor of Jacinta's room, only to be discovered by Mrs. Aldaya. Carax had to flee the house and wait for the Aldayas to take action. For days nothing happened, and he believed Mrs. Aldaya may have kept the secret, but one day he was summarily expelled from San Gabriel's. Returning home, Carax saw Mr. Aldaya's car leaving his family's apartment building.

Inside, Sophie told him that now Mr. Aldaya was cooperating with Fortuny to dispatch Carax to the army, and that he must flee immediately. On Saturday, Carax went to the train station where he'd promised to meet Penélope, but she never arrived. Miquel promised to keep him abreast of any developments and exhorted him to write books in honor of Penélope.

As it turns out, Mrs. Aldaya had confined Penélope to the house and told her husband everything. Mr. Aldaya was so angry that the servants said he was "possessed by all the devils in hell." He summarily fired Jacinta, forcing her to leave the house where she had lived for so many years without even saying goodbye to Penélope. Later, Mr. Aldaya pulled some strings to have Jacinta locked in a mental asylum for a few years. By the time she was released, the house was abandoned and the Aldayas had disappeared without a trace. After finishing the story, Jacinta begins to sob, and Fermín comforts her.

Daniel and Fermín leave the hospice in a hurry, planning to regroup in a café, but they are soon stopped on the road by two thugs and Inspector Fumero. Fumero warns that they are behaving dangerously by poking around the hospice, and threatens to torture Daniel if Fermín doesn't reveal exactly what they were doing. Fermín taunts the inspector, and then Fumero beats him up while the other policemen "laugh dutifully." Daniel recognizes one of them as the man he saw days before in the café and on the bus. When Fumero finally departs, Daniel rushes to revive Fermín, who insists on being taken to die in Bernarda's arms.

*In the elopement plan, the men are active while the women are passive. Miquel has more of a role than Penélope, although it's her life in question. Despite her loyalty to Penélope, Jacinta is so resistant to action and disturbance that they have to keep her out of the loop entirely.*



*It's notable that both Penélope and Carax and Daniel and Bea consummate their forbidden relationships in the same house. Besides establishing another parallel in the lives of the two men, it's a foreboding sign for Daniel's love story, since Carax was discovered and immediately separated from his lover.*



*Mr. Aldaya's immediate disavowal of Carax after discovering the affair shows how flimsy their relationship always was—it was always motivated by the elder man's desire to exercise power and control rather than any genuine love for the boy he mentored.*



*Mr. Aldaya is described as being possessed by demonic forces, and here he acts unequivocally evil, unlike Zacarías, the devil of Jacinta's visions, who is neutral and sometimes helpful. Mr. Aldaya shows that humans can be much more villainous than the supernatural entities to whom they attribute blame for their behavior.*



*With his ever-present henchmen, uncanny knowledge of Daniel's whereabouts, and habit of popping up in everyone's past, Fumero seems distinctly demonic, although he's very much rooted in the real world and the evils of humanity. In this way, he resembles Mr. Aldaya. Devilish or evil-seeming characters can often be more benign than they seem, while supposedly "good" characters can be much more menacing.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 32

Daniel takes Fermín to the Barceló home in a taxi, worrying that he will die on the way. A doctor and nurse care for his wounds while Bernarda cries over him and Barceló comforts her, welcoming Daniel as well and urging him to take a bath and compose himself. When Daniel emerges, Clara is standing in the doorway, just as enthralling as she was four years ago. She asks Daniel for forgiveness for hurting him and Daniel feels the urge to kiss her, but Bernarda interrupts the moment and he gets dressed instead. The doctor assures everyone that Fermín will live.

After the doctor leaves, Barceló calls Mr. Sempere to say that Fermín has had a “minor accident” and is recuperating with Bernarda. He then presses Daniel about what they’ve been doing, deducing that it has something to do with *The Shadow of the Wind*. Daniel finally agrees to tell him everything.

*Clara’s sudden shift in behavior is a sign that Daniel has grown up, and she’s ready to treat him as a man instead of a child. It’s important that while Daniel has changed a lot, mentally and physically, Clara is very static and looks exactly the same as always. At this point, Clara is more of a yardstick by which Daniel measures his own growth than a character in her own right.*



*When he needs help, Daniel immediately turns to Barceló instead of his father. What’s more, Barceló perpetuates his deception of Mr. Sempere. Neither one thinks Daniel’s father is strong or competent enough to take control, or even be informed, of the situation.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 33

Barceló listens attentively to most of Daniel’s story. Then they check on Fermín, who is recuperating next to a sleeping Bernarda. Fermín puts on a brave face for Daniel’s benefit, and Daniel continues to fill Barceló in. The bookseller is struck by the fact that Fumero is involved in the story at so many points, as well as the fact that Carax apparently spent a month in Barcelona before his death and no one knew anything about it. The most puzzling point, to him, is Fortuny’s refusal to claim Carax’s body, which he says is too inhuman for any father.

Barceló says they will need his help and connections to solve the mystery before Fumero catches up to them again and kills Fermín. He orders Daniel to visit Nuria and explain he knows she’s been lying, in order to force her into action.

Finally returning home at dawn, Daniel finds the careworn Mr. Sempere asleep with an open book at the dining table. Daniel is surprised by how frail and vulnerable he looks, especially since he used to consider his father “invincible.” Daniel kisses him carefully, as if by doing so he could “deceive time and convince it to pass us by.”

*Barceló examines Daniel’s story as if it were a literary text – which, in nature if not in form, it is. Like Daniel, Barceló believes that analyzing the various narratives about Carax for hidden truths and patterns will yield the secret of the mystery. It’s also interesting that although the novel is rife with troubled father-son relationships, Barceló considers this bond sacred and enduring, enough to treat Fortuny’s behavior as a potential clue.*



*Barceló immediately and confidently asserts his right to take control of the situation. Although he’s a sympathetic character, he clearly defines himself in terms of his power and connections.*



*Mr. Sempere’s defeated attitude is a striking contrast to Barceló’s decisive action. However, this is a result of Daniel’s desire to seem grown-up and independent compared to his father, rather than any real incompetence or lack of ability on Mr. Sempere’s part.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 34

Daniel dreams of Bea's body all night. In the morning, Fermín returns to the bookstore and horrifies Mr. Sempere with his bruised face.

In the afternoon, Daniel returns to The **Angel** of Mist as planned and arrives before Bea. But it's very cold and soon he ventures to the cellar to find wood for a fire. The mildewy smell makes him recall the damp morning on which they buried his mother. Daniel dispels the image and descends. After turning on a small boiler, he hears footsteps upstairs and assumes Bea has arrived, but returns upstairs to find she's not actually there. He wanders the house until he finds a small bathroom that is drawing heat from the boiler.

Bea finds Daniel in the bathroom, where they huddle for warmth. But suddenly the wind blows out their candles. Someone bangs on the door several times, but when Daniel finally opens it, no one is there. Daniel and Bea get dressed and hurry downstairs, but Daniel notices that a previously closed door, carved with **angels**, is ajar. He descends the staircase behind the door and finds a crypt containing Penélope's coffin, with 1919 listed as the date of death. While Daniel is looking at the coffin, a voice in the shadows tells him to "get out," and he recognizes it as Laín Coubert. Daniel grabs Bea and runs out of the house without telling her whom he encountered.

