

## ***Review: Catch 22***

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One of the main goals of *Catch-22* is to satirize the dehumanizing machinery of war by showing the irremovable survival impulse at the heart of every individual. By constantly making fun of wartime situations and by carrying arguments to their extreme, absurd conclusions, the novel shows the conflict that arises when a war's course is determined by factors alien to the people who are fighting the war. Through a maze of characters and events, *Catch-22* explores war and bureaucracy and their effects on ordinary people.

### **Chapters 1–5**

In these early chapters, these effects take the form of an absurd irony that penetrates virtually every facet of the characters' lives. The greatest irony is, of course, the perceived uselessness of the war—at least as it is carried out by the characters who surround Yossarian. All that matters to the generals controlling the troops is getting a promotion; all that matters to the troops is staying alive long enough to go home. No one is concerned with the larger political or ethical implications of the war. This grand irony is played out in hundreds of small ways, with Yossarian and his companions acting in self-defeating, paradoxical ways simply because their actions have so little meaning. In the hospital, for example, Yossarian and his companions hate the Texan because he is so likable, and Yossarian makes a fool of the chaplain even though he senselessly loves him. Furthermore, wielded with wickedly satirical intent, the banter between characters is full of paradoxes as impossible as *Catch-22* itself.

One of the statements that the novel makes is that the rules that govern individuals also tend to shape their thoughts. The early chapters show us how the soldiers, imprisoned by the paradox of *Catch-22*, take this type of paradox to heart, pursuing irrelevancy, meaninglessness, and nonsense as though they are real values in a world where relevancy, meaning, and sense are impossible. The power of bureaucracy further manifests itself in the first few chapters through Colonel Cathcart's impersonal raising of the number of required missions and even more through Doc Daneeka's explanation of *Catch-22*—Yossarian is forced to confront the revelation that the law governing his life is an irresolvable paradox.

The failure of communication plays an important role in the development of Heller's paradoxes. Words have little meaning, a truth that becomes clear in the very first chapter as Yossarian capriciously deletes random words from letters simply because he finds the letters boring. Heller often uses miscommunication to create comedy, as when ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen causes General Peckem a great deal of worry by calling him and saying, "T. S. Eliot"—a simple, harmless phrase that Peckem interprets as something complicated and sinister. Part of the irony here is that insubstantial, easily misinterpreted words are what determine the very real, substantial aspects of the soldiers' lives. The contrast between the actual fighting and the ridiculous bureaucracy that controls it is one of the most horrifying aspects of *Catch-22*.

Finally, even the notion of time itself is affected by the absurdity governing characters' lives. The story is told with a jumbled chronology involving recollections, allusions to future events, and statements whose meanings become clear only as the novel progresses. The narrative skips from scene to scene with occasional (but still confusing) mentions of *before* and *after* but with no central *now* to give these terms meaning. However, a number of handholds are offered to enable us to put the events in some kind of

order: the growth of Milo's syndicate, the ranks of certain officers, and, most important, the number of missions the men are expected to fly.

## Chapters 6–10

In these chapters, many of the novel's characters begin to accept the futility and illogic of the actions that the army and higher levels of bureaucracy demand of those involved in the war effort. First among those who resign themselves to the absurdity is Major Major Major Major, one of the most comical and improbable characters in the novel: all his life, Major Major has been the victim of bureaucratic forces beyond his control—his birth certificate, the IBM machine—and he eventually turns on these forces by forging false names on official documents. The way in which he rebels against the system reflects both his own dissatisfaction with his ludicrous name, which bureaucracy has generated, and the reliance upon names, cataloging, and indexing perpetuated by the bureaucracy. Major — de Coverley is another ridiculous and paradoxical figure, a revered old man with no important duties who plays horseshoes all day and is utterly irrelevant to the war. Actions, too, can be irrelevant and nonsensical: ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen's punishment for going AWOL is to dig holes and then fill them back up again. Wintergreen says that he doesn't mind doing it, so long as it is "part of the war effort." Obviously, his task is not helping the Allies win the war; its uselessness suggests that so many other actions that the army seems to believe are necessary are actually a waste of time. A similar sense of futility occurs with Major Major's realization that the documents he signs keep coming back to him for more signatures. His life is consumed with paperwork that repeats itself in an endless cycle in which nothing gets accomplished.

