

# V for Vendetta



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ALAN MOORE

Alan Moore was raised in an impoverished part of the United Kingdom. He was a voracious reader as a child, and showed a talent for drawing and writing. As a teenager, he began sending in poems and essays to local newspapers. It was also around this time that Moore began experimenting with drugs like LSD, and in 1970 he was expelled from his college (the English counterpart to American high school) for drug use. Following his expulsion, Moore worked a number of odd jobs, including toilet cleaning and tanning. He didn't begin writing and illustrating comic books full-time until 1978, when he sent his first cartoons to the music magazine NME. For the next five years, Moore earned less than 50 pounds a week. It was during this period that Moore married his wife, Phyllis, and had a child, Leah. It was Moore's dream to write for *2000AD*, the most prestigious comic magazine in Britain at the time. In 1980, he finally succeeded in selling an idea for a comic strip in *2000AD*. Moore worked as a freelance comic strip writer, often writing stories for other people's characters. He became known as a quick and creative writer with a strong visual sense, and all in all, he wrote more than 50 stories for *2000AD*. His major career breakthrough came in 1983, when he was hired by DC Comics, the most prominent American comic company, to reinvent *The Saga of the Swamp Thing*, an old, unpopular comic strip. Moore was widely praised for "deconstructing" the Swamp Thing character, essentially writing a satire of comic book superheroes themselves. Arguably Moore's best-known work is *Watchmen*, which was released between 1986 and 1987. In 1989, Moore completed work on *V for Vendetta*, one of his most popular works. Since 1990, he's worked on more than 50 graphic novels, including *From Hell*, a reimagining of the Jack the Ripper murders, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, an adventure comic featuring heroes of Victorian literature, and *Promethea*, which blends comic book conventions with Kabbalistic traditions. Moore has been honored with virtually every award given for comic books, and his comic *Watchmen* was included on *Time Magazine's* list of the 100 greatest works of fiction written in the 20th century.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*V for Vendetta* alludes to many historical events, some of the most important being the Cold War, the conservative values of the Reagan/Thatcher era, the AIDS epidemic, and the Guy Fawkes Gunpowder Plot. At the time when Moore was writing *V for Vendetta*, the Cold War was still a reality, and was, in many ways, still escalating. (Although it would end only two years

after the graphic novel was published.) The world's two dominant superpowers, the United States and the U.S.S.R., competed with one another for economic and political control of the world. Their competition took many forms, and perhaps the most notorious was the stockpiling of nuclear missiles. For nearly thirty years, both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. increased their defense budgets and devoted huge sums of money to building more nuclear missiles. There was widespread fear that the arms race between the U.S.S.R. and the United States would result in a nuclear war, which could easily destroy the entire planet. The premise of *V for Vendetta* is that this war has occurred: both Russia and America have been destroyed, along with Africa. Another important event to which *V for Vendetta* responds is the rise of conservatism in both the U.K. and America during the 1980s. During this decade, Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States, and Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister of England. Reagan and Thatcher were widely criticized for their indifference to blacks, feminists, homosexuals, socialists, and other demographic groups whose identities were said to oppose "traditional moral values." Never was this clearer than during the AIDS epidemic. The AIDS virus killed millions of people during the 1980s, most of them homosexuals. Reagan and Thatcher were attacked for refusing to allocate federal funds for AIDS research. It was pointed out that AIDS disproportionately targeted the demographics that didn't vote conservative (homosexuals, Latinos, and blacks), and it was even implied that Reagan and Thatcher weren't spending money to fight AIDS because their "ideal" people—white heterosexuals—weren't affected by it. Moore takes the Reagan/Thatcher conservatism to its ideological extreme with *Norsefire*: a highly conservative, homophobic, and racist regime that kills all those who stand outside the racial and sexual ideal. One final historical event to which *V for Vendetta* alludes is the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. A group of radical Catholics, including Guy Fawkes, plotted to assassinate James I, the Protestant ruler of England at the time, by blowing up the Houses of Parliament, the center of the English government. On the 5th of November, Fawkes was caught beneath the Houses of Parliament, surrounded by barrels of gunpowder. Although Fawkes was tortured for his act of treason, he committed suicide before English soldiers could execute him. Fawkes's act of violent disobedience has found a welcome place in English tradition: in November, the English launch fireworks and light bonfires in recognition of Fawkes's Gunpowder Plot.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

A full list of the books to which *V* alludes is impossible: there are simply too many of them. Moore has acknowledged his debt

to such important authors of dystopian fiction as George Orwell, author of [1984](#), and Aldous Huxley, author of [Brave New World](#). As in these two novels, England in the future is a highly repressive society, in which people are constantly being watched by an all-powerful government. Another major influence on *V for Vendetta* was [The Count of Monte Cristo](#), in which the innocent Edmund Dantes escapes from prison and seeks revenge on the people who sent him there. Moore has also acknowledged his debt to the comics of William S. Burroughs, a writer best known for the groundbreaking experimental novel *Naked Lunch*. Burroughs was an early practitioner of the “cut-up technique,” in which one group of words cuts jarringly, and sometimes comically, into another. Moore embraces the cut-up technique here (and in [Watchmen](#), in which a character specifically alludes to Burroughs’s technique) by cutting back and forth between multiple storylines, so that the characters’ speeches often parallel each other in amusing ways. Other works of literature to which *V for Vendetta* explicitly alludes include the poem “Jerusalem” by William Blake, [Macbeth](#) by William Shakespeare, and *V* by Thomas Pynchon.

## KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *V for Vendetta*
- **Where Written:** London, United Kingdom
- **When Published:** September 1988-May 1989.
- **Literary Period:** Postmodern Graphic Novel, Cold War Science Fiction
- **Genre:** Postmodern Graphic Novel, Dystopian Science Fiction
- **Setting:** (A dystopian vision of) London, England, 1997-1998
- **Climax:** Evey Hammond’s decision to become V
- **Antagonist:** Adam Susan, the Leader / Peter Creedy / Helen Heyer
- **Point of View:** *V for Vendetta* is a comic book or graphic novel, meaning that the usual distinctions between first, second, and third person don’t exactly apply to it. At times the captions voice the characters’ inner thoughts (i.e., first person), while the corresponding panels show scenes the characters don’t have access to (i.e., third person omniscient). Elsewhere, the captions establish the date and time of the action (third person omniscient), while the panels show events from a particular character’s point of the view (first person). In this way, Moore blurs the line between the third and first person.

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Hollywood? No Thanks:** Alan Moore comic books have been adapted as Hollywood films on many occasions: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, [Watchmen](#), *From Hell*, and, in 2006, *V for Vendetta*. While Moore was paid for selling the film rights to

all of these comic books, he has distanced himself from every film based on his work. Of the cinematic adaptation of *V for Vendetta*, he said, “It’s a thwarted and frustrated and largely impotent American liberal fantasy of someone with American liberal values standing up against a state run by neoconservatives—which is not what the comic *V for Vendetta* was about.”

**Viva la revolution:** *V for Vendetta* has had a major influence on radicals and revolutionaries across the world, and the Guy Fawkes mask in particular has become a symbol of resistance. During the Occupy Wall Street movement of the late 2000s, thousand of protesters wore Guy Fawkes masks as they protested the American financial system. In Egypt and other parts of the Middle East in 2011, demonstrators wore Guy Fawkes masks as they marched against their governments. *V* would be proud.



## PLOT SUMMARY

It is November 5, 1997, and England is run by a tyrannical regime called Norsefire. The head of the government is Adam Susan, known as the Leader. The Leader resides at the **Head** (government offices) and rules England with an iron fist, making use of his government’s institutions: the **Finger** (law enforcement), the **Nose** (counter-terrorism), the **Ear** (phone surveillance), the **Eye** (video surveillance), and Jordan Tower (propaganda). The Leader controls England using an advanced computer called Fate.

A sixteen-year-old girl, Evey Hammond, goes out into the night to begin her career as a prostitute. She’s apprehended by a group of Fingermen—police officers—and arrested. The Fingermen say that they’re going to rape and then kill her. Before they can touch her, however, a cloaked figure wearing a **Guy Fawkes mask** attacks the men and rescues Evey. The figure takes Evey to a roof, and points out the Houses of Parliament. Parliament then explodes, and the figure acknowledges that it was he who blew it up.

In the aftermath of the explosion, the Leader speaks with the leaders of each branch of Norsefire: Eric Finch (the Nose), Derek Almond (the Finger), Brian Etheridge (Ear), and Conrad Heyer (Eye). The Leader demands that Finch track down the terrorist responsible for the bombing and kill him. At Jordan Tower, Lewis Prothero prepares to broadcast information. His programmer, Roger Dascombe, explains to Derek Almond that Prothero is the “Voice of Fate.” Prothero reads information gathered and predicted by the Fate Computer.

The “terrorist” blindfolds Evey and takes her to his home, the mysterious “Shadow Gallery.” There, he introduces himself as V, and shows Evey his home, full of books, music, and art, all of which the Norsefire government has banned for being

“subversive.” V asks Evey to tell him about herself. She explains that there was a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union, resulting in the destruction of most of the world. In the following years, the brutal Norsefire regime rose to power. It rounded up blacks, homosexuals, and radicals, and sent them to camps to die. Evey’s mother died when Evey was young, and Evey’s father was taken to a camp afterwards.

The next day, V kidnaps Prothero. In the Shadow Gallery, V reminds Prothero of his past: Prothero used to be a sadistic guard at the Larkhill Prison, a place that was in actuality a concentration camp. V tells Prothero that V was “the man in Room V,” an admission which terrifies Prothero. V then burns Prothero’s prized doll collection, an act that leaves Prothero insane. A new broadcaster takes over as the Voice of Fate, but England begins to lose its trust in the media.

The Leader thinks about his relationship with the English people. He admits to being a fascist, and dismisses all talk of liberty and rights. His only love, he thinks privately, is the Fate Computer itself. Shortly afterwards, V goes to the Old Bailey (a famous London landmark) and has a conversation with the **statue of Lady Justice** outside. He accuses Lady Justice of betraying him. Afterwards, he blows up the Old Bailey.

Evey, still at the Shadow Gallery, tells V that she wants to help him to thank him for saving her life. V dresses Evey as a prostitute and sends him to his next victim: Bishop Anthony Lilliman. Lilliman regularly has sex with child prostitutes—a fact which many government officials are aware of, and condone. Alone with Evey, Lilliman attempts to seduce her. Evey opens the window, and V jumps inside. He forces Lilliman to take Holy Communion—Lilliman, terrified, does so, only to learn that the communion wafer is laced with cyanide. Evey is upset by V’s actions, and protests that killing is immoral. Meanwhile, investigating Lilliman’s murder, Finch discovers that Lilliman was a chaplain at Larkhill Prison, and worked alongside Prothero.

V accomplishes his next murder alone. He goes to the house of Delia Surridge, an aging doctor who is secretly in a relationship with Eric Finch. Delia worked at Larkhill Prison as a researcher. One prisoner, she remembers, was held in Room V. He became super-strong, and underwent a mental transformation as a result of the drugs she gave him. The prisoner used fertilizers to escape from Larkhill. One night, Delia wakes up and finds V standing over her. Delia explains that she regrets her involvement in Larkhill—V nods, and says he’s killed in her sleep, with a painless injection. Derek Almond, detecting trouble at Delia’s home, goes to investigate. There, V kills him easily. Finch, investigating the killings, finds Delia’s diary, including descriptions of a “Man from Room V.” He realizes that V has been killing off Larkhill workers for the last four years.

Evey continues to live with V in the Shadow Gallery. She tries to kiss him one night, and V suggests that she thinks he’s her father. Evey is shocked, but she realizes that V is right. V leads

Evey, blindfolded, away from the Shadow Gallery, and slips away from her—Eve is now completely alone in London.

Meanwhile, Rosemary Almond, Derek Almond’s widow, is denied a pension by the government. Impoverished, she’s forced to turn to men like Roger Dascombe for help, even though they only seem to be interested in having sex with her.

V hijacks Jordan Tower and broadcasts a message in which he urges the people of London to rise up against their tyrannical leaders and be their own masters. In the aftermath of the incident, Mr. Finch quarrels with the new head of the Finger, Peter Creedy, who mocks Finch for loving Delia Surridge. The Leader sends Finch on a short vacation to clear his head.

Meanwhile, Evey has begun living with a middle-aged gangster named Gordon. Evey seems to be attracted to Gordon. They spend time at the Kitty Kat Hiller Club, which is also frequented by Rosemary Almond, who eventually is forced to work as a showgirl. Gordon feuds with the gangster Alistair Harper. One day, Harper kills Gordon by stabbing him with a sword, and Evey vows revenge on Harper. One night, she waits outside the Kitty Kat Killer club and prepares to shoot Harper. Before she can, however, she is knocked out and dragged to a prison.

When Evey wakes up, she finds herself in a mysterious cell. A guard drags her to a room, where she’s tortured and ordered to give up information about V. Evey refuses. In her cell, she finds a **letter** written by a woman named Valerie. Valerie, Evey reads, was an actress who was arrested by the Norsefire government for being gay. Valerie is imprisoned at Larkhill Prison, but she never gives up her integrity or her dignity. Valerie’s message inspires Evey to withstand her own torture.

One day, after many weeks of torture, the guard takes Evey to a shadowy room, where a figure tells her to sign a statement saying that V kidnapped her, or else she’ll be shot. Evey bravely refuses to sign the statement. Afterwards, she realizes that she’s been held in a “fake” prison. The guard is a plastic dummy, and the shadowy figure is a dummy with a tape recorder imbedded in its head. Evey walks out of her prison, and finds that she’s been in the Shadow Gallery the entire time: V has been the one torturing her day after day. Evey is furious with V for torturing her. V explains, very calmly, that he did so to free Evey from the prison of her own happiness, and show her the power of courage and integrity. Evey is at first furious with V, but eventually she screams into the rain, and seems to embrace her new identity. She kisses V’s mask and thanks him for setting her free.