Bea promises to call Daniel soon and walks away without a goodbye. Daniel sees Tomás looking at him impassively from the window of their house.

*Daniel is feeling grown-up in many ways, taking care of Fermín and interacting with Barceló as an equal. His dream shows how much he links his developing manhood to sexual possession of women.*



*In many ways, Daniel is becoming comfortable in the environment of The Angel of Mist, in the same way that Carax became comfortable among the Aldayas even though he ultimately wanted to escape from them. Still, even though Daniel wanders the house at will, the fact it's reminiscent of the most traumatic event in Daniel's past is a reminder of its ominous character.*



*This frightening episode affirms that the house is not to be trusted, no matter how much Daniel has come to associate it with his trysts with Bea. It's important that Daniel's recollection of his mother's burial immediately presages his discovery of Penélope's death. It gives the moment an aura of destiny, as well as linking Daniel's childhood loss to Carax's romantic grief.*



*While Tomás is too kind to develop anything like Jorge's enmity for his sister's lover, for both Carax and Daniel, romantic love leads to the dissolution of childhood friendships.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 35

In the morning the telephone rings; when Daniel answers and asks if it's Bea, the line goes dead. It rains all day. In the evening, Daniel walks by the Aguilar house, but sees nothing to give him any information about Bea. Daniel doesn't hear from Bea for the next seven days. Daniel says this week is "the longest and the last of my life," and states that in seven days he will be dead.

*This is a startling and confusing pronouncement. On one hand, it seems as if Daniel has some foreknowledge of his own predetermined destiny. However, it's also a reminder that Daniel-as-narrator is writing down his memories of the past, and that he's very conscious that he's creating a literary work.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 36

For the next days, Daniel loafs around the city hoping for news of Bea. One day he visits her university and questions the students, who say she hasn't come to class in several days.

Finally Daniel calls Bea, even though it's dangerous to phone the Aguilar home. Mr. Aguilar answers the phone and swears that he's going to "beat your brains out" and that Bea will have to "pay for what you've done."

Daniel feels guilty for not having protected Bea better. He feels that he has always let others take the fall for him, as when he watched while Fumero beat up Fermín. On his way home, he realizes the same police officer who had restrained him during Fermín's beating is now following him again.

In the evening, without telling Mr. Sempere, Daniel and Fermín walk to a café, immediately noticing that a policeman is following them. At the café, Fermín bribes the waiter to tell the policeman that Inspector Fumero has urgently requested his presence, and the man leaves immediately.

Fermín tells Daniel that he met Fumero when the inspector was working for the anarchists and Fermín for the government, right before the Civil War. Then, Fermín was working for the party in charge, but after Barcelona fell to the Fascists, Fermín was branded a criminal and arrested. Fumero tortured him with a welding torch until he informed on his superiors, and Fermín feels guilty about their deaths to this day.

Daniel comforts Fermín and tells him he shouldn't feel guilty about informing under such terrible circumstances, and Fermín says he credits the Semperes with turning around his life.

*Bea's abrupt disappearance mirrors Penélope's, and calls to mind the fact that many people, like the caretaker Daniel once questioned, never even knew of her existence at all.*



*Like Penélope, Bea's disappearance turns out to be a punishment for disobeying her father and taking an illicit lover. It's disturbing that Bea's life so much resembles Penélope's, since Daniel has just discovered Penélope's death.*



*Daniel views the ability to control events and protect those around him as essential to becoming a man. His recent failure to do so reminds him to what extent he's still a powerless child.*



*Physically weak and a fugitive from the law, Fermín seems powerless. However, he's very competent and shrewd in combatting his enemies, showing Daniel that there's more than one way to be a man.*



*Fermín's guilt about the past is very similar to the guilt Daniel is feeling currently. Neither man was at fault for the misfortunes of their friends, but both feel ashamed of the fact that they couldn't control what happened or exercise power over the situation.*



*While they're far from a traditionally powerful or wealthy family, the Semperes' empathy and kindness emerge triumphant as the best way to combat trauma and resolve the past.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 37

The next morning, Daniel visits Nuria, telling Mr. Sempere that he's going for a walk. He's beginning to feel bad about lying to his father so often.

*Daniel has always been torn between his love for his father and his desire to be independent. As his investigations draw towards a climax, this conflict intensifies as well.*



Daniel ascends the stairs of Nuria’s apartment building, listening to her neighbor’s radio, which is blaring a religious game show called *With a Little Help from the Lord* that asks multiple-choice questions about the **devil**.

*Through this ridiculous radio program, Zafón gently pokes fun at the idea that evil can be neatly quantified, or that by outsourcing it to a supernatural entity, humans can absolve themselves from their own bad actions.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 38

Nuria answers the door and Daniel immediately tells her that he knows she owns the PO box of the lawyer who manages the Fortuny apartment. At this revelation, Nuria accuses him of judging her “without knowing [her].” She’s furious when he admits that Fumero is following him, thinking he has led him to her.

*It is true that despite his good intentions, Daniel hasn’t given Nuria much of a chance to explain herself. He’s viewed her as a static and passive woman like Clara, when in fact she’s very independent and thus far much better at evading Fumero than he is.*



Daniel declares his theory that Jorge Aldaya is hiding in the old mansion disguised as Laín Coubert, and accuses Nuria of lying to protect his role in Carax’s murder. Then he walks out of the apartment. Fermín is standing on the street nearby, dressed as a priest and watching for any movements Nuria might make.

*Daniel thinks he’s finally unlocked the mystery, putting himself in control of the situation. However, he’ll soon find out that Nuria is much more competent than he thinks.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 39

Daniel returns to the bookstore to find Mr. Sempere annoyed at his long absence. Mr. Sempere leaves to meet a client, leaving a letter for Daniel from the military office, calling him up to service in two months.

*Just as Carax was threatened with military service at the climax of his affair with Penélope, the army becomes a frighteningly real prospect for Daniel as his investigations start to bear fruit.*



Barceló arrives and announces he’s been to visit Don Fonseca, an employee at the city morgue who was on duty when the police brought Carax’s body in, claiming it had been found on the street, identified by a passport and a book. Don Fonseca says he called the publisher listed in the book, while Nuria claims the morgue only called three days later. Don Fonseca says it sounded as if the secretary he talked with already knew about the death.

*In focusing on Fortuny’s disavowal of his son, Barceló picked a seemingly tiny detail to investigate, but he turns out to be very shrewd. His ability to make conclusions based on his confidence in father-son relationships suggests there really is something enduring about the filial bond, regardless of its troubled manifestations throughout the novel.*



Moreover, Don Fonseca says that a visibly distraught Fortuny arrived to identify the body later that day. He looked at the body, stopped crying, and immediately left without affirmatively identifying the body. Then Inspector Fumero appeared at the morgue, signed off on the identification instead, ordered the corpse to be buried immediately, and threatened Don Fonseca when he objected.

*It’s important – and touching – that Fortuny really was devastated to see his son dead, both because it suggests that he’s not as hardhearted a father as he always seemed, and because it suggests that his later assertion to his neighbors that he “has no son” has an ulterior motive.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 40

Daniel spends all afternoon in the bookstore without hearing from Fermín. Eventually he calls Fermín's apartment building and the Barceló house, but he's not there either. While she has him on the phone, Clara announces that she's getting married, and Daniel is upset.