*Catch-22's* mosaic of anecdotes, whose chronological placement remains largely beyond the reader's grasp, undermines the conventional model of various events building tension toward a climax. It also conveys the impression that, just as Yossarian is afraid to confront a life that ends in death, the novel itself is nervous about the passing of time, which leads inevitably toward death. Breaking up the flow of time is, in a sense, a narrative attempt to defy mortality. In these early chapters, Dunbar presents an important alternative to this approach: he knows he is trapped in linear time, but he hopes to live in it as long as possible by making time move more slowly in his perception. He thus seeks boredom and discomfort because time seems to pass more slowly when he is bored or uncomfortable. This separation of the actual passage of time from the experience of time is an attempt to regain control of a life constantly threatened by the violence of war.

The novel's exploration of this quirky passing of time demonstrates how the novel's satirical and serious tones complement each other. Dunbar's argument about doing unpleasant things because they make time pass more slowly, a statement that seems entirely illogical and even comical the first time we read it, begins to make sense as the novel progresses. The only way in which these soldiers are able to approach the ludicrous situation in which they have been placed is to indulge their own ludicrous logic. Dr. Stubbs's frustrated reflection in Chapter 10 that the arbitrary nature of death makes it absurd to try to live makes Dunbar's ideas about making time last longer seem somewhat logical: a response to the possibility of imminent death that espouses self-preservation is no longer comical but rather completely rational.

Part of the reason for Yossarian's terror of death is that he has no control over his own fate. Again and again, the impersonal machine that seems to be running the war in *Catch-22* denies characters the ability to shape their own destinies. The law of *Catch-22* seems to be the embodiment of this trap: even when soldiers can think of rational reasons to go home from the war, *Catch-22* always stops them. A

large part of the powerlessness the men feel comes from the bureaucratic regulations that prevent rational action; the men's actions are guided by rules that have little to do with reality. The hilarious conversations that result from attempting to stick to the rules are often pitiful because they highlight how inhuman the bureaucracy is. In Chapter 8, for example, Scheisskopf's haranguing of Clevinger about the mode of his address when Clevinger attempts to communicate his innocence demonstrates how Scheisskopf focuses only on superficial things, such as matters of propriety, and completely ignores substantial things, such as his men's individual needs and feelings.

## Chapters 11–16

In this section, the disordered chronology functions as an instrument for building suspense. The lengthy digression about the Great Loyalty Oath Crusade interrupts the tense buildup to the Bologna mission, which occurs shortly before the scene at the beginning of the novel, when the number of required missions is still thirty-five. The Great Loyalty Oath Crusade story is ironic and funny; the Bologna mission is a dismal story told in terms of endless rain and growing worry. By breaking off the Bologna story in the middle to tell the exaggerated parable of the Loyalty Oath Crusade, Heller heightens the sense of uncertainty and anticipation surrounding the outcome of the Bologna mission. During the description of the actual bombing run to Bologna, however, Heller devotes a chapter almost entirely to a single event, without his usual digressions. This very detailed, vivid account of the attack makes time appear to move more slowly, trapping the reader in the same drawn-out terror as the characters. The earnest, straightforward manner in which the Bologna story is told is a signal that we are meant to take this episode seriously—that there is nothing funny about this aspect of war.

Although *Catch-22* is written mostly from the perspective of a third-person narrator who describes what each of the characters is thinking, we hear mostly what is happening in Yossarian's mind, and many of the observations about the absurdity of the war seem to be his own. So, despite the fact that each chapter of *Catch-22* bears the name of a character described in that chapter, the narrative generally returns to Yossarian. A significant departure from this organizational method occurs in the chapter entitled "Bologna," however: instead of operating as a largely humorous description of the nature and history of one of the novel's characters, this chapter remains almost entirely in the present of the story, and Yossarian is forced to confront his desire to live at the expense of everything else. The chapter title itself—a place name rather than a person's name—marks a shift from a satirical and humorous focus on the unwitting characters engaged in the war to a serious focus on the present realities of the war.

Yossarian's vague guilt about abandoning his friends reveals a weakness in his philosophy of self-preservation: he seems to have no qualms about abandoning the mission and thereby keeping himself alive, but he does care about his friends and feels a mild trepidation while he awaits their return. Up to this point, Yossarian's sole goal in life has been survival at the expense of everything else: he has subjected himself and his squadron to various illnesses, refused to enjoy fruit because it might make him healthy, and endured rather unpleasant hospital stays—all for the sake of not having to fly missions. Yossarian faces a difficult dilemma: on one hand, caring for others is destructive in that it undermines his ability to try to save his own life; on the other hand, caring for others is the only thing that mitigates the impersonal hatred that Yossarian perceives directed toward him.