The Leader begins to lose his mind when he sees a message on the Fate Computer that says, “I love you.” The strength of the Norsefire regime is further compromised when V blows up the Ear and Eye headquarters. V makes a broadcast on his own broadcasting network in which he tells the people of London to “do as they please.” As a result of V’s actions, riots break out

throughout England. In the Shadow Gallery, V offers to kill Alistair Harper on behalf of Evey, but Evey insists that V do no such thing.

In the days following V's bombings, Rosemary Almond buys a gun from Alistair Harper. Peter Creedy, recognizing that the Leader is becoming weak and unstable, pays Harper to organize a private army, which Creedy will shortly use to overthrow the Leader. At the same time, Helen Heyer, an ambitious, cold-hearted woman, plans to use Harper to overthrow Creedy and install her husband, Conrad Heyer, as the new Leader of England.

Meanwhile, V reveals to Evey that he has had access to the Fate Computer for the past four years, and he was the one responsible for the "I love you" message that drove the Leader insane. V shows Evey other parts of the Shadow Gallery, including his collection of explosives, and a subway train that connects to the tracks of the London underground.

Eric Finch has been on vacation for some time now—his loyal number two, Dominic Stone, is now the head of the Nose. While Finch is away, he decides to take LSD in order to think as V thinks. He goes to Larkhill Prison and has an acid trip. At the end of his trip, he is reborn with a new, intuitive mind. He walks away from Larkhill, back to London. On his way, he sees the Victoria train station, and realizes that it's V's lair. He goes into the station and finds V. In the ensuing fight, Finch shoots V.

In order to restore confidence in the government, the Leader goes out in public to make a speech. While he's in public, Rosemary Almond kills him in vengeance of his indifference to her pain. At the hospital, Finch appears and tells the remaining government officials—including Conrad and Helen Heyer—that he shot V.

V, still alive but bleeding heavily, crawls back to the Shadow Gallery, where Evey is waiting. V explains to Evey that she must never remove his mask, even after he dies. He also tells her that there is a block in the subway lines, and begs Evey to give him a "Viking funeral." Evey is enormously moved by V's death, and puzzled by his requests. She contemplates removing V's mask. Eventually, she realizes that she must not diminish V by reducing him to "one man." She leaves V's mask on, recognizing that V is more powerful as a symbol than as a man. She decides to take V's place as an anarchist revolutionary.

In the aftermath of the Leader's assassination, Peter Creedy takes over Norsefire. He announces that if V doesn't appear that night, he should be presumed dead. Harper betrays Creedy and slits his throat, saying that he's had a "better offer" from Helen Heyer. Before his death, V had arranged for Conrad Heyer to be sent a video of Helen Heyer having sex with Harper. Conrad is infuriated: he attacks Harper, and in the ensuing fight, both men are mortally wounded. Helen Heyer returns to her home to the sight of her own husband bleeding to death. Disgusted, she leaves him to die.

Massive riots break out throughout London. On the night of November 9, "V" (in actuality, Evey, wearing a cloak and Guy Fawkes mask) appears before a huge crowd. V explains that she is immortal, and will use her boundless power to blow up the Norsefire government's headquarters at Downing Street. Following this speech, "V" sends the subway car, filled with both explosives and V's dead body, toward St. James, realizing that V was giving her directions for how to blow up Downing Street.

Evey as "V" then saves Dominic from the riots in London, and takes him to the Shadow Gallery. When Dominic wakes up, he finds a cloaked figure wearing a Guy Fawkes mask standing over him. The cycle of apprenticeship has continued, with Evey as the teacher instead of the student.

It is unclear what will become of England, now that there is no government to lead it. Outside London, Eric Finch walks by himself, calmly smoking a pipe.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**V** – V is by far the most notable character in *V for Vendetta*: he has the greatest amount of dialogue, he is the subject of the most attention from the other characters, his name is in the title, etc. Yet in spite of all this, V is also the most ambiguous character in the graphic novel. We don't know how old V is, we don't know who his family was, we don't know his sexual orientation, we don't know what his face looks like (he wears a **Guy Fawkes mask** at all times), and we don't even know to a certainty if he's a man or a woman (for the purposes of this summary, we'll consider him a man). Based on the evidence we're presented with, it seems that V was a "subversive" who was arrested during the early days of the Norsefire regime and sent to a concentration camp. There, he was injected with drugs and hormones that made him smarter, made him stronger, and made him forget his own past. Since breaking out of his prison, V has used terrorism to oppose the Norsefire regime, killing his former jailers and orchestrating an elaborate assault on its institutions. V is an anarchist who believes that violence and destruction are necessary in order to establish a new world order in which people consent to live with each other in peace, rather than submitting to the tyranny of a government.

**Evey Hammond** – Evey Hammond is 16 years old at the beginning of *V for Vendetta*, when she's saved by V and taken to his underground lair to be his student and assistant. Initially, Evey finds V charming, and is highly grateful to him for saving her life. She assists him with some of his plans to attack the Norsefire government, but backs off when she realizes that V murders people in order to further his plans. Evey undergoes an enormous change when V, pretending to be a government agent, kidnaps and tortures her. Inspired by the example of



Valerie, Evey learns to be strong and protect her integrity. Ultimately, she comes to embrace V's aims of dismantling the Norsefire government, though she continues to refrain from killing people to do so. (Even when she blows up Downing Street, she makes it clear what she's doing well in advance.) In a sense, Evey becomes less of a character as *V for Vendetta* goes on, and more of a symbol. In the final chapters, she's embraced V's ideology, as well as his **Guy Fawkes mask**, cloak, and hat, and seems to have found a student of her own. It's suggested that she'll continue to oppose government and tyranny, just as V has done before her.

**Mr. Conrad Heyer** – The head of the **Eye**, the Norsefire institution charged with video monitoring all citizens of London, Conrad Heyer is a weak-willed, ineffectual man. He spends long hours watching Londoners in their homes, and is, as his wife, Helen Heyer puts it, London's highest-paid "peeping Tom." When it becomes clear that the government of England is slowly falling apart, Helen Heyer engineers a plan for Conrad to become the new Leader. Conrad seems to support this plan, but does nothing himself to enact it. He's a curiously blank character—his one defining characteristic, as Helen notes, is that he likes to watch. In a gruesomely appropriate twist of fate, he dies of a neck wound while watching his own death on a television screen.

**The Leader / Adam Susan** – Adam Susan, usually known by his title, the Leader, is the dictator of England. His Norsefire regime ascended to power following a brutal, mysterious war that destroyed much of the planet. As Leader, Susan immediately began a series of programs whose goals were to "purify" the people of England, rounding up and murdering all homosexuals, Jews, blacks, Leftists, and Pakistanis. He used the specter of war to justify his harsh measures. As he settled into his role as the Leader, Susan became immensely lonely, recognizing that he was hated and feared by his subjects. Susan then turned to the Fate Computer, the advanced computer system that Norsefire used to survey London and predict crime and the weather. His love for Fate says a great deal about his character: he's an egomaniac and a misanthrope who believes only in the existence of himself and of "God"—which he believes to be the Fate Computer itself. Susan despises all "talk of freedom," another reason why he worships the cold determinism of Fate. In the end, Susan's love for Fate—cleverly manipulated by V—drives him insane, and he's assassinated shortly afterwards.

**Mr. Derek Almond** – Derek Almond is the head of the **Finger**, Norsefire's law enforcement institution. He's a cruel, cold man, though an undeniably effective law enforcement officer. At several points, he's shown to mistreat his wife, Rosemary Almond, at one point slapping her in the face and making her weep. Ironically, Almond's sadistic treatment of his wife is his undoing: he scares her with an unloaded gun, and then forgets to load it before his confrontation with V. Almond's death

triggers a series of events that culminates in his wife assassinating the Leader.

**Mr. Eric Finch** – Eric Finch is a talented, thoughtful detective, and one of the most important figures at the **Nose** (the Norsefire institution that investigates terrorism and other major crimes). Finch is unlike the majority of his colleagues, insofar as he dislikes the repressiveness and brutality of the Leader's regime, and voices his dislike to the Leader himself. Finch's willingness to admit his disapproval is a mark of his bravery, as well as his immense competence—the Leader notes that he'd have no qualms about having Finch executed, were it not for Finch's years of loyal service to the Nose. During the course of the graphic novel, Finch becomes increasingly obsessed with tracking down V. He recognizes that V isn't an "ordinary man"—he's not concerned with monetary gain or any other practical end. After the death of his lover, Delia Surridge, Finch takes LSD and experiences a mental transformation that allows him to think like V. Though Finch eventually tracks down V and kills him, he comes to realize that V was right to oppose the Norsefire regime. As the novel concludes, Finch has vowed to never accept orders from a tyrant again, and to be his own master.

**Roger Dascombe** – An important agent of the Norsefire government's broadcasting system, Roger Dascombe is one of the more ambiguous secondary characters in *V for Vendetta*. His talents for broadcasting and propaganda are so immense that the people of London go years without realizing that the Fate Computer has no actual voice—the true "Voice of Fate" is a human being, Lewis Prothero. Dascombe seems more aware of his government's contradictions and hypocrisies, even if he only dares to speak of these hypocrisies in coded language. For instance, Dascombe mentions that Prothero is "sensitive" for collecting dolls—an obvious euphemism for queer or homosexual—and then calls the Leader "sensitive," too. Dascombe's awareness of the sexual hypocrisy in his society—in other words, of secret homoeroticism in an intensely homophobic society—suggests that he may be gay himself. Later, however, he seems to proposition Rosemary Almond, though we never see the end results of his proposition. In the end, Dascombe's sexuality, as well as his true feelings about Norsefire, remain a mystery—he seems to be another bureaucrat, withholding his personal feelings to perform his job.

**Dominic Stone** – The loyal assistant of Eric Finch, Dominic Stone is a talented detective for the **Nose** who plays an invaluable role in tracking down V. Like Finch, Dominic seems to have misgivings about the morality of the Norsefire regime, though he's less willing to discuss them than Finch is. After Finch leaves his post, Dominic rises to head the Nose, where he tries, with little success, to track down V. At the end of the novel, Eric Finch advises Dominic to "be his own leader," but it's not clear how Dominic will interpret this advice, or if he'll obey

it at all.

**Lewis Prothero** – The “Voice of Fate,” Lewis Prothero performs a crucial service for the Norsefire government. Every night, he reads the information printed by the Fate Computer, so that his voice is broadcast over every television and radio in England. Thanks to clever propaganda, the people of England don’t realize that Prothero exists: they believe that Prothero’s voice—supposedly a “magnificent” voice—is the voice of the computer itself. Beneath the magnificence of his voice, Prothero is a foolish and cruel man, who once worked as a guard at Larkhill Prison, the concentration camp where V was imprisoned, and seemed to have no qualms about murdering innocent people there. Prothero is known to have a vast, impressive collection of dolls—a fact that makes Roger Dascombe consider him highly “sensitive” (seemingly a euphemism for homosexual, though this is never explored). In the end, Prothero’s fondness for dolls signals the manner of his undoing: V burns his dolls, thereby driving him insane.

**Helen Heyer** – Helen Heyer is the strong, intelligent, and manipulative wife of Conrad Heyer. In the latter half of *V for Vendetta*, she masterminds an elaborate plan to depose the Leader of England, Adam Susan, and murder his likely successor, Peter Creedy, leaving her husband the unquestioned Leader of the country. It’s amusing that Helen works so hard to put her own husband (a weak, foolish man) in power—one would think that she’d prefer to be the Leader herself. This suggests the extreme sexism of English society under Norsefire: no woman would ever be allowed to lead the country. In the end, Helen’s sexual liaisons with Alistair Harper backfire—V shows video footage of her adultery to Conrad Heyer, Conrad takes revenge on Harper, and Helen’s plans for a coup crumble apart overnight.

**Rosemary Almond** – As *V for Vendetta* begins, Rosemary Almond is the quiet, timid wife of Derek Almond. When V murders her husband, Rosemary is denied a pension from the government, and risks falling into poverty. Desperate to survive, she’s forced to use her beauty and her sexuality—first turning to Roger Dascombe (who may or may not be propositioning her sexually) and then working as a showgirl in the Kitty Kat Killer Club. In the end, Rosemary turns on the Leader, the man responsible for denying her a pension, for revenge.

**Delia Surridge** – Delia Surridge is a middle-aged doctor who worked at Larkhill Prison years before *V for Vendetta* begins. She is a talented doctor, who researched drugs that could alter the human mind and body, and gave them to patients at Larkhill, confident that their agony and death would be for the greater good of her research. In the years following her experiences at Larkhill, Delia comes to realize that her experiments were barbaric. Because V recognizes that Delia shows remorse for her actions, he kills her with a painless drug. Delia’s death is a turning point in the novel because it causes Eric Finch, her

lover, to reconsider his place in the Norsefire government, and visit Larkhill Prison himself.

**Bishop Anthony Lilliman** – Bishop Anthony Lilliman is a hypocritical, highly corrupt clergyman who once served as a chaplain at Larkhill Prison. Since this time, Lilliman has ascended to be the Bishop of Westminster, where he delivers sermons that betray a racist, bloodthirsty mindset. It’s revealed that Lilliman, in addition to his bigotry and cruelty, is guilty of pedophilia. He regularly sends for child prostitutes—a fact that’s well known among government officials, and apparently condoned. As with V’s other victims, Bishop Lilliman’s fate is gruesomely appropriate: Evey pretends to be a prostitute and lets V into Lilliman’s house, where he kills Lilliman with a cyanide-laced wafer.