Mr. Sempere returns home sad and anxious about the possibility that Daniel will be drafted. After dinner, Fumero and his henchmen raid the bookshop and smash the furniture, searching for Fermín. Fumero threatens to break Mr. Sempere's legs if Daniel lies, but luckily Daniel can say honestly that he hasn't seen Fermín since lunch.

Just after Fumero leaves, Don Anacleto arrives with a copy of the next day's newspaper. The front page announces Nuria Monfort's murder, attributing it to a tramp dressed as a priest. The picture shows Fermín's face, and Daniel realizes he has been framed.

*Clara's marriage represents a tangible end to Daniel's most important childhood fantasy, and thus to childhood itself. While Daniel's always been impatient to become a man, it's still hard to truly let go of his youth.*



*It's important that unlike Fortuny and Mr. Aldaya, Carax's two father figures, Mr. Sempere wants Daniel to avoid the draft. His concern for Daniel's safety, untinged with any self-interest, is the main thing that differentiates Daniel's childhood from Carax's.*



*It's important that the false story of Fermín's crime arrives through the newspaper. While literature yields important knowledge, popular media like newspapers prove to be untrustworthy and easily manipulated to disseminate untruths.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 41

To maintain a façade of normal life, the Semperes open the bookshop as usual the next day. Mr. Sempere questions Daniel about Nuria, and Daniel admits that she was a friend of Carax and he'd been to visit her. Mr. Sempere says that Daniel shouldn't be looking into other people's lives and causing trouble, and Daniel gets angry with him for insinuating that he's responsible for Nuria's death. Mr. Sempere says he doesn't know who Daniel is anymore.

Daniel walks through the city in the freezing rain, conscious that he's being followed. At one point he almost gets hit by a bus, only to find that the police officer sent to tail him has pulled him out of the way and vanished. Daniel then goes to Bea's house and is greeted by one of the maids. Bea is away at the doctor, and Tomás refuses to see him. Daniel sees him standing at the window, but Tomás doesn't return his friend's wave.

*This episode is Daniel and Mr. Sempere's only moment of overt conflict. While most other fathers and sons fight frequently, it's important that this conflict centers around a genuine moral dilemma rather than an issue of familial control or power. Mr. Sempere's final remark highlights the extent to which Daniel's impetuous character has diverged from his father's mild-mannered ways.*



*The policeman's action marks a momentary truce between him and Daniel. It also differentiates typical policemen, whom Zafón says elsewhere are often ordinary citizens pressed into the service of a bad regime, and the oppressive regime itself—as represented by Fumero, the only character who can thrive no matter which party is in power.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 42

Walking back to the bookshop and aware he's being followed again, Daniel meets Don Federico, who says he has a repair ready even though Daniel hasn't ordered anything. He gives Daniel a bag, inside of which is the missal Fermín carried when he was dressed as a priest outside Nuria's apartment. Tucked inside is a note saying that Fermín did not kill Nuria and is hiding in a safe place.

Exhausted, Daniel falls asleep until dawn, when he leaves the apartment and paces through the city streets. Then he returns to his room and takes out his old **fountain pen**, hoping it will guide him, but "the pen had nothing to say." Daniel feels like he can't "write or feel" anything in the midst of his grief and fear.

*Don Federico's loyalty and helpfulness recall the way the neighborhood behaved when he was punished by Fumero for being gay. Just as they were willing to aid anyone targeted by the government regardless of personal beliefs, Don Federico implicitly believes Fermín isn't guilty, perhaps without knowing the whole story.*



*When Daniel was a child, the fountain pen was an invincible talisman for him. Its failure now shows that Daniel can no longer rely on such simplistic beliefs from his childhood.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 43

The next day, Daniel goes to the cemetery to attend Nuria's funeral. He finds her neighbors in attendance but not Isaac. The policeman who pulled him away from the bus is also there. When he's about to leave, the officer pulls up in a car and offers him a ride, introducing himself as Enrique Palacios.

Palacios says he's sorry about Nuria's death and wants to help Daniel, but Daniel sees this as only a trick or an insult. Palacios tells Daniel that Nuria died in his arms, and that she told him to tell Daniel to let Penélope go. Palacios assumes that she was referring to Daniel's girlfriend.

Daniel walks home pondering these words. In a sudden epiphany, he realizes that Nuria wasn't speaking to him but to Carax, whom she must have loved for years even though he only loved Penélope.

*Isaac's absence from his own daughter's funeral is a marked contrast to Fortuný's grief over the son he disowned. While Barceló views parental love as an enduring human trait, in this case it's seemingly not enough to overcome their quarrels during Nuria's life.*



*By mistaking Penélope for Daniel's girlfriend, Palacios highlights the increasing similarities between Daniel and Carax.*



*Daniel experiences this epiphany without much evidence or explanation, making it seem as if his deductive process is guided by something bigger than his own mind or talents as an investigator.*



## CITY OF SHADOWS: CHAPTER 44

Daniel returns to Nuria's apartment, where he finds Isaac Monfort going through her belongings and crying. He talks about their estrangement and regrets all the time they allowed to pass without talking.

*While Isaac couldn't act publicly as Nuria's father, even after her death, his evident grief here redeems him somewhat and shows he really did care about his daughter.*



Isaac tells Daniel that Nuria came to see him the day before she died and gave him an envelope to give to Daniel in case of emergency. He's already read the manuscript inside, even though he said he wouldn't. After doing so, he says he doesn't know his daughter anymore. Now he wants to be left alone among her possessions.

*Isaac's remark about not knowing Nuria mirrors Mr. Sempere's earlier comment that he doesn't know Daniel anymore. Connection to Carax's mystery has reshaped both Nuria and Daniel, and drawn them together despite their differences.*



Daniel is happy to see Mr. Sempere when he returns. He hugs his father and says he loves him. Still, he then barricades himself in his room to devour Nuria's manuscript.

*Nuria's destroyed relationship with Isaac makes Daniel grateful for his own father, even if they're experiencing a tense phase themselves.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 1

Nuria begins her narrative in 1933, when she's working as a secretary for Toni Cabestany and meets Carax for the first time. Carax had published several novels in Paris, as the owner of the bar where he worked, Irene Marceau, was well-connected in the city. Because they sold so poorly, Cabestany acquired the rights for a small price and continued to print them in Spain even though they never succeeded. After reading Carax's work herself, Nuria is astonished that they never sold.

*Nuria's introduction to Carax and his work is similar to that of many other characters. She discovers Carax by chance as an unknown writer, and feels that his novels are brilliant despite their lack of success, just as do characters like Clara and Daniel himself.*



Nuria is also puzzled that the same person, using different aliases, calls every few weeks to ask for Carax's address. Assuming him to be up to no good, Nuria never gives it and eventually removes any record of the address from the publisher's files.