The interlude with Luciana provides a welcome respite from life in the camp on Pianosa, but it also illustrates the strain placed on male-female relationships by the war. Luciana and Yossarian seem legitimately drawn to one another, but their relationship is brief and almost wholly sexual. Hungry Joe's interruption of their time together demonstrates the glaring lack of privacy in Yossarian's life and

highlights the difficulty of having meaningful relationships in wartime. Similarly, Yossarian's tearing up of Luciana's number constitutes an act of irrational, self-satisfied exuberance that seems part and parcel of the absurd ironies forced on him by the Catch-22 mentality of the war. He is so overwhelmed at the end of this section—after Bologna, after Luciana, and after he learns that the number of missions has been raised yet again—that he decides to check into the hospital, a place of relative sanity and safety.

## Chapters 17–21

In *Catch-22*, the hospital is certainly not a place where heroic doctors heal grateful patients, but Yossarian's ridiculous experience in this chapter goes so far as to parody the idea of a hospital as a place where death can be confronted and properly mourned. For Yossarian, the hospital is nothing more than a refuge from the atrocities that occur outside its walls, and he is unable to understand why a family would want to arrive at a hospital to watch their son die. The hospital staff further parodies the hospital as a site of grief by requesting that Yossarian pretend to be a dying soldier for the sake of a family whose real son has already passed away. Adding somber draperies and stinking flowers to the room, the hospital is as unable as the rest of the bureaucracy to take death seriously, and the family members who do mourn their son's or brother's passing are comically portrayed as overly sentimental. While one might expect that a war would underline the fragility of life and make those involved appreciate ritual celebrations of life and mourning of death all the more, in *Catch-22* the war numbs these characters to the effects of death, which has become a mundane, daily occurrence. As a result, the actions of those who still take death seriously are incomprehensible or meaningless to those involved in the war. Heller's statement, however, is *not* that life is meaningless; it would be a mistake to assume that Yossarian's attitude or the doctors' attitudes toward death are Heller's own. Rather, it seems that the novel's purpose in displaying such an unconventional portrait of mourning is to show the absurd behavior that war forces humans to adopt—reaching a point where not even the loss of life is impressive.

In one of the novel's manifold contradictions, two atheists, Yossarian and Mrs. Scheisskopf, argue over what kind of God they do not believe in and address the nature of God in a debate. The God in whom Mrs. Scheisskopf does not believe is good and all-knowing, whereas Yossarian's deity is bumbling and confused. Yossarian's argument is typical: that a truly compassionate God would not have allowed all the unpleasantness and pain in the world. But the details that Yossarian uses to argue his point are unusual: he asks why God would create phlegm, tooth decay, or incontinence. Yossarian is not just angry with the God that he does not believe in, but he also ridicules him. Mrs. Scheisskopf, on the other hand, prefers not to believe in a good and righteous God, arguing that if one is not going to believe in God, one might as well not believe in a good God. In this way, the idea of God can be useful, even if it is not accurate. The contrast between the chaplain and his assistant, the atheist Corporal Whitcomb, further develops this paradox. The chaplain, who does believe in God, has a very quiet, nonintrusive manner as he ministers to the men in the squadron, which does not turn many men toward religion. Corporal Whitcomb, on the other hand, wants to enter into a full-scale religious campaign, which would include revivals and form letters sent from the chaplain to the families of men killed in combat. Like Mrs. Scheisskopf, Whitcomb's lack of belief in God allows him to see religion as a useful tool.

The ambitious, foolish, and compulsive Colonel Cathcart dominates the second half of this section, which focuses on the dehumanizing power of bureaucracy. Colonel Cathcart wants to be a general, for no reason other than that he is not a general now. His ludicrous tallying of black eyes and feathers in his cap would be amusing if it did not directly result in his unflinching willingness to risk his men's lives. As it is, Colonel Cathcart is only sickeningly amusing. When Chapter 21 reveals that he does not have a chance of becoming a general, his arbitrary increase of the number of missions his men must fly seems even

more meaningless. The poor, ineffectual chaplain wants very much to help Yossarian and his friends, but all his moral convictions are frail and flimsy before the unanswerable authority of men like Cathcart and Korn.