**Peter Creedy** – Peter Creedy is the successor of Derek Almond at the **Finger**, the law enforcement branch of the Norsefire government. Creedy is a cruel, bullying man, indifferent to the suffering of others. When it becomes clear that the Leader’s mind is deteriorating, Peter Creedy begins assembling a private army, using Alistair Harper’s help. Creedy seems to be planning to assemble a force large enough to stage a military coup and make himself the new Leader of England. Creedy’s plan backfires when Harper, who’s made a deal with Helen Heyer, betrays him to his death.

**Valerie** – Valerie is a lesbian actress whose life story inspires both V and Evey to oppose the Norsefire government. Valerie endured mockery and homophobia as a young woman before moving to London and becoming a successful actress. After the rise of the repressive, homophobic Norsefire government, Valerie was betrayed by her lover, Ruth, and sent to Larkhill Prison. There, she refused to sacrifice her dignity to her jailers, instead writing a long letter on a piece of toilet paper. It’s suggested that both V—who occupies Valerie’s cell after she dies—and Evey—who read’s Valerie’s letter when she’s enduring her own torture and imprisonment—take Valerie’s message to heart: they both maintain their dignity and integrity, bravely refusing to inform on their friends.

**Gordon** – A middle-aged London gangster and smuggler who takes in Evey Hammond after V abandons her. Gordon is kind and gentle with Evey, though his gentleness carries with it an aggressive, sexual undertone—eventually, he begins sleeping with Evey. Evey seems attracted to Gordon, though we see that her attraction stems largely from her conflicted feelings about her father.

**Alistair “Ally” Harper** – Alistair Harper is a young, ambitious London gangster who plays a major role in three separate storylines of *V for Vendetta*. First, he is responsible for murdering Gordon, thereby triggering Evey’s attempt at revenge, and thus her imprisonment. Second, Harper is responsible for selling Rosemary Almond the gun that she uses to assassinate the Leader. Finally, Harper joins forces with

Helen Heyer and plots to stage a military coup that will leave Helen's husband, Conrad Heyer, the new Leader of England. Harper seems totally amoral, and has no qualms about betraying his friends and allies.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Ruth** – Valerie's lesbian lover, and a fellow actress. When Ruth is arrested by Norsefire agents who disapprove of her sexuality, she's tortured, and ultimately informs on Valerie. Ruth feels so guilty about her betrayal that she kills herself immediately afterwards.

**Mr. Brian Etheridge** – The head of the **Ear**, murdered by V in an explosion.

**Dennis** – Bishop Anthony Lilliman's assistant, who knows about Lilliman's pedophilia and adultery, and seems to approve of it.

**Mr. Bishop** – A witness to V's kidnapping of Lewis Prothero.

**Robert** – A gangster friend of Gordon, who tries and fails to save his aging mother from the gas chambers, to which the elderly are sent under the Leader's regime.

**Rita Boyd** – A lesbian who is sent to Larkhill Camp where is experimented on, and who ultimately dies.

succinctly, "We shouldn't have to live like this." But if Evey objects to Norsefire's tyranny, how *does* she want to live? What would a "free" society, as understood by Evey and V, look like?

While it's impossible to answer this question in just a few sentences, one relevant distinction that Moore makes is the distinction between "freedom to ..." and "freedom from..." The "freedom to ..." model suggests that freedom is, simply put, a matter of doing whatever one wants—living in the land of "do-as-you-please," as V puts it. The "freedom from..." model suggests that freedom isn't just a matter of doing what you want—freedom also involves freeing *oneself* from ignorance, weakness, etc. This requires education, discipline, and hard work.

Over the course of *V for Vendetta*, it becomes increasingly clear that Moore favors the "freedom from..." model of freedom. It's not enough to simply release people from their servitude to a government—this becomes apparent when V shuts down government institutions for three days, and enormous, bloody riots break out throughout England. True freedom, V maintains, takes hard work. (To quote an old tautology, freedom is not free.) People need to free themselves from the prisons of their governments, but also the prisons of their own minds. This helps to explain why V is constantly reading, studying, and learning. More disconcertingly, it helps us understand why V kidnaps Evey and tortures her for weeks. V wants to "free" Evey from the weakness of her own desire for happiness—"happiness," as he later says, "is the most insidious prison of all."

At the end of *V for Vendetta*, London is still in a state of chaos. Moore has suggested that true freedom requires education and training—otherwise freedom is nothing but violence and chaos. This raises all sorts of questions: Does this mean that freedom involves a teacher, a kind of authority figure? What form would a truly free society take? Do people need guidance to achieve true freedom, or can they figure it out for themselves? Wisely, Moore doesn't try to answer all of these questions—instead he leaves us, as readers, "free" to make up our own minds.



## BIGOTRY

One of the most immediately noticeable characteristics of the society in *V for Vendetta* is its profound bigotry. Like most Fascist societies, England under the Norsefire government celebrates the achievements of one racial group—here, Caucasians—and attacks members of nearly all other races, sending many of them to die in concentration camps and eradicating their cultural achievements. Norsefire society also directs its bigotry towards women—all the prominent authorities in the government are men, while women are shown to have few career opportunities besides prostitution and chorus line



## 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.



## FREEDOM AND ANARCHY

The central theme of *V for Vendetta* is freedom and its relationship with anarchy, or the absence of government. V describes himself as an anarchist (as does Alan Moore, the author) — one who believes that all governmental authority is corrupt because it infringes on human freedom. V's actions, and thus, the plot of the graphic novel, reflect his commitment to freedom.

It's clear from the start that the fictional Norsefire government of England in *V for Vendetta* is guilty of restricting human freedom. We see some of the ways Norsefire does this: forbidding people from reading what they want to read, throwing people in jail simply because of their sexual orientation or skin color, and sending the elderly to gas chambers to die. It's no coincidence that the radio broadcasting system used by Norsefire is called the "Voice of Fate"—Fate is, after all, the opposite of freedom.

Evey Hammond and V, the two main characters of *V for Vendetta*, despise the Norsefire government—as Evey puts it

dancing.

Moore is insightful about how the ways racism and sexism are crucial components of Fascist society. As Evey points out (and the Leader later verifies), England became strong once again following nuclear war because it successfully united its people around hatred of a common enemy: all those who were not heterosexual Caucasians. Norsefire culture—its literature, its music, its art, even its religion—is founded on racial pride. Bigotry, then, is a useful political tool, which the Leader uses to keep his followers together, and to keep them loyal.

Yet Moore also shows that bigotry, in addition to being immoral, is ultimately destructive for Norsefire society. By excluding women, gays, and minorities from leadership of England, Norsefire stunts its own “talent pool.” We see this most clearly in the character of Helen Heyer—a brilliant, ruthless woman whose ambition matches that of the Leader. Instead of conspiring to control the Norsefire government herself, Helen is forced to search for ways to install her husband, the inept, foolish Conrad Heyer, in a position of power. Helen knows full well that, as a woman, she could never work in the government—she’ll always have to remain in the shadows. In the end, Helen’s plans to control Norsefire fail, because the two men with whom she’s plotting, Alistair Harper and Conrad Heyer, kill each other. In spite of her vast intelligence and influence, Helen is left utterly powerless—a victim of the bigoted society she seeks to control.

The narrow, self-defeating bigotry of Norsefire society contrasts sharply with V’s lifestyle and worldview. V immerses himself in the knowledge and art of every culture, including many that Norsefire tried to wipe out. V’s worldview is clearly informed by his self-education: he quotes from the works of hundreds of writers whom other Norsefire citizens have never heard of. Furthermore, V doesn’t condescend to Evey simply because she’s a woman. In contrast to Helen Heyer, Evey ascends to a position of direct power and influence, helped along by V’s careful guidance.

In short, bigotry may be important for building a sense of unity in a Fascist society, but in the end, it’s always self-destructive. Indeed, V and Evey’s rejection of all bigotry plays a major role in their victory over Norsefire: they defeat their enemies by cooperating, first as master and apprentice, but then as equals.



## THE POWER OF SYMBOLS

From the first chapter of *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore shows us the enormous power that symbols have over a society. V, the protagonist of the graphic novel, wears a **Guy Fawkes mask**, and draws “V” symbols almost wherever he goes. After saving Evey Hammond from a group of murderers, V takes her to watch as he blows up the Houses of Parliament, a centuries-old symbol of the strength and power of the English government. In a sense, *V for Vendetta*

is about a fight between two sets of symbols: the austere, Fascist symbols of the Norsefire government, and the anarchic, more anonymous symbols of V. It’s worth understanding what the stakes of this conflict are.

To begin with, Moore makes it clear that symbols are highly powerful weapons—indeed, the Norsefire government rules England by cleverly manipulating symbols. One important symbol in the Norsefire regime is the **Voice of Fate**. Every evening, Lewis Prothero reads news determined by the Fate Computer. His voice is so impressive, and its presence so pervasive, that people think the voice is literally that of the Fate Computer. The Voice of Fate comes to symbolize the strength and omnipresence of the Norsefire government.

One reason that symbols like the Voice of Fate are so powerful is that they’re superhuman. As V explains, a single human being can express his views however he likes, but he’ll always be limited by his humanity: the everyday-ness of his face, the inevitability of his death, etc. A symbol, in contrast, isn’t directly tied to one human being. In the case of the Voice of Fate, for instance, the Norsefire government actively tries to ensure that people don’t realize that the voice *is*, in fact, tied to one human being. The less “human” a symbol is, the more mysterious and powerful it becomes.

In order to undermine the Norsefire government, V attacks its symbols—either replacing them with his own, or using them against their creators. After blowing up Parliament, V kidnaps Prothero and drives him insane, leaving the Voice of Fate frail, tremulous, and conspicuously *human*. People begin to realize that the Voice of Fate—and thus the Norsefire government—is only human, and thus flawed. V’s own symbols become increasingly popular: we see children and others copying his “V” symbol in graffiti-form. The beauty of the “V” symbol, like the power of V’s Guy Fawkes mask, lies in its anonymity. Anyone can carve a “V” onto a wall, meaning that every citizen of England is a potential threat to the authority of the Norsefire government. V uses symbols—simple, reproducible, and anonymous—to build up his cause’s power and influence and, implicitly, to undermine the power and influence of the government.

At the end of *V for Vendetta*, we’re given a particularly clear illustration of the superhuman power of symbols. Eric Finch shoots V, killing him, but before he dies, V whispers, “You can’t kill an idea. Ideas are bulletproof.” The same might as well be said for symbols: although V dies, he passes on his home, his education, and, crucially, his set of symbols—the mask, the cloak, the “V”—to his loyal student, Evey Hammond. Evey, now wearing V’s old mask, introduces herself to London as V. By himself, V—and, for that matter, Evey—is only human. Yet V’s symbols are indestructible: passed from one person to the next, they take on a life of their own. In all, *V for Vendetta* has been a battle between two sets of symbols: Norsefire’s and V’s. In the end, the more anonymous, reproducible set of symbols wins.





## VENDETTAS, REVENGE, AND THE PERSONAL

Webster’s Dictionary defines “vendetta” either as “a feud between two families, leading to long-lasting animosity and retaliatory acts of revenge” or as “a series of acts attempting to injure another.” In *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore moves back and forth between these two definitions of the word: one personal and vengeful, the other more vague and abstract in its motives. In essence, Moore leads us to ask, “Is V motivated by revenge, or by a more abstract, philosophical objection to the Norsefire government?”

At times, *V for Vendetta* appears to be the story of V’s personal revenge. Eric Finch and his assistant, Dominic Stone, hypothesize that V’s attacks are motivated by a desire for vengeance. It’s possible, Finch discovers, that V was a patient in Larkhill Camp, where he was starved, tortured, and given dangerous drugs. V could then be trying to “spit back” his pain and suffering on the people who hurt him: Lewis Prothero, his former prison guard, Anthony Lilliman, his hypocritical chaplain, and other. But at the same time, Finch realizes, V could also just be *pretending* to seek revenge: perhaps he wasn’t a patient at Larkhill at all, and is only using this backstory as a smokescreen for a more ambitious, far-reaching assault on the Norsefire government.

By the end of *V for Vendetta*, we still don’t know what motivates V. It’s possible that he was a patient at Larkhill Camp, and wants to avenge his mistreatment—this is the version of events we’re told in Delia Surridge’s diary. It’s also entirely possible that V is an English citizen who has conspired to destroy Norsefire for more moral or philosophical reasons. (Eric Finch brings up the possibility that Delia’s diary was edited or forged by V himself.) Even if Moore doesn’t explain exactly what motivates V, he offers some important clues near the end of his graphic novel about how to interpret revenge and vendetta. After Eric Finch kills V, Evey Hammond wonders whether or not she should remove V’s **mask** and look at his face. In the end, Evey decides to leave V’s individual identity a secret, and instead to celebrate V’s symbolic identity. With this in mind, she takes another copy of V’s mask and wears it as her own, along with V’s usual cloak and hat. In the final chapter of *V for Vendetta*, we see Evey, dressed as V, welcoming a naïve young man to the Shadow Gallery—in essence, playing the same role for this man that V once played for her.

The suggestion in these final chapters is that while V may have been motivated by a personal desire for revenge (but we don’t know who he is, and thus can’t know for certain), his personal motives ultimately don’t matter. Evey chooses to leave V’s mask in place because she recognizes that V’s abstract, universal reasons for attacking Norsefire—his belief in human freedom, anarchy, and dialectical materialism—are more important to her and to V’s followers. After Evey dons V’s mask, we realize

that V himself may have been a former student of the Shadow Gallery, not a prisoner at Larkhill. To *be* V, the graphic novel suggests, is to put aside one’s personal motives altogether and embody the ideals of anarchy.