*Although she doesn't know Carax yet, Nuria feels an implicit loyalty to him because of her connection to his books, enough to take illicit action on his behalf. Similarly, Daniel went to extraordinary lengths to investigate Carax's past without any tangible reason.*



While working on Cabestany's accounting, Nuria discovers that the unprofitable editions of Carax's books are financed completely by someone named Miquel Moliner, and that Cabestany is charging Moliner significantly more than it cost to print the books. One day Nuria visits Moliner to warn him he's being swindled, but Moliner is unperturbed. He lives "a monastic existence" in his old family mansion and spends his time writing newspaper articles.

*Despite the fact that she's a secretary with little power, Nuria's honesty and integrity differentiate her from her bosses. Here, she appears very similar to Daniel when he refused to part with his copy of Carax's novel despite pressure from powerful adults to do so.*



Nuria and Miquel quickly become friends, sharing their interest in books, music, and the enigmatic Carax. Miquel tells Nuria everything about their shared childhood experiences. Eventually, Miquel confesses his love to Nuria, and she has to tell him that she doesn't reciprocate his feelings. Miquel says that she's in love with Carax, but she "doesn't know yet."

*Nuria's potential love for Carax is remarkable, considering that she's never actually met him and only knows him through his work. Her fascination is a testament to literature's ability elicit strong emotions, and to facilitate deep connections even between people who don't know each other in real life.*



In the summer, Cabestany sends Nuria to Paris on business, where she meets Carax, who lets her stay in his spartan garret apartment. He tells her many fantastic stories about the mysteries of Paris and urges her to stay longer to explore the city. He even hires the young son of one of his friends to guide her around the city. Nuria asks Carax about the identity of “P,” to whom he dedicates all his books, and Carax tells her that Penélope is the only woman he’s ever loved.

Carax also tells Nuria about his life in Paris. In 1921, homeless and ill on the streets, he met Irene Marceau. She owned a brothel and took him home to recover there, eventually hiring him as a pianist. She also encouraged him to keep writing and found him a publisher for his novels.

After talking to her all night about his lonely night, Carax and Nuria finally have sex. She spends two weeks in Paris as his lover, but knows he will never love her the way he loves Penélope. Meanwhile, she’s sure she’ll never love another man as she loves him.

Carax covets a **fountain pen** he sees in a pawnshop, which is said to have belonged to Victor Hugo. Nuria secretly buys it for him out of her meager savings. That night, she leaves without saying goodbye, placing the pen on his typewriter and knowing that “the best part of my life was already behind me.”

## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 2

When Nuria returns to Barcelona and sees Miquel, he knows immediately that she’s hopelessly in love with Carax. Meanwhile, he’s in the process of being disinherited by his worldlier brothers, who want to get their hands on the family mansion. Nuria often visits him, partly to convince him to spend time outside of the gloomy house, and partly because she can talk to him about Carax and Penélope. She has become obsessed with the idea of Penélope, whom she imagines as a supernaturally perfect and immortal enemy.

Eventually, out of mutual loneliness and desperation, Miquel and Nuria become lovers. Miquel drinks more and more, and sometimes they fight over Nuria’s passion for Carax.

*Carax is remarkably kind and hospitable despite his limited resources, suggesting that he too is affected by the bond Nuria has formed through his novels – or at least by her evident fascination with him. However, his refusal to part with the idea of Penélope shows the extent to which he’s living in his past, rather than moving into the future.*



*Just like Fermin, Carax doesn’t fit easily into mainstream society but thrives best in Paris’s seedy underbelly. By linking him to one of the novel’s most positive characters, this characteristic establishes him as sympathetic as well.*



*Nuria’s stark claims about her relationship with Julian show that she considers both of their lives determined by a static destiny, unable to change and not subject to human action or desires.*



*Daniel and Carax both covet and eventually own the same fountain pen, which strengthens the link between them even further. Moreover, the repeated appearance of the pen is another unbelievable coincidence suggesting that their lives were meant to intertwine, rather than doing so only by chance.*



*Even though she fears and hates her as a rival, Nuria’s obsession with Penélope establishes her as similar to Carax. Nuria is the novel’s only woman who forms her own obsessions rather than being the subject of other people’s. Accordingly, she also remains fairly independent throughout the novel, and is very resistant to male campaigns to possess her.*



*This twisted love affair is a result of both Nuria and Miquel’s fascination with Carax’s history; it shows how history, if unresolved, can resurface to warp the events of the present.*



One day after a fight, Miquel tells Nuria that in 1919, when Carax and Penélope's affair was discovered, Mr. Aldaya locked Penélope in her room and forbade anyone to see her, especially after a doctor confirmed that she was pregnant. When he met Carax at the train station, Miquel already knew this, but didn't tell him because he knew his friend would stay and fight for Penélope, whereas he needed to flee for his own safety.

One night, Jorge tracks Miquel down and hands him an obviously fake letter from Penélope to Carax, announcing her marriage and claiming she has never loved him. Knowing that it would devastate Carax, Miquel doesn't send it. Instead, he tracks down Jacinta, who by this time is in the insane asylum but who left a note in her apartment explaining that one of the other servants had covertly mailed a letter from Penélope to Carax. Assuming that she sent it to the Fortuny apartment, Miquel goes there to retrieve the letter from Sophie, only to find that Sophie has left her husband and that Fortuny has completely disowned his son. This is the letter that Daniel reads many years later.

Viçeneta, Sophie's only friend, informs Miquel that she's staying in an obscure boardinghouse and waiting for a ship to America. Miquel visits her there and shows her the fake letter from Penélope. Sophie begins to cry and whispers to him that Carax and Penélope are brother and sister.

### NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 3

When she arrives in Barcelona as a young woman, Sophie has to eke out a living as a piano teacher for arrogant and rude young girls. Fortuny begins courting her. She knows she'll never love him, and always refuses his proposals. Still, she spends time with him because she likes to bask in his desire and affection.

Sophie meets Mr. Aldaya in the grand house of one of her employers. They have an immediate connection, even though he "radiates cruelty and power." They become lovers, and meet in an empty apartment Mr. Aldaya owns for ninety-six days of violent and upsetting encounters. When she gets pregnant, Mr. Aldaya orders her to get an abortion and, when she refuses, abandons her. She agrees to marry Fortuny so her child won't be illegitimate. On her wedding day, Mr. Aldaya sends a funeral wreath to the church.

*Penélope's imprisonment shows how much her father considers her a possession, wrongfully appropriated by Carax, rather than a person in her own right. While he's much more sympathetic to her, Miquel unwittingly treats her the same way, worrying about Carax's conflict with Mr. Aldaya rather than Penélope's safety.*



*In this episode, letters prove both deceitful and very informative. Penélope's first letter, written under duress, is much like the newspapers and radio programs through which the government disseminates lies among the public. In contrast, the real letter smuggled to the Carax's apartment is like Carax's novels, a powerful text that draws Daniel into the mystery and gives him clues to solve it.*



*Sophie's dramatic revelation means that, regardless of Mr. Aldaya's attitude, Carax and Penélope's romance could never have worked out. This severely undermines the lovers' conviction that they were meant to be together, and means that their faith in a positive force of destiny guiding of their lives was completely misplaced.*



*This portrayal of Sophie and Fortuny's courtship shows Fortuny in a much more positive light. Even among literary accounts of the past, there can be serious discrepancies about how events actually occurred.*



*Sophie's liaison with Mr. Aldaya is potentially troubling, both in its suggestion that "cruelty and power" are essential to masculine appeal and that some women are drawn to relationships that center around possession and abuse. However, no matter how submissive to Mr. Aldaya she seems, Sophie is still strong-minded enough to act independently when it comes to protecting her child.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 4

Mr. Aldaya doesn't arrive at the hat shop and meet Carax by chance, but rather because he has started to think more about the son he never knew. Moreover, he has decided that his legitimate heir, Jorge, is weak and stupid, and has lost interest in him. When he meets Carax, Mr. Aldaya feels youthful again, and thinks he can mold the boy in his own image. He never realizes that Carax only tolerates him in order to be close to Penélope.