The chaplain's sensation of *déjà vu* reminds us that in the disordered temporal structure of Heller's story, some events do actually happen twice. But the chaplain defines his *déjà vu* not in terms of time but as "the subtle, recurring confusion between illusion and reality"—a confusion that becomes quite serious in these chapters. Yossarian, for example, constructs illusory sicknesses, but doctors are inexplicably unable or unwilling to tell the difference between real and artificial sickness. Frequently, these sicknesses take on the illusory nature of performances. In Chapter 18, Yossarian's admiration for the performance of the man who sees everything twice leads him to imitate that performance. When the man dies in the night, however, Yossarian does not acknowledge the authenticity of the man's sickness; instead, he decides that the man took his performance too far. In order to avoid encountering the ultimate realities of the war—death, pain, and fighting—the men create illusions that blur the lines between what is real and what is not.

## **Chapters 22–26**

The bombing run during which Snowden dies has been alluded to for several chapters, but the details have never been fully explained. The beginning of Chapter 22 provides a few of those details and underlines the narrative importance of the event. The novel's incessant references to the incident have two narrative purposes. First, they emphasize the narrative's circular chronological organization. The event that has so traumatized Yossarian does not recede into the past as Yossarian moves through time; rather, he continually returns to it, unable to escape. Second, the constant references to Snowden's death build up suspense, making the Avignon mission one of the novel's climaxes. Even though this mission occurs chronologically before many other events in the novel, we have to wait until almost the end of the novel to find out exactly what happened on the mission. By telling his story out of chronological order, Heller can place whatever climactic events he wants at the end of the novel, since he is not bound by temporal restraints.

The bombing of Avignon is just one of the many ways in which this section continues to show Yossarian's attempt to hold onto his life and his humanity in the face of the war. The chaplain struggles similarly in this section to remain sane despite his nightmarish life. The chaplain is treated as an outsider by everyone, doubts the moral standards that have governed his life, and endures horrible fantasies of his wife and children dying violent deaths. Just as the idea of the hospital as a place for respectfully coming to terms with death is undermined in the previous section, the idea of the chaplain as a source of spiritual stability and reason in the face of a disorienting and upsetting war is undermined in this section.

Milo Minderbinder is one of the most complex figures in the novel, and the syndicate that he heads is one of its most elusive symbols. On the one hand, the syndicate gives Heller an opportunity to parody the economic activity of large-market capitalism. The extraordinary rationalization by which Milo is able to buy eggs for seven cents apiece and sell them for five cents apiece while still turning a profit is one of the most tortuously sublime moments in the novel, even if it makes only shaky economic sense. Milo claims that at every stage he actually buys and sells the eggs to his own syndicate, thereby somehow retaining the money that he spends to buy the eggs. But, if he buys the eggs with the same resources that he bolsters by selling the eggs, all he is doing is moving money from one place to another. We can easily reduce the bizarre logic that governs Milo's syndicate to nonsense, because we understand the

impossibility of Milo's money-making scheme. Yet, though it is completely illogical and unjustifiable, like many concepts in the novel, Milo's syndicate does make money. Whether or not the logic makes sense is irrelevant; the end result defies those who try to explain the process.

The syndicate also represents an almost socialist collectivity—in this enterprise governed by amoral expediency, “everybody has a share.” In this light, the syndicate becomes almost a parody of communism as well as capitalism: it is nominally a collective governed by all but is actually run by a single despot. The economic rationalization of the syndicate resembles the moral rationalization of a dehumanized collective, which might agree that it is in everybody's best interest for Milo to bomb his own squadron and kill, wound, and maim a number of his fellow soldiers.

Heller creates a tension between Yossarian's feelings about Milo and our feelings about Milo. Yossarian is undeniably the moral compass of the novel, and he seems to like Milo, which suggests that we too should sympathize with him. But Milo is continually presented as a threatening figure. While Yossarian sits naked in the tree at Snowden's funeral in a highly biblical scene, Milo almost seems like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, there to tempt the innocent with chocolate-covered cotton and the promise of a fast buck.

The absurd proportions of Milo's empire clue us in to an aspect of *Catch-22* that, until this section, has been rather subtle: the novel's element of hyperbole. Despite their ridiculous names, all the men in Yossarian's squadron might possibly have lived during WWII. Milo, however, is a completely impossible figure. All along, Heller has created minor absurdities, such as the way the soldier in white has the fluids from his groin directed right back into his IV drip. In this section, he creates a major absurdity in the vastness of Milo's domain, which allows us to know with absolute certainty that *Catch-22* is intended more as an allegory than as a realistic portrait of army life.