In the end, Moore’s meditations on revenge and vendetta are crucial to *V for Vendetta* because they define the difference between the graphic novel’s protagonists—Evey Hammond and V—and its antagonists—the government officials of Norsefire, led by the Leader, Adam Susan. While the officials of Norsefire use their power and authority to achieve their own interests and satisfy their selfish desires (lust, ambition, sadism, etc.), Evey and V use their power and training to *deny* their own interests, and indeed, their own personalities. To carry out a vendetta against the government is to set aside oneself and embrace the universal ideal of freedom.



## FATHERHOOD, MENTORSHIP, AND THE STATE

Throughout *V for Vendetta*, Evey struggles with her conflicted feelings for her father—feelings that have enormous ramifications for her relationship with V and with the Norsefire state. Evey’s father, whom she adored, was arrested by the Norsefire government for his socialist leanings when Evey was a child. It’s likely, Evey acknowledges, that her father was then taken to a concentration camp and murdered.

Because Evey lost her father at a young age, she searches desperately for father figures to replace him. One such father figure is Gordon, the middle-aged gangster who takes Evey under his wing. Another important father figure for Evey is V himself—the wise, strong man who saves her life and provides her with shelter. Evey’s father figures make her feel loved and protected, filling the “gap” in her family life. Moore even suggests that Evey has something of an “Electra complex”—a psychological term developed by Freud to describe a woman’s suppressed sexual desire for her own father. Evey sleeps with Gordon and kisses V, and at one point, she dreams about sleeping with V, then Gordon, and finally, her own father.

Because Evey has no father, Moore implies, she turns to volatile father figures who protect her, but also leave her in a state of perpetual immaturity—weak and frightened. Arguably the most important such father figure for Evey is the Norsefire state itself. Moore shows how the Leader’s Fascist government rose to power by appealing to England after the devastations of nuclear war. As *V* suggests, the people of England accepted the Norsefire regime because they craved a stern, fatherly presence in their lives. (The philosopher Hannah Arendt hypothesized that all modern Totalitarian states rose to power by appealing to people’s innate desire for a father figure.) Thus, Evey’s struggle to overcome her Electra complex parallels the English nation’s struggle to overcome its cowardly, childish acceptance of Fascism.

Paradoxically, Evey learns to overcome her desire for a father figure by turning to another father figure: V. V allows Evey to participate in his plots against Norsefire officials, and teaches her about explosives, weaponry, and various other anarchist tactics. At first, these lessons encourage the idea of V as a father figure—and so Evey kisses V’s **mask**. However, after V kidnaps and tortures Evey, Evey comes to hate her teacher. This is exactly what V wants: in the end, Evey accepts that V’s torture served a useful purpose (it made her immune to government coercion), but she also ceases to desire a father figure in her life. Instead, Evey learns to take care of herself, gaining new wisdom and maturity in the process.

Ultimately, V teaches Evey how to live without a “father”—whether it’s a father figure, or a tyrannical Norsefire state. At the end of *V for Vendetta*, Evey has taken on V’s role for herself, wearing his mask and robe and tutoring a young student in V’s home. Evey is no longer the child/student: she’s become the teacher/parent. She has overcome her Electra complex by becoming her own father, and playing the role of a father for another person. It’s no coincidence that Evey’s ascension to V’s role coincides with the destruction of the “**Head**” of the Norsefire regime. She’s finally overcome her desire to be “ruled” by a Fascist state, a father, or a teacher.



## SYMBOLS

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



### GUY FAWKES MASK

Arguably the most important symbol in *V for Vendetta*—and certainly the most recognizable—is the **Guy Fawkes mask** that V wears. In modern society in general, this mask has become a symbol of anarchism, revolution, and civil disobedience—for example, demonstrators in Egypt and at Occupy Wall Street in New York City wore the iconic mask to show their disapproval of the government. (Interestingly, Moore only identifies the mask as a “Guy Fawkes” mask a handful of times.) Within the graphic novel, the mask is a powerful symbol: it communicates the wearer’s allegiance to the spirit of Guy Fawkes—the man who tried and failed to blow up the Houses of Parliament in the 16th century (see Background Info)—and his opposition to the Norsefire government that controls England. One important element of the mask’s power as a symbol is its anonymity: anyone can wear the mask and embody the spirit of rebellion. We see this firsthand in the graphic novel, as in the final chapters, Evey Hammond dons V’s mask and “becomes” V. In the end, then, the Guy Fawkes mask represents symbols at their most powerful: they can transform individual, flawed people into something more powerful and create movements.



### VALERIE’S LETTER

When Evey Hammond is confined to a prison cell and tortured every day, her only comfort is the **letter** she finds in her cell. This letter was written by a woman named Valerie—a lesbian actress who was arrested by the Norsefire government, sent to the Larkhill concentration camp, and killed. Valerie encourages all those who read her letter to maintain their integrity. As she puts it, integrity isn’t more than “an inch,” but as long as humans protect this inch, they are free. Inspired by Valerie’s words, Evey refuses to give in to her torturers. Valerie’s letter symbolizes the power of words themselves—a power so great that the Norsefire government censors literature extensively.



### LADY JUSTICE

At the Old Bailey—a famous London building—there is an old iron statue of **Lady Justice**, the personification of the law. For different characters in *V for Vendetta*, Lady Justice symbolizes different things. To most of the people of London, Lady Justice is exactly what she seems to be: a symbol of justice. To V, however, Lady Justice symbolizes something more tragic. Since the rise of the Norsefire government, the Old Bailey—and the entire legal system—has come under the control of the Leader and his henchmen, who use “justice” to imprison minorities and constantly watch over their own people. For V, then, Lady Justice is a symbol of the *weakness* of justice and the law in England. V hopes to replace the corrupt legalism of Lady Justice with a new, better form of justice, based in anarchy and individual liberty.



### THE HEAD / THE EYE / THE FINGER / THE NOSE / THE EAR

Each of the different institutions of the Norsefire government is named after a different body part: the Head represents the Leader’s offices on Downing Street (the location of the real-life headquarters of the Prime Minister), the Eye represents surveillance, the Finger represents law enforcement, etc. The implication of these names is that the Norsefire government itself is a human body. Interestingly, this way of conceptualizing government isn’t unprecedented in English political thinking. For many hundreds of the years, England itself was personified as a body in political speeches (there are still some echoes of this in the English language today, such as the phrase “the body politic”). In Thomas Hobbes’s political treatise *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that the ideal government should be as whole and well-formed as a human body—and the famous cover of his book shows an enormous king, composed of the bodies of his people. The names of the different branches of the Norsefire government

suggest that big government itself is a character in *V for Vendetta*: a huge, grotesque giant that must be defeated.



### VOICE OF FATE

At the beginning of the graphic novel, the Norsefire regime broadcasts information to its people, making use of the “**Voice of Fate**.” Lewis Prothero, a large man with a splendid, authoritative voice, is tasked with reading information about the country over the radio. Because of Norsefire’s propaganda, the people of England have come to believe that Prothero’s voice isn’t actually that of a man at all—it is, literally, the voice of the computer program that the government uses to keep tabs on its people. This is exactly what the Norsefire government intends: it wants the people of England to treat the Voice of Fate as infallible, a symbol of Norsefire’s boundless power and knowledge. After V kidnaps Prothero and drives him insane, Norsefire is forced to replace Prothero with a new, lackluster voice. Because Norsefire has lost a valuable symbol, the people of England begin to doubt the authority of their government.



### “V” SYMBOL

At many points in the graphic novel, V defaces government posters and buildings by carving a “V” symbol. The symbol is simple: a circle with two diagonal slashes through it, forming the letter “V.” The significance of the “V” is very clear: it represents an act of vandalism against the signs and buildings that Norsefire deems important, and thus an affront to the authority of Norsefire itself. It’s no coincidence that the “V” symbol is nearly identical to the popular “anarchy symbol,” spray-painted onto walls across the world—like its real-life twin, the “V” represents a rebellion against not only Norsefire, but against all big, tyrannical regimes.



### ROSES

Throughout the graphic novel, V kills his enemies and commemorates their deaths by placing **roses** on their dead bodies. It’s implied that V got the idea to plant roses on each of his victims after reading Valerie’s letter, in which she notes that the Norsefire government destroyed her happiness and “took away the roses.” Thus, V’s roses pay homage to Valerie’s memory: he’s “bringing back” roses. Of course, V’s roses are symbols of death and brutality, not happiness, as they were for Valerie. And yet V sees his roses as symbols of gentleness and kindness, as well as violence. He grows the roses, very carefully, in a private garden in his home, tending them as carefully as if they were his own children. This tells us something about V’s acts of terrorism. Like gardening, killing is a form of “creative destruction” for V: he’s taking others’ lives, but he’s also doing so in order to bring justice and

peace to England.





## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vertigo edition of *V for Vendetta* published in 2005.

### Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☛ Remember, remember the fifth of November, the Gunpowder treason and plot. I know of no reason why the Gunpowder treason should ever be forgot.

**Related Characters:** V (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 14

#### Explanation and Analysis

Here V, the masked vigilante who's vowed to topple the Fascist government headed by Adam Susan, recites a poem about the "Gunpowder Treason," the infamous plot by Guy Fawkes to blow up the Houses of Parliament in the 1600s. (See Background Info.) As far as V is concerned, Guy Fawkes is a hero: a fellow vigilante who used his knowledge of explosives to attempt a sweeping revenge plot on a government he believed to be unjust.

The passage tells us a lot about V's twisted, whimsical approach to violence. V is talking about destroying enormous buildings and potentially killing innocent people—a crime belied by the innocent, sing-song nature of his poem. More importantly, V looks to Guy Fawkes for inspiration in his own vigilante acts, as even his mask is fashioned to look like Fawkes. V recognizes the importance of symbols and role models—just as he treats Fawkes as a hero, he hopes to inspire a new generation of anarchists to rise up against Susan and the Fascist party. By completing Fawkes's plot (i.e., blowing up Parliament 500 years later), V sends a powerful symbolic message: revolutionaries always win in the end, even if it takes them 500 years.

### Book 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ They eradicated some cultures more thoroughly than they did others. No Tamla and no Trojan. No Billie Holliday or Black Uhuru. Just his master’s voice every hour on the hour.

**Related Characters:** V (speaker), Lewis Prothero, The Leader / Adam Susan

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 19

### Explanation and Analysis


V has taken Evey back to his secret lair, where he shows her his vast collection of old paintings, sculptures, books, and records. V explains that he's made a point of collecting cultural artifacts that Adam Susan's Norsefire government tried to destroy in previous decades. Susan sought to eliminate all "rival cultures"--anything that could compete with the dogma that the English are the greatest nation and the greatest race on the planet. Consequently, Norsefire destroyed the art and music of great African American artists like Billie Holliday.

V's explanation of Norsefire's crimes is one of the first signs of the extreme, racist nature of England in the future. Frightened for its own survival, English politicians rally their people around the hatred of "foreigners" and "aliens" of any kind--thus, black people, homosexuals, etc. are bullied, imprisoned, and often murdered for their supposed crimes. Susan's methods of control are typical of Fascist governments--like Hitler, he uses hatred and racism to unite his people against a common enemy.

## Book 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☝☝ They got things under control. But then they started taking people away ... all the black people and the Pakistanis. White people, too. All the radicals and the men who, you know, liked other men. The homosexuals. I don't know what they did with them all.

**Related Characters:** Evey Hammond (speaker), V

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 28

### Explanation and Analysis

Evey describes her impressions of England during her childhood--the period when Fascists were first beginning to take over the country. As Evey makes clear, the Fascists began by arresting all "undesirable" people--mostly those who weren't white, heterosexual, and moderate in their thinking. Thus, blacks, homosexuals, Pakistanis, and radicals were arrested.



Evey doesn't know what happened to the undesirables--she doesn't yet understand that they were probably sent to camps and systematically murdered, like the Jews and other

minorities during the Holocaust. Her innocence is obvious--at this early point in the graphic novel, she doesn't fully recognize how evil her own government really is. In general, Evey's attitude is typical of the people of England under Norsefire: she knows that the government arrested a lot of people, and she even seems to know that doing so was wrong--but she turns a blind eye to the real horrors of her government.

## Book 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ I believe in strength. I believe in unity. And if that strength, that unity of purpose demands a unity of thought, word, and deed then so be it. I will not hear talk of freedom. I will not hear talk of individual liberty. They are luxuries. I do not believe in luxuries.

**Related Characters:** The Leader / Adam Susan (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 37

### Explanation and Analysis



Adam Susan, the dictator of the Norsefire Party of England, rehearses a speech in his head. In the speech, Susan rejects the notion of freedom as obsolete and useless. The only goal of government, Susan insists, is order. He sees himself as a strong, stern master--someone who has to "break some eggs" in order to "make an omelette." Of course, Susan is glossing over the barbaric nature of his actions as dictator of England--he believes he was justified in censoring free speech, murdering thousands of "undesirables," and killing his political opponents.


Susan's speech is interesting in that it stresses the futility of luxury, and that he is very straightforward about his Fascist goals. Susan may be evil, but he's not a hypocrite. As we see throughout the graphic novel, Susan lives a lonely, monastic life--he's never shown eating a big feast, relaxing in a beautiful mansion, or enjoying material pleasure of any kind. True enough, Susan doesn't care about enjoying the luxuries of his power--a true tyrant, his only source of pleasure is controlling the English people.

☝☝ Her name is anarchy! And she has taught me more as a mistress than you ever did! She has taught me that justice is meaningless without freedom. She is honest. She makes no promises and breaks none.



**Related Characters:** V (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 41

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, V holds a mock-conversation with the statue of Lady Justice that stands over the Old Bailey, a famous legal building in London. V accuses Lady Justice of serving an evil master--the Fascist government of England. V maintains that he serves a new master--not justice, but anarchy.