When Mr. Aldaya discovers his two children's affair, he feels both humiliated that they've tricked him and horrified that they've committed incest. He feels such hatred for Carax that he conspires to have him killed once he's in the army and locks Penélope away for the duration of her pregnancy, not even allowing to the servants to help her.

Finally, Penélope gives birth to a stillborn boy. Because Mr. Aldaya doesn't allow a doctor to help her, she dies alone of a hemorrhage, murdered by her own father. The family buries her and the baby in the secret crypt. Jorge eventually tells Miquel of her fate, "drunk with guilt and shame" at not having protected his sister.

Soon after this, the Aldaya fortune crumbles, Mrs. Aldaya dies, and the men of the family emigrate to Argentina to escape their creditors. During the voyage, Mr. Aldaya forces Jorge to promise he will one day kill Carax, then throws himself overboard and is eaten by sharks.

## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 5

Jorge loses all his remaining money in Argentina and returns to Barcelona ten years later almost a beggar. He tries to track down Carax but instead meets Javier Fumero, who has risen from his humble origins to be an army officer and then killer for hire, "said to be death itself." Fumero is "nauseated" by Jorge's weakness but takes him home, knowing he can take advantage of him. Meanwhile, Fumero joins the Crime Squad, arranging for his superiors to die so he can take their places. He is considered an exemplary officer.

*As it turns out, Mr. Aldaya isn't just a proxy father to Carax, but rather has always known the boy is his son. This development makes his self-interested behavior even more evident, and his abrupt shift from mentorship to disavowal of his own son even more reprehensible.*



*While even a kindhearted parent would have to separate lovers who violated the incest taboo, it's clear that Mr. Aldaya's motives lie elsewhere. Both of his children have subverted his control over their lives, and he doesn't just desire to separate them but punish them severely.*



*Mr. Aldaya's actions amount to murder, making his and Penélope's by far the most troubled parent-child relationship in the book. While many men – her father, her brother, and her lover – fight for control over Penélope, none of them can possess her as much as they want to.*



*The family's material circumstances mirror their moral decline. It's notable that while Jorge seems to recognize his father's culpability in Penélope's death, he draws closer to him as a result. By placing blame for the crime outside the family, he seeks to absolve his own complicity as well.*



*It's important that while Fumero is the novel's most unequivocally evil character, he's equated with "death"—something inevitable but not necessarily evil—while other characters who are equated with devils or demons tend to have both positive and negative qualities. Fumero's rapid rise as a police officer mirrors Jorge's fall from grace; but whereas Jorge's fate seems well-deserved, Fumero's increasing power is unmerited and frightening.*



Jorge considers Fumero a friend and apologizes for mistreating him when they were children. Fumero wants to use Jorge to track down Carax, whom he also hates. He has been to Carax's publisher to obtain his address, and has even followed Nuria home a few times, both attracted to her body and enraged by her defense of Carax, desiring to control her himself instead.

Fumero considers that his passion for Penélope was completely pure, "like the ones you see in movies." He decides to use Jorge just like villains use stooges in the movies, in order to lead him to Carax.

*Jealous and possessive without even knowing Nuria, Fumero's behavior towards her is deeply disturbing. However, it's an amplified version of the romantic behavior of many of the novel's men. Even positive characters like Carax and Daniel form obsessions with women they barely know and feel entitled to possess them romantically.*



*Fumero completely misinterprets his feelings, mistaking self-interested obsession for real love. His predication of his beliefs on movies again suggests the idea that while literature leads readers to greater insight or understanding, cinema can actively inhibit that kind of truth-seeking.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 6

Meanwhile, Miquel's brothers succeed in evicting him, and Nuria finds him in a derelict apartment building, bankrupt and ill with tuberculosis. She takes him home and marries him. One day Jorge shows up at their apartment asking where Carax is, and they lie and say that he's in Italy. Jorge reveals that he's fallen in with Fumero and they both feel "cursed." Carax writes Nuria that he's working on a new novel, *The Shadow of the Wind*.

One day Nuria comes home from work to find that Fumero has visited Miquel and announced that Carax is getting married to Irene Marceau, which Miquel assumes is an arrangement so that she can leave him her money. Fumero also tells Jorge that his old enemy is marrying into a fortune, stoking Jorge's anger into fantasies of revenge. Miquel writes to Carax to warn him.

Eventually, Fumero prods Jorge into going to Paris and challenging Carax to a duel. Just as Fumero predicts, Jorge tells Carax all about Penélope's imprisonment, without mentioning that she died soon after. Carax gets so angry that he kills Jorge and immediately returns to Barcelona to search for his lost love.

*Nuria is the novel's only woman who remains fairly independent even after marriage. However, her self-control contrasts with her belief that her fate is already decided. When she describes her situation as "cursed," she uses the vocabulary of destiny, showing that she believes her fate and that of Carax's to be predetermined.*



*If anyone is determining characters' fates, it's Fumero, who has become an adept manipulator. Many events attributed to destiny are actually caused by the villain Fumero. This undermines the conviction of characters like Nuria that their lives follow a predetermined scheme, as well as the wisdom of believing such schemes to be inherently positive.*



*Penélope continues to be a pawn in struggles for power between male characters. One of the novel's great tragedies is that her death is never really mourned for its own sake, but only in that it causes sadness or anger to the men around her. The identity of Coubert is also becoming clearer, now that it's revealed that he can't be Jorge.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 7

Meanwhile, the Civil War is beginning and Miquel is dying of tuberculosis. No one knows which side is in charge of the city, and people are assassinated in broad daylight. Irene Marceau writes Miquel to inform them of the duel and Carax's flight from the city, and they wait anxiously for his arrival. When he doesn't appear, they start searching the places they think he will look, like The **Angel** of Mist and San Gabriel's, where Father Fernando says that Fumero has come around threatening him as well. While they search, most of the streets are deserted and people are locked inside, fearing to leave their houses in case street fighting arises.

In despair one night, Nuria gets drunk and falls asleep on the sofa. When she wakes up, she finds a note saying that Miquel has gone to look for Julian and she should wait in the apartment. She notices that Miquel has cleaned out his desk, and knows she will never see him again.