## **Chapters 27–31**

This section works through an increasingly macabre surrealism that climaxes with the manslaughter of Kid Sampson and suicide of McWatt. The strange psychological examinations and identity games in the hospital provide Heller with the opportunity to parody modern psychotherapy, which he does with scathing cleverness—Major Sanderson's insistence on discussing his own late puberty is one of the funniest characterizations in the novel. It also lends some weight to the idea of insanity that circulates throughout the novel; the men are always accusing each other of being crazy, and Yossarian even finds insanity a desirable trait, because it will get him out of the war—or would, if not for *Catch-22*.

Although the novel does not seem to follow a chronological pattern—being composed primarily of episodes that are memories, flashbacks, or character descriptions and having very little grasp on what exactly the current moment is—the climax of these three chapters demonstrates that the novel as a whole still has a somewhat conventional narrative shape. That is, the memories and flashbacks that make up the first two-thirds of the novel lead up to the fatigue and frustration with war that form the background for the events in these chapters. The war transitions from a surreal series of events whose absurdity can be lightly parodied to a reality that is a serious and heavy weight on Yossarian and his squadron. Furthermore, the events in these chapters—particularly the two deaths—shift the narrative from the brilliant parody of the preceding sections into an extremely dark humor that borders on seriousness. The increasing strain the war is placing on Yossarian's psyche is evident in the scene in which he contemplates murdering Orr and finds the idea a relaxing one; it is this thought alone that allows him to tolerate his roommate's prattling.

Orr's disappearance and presumed death come as something of a shock. In fact, one of the most remarkable aspects of *Catch-22* is the way that Heller manages to catch us off guard each time one of Yossarian's friends dies. In part, this aspect is a virtue of the novel's chronology—with so much jumping forward and backward in time, it becomes easy to think of the lives of the characters as existing in a sort of vacuum, without beginning or end. Of course, such is not the case, and the men's deaths are sharp reminders that even in the novel time moves forward and people are fragile. Yossarian is not in need of such a reminder: he is haunted by the death of Snowden and reaches a moment of murderous rage toward McWatt shortly after flashing back to Snowden's death. Yossarian's fierce desire to live makes him seem heroic even in his moments of cowardice. As he strangles McWatt and yells at him to pull up, it seems only just for McWatt to obey.

The absurd chapter on the death of Doc Daneeka represents perhaps the most extreme moment of bureaucratic confusion in the entire novel. Paperwork has the power to make a living man officially dead, and the bureaucracy would rather lose the man than try to confront the forms. Painfully, Mrs. Daneeka becomes complicit in her husband's red-tape murder when she decides to take the insurance payments as a higher authority than his own letter protesting that he is really alive. Doc Daneeka thus realizes that he is essentially dead and that death is a matter of paperwork rather than biology. The soldiers' powerlessness over their own lives extends even to their own deaths, which can be forced upon them not only by the shooting of a gun but also by the fall of a stamp.

### Chapters 32–37

The first part of this section, with Yossarian's young roommates and the story of Nately's whore, returns to the high comedy of the earlier parts of the novel, but with the important difference that Yossarian is on the edge of a breakdown and seems to know it. Orr's disappearance is a very hard blow, and Yossarian is now plagued by thoughts of death and dismemberment. The high comedy comes to an abrupt and unexpected halt with the eerie return of the soldier in white, which is followed immediately by Dunbar's unexplained disappearance and the deaths of Chief White Halfoat, Nately, and Dobbs. The squadron is beginning to fall apart, and even the military bureaucracy is being turned on its thick head by the sudden ousting of General Dreedle in favor of General Peckem, who immediately learns that General Scheisskopf is now his superior officer. Furthermore, Scheisskopf's intention for everyone under his command to march in parades is a ludicrous juxtaposition of irrelevant discipline-building exercises with the realities of war.