V's speech is important because it spells out his political convictions. Where Adam Susan, the dictator of England, believes that "justice" is all about control and domination (hence his decision to shut down free speech, imprison his opponents, etc.), V takes the opposite point of view. He thinks that the purpose of justice is to allow people to be free and happy; thus, the ideal state of society, he believes, is lack of any government whatsoever. ("Anarchy" literally means "without government.")


V's ideas about justice might seem just as counterintuitive and barbaric as Susan's--most people would probably argue that society needs a compromise between order and freedom. But Moore never once tells readers to agree with V--true to form, we're "free" to make up our own minds about how seriously we should take V's commitment to total anarchy.

1970s, a psychologist told a series of volunteers to administer painful shocks to a test subject, supposedly in order to conduct a learning exercise. The vast majority of the volunteers agreed to administer the shocks, even though they knew full-well that they were probably hurting innocent people. In reality, no shocks were ever given--the experiment was designed to study obedience to authority. Surprisingly, Milgram concluded that the vast majority of human beings will commit atrocious crimes, provided that someone who seems like a leader orders them.

Delia is especially disturbed by the Milgram experiment because she herself was an obedient servant of the Norsefire government for many years--she helped experiment on innocent people in concentration camps. Her experiences have lead her to hate herself, and to hate human beings in general. In many ways, V's goal is to rouse the "common man" from his Milgram-esque obedience to authority, inspiring him to question the Fascists who order him to commit human rights abuses.

●● You see, there are two possible motives here. Not one. The first motive is revenge. He escapes from Larkhill and vows to get even with his tormentors. The Parliament bombing and the other stuff is just a smokescreen. The whole exercise was an elaborate, chilling vendetta. That's the explanation that I find the most reassuring, funnily enough. Because that means he's finished now. That means it's over. The second motive is more sinister. Like I said, everyone who could have identified him is now dead. What if he's just been clearing ground? What if he's been planning something else?

**Related Characters:** Mr. Eric Finch (speaker), V, The Leader / Adam Susan

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 85

### Explanation and Analysis



Eric Finch, the head of detective work in the Norsefire government, tries to understand why V, known to be a masked vigilante, is murdering former Norsefire party members who worked at Larkhill Prison (where V himself was probably kept and tortured) years ago. Finch isn't sure if V is killing these people because he's angry with them and wants revenge, or because he's preparing for something else and trying to eliminate people who have valuable information about him--or both.

It's important to note the frightened tone of Finch's quote. He's afraid of and even awed by V's actions, and this is

## Book 1, Chapter 10 Quotes

●● They were ordinary people, and they were prepared to torture a stranger to death, just because they were told to by someone in authority. Some of them said they'd even enjoyed it. I think I enjoyed what I did at the time. People are stupid and evil.

**Related Characters:** Delia Surridge (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 73

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Delia Surridge, a former employee of the Norsefire government, contemplates the infamous Milgram experiment (though she doesn't mention it by name). In the

exactly what V wants: he wants to strike fear and uncertainty into the hearts of his enemies. And yet Finch's questions are valid—we're not any more sure of why V is doing what he's doing than we are. There's a fine line between V's personal vendetta and his broader commitment to ideals like freedom and justice. By wearing a Guy Fawkes mask and concealing his own identity, V can effectively enact *two* vendettas at the same time: he can satisfy his own personal desire for revenge while also fighting for his beliefs.

## Book 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

☝☝ “Perhaps you don't sort of fancy women. But, like, there's nothing wrong with that. Or perhaps...”  
“Or perhaps I'm your father?”

**Related Characters:** V, Evey Hammond (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 96

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, V reveals that he can see through some of Evey's sexual issues—she's attracted to father-figures. Evey's father was arrested for his radical leftist politics when Evey was a small child, so she grew up without his presence.



Though V's statement is metaphorical, it's important to note that Moore never denies the possibility that V could be Evey's *real* father—indeed, we're told that “the man in room five” was tortured so frequently that he's lost all memory of who he used to be. In short, it's entirely possible that V is Evey's father, even if he doesn't remember the truth.

Either way, we should note that Evey consistently wants a father figure, and confuses this desire with her sexual desires. She's young and unsure of her place in the world—therefore, she craves a strong, fatherly authority to tell her what to do. Evey's desire for a father figure parallels England's desire for a strong, authoritative government, like Norsefire. Over the course of the graphic novel, V will liberate England from its desire for a government, and by the same token, he'll free Evey from her desire for a father figure.

## Book 2, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ It's your basic unwillingness to get on within the company. You don't seem to want to face up to real responsibility, or to be your own boss. Lord knows, you've been given plenty of opportunities. We've offered you promotion time and time again, and each time you've turned us down.

**Related Characters:** V (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 114

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, V makes an illegal broadcast to the people of England, in which he takes on the persona of an office boss, having a “performance review” with a fictional employee. V uses the conceit of the office to criticize the people of England for eagerly submitting to the authority of Adam Susan's Fascist government. Although they have the potential to be their own masters—i.e., to survive with a government of any kind, let alone a brutal Fascist government—they chose to elect Susan and his thugs to rule over them. V's implication is that the people of England *choose* to be dominated: like Evey with her father-figure, they *want* someone to boss them around, even though don't need such a person by any stretch of the imagination.

☝☝ I understand that you are unable to get on with your spouse. I hear that you argue. I am told that you shout. Violence has been mentioned.

**Related Characters:** V (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 115

### Explanation and Analysis

V continues to use his broadcast to criticize the English people, adopting the language of an office boss conducting a performance review. Here, he attacks the people for the state of their family lives. There are “reports” of violence and arguing between husbands and wives. Based on what Moore shows us in the graphic novel, V isn't exaggerating: in England, Norsefire promotes an overall culture of cruelty, selfishness, and misogyny. Women are beaten and oppressed by their husbands, the people who are supposed to love them most.

V's critique of "family values" in England is particularly savage since the Norsefire government prides itself on the strength and unity of its culture, centered around the virtues of a family. If the families of England are secretly in a state of chaos, then this points to the basic flaws in Norsefire itself: a culture that pretends to be strong, happy, and perfect is in reality twisted, repressive, and at odds with itself.

☝ We've had a string of embezzlers, frauds, liars and lunatics making a string of catastrophic decisions. This is plain fact. But who elected them?

**Related Characters:** V (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 116

### Explanation and Analysis

V continues his illegal broadcast, addressing the people of England. Here, he makes an important point about the dictators of history, Susan included: although dictators are usually singled out for their evil, brutality, etc., they don't ever gain power alone. As bad as someone like Hitler was, one could argue that the German electorate itself is also to blame for his action--the millions of "normal" people who voluntarily elected Hitler to rule over them, and then obeyed his orders once he was in power. In short, V recognizes that the people of England are partly to blame for their own suffering. In their fear and haste, they chose to elect a brutal Fascist to rule their country--a man whom they knew to be dangerous, but who promised to bring them order and protection.

Although V's speech might sound angry or scolding, it also has a strong undertone of respectful disappointment. V faults the English people for electing Susan, but unlike most, he fully recognizes that the English people have the capacity to be better--to rule themselves. V also recognizes that the people of England are stronger than their own government--they're afraid of Susan, but if they were to rise up together against the government, they'd be unstoppable. V's mission is twofold: on one hand, he aims to weaken the government. But his anti-Norsefire plans would be pointless unless he inspired the people to rebel against Norsefire as well.

## Book 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

☝ We shouldn't have to live like this!

**Related Characters:** Robert (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 129



### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, a young man named Robert tries to protect his elderly grandmother from being sent to a gas chamber, as most old people are in England. Peter Creedy, the man who controls law enforcement, refuses to help Robert's family--angry and frightened, Robert shouts, "We shouldn't have to live like this!"

Robert's exclamation illustrates the basic flaws in Norsefire society. Although on the surface England appears to be a model of unity and discipline, many of the people of England--not just Robert--secretly hate their lives under Adam Susan. Beneath the surface, millions of people like Robert want to rebel against the cruelty of superiors like Creedy. All they need is a role model, like V, to organize and inspire them.

## Book 2, Chapter 9 Quotes

☝ Strength through purity. Purity through faith.

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 148

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote, repeated several times throughout the graphic novel, is the official motto of the Norsefire government.

The Norsefire motto uses a rhetorical device known as *anadiplosis*, the repetition of a word used at the end of a phrase, at the *beginning* of the next phrase. (Here, the repeated word is "purity.") Anadiplosis, a common rhetorical trick in the Bible and in big political speeches, is often used to create a mood of solemnity and solidity--the appropriate tone for the powerful Fascist government of England.

Specifically, the motto references the three "pillars" of English society under Norsefire. "Purity" should suggest the racism of Norsefire: blacks, Pakistanis, and homosexuals are murdered for their supposed imperfections. Strength alludes to the violent, militaristic nature of society--the same violent militarism that led so many minorities to die. Finally, the motto alludes to faith--as we see, England has become a highly religious country. While many in the country worship a Christian church, the true religion of England has become worship for Susan himself: he's


regarded as a god, incapable of any imperfections.

## Book 2, Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ But it was my integrity that was important. Is that so selfish? It sells for so little, but it's all we have left in this place. It is the very last inch of us, but within that inch we are free.

**Related Characters:** Valerie (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 156

### Explanation and Analysis

Halfway through the graphic novel, Evey is arrested and imprisoned. In prison, she's tortured and ordered to sign a confession stating that V kidnapped her and sexually abused her. Although Evey is tempted to lie and sign the statement (effectively clearing herself of any danger), she's inspired to hold out after finding a letter written by a woman named Valerie. In the letter, Valerie talks about being confined to a prison cell and refusing to cooperate with her captors.

Valerie refuses to give in because she doesn't want to sacrifice her integrity and personal freedom. By cooperating with people she despises, Valerie would be sacrificing her principles for the sake of "mere" survival. Even if she did survive prison, Valerie decides, she wouldn't be able to respect herself any more--she'd spend the rest of her life thinking of herself as a frightened animal, more interested in life for life's sake than in freedom, justice, or truth.


Valerie's letter also makes a surprising suggestion: human beings can obtain *freedom* by refusing to cooperate with torturers, even in the moment when they are literally being imprisoned and tortured. As long as a human being has control over her dignity and self-respect, she'll never be completely broken. A torturer could mangle Valerie's body and hurt her horribly, but she would still be a proud, dignified human being, with at least that last "inch" of freedom.

## Book 2, Chapter 12 Quotes

☝☝ “Sign that statement. You could be out inside three years. Perhaps they'd find you a job with the Finger. A lot of your sort get work with the Finger.”  
 “Thank you... but I'd rather die behind the chemical sheds.”  
 “Then there's nothing left to threaten with, is there? You are free.”

**Related Characters:** V, Evey Hammond (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 162

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, a "guard" orders Evey to sign a statement saying that V kidnapped and raped her--in other words, saying that Evey is innocent of all crimes, and V is guilty. By signing, Evey would be condemning V to execution (if the government could catch him) and saving herself.

Inspired by Valerie's letter, Evey makes the difficult decision to refuse to sign the statement. She would be ensuring her own survival, but she'd also be betraying her friend. Evey is effectively saying that she values her dignity--her honesty, her loyalty to V, etc.--more highly than her life.



Surprisingly, the guard who's been torturing Evey then tells her that she is "free." As Evey is about to discover, her imprisonment has been an elaborate test of her strength and integrity, a test that she's passed. Evey has found the elusive "freedom" that Valerie mentioned in her letter. By refusing to sacrifice her principles, Evey has freed herself of all fear of her guards. There is, quite literally, nothing to threaten her with anymore--because she's not afraid for her life anymore, she's "above" all control.

## Book 2, Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ “You say you want to set me free and you put me in a prison.”  
 “You were already in a prison. You've been in a prison all your life.”  
 “Shut up! I don't want to hear it! I wasn't in a prison! I was happy! I was happy until you threw me out.”  
 “Happiness is a prison, Evey. Happiness is the most insidious prison of all.”

**Related Characters:** V, Evey Hammond (speaker)



**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 168

### Explanation and Analysis



In this scene, Evey discovers the truth: V has captured her, imprisoned her, tortured her, and threatened to kill her, with the goal of transforming her into someone who's unafraid of death. Evey is furious that V--someone she'd thought of as a friend--would mistreat her so horribly.

As V tries to explain his actions, he makes some important points about the nature of freedom. In V's view, most human beings believe that they're entitled to a certain measure of happiness--indeed, the highest good is to achieve happiness. The problem with such a philosophy, in V's view, is that it allows people to be manipulated. A happy citizen will readily accept injustice in his society, so long as it doesn't affect him. The people of England are "happy," which is why they look the other way when the Norsefire party murders innocent people. In all, V argues, the only way to make Evey into a moral, mature person is to cure her of her desire for happiness--in essence, her desire for life.

## Book 2, Chapter 14 Quotes

☝☝ "Thank you. Thank you for what you've done to me." "You did it all yourself. I simply provided the backdrop. The drama was all your own."

**Related Characters:** V, Evey Hammond (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 174

### Explanation and Analysis

In this important scene, Evey--who's previously been furious with V for kidnapping and torturing her--thanks V. Evey recognizes that V hurt her into order to make her into a stronger, more confident person. Evey is no longer afraid of death. As a result, she's no longer willing to accept injustice in her society--the government can't threaten and intimidate her into submission. It might be hard for readers to accept that V did the "right" thing by torturing Evey for months. Moore doesn't editorialize--he's said many times that readers are free to disagree with V and Evey.


Whether or not one agrees with V's action, it's important to notice that V has used violence and torture to transform Evey against her will--ironically, he's forced her into freedom. (It's only much later that Evey gives her assent to

the entire process.) The paradoxical nature of V's behavior tells us something about his mission as a whole: V wants to liberate the people of England, whether they want to be liberated or not. To such an end, he'll use explosives, take lives, etc.--everything he does is justified, at least in his own mind, by the "greater good" of anarchy.