*The trauma and brutality of the Civil War haunt the 1950s Barcelona in which Daniel grows up. Therefore, it's fitting that Nuria and Carax's narrative comes to a climax at the beginning of the war. The novel's timing underscores the fact that the war makes its effects felt even after it's long over in reality. Moreover, the many appearances of the war in the background of the novel mirror the repetitions that characterize most characters' lives.*



*Nuria and Miquel have had a fairly equal relationship. However, his exclusion of her now shows that he doesn't consider her as a partner in investigations.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 8

In fact, Miquel returns to The **Angel** of Mist, having received a call from one of the neighboring caretakers that a man of Carax's description has been wandering around. He immediately recognizes his old friend and follows him into the garden. The men hug, and Miquel takes him to a café. Surprisingly, Carax has reconciled with Fortuny, whose spite has turned into love after years of absence. Fortuny knows that Fumero is looking for his son, so he goes out to search the city for Penélope while Carax hides in the apartment. He's unable to find any trace of her.

Meanwhile the waiter of the café, who's in Fumero's pay, calls the police. Miquel and Carax don't realize they've been trapped until they see a car outside. Carax produces a gun but Miquel grabs it and tells Carax to hand over his papers, saying that he only has a month to live, while Carax could keep searching for Penélope or settle down with Nuria, who's waiting for him. Carax escapes while Miquel fires at the policeman and is subsequently killed.

*Finally, Fortuny's strange behavior is partially explained. Although his reconciliation with Carax seems abrupt, it's a testament to the strength of bonds between children and parent figures, even if – as in Fortuny's case – they aren't biologically related.*



*Fumero's arrival here mirrors his sudden appearance when Daniel and Fermín leave the nursing home. Notably, by switching identities each friend becomes even more entwined with the other, even while they are separated forever by Miquel's death.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 9

The police abandon Miquel's body in a seedy neighborhood, and when it eventually arrives at the morgue, he's identified as Julian Carax based on the papers he carries. Fortuny is devastated to hear that his son is dead, but when he arrives at the morgue and sees Miquel's body, he screams in relief, which the police interpret as grief. Fumero sees the body and knows it's Miquel, but allows it to be buried as Carax. That way, Fumero can never be accused of killing Carax—because technically he would already be dead.

Meanwhile, Nuria hasn't heard from either Carax or Miquel and is sick with worry. When Don Fonseca calls from the morgue to say that Carax's body has been buried, she returns home in tears to find Carax hiding in the apartment. She understands immediately that Miquel has died in his place, and feels guilty for her relief. Carax and Nuria become lovers again.

*Fumero is incredibly adept at manipulating government mechanisms like the paperwork at the morgue for his own gain, even while he continues to act outside the law. This is an indictment not only of his own character but of bureaucracies which have no moral structure but are easily twisted to facilitate wrongdoing.*



*Even though she's spent little time with him, Nuria's passion for Carax is overwhelming. It's notable that romantic passions are often the most rewarding aspects of characters' lives, even while they expose their flaws or lead them into moral dilemmas and tragedy.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 10

Nuria knows that Penélope is dead, but can't bear to tell Carax, so she just insists on accompanying him when he returns to the Aldaya mansion. Carax breaks the gate's lock by pouring acid on it, and they ascend to Jacinta's room, which is now unfurnished and covered with bloodstains.

Carax notices a bricked-up door at the end of the hall and knocks it down with great effort, revealing the carved **angels** on the original door. He goes into the cellar, and finally sees Penélope's marble tomb and that of his own stillborn son, David.

*Nuria knows almost everything about the mystery by now; but because she's too afraid to confront the tragic past, she dooms Carax to relive it over again, rather than finally resolving it.*



*It's ironic that angels, symbols of heavenly purity, guard the novel's most grotesque secret. Their presence is an indictment of the Aldaya family's cruel and cowardly treatment of their own daughter.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 11

Carax has finally solved the dreadful mystery of his lost love. Nuria drags him out of the cellar, feeling "the venom of hatred spreading slowly through his veins." She knows he blames himself for the tragedy, and that he now hates himself and the books to which he has devoted his life. He runs away from the house, leaving Nuria behind. When she returns home, she finds he's already been there, left her the Victor Hugo **fountain pen**, and burned all her copies of his novels.

*In Nuria's words, the effect of the discovery on Carax is a sort of chemical reaction, changing his identity fundamentally. It's also important that Carax takes out his grief on his books; this shows how closely he connects his work to his own identity and to his passion for Penélope. He burns his books to show his self-hatred as well as the finality of his love affair.*



When Nuria arrives at work, she finds that someone named Laín Coubert has already been there asking to buy all the company's Carax stock. That night, Nuria hides copies of all Carax's works in the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**, and the warehouse is burned down. The night watchman at the warehouse tells her that after the fire, the firefighters found a burned human body and took it to the hospital.

Nuria finds a badly burned Carax at the hospital and identifies him (falsely) as Miquel Moliner. She takes care of him as he recovers for a year. Meanwhile, he says nothing and is assumed to have lost his mind. He also loses most of his face in the blaze. Eventually, Nuria takes him home and tries to take care of him, although he just tells her to leave her.

When Nuria has depleted most of their financial reserves, Carax takes to going out at night, disguised as Laín Coubert and stealing to support them. She realizes that he's also breaking into libraries and homes in order to burn copies of his own books.

Nuria runs into Fortuny, who believes that Carax is alive somewhere and hiding from Fumero, who is the only person in Barcelona who manages to come out on top no matter what course the war takes. Even though Nuria knows Fortuny was a terrible father, he reminds her of her own father, so she takes to visiting him in his lonely apartment. Eventually Fortuny dies—Nuria believes of loneliness.

Nuria and Carax desperately need money, so Nuria uses a strategy that Carax once wrote about in a novel, writing as a fictitious lawyer to Sophie in South America and asking for authorization to assume temporary ownership of the Fortuny apartment. Posing as Requejo, she convinces Sophie to send a monthly money order for property expenses to Nuria's PO box.

Nuria and Carax survive for several years this way, until one day an informer posing as a journalism student arrived to ask questions about Miquel. That night, Nuria takes Carax to hide in his childhood apartment. By this time, he barely speaks or leaves the house, and she's not even sure if he's still sane.

*While the identity of Laín Coubert has puzzled Daniel for the entire novel, Nuria figures it out right away. Nuria acts to protect Carax's work as instinctively as she protects the man himself, showing that she too considers his works integral to his identity – or even as having important identities of their own.*



*Carax's physical damage mirrors the mental damage that Nuria noticed immediately after his discovery of Penélope's death. He is truly changed, as if into another, more monstrous person.*



*Laín Coubert is a criminal, but he also acts out of understandable motives. Like most characters who are associated with devils, Coubert has both reprehensible and sympathetic traits.*



*Nuria attempts to vicariously fix or atone for her own troubled relationship by being a kind daughter figure to Fortuny. Like many characters, she finds it easier to relate to someone else's parent than her own.*



*Faced with a serious dilemma, Nuria takes her tactics from Carax's novels. This shows how strongly literature tends to manifest itself and determine the course of real life events in the book.*



*It's important that the informer poses as a journalist. This subtly contributes to the characterization of news and newspapers as an inherently untrustworthy source of information, especially compared to literature.*



## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 12

Nuria finds work at another publishing house run by Pedro Sanmartí, which publishes trashy propaganda novels about “civil servants who were happy and morally sound.” She makes friends with another secretary, Mercedes Prieto, who tells her that Sanmartí is a close friend of Fumero. Sanmartí is also a womanizer, and relentlessly tries to seduce Nuria. Fleeing from his advances one night, she runs into Fumero on the stairs. The policeman convinces Sanmartí to fire her.