As Yossarian's story moves toward its climax, the sense of unknown danger approaching from all sides intensifies markedly, from gunfire in the dark to the disappearance of Dunbar to the chaplain's sudden, disconcerting interrogation for an unspecified crime. (This scene is reminiscent of the scene in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, in which the novel's protagonist wakes one morning to find himself accused of a crime whose nature no one will describe to him.) The illogical nature of the chaplain's interrogation makes it so terrifying. If he were accused of a specific crime, or if his interrogators were willing to listen to a word he said, the chaplain would have at least some power over his situation. As it is, all his attempts to clear his name are met with the same illogical arguments, and he can do absolutely nothing; he realizes that his captors could beat him to death if they wanted to and he couldn't stop them. The chaplain's plight is similar to that of all the men in the squadron: their lives are in the hands of others, and their logical desire to go free because they are innocent is meaningless in a world without logic.

Another highly restrictive force surrounding the squadron is the fact that no goal seems to be achievable. As soon as the men complete their missions, the required number is raised; as soon as Orr

finishes building his stove, he is shot down and disappears; as soon as Nately's whore falls in love with him, he is killed in combat. It seems almost miraculous that the men have it in them to try to accomplish anything, let alone the thankless task of bombing enemies they have never seen, when almost any action taken to alter the status quo has very negative consequences. However, Heller always stops just short of criticizing the war itself—it would be difficult to argue that fighting Hitler is wrong. Instead, he criticizes the *way* in which the war is carried out.

This section is also one of the only long sequences of chapters told in straight linear time—the same timeline, in fact, that leads right to the end of the novel. Heller uses this long chronological sequence to enhance the sense of momentum building toward a climax. The orderly progression of time corresponds to an increasing disorder in Yossarian's world: the helplessness and lack of control that the men feel spirals to a fever pitch. As things fall apart all around Yossarian, the novel takes on the feel of a moving walkway, leading inexorably toward an unspecified, ominous ending.

### **Chapters 38–42**

This section plunges Yossarian into the deepest, most surreal darkness in the novel—the night in Rome after the disappearance of Nately's whore and her sister is the most wrenching, despairing scene in *Catch-22*—as Yossarian encounters example after example of abuse, neglect, and oppression. This scene culminates in Aarfy's rape and murder of the maid, which finally explodes the question of moral absolutes in war: Yossarian, outraged, repeats the most inviolable of those absolutes—one cannot kill another person—and is then arrested for the meaningless crime of being in Rome without a pass, while Aarfy receives an apology from the police. Obviously, war carries a requirement to kill other people, and, as the old woman who notes the dominance of *Catch-22* is aware, this fact undermines every other natural and moral law.

Snowden's death has been hinted at throughout the novel, but it is only in the second-to-last chapter that we are finally allowed to see the scene from beginning to end. Because it is placed near the end of the novel and is so clearly an important event, Snowden's death functions as the technical climax of *Catch-22*, even though it took place before many of the novel's other events. The progression of the scene of Snowden's death is similar to Yossarian's progression throughout the novel: at first, Yossarian thinks that he has control over death and that he can stop Snowden's leg wound from bleeding and save Snowden's life; later, he finds that death is a force utterly outside his control. The "secret" revealed to him here is that man is made of inanimate matter and that no human hands can restore life to a body once it has been destroyed by flak, disease, or drowning.

Yossarian has taken Snowden's secret to heart, and he realizes that the impulse to live is the most important human quality. But the impulse to live is not simply a desire to survive at any cost: Yossarian cannot live as a hypocrite or as a slave; as a result, he decides to incur enormous personal danger by attempting to escape from the military rather than take the safe deal that would betray his friends. Yossarian chooses simply to take his life back into his own hands, openly rejecting (rather than, as the deal would have required, falsely embracing) the mentality of *Catch-22* and making his run for freedom. He is inspired in this decision by the rather absurd example of Orr, who has escaped to Sweden.

The appearance of Nately's whore in this section works as a bizarre kind of moral point of reference. Though Yossarian is not responsible for Nately's death, Nately's whore still seems to blame Yossarian, and, to an extent, Yossarian blames himself—at least enough to feel responsible for the whore and her sister. But as long as he refuses to comply with the military authorities, he manages to escape Nately's



whore's attempts to murder him. Only when he agrees to the deal with Cathcart and Korn does she succeed in stabbing and seriously injuring him, suggesting that the act of agreeing with these bureaucrats constitutes the metaphorical death of Yossarian. At the end of the novel, when Yossarian makes his escape, the whore's presence is a surprisingly welcome one—and Yossarian succeeds in getting away from her—proof that he is doing the right thing in refusing to sell himself out to the bureaucracy.

**P.S.**

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