☝☝ Uncaring fate? It is said there is no question that can be formulated that you cannot answer. Tell me this, then: Am I loved?

**Related Characters:** The Leader / Adam Susan (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 184

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Adam Susan, the dictator of England, tries to communicate with the Fate Computer, the futuristic device that allows him to predict the weather, the economy, and other important aspects of the world. Susan--a control freak through and through--adores the Fate Computer because its control of reality is absolute: it predicts something, and then the prediction comes true, like clockwork.

Susan's unusual behavior in this scene is an early sign that he--and the government he leads--is cracking. In the past, Susan has seemed comfortable with his role as the dictator of the country. Now, we begin to see the truth: Susan is almost as miserable as the people he leads. (In the graphic novel, he's usually shown in dark, gloomy spaces that convey his sadness and loneliness.) Although Susan controls millions of people, there's not a single person who can love him as an individual. One could even say that Susan chooses to become a dictator because he's incapable of normal human love--his desire for control and power is Susan's approximation of interpersonal love.

In all, the passage makes the provocative that Susan, the "prison guard," is almost as much of a prisoner as his frightened, obedient subjects--he lives a miserable, lonely life.

## Book 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

☝☝ Noise is relative to the silence proceeding it. The more absolute the hush, the more shocking the thunderclap. Our masters have not heard the people's voice for generations, Evey. And it is much, much louder than they care to remember.

**Related Characters:** V (speaker), Evey Hammond

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 194

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, V prepares to plunge England into a state of complete anarchy. V plans to cut the power, turn off surveillance cameras, and dissolve communication networks. For the first time in years, the people of London will be allowed to do whatever they want, without government repercussions of any kind.


As V explains to Evey, the people of England are enormously powerful. In one sense, V's words should be taken as sinister: the people of England, united as a mob, can be as dangerous and frightening as a "thunderclap." V further implies that the leaders of Norsefire ("our masters") have made a grave mistake in underestimating the people--they're far more dangerous than Norsefire has given them credit for.

On the other hand, V's statements imply that the people of England are capable of some positive actions, not *just* mindless violence and destruction. But before we see what any of these "positive actions" look like, Moore invites readers to witness the English people's acts destruction--necessary precursors to an anarchist society.

## Book 3, Chapter 2 Quotes

☝☝ You know, you're quite a successful young man, Conrad. If your success wasn't entirely due to my efforts, I might even fancy you.

**Related Characters:** Helen Heyer (speaker), Mr. Conrad Heyer

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 199

### Explanation and Analysis

As the graphic novel draws to a climax, we're introduced to a new, dangerous character, Helen Heyer. Helen is the wife of Conrad Heyer, an important official in the Norsefire government. Although Conrad has a reputation as a talented young man, Conrad and Helen are both aware that Helen is the "brains of the operation"--Conrad does whatever Helen tells him to do.

The passage reinforces that England under Norsefire is a

sexist, chauvinistic country, in which women are afforded no opportunities for success. (Virtually the only career for women we see in the graphic novel is erotic dancing.) Because Helen is unable to run for office or hold a government job herself, she's forced to manipulate people from behind the scenes. In a general sense, Norsefire shoots itself in the foot: because of its sexism and bigotry, it squanders the talents of its own members, such as Helen Heyer.

## Book 3, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ Because if I'm going to crack this case, and I am, I'm going to have to get right inside his head, to think the way he thinks, and that scares me.

**Related Characters:** Mr. Eric Finch (speaker), V

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 210

### Explanation and Analysis

Eric Finch, the detective tasked with tracking down V, decides that the only way to catch V is to think like V. (This is one of the classic plot tropes of crime and serial killer stories--the detective discovers that he and his quarry eerily similar.) In order to simulate V's state of mind, Finch ingests a large quantity of LSD, a hallucinogenic drug that, he believes, promotes creativity and original thinking.

By taking LSD and thinking like V, Finch isn't just trying to solve his case. Finch is also trying to free himself from the constraints of his own society. Finch is secretly a good man who opposes the tyranny of Norsefire's regime. But just like everyone else, he's too frightened and cynical to attempt to oppose Norsefire, and he goes through life accepting injustice in his society. The fact that Finch subconsciously wants to be like V is a clear sign that he's fed up with being a pawn to Adam Susan and other Norsefire officials--he wants to escape the government's authority by first freeing his mind from fear.

☝☝ I look at this mad pattern, but where are the answers? Who imprisoned me here? Who keeps me here? Who can release me? Who's controlling and constraining my life, except ... me?

**Related Characters:** Mr. Eric Finch (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 215

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Eric Finch--having ingested a large amount of LSD--hallucinates that he's in a prison. He has a sudden, unexpected epiphany that he is his own prisoner. In the exact instant that Finch realizes that he is his own prisoner, the prison vanishes.

The scene is a clear metaphor for the paradoxes of freedom. In Norsefire society, the government wields a huge amount of control over its people. And yet, as V has pointed out before, the people of England have *chosen* to submit to Norsefire. By choosing to elect Susan, abide by his rules, and fear his discipline, the English people are literally condemning *themselves* to a life of fear and uncertainty--they are their own jailers.

But how to free yourself from a jail of your own making? As the passage suggests, Finch frees himself from his own fear and servility in the instant he become *aware* of these things. As strange as it may sound, the people of England--not just Finch--can choose to rise up against Susan at any time, taking control of their own destinies in the process. (In real life, Alan Moore is a vocal proponent of LSD use--he often says that the drug stimulated his greatest creative leaps and personal epiphanies.)

## Book 3, Chapter 7 Quotes

☝☝ "Did you think to kill me? There's no flesh or blood within this cloak to kill. There's only an idea. Ideas are bulletproof."

**Related Characters:** V (speaker), Mr. Eric Finch

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 236

### Explanation and Analysis

In this important scene, Eric Finch tracks down V and shoots him. V (secretly bleeding to death) tells Finch that nobody can kill him, because he's an idea, not a man.

V's statement isn't literally true, of course, but it's very powerful (and one of the most famous quotes from the work). V is a human being, but he's also much more. By wearing a cloak and a Guy Fawkes mask, V aims to erase his own personality and become a symbol. As a symbol,

something without the flaws and complexities of a real human, V can inspire millions of other people with just his ideas, courage, and image.

Sure enough, a few chapters later, "V" is dead, but Evey has taken V's cloak and mask, effectively becoming the "new V." Ultimately, V isn't a person--it's a role, which can be played by many different people.

## Book 3, Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ Because you were so big, V, and what if you're just nobody? Or even if you're someone, you'll be smaller, because of all the people that you could have been, but weren't.

**Related Characters:** Evey Hammond (speaker), V

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 250

### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, Evey--witnessing V's death--makes the difficult decision to keep V's face and identity concealed. Instead of removing his mask, she keeps the mask on.



Evey is still curious about V's true identity, but ultimately, she recognizes that V's individual identity is less important than the "idea" of V--in other words, the idea of a powerful, resourceful opponent of the Norsefire government, someone who's immune to pain and danger. In short, Evey recognizes that V is more powerful as an idea, capable of inspiring other people, than he is as an ordinary man (or woman).

Evey's decision to keep V's mask on also reflects the fact that she's free of her desire to be controlled and to have a father-figure. Evey has craved a strong, masculine presence in her life, but now, she has no further need for such a presence. Evey has learned how to take care of herself--she doesn't even need V anymore. By the same token, Evey has no more need for Adam Susan's government--by donning V's spare mask, she resumes V's mission to destroy the government forever.

## Book 3, Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ I'm following my own orders now. And getting out before everything blows. Perhaps you should, too. Goodbye, Dominic. Take care, lad.

**Related Characters:** Mr. Eric Finch (speaker), Dominic Stone

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 252

### Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the graphic novel, Eric Finch crosses paths with his old coworker, Dominic Stone. Finch, transformed by his use of LSD, tells Dominic that he's no longer working for the government. His experiences with LSD and with V have convinced him that there's no point in living a life of fear and submissiveness. Instead of cowering before the Norsefire government, Finch chooses to "follow his own orders."

The second part of Finch's advice is as interesting as the first. Finch knows that soon, the Norsefire government is going to "blow"--and he has no intention of being around when this happens. One could interpret Finch's statement to mean that he's frightened of anarchy--the mob rule that's going to break out when Norsefire disappears from England. Finch's fear of the impending mob makes us, too, wonder what will become of England--after Norsefire, will the people build a utopian, anarchist society (a society in which, somehow, there's no government)? In typical fashion, Moore doesn't answer his own questions: he leaves readers to decide what an anarchist society would look like, or if it's even possible.





## 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.

## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1: THE VILLAIN

The novel begins with a voice, which announces itself as the “**Voice of Fate**.” The voice explains that it is November 5, 1997. The voice echoes throughout London: in public spaces, in private rooms, etc. As the voice announces that it will rain from exactly 12:07 am to 1:30 am, two figures—neither of which is identified—dress themselves in front of the mirror.

The first figure is a young-looking woman, who’s applying her lipstick nervously in a small mirror. The second figure is shadowy, and seems to be standing in a vast hall lined with horror and film noir posters from the 30s and 40s. As the first figure puts on her dress, the second puts on gloves, a long, black cloak, a set of daggers, and a strange **mask**. The mask shows a pale man’s smiling face. Meanwhile the voice continues to describe news and current events: it stresses that “prospects” are brighter than they’ve been since “the last war,” and adds that it is every man’s duty to make Britain “Great again.”

The first figure leaves her room and walks outside, to an area near a dark alley. She encounters a strange man in a coat, and timidly asks him if he’d like to sleep with her “for money.” The man smirks and says that it must be her first night working as a prostitute. The woman reluctantly admits that it is. Suddenly, the man produces a badge and claims to be a “**Fingerman**” (law enforcement officer). Two more fingermen step out of hiding. The woman is terrified: clearly, fingerman are trusted with a large amount of power. The head fingerman tells the woman that he and his friends can do whatever they want with her—and then kill her.

As the woman tries to protest, the second figure, dressed in his cloak and **mask**, walks toward the fingermen. He quotes from the first act of *Macbeth*, calling the fingermen wicked. The head fingerman tries to push the figure away, and is surprised to find that he can pull the figure’s hand off. Suddenly, the figure attacks the three fingermen, killing one of them with a strange firebomb. The figure then escapes with the woman, leaving the two remaining fingermen confused.

*The first part of V for Vendetta establishes two central themes of the graphic novel: the ubiquity of tyranny, and the importance of symbols, masks, and disguises. The government that controls England dominates all aspects of citizens’ lives, and broadcasts its information everywhere.*



*In the panel with the many film posters, we get our first glimpse of Moore’s tastes for allusions to film and literature (allusions which no LitCharts summary could do justice to). We are immediately introduced to England as a surveillance state, where a government supercomputer named “Fate” seemingly knows everything and sees everything—even the upcoming weather—and promotes nationalism with bland slogans. Moore often creates “parallel actions” to connect scenes and characters in surprising ways.*



*The corruption of this futuristic English state is clear. We learn that there is a group called the Fingermen—basically a secret police. Clearly, Fingermen can do as they please: they don’t have to face any consequences for killing a young woman. This essentially limitless power corrupts and makes them hypocritical—they can have sex with a prostitute and then, immediately afterwards, kill her for breaking the law. This scene of violence and desperation is juxtaposed with the comforting, seemingly omniscient voice of “Fate.”*



*In contrast to the blandness and violence of the present, the masked figure seems to connect himself to the art and literature of the past: film noir, horror, and now, Shakespeare. The scene in which the Fingermen pull off the figure’s hands alludes to a similar scene in James Whale’s film of *The Invisible Man* (one of the posters glimpsed in the figure’s home). The meaning of the allusion is clear: the figure is “invisible,” undetectable even to the surveillance state.*



The cloaked figure brings the woman to a nearby roof, where she thanks him for saving her life. [NOTE: for the purposes of this summary, we'll refer to the character as "he," since his mask is that of a man. Nevertheless, no proof is ever offered that he is, in fact, a "he."] The woman asks the figure who he is—he replies that he's the "villain" and "the king of the 20th century."

The man asks the woman if she remembers the old nursery rhyme about the fifth of November—when she replies that she doesn't, he recites it: "Remember, remember, the fifth of November, the Gunpowder Treason and Plot. I know of no reason why the gunpowder treason should ever be forgot." As the man falls silent, there is a loud explosion, and the Houses of Parliament explode. Fireworks shoot into the sky, spelling out a "V," much to the woman's delight.

The narrative cuts ahead to November 6, in the morning. There is a videoconference between a shadowy authority figure and a panel of experts. The authority figure, addressed as "Leader," asks each of the men what they can tell him about the explosion of the Houses of Parliament. The first man, Mr. Conrad Heyer, claims to speak for an institution called "**The Eye**." He explains that video surveillance has captured some footage of the terrorist responsible for the plot—however, because he is wearing a **mask**, it's impossible to identify him. The second man, Mr. Brian Etheridge, speaking for "**The Ear**," adds that millions of people are talking about the explosion over the phone, and that all their information is being sent to Mr. Almond, who works for an institution called "**The Finger**."

The Leader next asks Mr. Finch to speak for "**The Nose**." Finch explains that the terrorist used a set of highly sophisticated explosives to blow up Parliament. The Leader nods and instructs the three men to inform him of any new information.

After turning off his video feed, the Leader turns to Mr. Derek Almond, who is standing next to him. He furiously tells Almond to find the man responsible for the explosion, or he'll have Almond's "head."