When Nuria gets home, upset and exhausted, Carax comforts her. He leaves the apartment all night, and in the morning Nuria hears on the radio that Sanmartí has been strangled on a public bench.

## NURIA MONFORT: CHAPTER 13

Carax’s casual murder of Sanmartí makes Nuria realize he’s a much different man from the one she fell in love with, and that he is now dominated by his alter-ego Laín Coubert. She discovers that “Laín Coubert, impersonating Julian,” has been returning to the Aldaya mansion every night to open Penélope’s coffin.

Meanwhile, Fumero arrests Nuria to interrogate her about Sanmartí’s death. He doesn’t torture her and eventually lets her go, but in the meantime his men destroy her apartment and scrawl “WHORE” on the wall in their own excrement.

Nuria rushes to the Fortuny apartment, but Julian isn’t there and she knows he’s gone forever. From that point on, she only sees him sporadically. Once he approaches her in the cinema and tells her he’s heard about a remaining copy of *The Shadow of the Wind* in the hands of a young boy. Barceló had been bragging about his discovery of the book, and Carax comes to respect Daniel without knowing him because of his refusal to part with the book for money. Carax says the boy reminds him of himself.

*The description of Sanmartí’s novels parodies their saccharine nature and transparent pro-government agenda. While literature is generally to be trusted in the novel, it’s clear that this isn’t always the case, especially with contemporary works vulnerable to manipulation. The general trend then seems to be that film, radio, and newspapers are untrustworthy because they are easily manipulated by corrupt governments, whereas literature is presented as addressing timeless themes and standing outside of current politics.*



*Carax’s empathetic behavior towards Nuria contrasts with his violent murder of Sanmartí, again showing that one person can contain many extremes of character.*



*Nuria explains Carax’s flaws by deeming Laín Coubert his own character, completely independent from Carax. This differentiation of Coubert from Carax shows a literary character freeing itself from the control of its creator, but also arguably shows Nuria letting Carax off the hook for his actions, and trying to preserve him in her memory as the man she fell in love with.*



*It’s disturbing, although not surprising, that the police attack Nuria’s sexual character. Their behavior is an amplification of the widespread male tendency to feel entitled to know and control the sexuality of the women around them.*



*At this point, Nuria is repeating parts of Daniel’s story that he’s already lived and recorded. The narrative’s structural repetition mirrors the tendency of characters to repeat each other’s lives. It’s also important that while Carax sees Daniel as inherently reminiscent of himself, by starting to interfere in the boy’s life he makes it even more probable that Daniel will become more like him.*



Nuria sometimes visits Carax at the Aldaya house, where he now squats. He thinks he's going insane, but Nuria believes he's just overcome by his tragic life. Sometimes Carax tries to write about Daniel, and he keeps tabs on his childhood and adolescence.

Nuria is afraid of Daniel because she believes that "we were all bound together in a strange chain of destiny," and that Daniel will reopen the wounds of the past without resolving them. She's also anxious because Daniel inadvertently leads Fumero back to Carax.

Concluding her manuscript, Nuria writes that she knows that Fumero is watching her, and she's convinced that she "will die by his hand." She urges Daniel to read her story and "set it free," and to always remember her.

*While Daniel lives out the events of his youth, Carax is writing about them. Just as the events of literature often assert themselves in real life, reality is easily transformed into literature as well.*



*Nuria interprets the strange resemblance between Daniel and Carax as destiny, rather than the result of coincidence or human behavior. It's reassuring to believe this, since it provides some meaning to her otherwise tragic life, but there's very little real evidence to support her theory.*



*Nuria's final injunction underlines the tendency of history to repeat itself harmfully. Her desire for Daniel to resolve the past and move forward contrasts poignantly with her desire to be remembered, even though she's now dead and part of the past herself.*



## THE SHADOW OF THE WIND: CHAPTER 1

At dawn, Daniel finishes Nuria's manuscript, which he calls "our story." He identifies himself with Carax and says that in his "lost footsteps, I now recognized my own, irretrievable." He gets dressed and hurries to the Aguilars' apartment, determined to fight for Bea so he won't lose her as Carax lost Penélope.

A hostile Tomás answers the door and tells Daniel that Bea has left home, and no one knows where she is. He says that Bea is pregnant but has refused to name Daniel as her lover, that Mr. Aguilar is determined to find and kill the man responsible, and that Tomás is too angry with Daniel to stop him. Tomás punches Daniel several times, and Daniel leaves the building bruised and anxious.

*Daniel is now fully aware not just of the parallels between his own life and Carax's, but of the dire necessity of extricating himself from Carax's "footsteps" so as to avoid repeating his tragedy as well.*



*Tomás seems to mirror Jorge's behavior when he turned on Carax. However, it's clear that he's acting out of love and worry for his sister, whereas Jorge was only motivated by fear and shame.*



## THE SHADOW OF THE WIND: CHAPTER 2

Walking the streets, Daniel notices that a car is following him. He tries to escape, but is bundled into the backseat by two men, only to find that one is Fermín and the other Don Federico. Daniel faints and wakes up in Fermín's safe house. He's anxious to find Bea, but Fermín, who has read Nuria's manuscript while Daniel slept, gives Daniel some painkillers and says he'll go out to search for her.

*Vowing to search for Daniel's missing lover, Fermín mirrors Fortuny when he helped shield Carax earlier. By facilitating his love affair, he's helping Daniel become a man; but by protecting him, he's still caring for him like a father.*



Daniel wakes up in the middle of the night to find Fermín snoring next to him. He realizes that Bea has probably taken refuge in the Aldaya mansion, and he boards the bus, amid a huge snowfall, to pursue her there.

*Daniel rejects Fermín's fatherly care (as he has with his actual father), feeling the urgency of his problems too greatly and preferring to solve them independently.*



### THE SHADOW OF THE WIND: CHAPTER 3

At the Aldaya house, Daniel quickly finds Bea, who is huddled in Penélope's old room. She has also met Carax, who knew who she was and provided her with food and blankets. Now, Bea says, Carax is waiting in the library for Fumero, who he knows will have followed Daniel. Daniel looks down the stairs and sees that Fumero is entering the house with a gun.

*It's notable and ominous that the newly pregnant Bea has taken refuge in the room where Penélope gave birth to her illicit child and subsequently died. While his similarities to Carax are often a source of pride for Daniel, it's clear that for Bea these parallels could be a death sentence.*



### THE SHADOW OF THE WIND: CHAPTER 4

Daniel tells Bea to stay in the room and steals out to warn Carax. Fumero catches him in the foyer, and Daniel lies and says that Carax has run away. Fumero puts his gun in Daniel's mouth and demands he tell the truth. Daniel says that Carax is in the crypt, although he can see Carax sneaking up behind Fumero as he speaks. Carax tackles Fumero and they tussle over the gun. Carax grabs Fumero's knife and stabs his wrist into the wall. He tells Daniel to get Bea and leave quickly.