*The figure's introduction is endlessly confusing and his cryptic answers to the woman's questions hardly clear things up. Nevertheless, the figure's allusions and whimsical phrases suggest that he's intelligent but not entirely sane.*



*One of the key themes of V for Vendetta is the creativity of destruction—itsself a vital theme in anarchist thinking. The figure's destruction of the Houses of Parliament is beautiful to behold. We also continue to see the figure's fondness for poetry and literature. The Gunpowder Treason is an important part of English history, celebrated on Bonfire Night. (See Background Information.)*



*The contrast between the mysterious figure and the Leader couldn't be clearer. The figure speaks in riddles and literary allusions, while the Leader speaks in bureaucratic jargon. We see that the surveillance state in England is truly all-encompassing: even the other officials in this state are being watched by the Leader (also a symptom of the typical paranoia of tyrants). The government is seemingly divided into different parts, each named for a body part—and each mostly concerned with monitoring English citizens, apparently. The department names introduce the symbol of the government as a body—something with a gigantic, villainous character of its own.*



*Mr. Finch will be an important character in the book, but for the time being he is just another official—someone to manipulate the public, and to in turn be manipulated by the Leader.*



*The Leader is cruel both to his own people and to the authorities in his government. The guiding principle of the state is fear: everyone is deathly afraid of their commander, who has absolute power over them.*



At 7 pm on November 6, a team of media specialists discusses how to control the story of Parliament’s destruction. The “**Voice of Fate**” will explain that the building was demolished at night to avoid traffic congestion. One man, Dascombe, points out Lewis Prothero, the man who reads the “Voice of Fate” over the radio.

*Here we see the hypocrisies and propaganda of the media system. Even though it’s plain that someone has destroyed the Houses of Parliament in opposition to the government, the media spreads a false, comforting story about how the government wanted to destroy Parliament. The notion of a “Voice of Fate” suggests majesty, determinism, and control, while in reality we see the media system always scrambling to “spin” the news in order to make it cohere with the state’s wishes.*



## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2: THE VOICE

On November 6, in the evening, Lewis Prothero, the **Voice of Fate**, is reading his messages over the radio, so that millions of Londoners will be able to hear them. Dascombe explains to Derek Almond that Prothero will avoid talking about the fireworks following the explosion last night—if anyone asks, he’ll say it was a freak accident triggered by the demolition. Dascombe goes on to explain that Prothero has a superb voice—ironically, nobody knows that he provides the Voice of Fate, since the voice is more effective when people don’t know where it comes from.

*The Leader’s state is cleverly and skillfully run. The propaganda system is designed so that people will (whether consciously or not) believe that “Fate” itself is speaking over the radio—that they have no real control over their lives. In this way, people think that the Leader’s state is superhuman, omnipotent, and omniscient. At the same time, however, we see some telling weaknesses—the seemingly all-powerful “Fate” actually hinges on the voice of one particular man.*



Dascombe argues cheerfully with Derek Almond. Dascombe points out that Prothero collects dolls—a strange habit for a man. He adds, wryly, that Prothero must be extremely “sensitive”—as is the Leader. Almond calls Dascombe a degenerate and walks out.

*It’s not clear how to interpret this scene. We know that in the Leader’s state, sexuality is closely monitored, so it’s possible that Roger Dascombe is alluding to Prothero’s closeted homosexuality—and, shockingly, the Leader’s. But free speech is so thoroughly censored in England that we don’t know what Dascombe really means.*



Meanwhile, the mysterious man and woman from the first chapter stand in a place called the “Shadow Gallery,” a magnificent room lined with books and paintings. The man notes, a little sadly, that he’s collected the relics of cultures that were otherwise “eradicated” by the government of Great Britain. He plays Motown music for the woman, noting grimly that certain cultures were “more thoroughly eradicated” than others.

*We move from the censorship of the state’s propaganda system to the freedom of the Shadow Gallery. In the Shadow Gallery, we hear the music of “other” cultures. The suggestion is that the Leader’s state is profoundly bigoted, eradicating any non-white races along with the art and music they produce. As fascinating and culturally rich as the music collection is, its very existence suggests the savage racism of England as a whole.*



At 12:30 pm on November 6, a group of government workers, including Lewis Prothero, sit in a train. Prothero loudly brags about having fought in the military, collecting dolls, and having sex with many women. His two bodyguards nod stiffly, having clearly heard these stories many times before.

*Lewis Prothero provides the Voice of Fate, but nothing else. His voice itself commands authority, but the content of his speech is dull and insipid. A trend of dictatorships and totalitarian states is that fools and bullies rise to positions of great power, while the intelligent are persecuted and suppressed.*



As Prothero tells his stories, his colleagues notice a strange figure jumping onto the train. Suddenly the train stops and the lights go off. Prothero cheerfully continues to tell his story, about a friend of his who had sex with some “native girls.” Prothero notices that his companions have fallen silent. He strikes his lighter, and is shocked to find that his two bodyguards are dead.

The narrative jumps ahead. The train has been crowded with police officers and detectives. One of these officers, Mr. Finch, is talking to a witness named Mr. Bishop, who explains that the train came to a sudden stop. Soon afterwards, Mr. Bishop felt a sudden electric shock, and lost consciousness. Mr. Finch nods and walks out of the room and into the train, accompanied by his colleagues. Finch wonders aloud if the person who stopped the train is connected to the explosion at Parliament.

### BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3: VICTIMS

Immediately after the events at the end of the last chapter, Mr. Finch and his colleague, Dominic, climb aboard the train, which is now a crime scene. Finch walks to Prothero’s train car, where he finds a strange symbol: a **V** surrounded by a circle, carved onto the door. He sees two dead bodyguards, and notes, terrified, that whoever killed them probably did so “with his finger,” stabbing into their chests. Finch also notices a **rose** placed on the train seat. It is a kind called a “Violet Carson,” supposedly extinct since “the war.” Finch notes that his suspect seems to have a fondness for the letter “V.” He realizes that this figure must have kidnapped Lewis Prothero.

Meanwhile, in the Shadow Gallery, the masked man greets the woman, who is resting. The man introduces himself as V, and the woman calls herself Evey Hammond. Although Evey insists that there’s nothing “special” about her, V asks her to tell him about her life. Evey begins by saying that she’s sixteen: she was born in 1981. She grew up in the midst of a horrible recession which made her family very poor. When she was seven, she continues, there was a horrible war, loosely related to a conflict between “President Kennedy” and the Russians. In the ensuing conflict, Africa was blown up with nuclear missiles. This environmental disaster changed the weather in London, causing acid rain and floods.

*Prothero seems particularly bumbling and foolish in this section, as he doesn’t even notice that someone has murdered his bodyguards. The strange figure seems almost superhuman: like an old-fashioned cowboy or gangster (like something out of one of his movie posters), he “robs” a train.*



*Alan Moore likes to “jump around” in his graphic novels. Thus, we “cut” ahead several hours, to the aftermath of the figure’s train robbery. This can make the graphic novel confusing at times, but it also adds suspense and excitement in a way that a strictly linear narrative wouldn’t offer. Even after two chapters, we know next to nothing about the mysterious figure who abducts Prothero.*



*The more we learn about the mysterious figure, the more intimidating he becomes—seemingly capable of killing humans with one finger. At the same time, we recognize that the figure has a theatrical fondness for symbols, big, dramatic gestures—like the roses—games, and wordplay. Theatricality is an important weapon for the figure: he uses it to confuse and intimidate his opponents—to become larger than just one person, and to act as a symbol himself.*



*In this section, we’re finally given some important information about our two protagonists, Evey Hammond and V. We also learn about the futuristic events that have led England to Fascism. Moore seems to be freely riffing on the historical events of the 1980s (the graphic novel was published in 1989), when the United States was locked in a Cold War with the Soviet Union, both stockpiling nuclear missiles. In Moore’s vision of the future, America and Russia finally start a nuclear war. In reality, the Soviet Union would collapse only a few years after V for Vendetta was released.*



Evey continues explaining her story to V. In 1991, Evey's mother died of one of the diseases spread by the nuclear fallout. Riots became increasingly common, and slowly the existing government collapsed. Then, in 1992, the remaining power groups in England, including right-wing politicians and corporations, seized power. They called their political party "Norsefire." The Norsefire party succeeded in restoring order to England, but at a price: they imprisoned Pakistani and African immigrants, along with homosexuals, often sending them to concentration camps or factories. Evey's father was arrested for having had socialist sympathies as a young man. This left Evey to fend for herself. She tried working at a factory, but eventually was forced to turn to prostitution—this is what she was attempting when V first met her. Evey begins to weep. V comforts Evey and tells her that it's time to "start again."

Lewis Prothero wakes up in a strange arena, wearing an old military uniform. He sees a sign that says, "Larkhill Resettlement Camp," a message he seems to find disturbing.

It is November 7, 1997, and Mr. Finch has gone to visit the Leader. Finch explains to the Leader that "V," as he's been called, is a psychopath, capable of killing for any reason. The Leader acknowledges that V has been successful in attacking his government's credibility: with Lewis Prothero kidnapped, there will have to be a new **Voice of Fate**. This will be disastrous, because the people of London sincerely believe that the Voice of Fate is the "true" voice of the "Fate Computer." The Leader concludes that the belief in the "integrity of Fate" is the cornerstone of his government. Finch bravely admits that he finds this belief contemptible. The Leader nods and reminds Finch that he would gladly execute Finch for treason if it weren't for the fact that Finch is excellent at his job.

## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4: VAUDEVILLE

At the Shadow Gallery, V speaks with Evey. V explains that he's actually a "very funny" person. Evey notices that V has changed into a new outfit: an old-fashioned vaudeville suit, complete with a different, narrower mask.

*At the time when Moore was writing his graphic novel, conservatives were in power in both England and the United States. Moore, an anarchist, despised the conservative leadership for emphasizing "traditional values" and discriminating against anyone who deviated from the norm. Moore also alludes to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s (see Background Information). In the future, he suggests, governments will persecute the homosexual community even more explicitly than in the past. One final theme that Moore establishes in this scene is Evey's desire for a father. Evey tells V that she's lost her father, and then embraces V. The message is clear: Evey turns to V because she needs a father figure.*



*Prothero is clearly facing some kind of "contrapasso": a situation (usually from Dante's [Inferno](#)) where one's punishment fits one's crime.*



*Mr. Finch makes explicit what we'd already recognized: V has disturbed the strength of the Norsefire state by kidnapping Prothero. The irony is that Norsefire is a victim of its own success: because it's been successful in deluding Londoners into believing that Fate itself reads the news, it's comically easy for V to expose the weakness of this lie. We also see further cracks in the state's power, as not all the party officials believe in the supremacy of the Leader. Eric Finch distrusts Fate and the Leader—a fact that he can only admit because he knows he's too valuable to be murdered.*



*V is a totally anonymous character: we don't know anything about his family, his background, etc. This allows him to be "larger-than-life," and also to dress up as anyone he wants to.*





V goes into a different room of the Shadow Gallery, where Lewis Prothero is standing in his uniform, very confused. Suddenly, V cries out, "Good morning, campers!" Prothero cries out that V has "the wrong man." He claims that he had nothing to do with the concentration camps. V ignores Prothero and drags him past life-size models of the sheds and prisons of Larkhill prison. Suddenly, V points out a huge pile of dolls: Prothero's prized doll collection. Prothero is horrified that V will try to hurt these dolls. V mocks Prothero for having such love for his dolls, yet so little for other human beings. Prothero insists that it was "us or them" at the Larkhill camps.

V continues with his torture of Prothero. He drags him to a model of "Room V." Prothero seems to understand what this means: V is "the man from Room V," an area of the camp where Prothero used to patrol as a guard. With this, V presses a button, and Prothero's dolls burst into flames. Prothero gives a hideous scream.

The narrative cuts to "Scotland Yard, later." V, wearing his usual cloak and **mask**, skillfully maneuvers his way past a security guard. When the security guard catches a glimpse of V, he calls for his superiors over the intercom.

In the evening, Roger Dascombe is working at his broadcasting office. Mr. Almond knocks and tells Dascombe that the **fingermen** have found Lewis Prothero. Officers lead Lewis Prothero into the room: his face has been painted white, like a doll's, and he can only say, "Mama." Clearly, Prothero has lost his mind. The broadcasters have no choice but to put a different man in charge of reading the "**Voice of Fate**." Prothero's replacement is clumsy, and slurs his words—and the people of London listen with great skepticism.

## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5: VERSIONS

It is December 12, 1997. The Leader, whose real name is Adam Susan, is sitting in the back of a limousine. Susan thinks about all that he's done for Britain: he's led Britain out of the "wilderness of the 20th century." He is a fascist, he freely admits, but believes that fascism is necessary to bind a country together and make it strong. He rejects talk of freedom and liberty—freedom is obsolete after "the war." He walks into a building, the "Old Bailey," on top of which there is an old sculpture of "**Lady Justice**."

*This is a horrific section—and an undeniably humorous one. V again shows his penchant for theatricality, freely moving between different personas—jailer, guard, comedian, singer—while Prothero is "stuck" as a prisoner in the camp. In another sense, Prothero is the "straight man" to V's vaudevillian. It's crucial that Prothero admit his wrongdoing before he's punished—V doesn't want him to go proudly to his grave.*



*Instead of punishing Prothero physically, V harms Prothero's most prized possession: his doll collection. We don't yet know much about the Larkhill camps, but we can tell that V is exploiting a horrible irony—that Prothero cares greatly about dolls, but not at all about human beings.*



*V is a skilled fighter, capable of killing a man with one finger, but he's arguably even more terrifying when he maneuvers his way past guards virtually undetected.*



*Here, we see the full scope of V's attack on Lewis Prothero. Although V seems to have kidnapped Prothero for personal reasons, his revenge also has a broader political impact: the people of London begin to distrust the Voice of Fate, and, by extension, the entire Norsefire government. It's a mystery why V kidnapped Prothero in the first place: was he aiming to enact revenge, dismantle Norsefire, or both? Moore will return to this question many times.*



*We know many things about the Leader: his real name, his political ideology, his attitude toward governmental administration, etc., while V, by contrast, remains entirely mysterious. It's important to recognize this theme as the chapter begins, since Moore will structure the chapter as a quarrel between two rival lovers of Lady Justice: V and Susan.*



Susan walks to a surveillance room in the Old Bailey, where the “Fate Computer” monitors the activities of millions of Londoners. Susan thinks that he is in love, even though he’s never taken a lover. He is in love with the computer itself: it’s pure, perfect, and all-powerful.