*In their first face-to-face meeting, Daniel and Carax work together to pin Fumero to the wall. It's important that their two narratives converge at the climactic moment that they must confront their shared enemy.*



Just at that moment, Palacios enters the house and Fumero frees himself from the wall. Palacios wants to let Daniel leave, but Fumero grabs his gun and turns on Carax. Daniel jumps on Fumero, and Fumero shoots Daniel through the ribs. Dazed, Daniel sees Carax and Palacios bending over him and Bea running into the library. Fumero turns his gun on Bea but Laín Coubert, who has "taken [Carax's] place," attacks Fumero and throws him into the fountain, where the hand of the **angel** statue impales him through the chest.

*Like Nuria, Daniel describes Laín Coubert as a separate entity from Carax, thus absolving the author from his more violent actions. Interestingly, a demonic figure – Coubert – and the angelic statue cooperate to finally kill Fumero, a fitting culmination to the pattern of devils and angels that crop up throughout the novel.*



Daniel drifts into unconsciousness, hallucinating that he's an old man with Bea and also that Mr. Sempere and Nuria are crying over his grave. Before he faints, he remembers his mother's face with a clarity he hasn't felt for many years, as if the memory "had suddenly fallen out of the pages of a book."

*Daniel equates his unusual clarity of memory to the experience of reading a book. This shows that for him, reading leads to intense emotional experiences, and that the preservation of important real-life memories is inherently linked to literature.*



### POSTMORTEM

Daniel spends three weeks in the hospital and even Fermín is convinced he will die. During the ambulance ride, Bea and Palacios cradled him and his heart stopped for over a minute, and Daniel thinks he has died and come back to life.

*This episode explains Daniel's earlier claim that he would be "dead" in a week. His figurative death corresponds to Fumero's literal death.*



By the time Daniel wakes up a week later, the newspapers are saying Fumero died fighting armed criminals. No other bodies were found in the Aldaya mansion.

*While the newspapers are again perpetuating misinformation, this time they inadvertently prevent Daniel from being blamed for Fumero's death.*



Daniel wakes up in the hospital to find Mr. Sempere, Bea, and Fermín standing guard over him. Barceló, Clara, Tomás, Bernarda, and their neighbors arrive soon after. Mr. Sempere has brought Daniel's **fountain pen** to the hospital in case he wants to write, and Fermín has discovered that he won't have to do military service due to his wounds.

*By protecting him from the army and fostering his creative impulses, Mr. Sempere and Fermín are the concerned and supportive father figures that no other characters in the novel are lucky enough to have.*



Later, Daniel wakes up to find the room empty except for Carax. Carax doesn't say anything, but Daniel looks into his eyes for a long time and feels sure that Carax has never found out that Penélope is his half sister. Daniel tells Carax to take the **fountain pen** and start writing again. Later Daniel wakes up again, and Bea says that she's been there the whole time and there was no one else in the room, but the fountain pen is gone.

*Daniel's final gift of the fountain pen reinforces the connection between him and Carax, even after the mystery is solved. Bea's version of events conflicts with the fact that the pen really is missing; this is one last improbable and inexplicable event before the novel settles into a much more prosaic reality.*



## THE WATERS OF MARCH

Three months later, Bea and Daniel get married. Her family has agreed that there is no other way to avoid a scandal. Although Mr. Aguilar still dislikes Daniel, he says that Bea is "the only good thing I've ever done" and tells Daniel to take care of her. Father Fernando performs the wedding, since the regular priest won't marry a pregnant woman.

*While the Aldayas avoid scandal by essentially killing their daughter, the Aguilars consent to the marriage she wants. Although Bea's narrative initially parallels Penélope's, it diverges in the truly important places.*



The night before his wedding, Fermín tells a reluctant Daniel that he has organized a bachelor party. To fulfill the promise Daniel made long ago, he hires a prostitute and they drive up to the Santa Lucía Hospice and sneak her in to the old man. Meanwhile, they ask after Jacinta, who they learn died two weeks ago, after being visited by Carax.

*Jacinta has been trapped for years, reliving her memories of the past without ever seeing her beloved Penélope. Now, just as Carax is released from his past enemy and Daniel from the mystery that gripped him, Jacinta is released from the misfortunes that have plagued her tragic life.*



## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Ten years later, Daniel has a son named Julián and runs the bookshop with Bea's help, while Mr. Sempere is retired. Bea is "strong and wise," although given to occasional reveries. Daniel says that Bea and Julián are "linked by an invisible bond" that he can't quite understand.

*While the novel devotes much of its time and energy to dissecting father-son relationships, Bea's bond with her son is inexplicable and almost mystical. This both elevates it above father-son relationships and makes it seem less complex and human.*



The bookshop is surviving but not prospering. Bea says that reading is a dying art because it's such a demanding and "intimate ritual."

Fermín and Bernarda are married and have four children. Fermín is now the keeper of the **Cemetery of Forgotten Books**. Tomás is an engineer in Germany, and he and Daniel are friendly but distant.

Daniel feels that Barcelona is slowly recovering from the horrors of two wars, and that "a certain brightness is tentatively returning" to the city.

Barceló has sold his own bookshop and now devotes himself to reprinting editions of Carax's work, which still don't sell many copies. Meanwhile, Clara got married and quickly divorced. Now she lives an increasingly reclusive life and is growing bitter in middle-age. She doesn't like other women, and Daniel thinks that she's still waiting for someone to "adore" her the way he did when he was a teenager.

No one remembers Inspector Fumero. Palacios tells Daniel that a plaque was placed in the police station basement, but it's now covered by a drinks machine. The Aldaya mansion is now the corporate headquarters of an advertising agency.

One day, Daniel receives a package from Paris containing a novel called *The Angel of Mist*, by an author called Boris Laurent. He finds an inscription written in the **fountain pen**'s familiar ink, to him and to Beatriz, "who gave us both back our lives."

The last paragraph of the book repeats the novel's first paragraph, in which a young man brings his son to **The Cemetery of Forgotten Books** at dawn. The child asks if he can share the secret with his mother, and the father assures him he can. However, this child's name is Julián, and his father is Daniel.

*Bea's remark suggests a certain pessimism about the fate of literature; although it's presented as being more trustworthy than contemporary media like journalism or cinema, it's also less adapted to success in the fast-moving modern world.*



*The dissolution of Daniel's friendship with Tomás recalls Father Fernando's earlier remark that while his childhood friendships were the most important of his life, they all faded eventually.*



*Just as Daniel has been able to confront and vanquish the past in his personal life, he feels that his society is beginning to do so on a larger scale.*



*Clara's fate is disturbingly harsh. It seems as though she's being punished for spurning Daniel when he adored her as a child, even though she wasn't obligated or even able to reciprocate his feelings. As a child, Daniel felt discarded by Clara; as an adult, he discards her himself.*



*These prosaic developments contrast to the dramatic defeat of the demonic Fumero, but they also show that once people confront the past, they can begin to healthily forget it.*



*The fountain pen identifies the author as Carax's new pseudonym. Crediting Bea with leading Daniel to the Aldaya mansion and saving their lives, Carax assigns her significant agency in the story—but in the narrative presented in the novel, she's largely a passive and obedient figure on the sidelines.*



*The last chapter repeats the first almost word for word, showing that while some parallels – such as the one between Bea and Penélope – must be broken, others – like the loving, committed relationships between fathers and sons – are well worth preserving from generation to generation.*





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