*Susan and V are both opposites and eerily similar. V is superhuman in his strength, his anonymity, and his intelligence, and Susan also seems to aspire to a kind of super-humanity (or inhumanity), as we see in his love for a computer.*



Hours after Adam Susan walks into the Old Bailey, V walks by the building. He sees **Lady Justice**, and has a mock-dialogue with her. He accuses Lady Justice—whom he’s loved since he was a child—of refusing to return his love. Lady Justice, V suggests, has taken a new lover: a “man in uniform.” As a result, V vows to never serve Lady Justice again—instead, his justice will be anarchy. He places a small object, wrapped with a bow, in front of the statue. As he runs away, the Old Bailey blows up.

*V’s political aspirations—and, arguably, his insanity—are on full display here. V distrusts institutions of any kind. While justice itself may be a thing worth loving, justice as its been manipulated and co-opted by government is not. V prefers to worship a new, more individual form of justice. V might just be acting again, and pretending to talk to a statue— but he also seems to have the tendency to treat objects like people, and people like objects.*



Lewis Prothero, his mind a wreck, lies in a mental hospital. Finch and his colleagues try to get Prothero to explain what V did to him. Prothero only repeats, “mama.” Finch suggests that they “take five” and get some tea. As Finch says this, Prothero begins repeating, “Room Five.”

*The chapter ends with a clue—we’re meant to assume that Finch will be able to trace “Room Five” to V, based on V’s fondness for the number five and the letter V (the Roman numeral for five).*



## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6: THE VISION

In the Shadow Gallery, Evey surveys a staircase, which is emblazoned with “**V.V.V.V.**” Evey asks V what this means. V explains that it’s shorthand for a Latin phrase which means, “by the power of truth, I, while living, have conquered the universe.” Evey, excited by V’s lifestyle, asks if she can help V with one of his next “projects.” V assures Evey that she’s under no obligation to help him, but Evey insists that she wants to “make a deal.” V agrees, though he notes, half to himself, that the speaker of the Latin phrase was Dr. Faust, who also “made a deal.”

*The “Faustian Deal” to which V alludes is one of the key myths of European culture. In German tradition, Doctor Faust made a deal with the devil: the devil would give Faust unlimited power and knowledge, in return for which Faust would give the devil his soul (in Goethe’s version of the story, the deal is a little different). V seems to think that Evey is taking a great leap forward by making a deal with him—but he acknowledges that she might regret her decision. At least it seems that Evey is trying to take more control over her own life, even if for now she is merely fascinated by the glamorous figure who saved her life.*



At Westminster Abbey, in December 20th, a large congregation assembles to listen to a bishop’s sermon. The bishop, Anthony Lilliman, praises God for sparing England from his punishment, and prays that God will keep the people safe from the “evil one.” He concludes that they are “one race, one nation, one love.”

*We see how Norsefire has co-opted Christianity to fit its racist, Fascist agenda. This is a state-sponsored religion that unites the people of England together—partly by treating the English as “one race.” Underneath the bland slogans of the sermon lie justifications for bigotry and genocide.*



After the sermon concludes, Derek Almond walks to his car, accompanied by his wife, Rosemary Almond. Two friends, Conrad Heyer (from [the Eye](#)) and Helen Heyer, Conrad's wife, greet the Almonds and ask if Derek has any information about the terrorist who blew up Parliament. Almond replies that he's sure the government will catch him eventually, but says little else on the matter. Helen jokes that Conrad is London's "highest paid peeping Tom," and listens to people's lives all day long. As the Heyers leave, Rosemary notes to Derek that Helen is very harsh about her husband. Derek angrily objects that Helen Heyer is twice the woman Rosemary is.

Anthony Lilliman stands in his room, accompanied by his servant, Dennis. He asks Dennis if his "young lady" has arrived, and Dennis informs him that there was a mix-up at "the agency"—there is an older girl, about sixteen. Lilliman grudgingly agrees to accept this girl. Dennis sends in the girl, who turns out to be Evey, dressed in a childish pink dress. Bishop Lilliman smiles with pleasure and tells Evey that she will "do."

Meanwhile, in the Shadow Gallery, V prepares for another mission. He takes a [rose](#), identical to the one he left for Lewis Prothero, and leaves, reciting William Blake's poem "Jerusalem" to himself.

## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7: VIRTUE VICTORIOUS

At Westminster Abbey in December 20, 1997, a group of bodyguards, along with Dennis (the Bishop's assistant), are drinking to the New Year. Since the explosion of Parliament, Almond has ordered that all authorities are to be protected by bodyguards at all times. Dennis mentions that "His Grace" is currently enjoying his time with "that girl with pigtails," and the bodyguards laugh.

Inside Westminster Abbey, "His Grace" Anthony Lilliman is trying to seduce Evey on his bed. Evey asks if she can open a window, and Lilliman allows her to do so. Evey asks him to read her "something religious," and Lilliman obliges, going to the next room to read from the sermon he delivered that morning. As he does so, V attacks the group of bodyguards, easily disarming them with his daggers.

*We see more ramifications of Norsefire's bigotry. The men in England are, for the most part, aggressive and violent, while their wives are supposed to be docile and meek. One notable exception to this rule comes in the form of Conrad and Helen Heyer: Conrad is calm and weak, while Helen seems stronger and savvier than her husband. Yet even here, Conrad is the one with a government job, not Helen: Norsefire's sexism is so pervasive that intelligent women can't get a good job of any kind.*



*We see the hypocrisy of Lilliman—and of Norsefire society—very clearly. While preaching about the value of chastity and morality, Lilliman indulges in his own horrible impulses—his pedophilic lust for children—and seemingly feels no remorse and faces no consequences. Lilliman is here a grotesque version the "father-figure" Evey craves.*



*We've already seen that V uses roses to mark his crimes, so we can't help but assume that V Lilliman is his next victim. V's mention of "Jerusalem" reminds us of the scope of his plans: he wants to bring utopia to (from the poem) "England's green and pleasant land."*



*We see that Lilliman's sexual hypocrisy is equally the hypocrisy of the entire Norsefire society: everyone seems to know that Lilliman is a pedophile, and yet nobody does anything about it.*



*In this transitional section, we see Evey assisting V with his attack on Bishop Lilliman. It's not clear exactly what V has told Evey to do—or if he's told her what he's going to do to Lilliman. Nevertheless, Evey has "made a deal" with V: presumably to assist him in any way he says.*



As Lilliman finishes his sermon reading for Evey, he asks her to remove her dress. When he leans in to do so himself, Evey hits him with a heavy lamp and runs away. The Bishop yells and calls Evey a “filthy whore.” Suddenly, V is standing in front of him. He quotes from the Rolling Stones song “Sympathy for the Devil” as he drags Lilliman out of the room.

*Here Lilliman receives an ironic, brutal comeuppance. V, ever the wordsmith, quotes from the Rolling Stones—presumably another banned musical group—and takes on the form of an ironic “devil,” attacking and delivering justice to the supposedly and moral Bishop.*



## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8: THE VALLEY

At the “**Ear**” headquarters, Heyer and his colleagues eavesdrop on conversations throughout London. They note darkly that Bishop Lilliman at Westminster likes to have a “children’s night” on Sunday. Heyer listens to recordings of Bishop Lilliman’s room. He hears loud music, beneath which he can detect a voice: someone saying that he has come to do the “devil’s work.” The voice—a man’s, and not Lilliman’s—says that Lilliman can call him “V.” Heyer quickly realizes that Lilliman is in danger, and alerts Finch and Almond to send men to Westminster.

*We’re given another reminder that Bishop Lilliman’s fondness for having sex with children is well known in England: Heyer has actually listened to Lilliman rape children before. It’s not clear if V is aware that he’s being listened to, but it seems likely, since nearly everything is under surveillance at all times. He spreads fear with his very confidence.*



When Finch and his men arrive at Bishop Lilliman’s home, it is the morning of December 21, 1997. Inside, they find another “**V**” carved onto the walls. Finch notices a **rose**, identical to the one left for Lewis Prothero. As Finch inspects the building, Dominic informs him that the music V was playing was Beethoven’s 5th Symphony.

*Finch begins to get a sense for V’s style of murder. He’s theatrical, and loves to leave clues behind: Beethoven’s music, roses, etc. It’s as if V is trying to tell Finch who he is, without actually giving away anything about himself—and also to remind him of the kind of culture and beauty suppressed by the regime.*



Finch tries to reconstruct what happened the night before. Bishop Lilliman was alone in his room with a prostitute—probably an accomplice of V’s, Finch guesses, since she’s nowhere to be found. Late in the night, Dennis went into Bishop Lilliman’s room to check on him. V must have turned out the lights, Finch realizes. Although Dennis had a gun, V was able to disarm him and, it’s implied, kill him.

*Based on V’s clues, and the recordings from Heyer, Finch is able to deduce that V had an accomplice (whom we know to be Evey), and that he disarmed Dennis easily. Finch too seems well aware of Lilliman’s pedophilia.*



Alone with Bishop Lilliman, V offered him the chance to take communion. V gave Bishop Lilliman a communion “wafer,” which turned out to be cyanide and killed him instantly. After completing the autopsy on Lilliman, Finch learns that the Bishop’s bodyguards were killed by a quick, powerful wound, almost as if V punched through their bodies with his fingers. Disturbed, Finch takes V’s **rose**—another Violet Carson—to his assistant, Delia, and asks her to research where it could have come from.

*The manner of Lilliman’s death is ironically appropriate. V gives Lilliman a poisoned wafer—an apt symbol of Lilliman’s brand of Christian hypocrisy. Although Christianity teaches that the wafer will transform (or transubstantiate) into the body of Christ, V’s poisoned wafer “remains” cyanide, killing Lilliman instead of filling him with religious ecstasy.*



## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9: VIOLENCE

The chapter opens in the Shadow Gallery. Evey is arguing with V, claiming that killing Bishop Lilliman was “wrong.” V points out that Evey was the one who wanted to “make a deal”—V didn’t force her to involve herself in anything.

In the London neighborhood of Knightsbridge, Derek Almond stays up late, working on the V case. As he works, Rosemary Almond enters the room dressed in her nightgown. She tries to apologize for angering her husband earlier that day—in response, Derek angrily slaps her and tells her that he’s not going to have sex with her. Rosemary sobs.

In the Shadow Gallery, V sits at a piano, playing. Evey enters his room and apologizes for lashing out at him. She admits that she’s been feeling guilty for her role in killing Bishop Lilliman, and says once more that she won’t kill another person—not even for V.

We jump ahead to Plaistow, at 9:17pm, in a modest apartment. A woman hangs up her coat and goes to bed. She has vivid flashbacks to a scene of a mysterious, silhouetted figure emerging from a massive fire. As the woman prepares for bed, she notices a **rose** on her couch.

Back in the Shadow Gallery, V sits, reading *The Magic Faraway Tree*. The passage he reads is about a land called “The Land of Do As You Please.” While the two characters, Jo and Silky, enjoy this place, they also recognize that need to move on to somewhere new. After a few moments, V puts his book away and leaves the Shadow Gallery.

At **the Nose**, Dominic and Mr. Finch stay up late, working and discussing the V Case. Dominic has invented a clever theory: Lewis Prothero worked in Larkhill Camp as a young man, and, after going insane, kept talking about “Room Five.” From this, Dominic hypothesizes that V was a prisoner in Room Five (the Roman numeral V) of the camp. Finch thinks Dominic is onto something—Bishop Lilliman was at Larkhill, too. Using computer records, he researches the surviving people who worked at Larkhill, noting that most are dead.

*Evey objects to V’s violent methods. This is a common debate in the anarchist community: is violence justified in enacting meaningful change? V clearly thinks that violence is justified by its ends—killing those who kill and persecute. Evey doesn’t agree, and she feels personally responsible for Lilliman’s death.*



*Almond’s brutality to Rosemary, we sense, is completely uncontroversial in Norsefire society. Because of the brutality and bigotry of the government itself, husbands are just following the status quo in feeling entitled to hit their wives.*



*For the time being, Evey finds ways to convince herself that she’ll always do the right thing—she still wants to see things in black and white, because the alternative is much scarier.*



*We recognize that the woman in the apartment is going to die—the rose is a symbol of V’s aggression. And yet we’re given more of a window into the woman’s thoughts and feelings than we were in the case of either Lilliman or Prothero. This woman may be awaiting the same fate as her two predecessors, and yet she’s not of the same stripe.*



*The Land of Do As You Please will reappear several times in the graphic novel. For now, it’s important to note that V is reading to Evey, the way a father reads to a small child before bedtime. V has truly taken on the role of a concerned father, and Evey has fallen willingly into the role of his child.*



*It’s a testament to Dominic’s quick thinking that he recognizes the connection between V’s victims. At the same time, it’s rather surprising that nobody has noted a link between the victims of Larkhill before: one might think that, with all the computer power in Norsefire, a computer would have noticed that every guard in the concentration camp was dying.*





In Plaiston, the mysterious woman is sleeping in her bed, when suddenly she wakes up. Addressing a shadowy figure, she asks if she's going to be killed. The figure answers that she is. We see that the figure is V, dressed in his usual cloak and **mask**. The woman buries her head in her hands and whispers, "Thank God."

*Even at the end of the chapter, we don't know anything about the woman whom V is planning to kill, other than the fact that she's clearly feeling guilty for whatever she did (presumably at Larkhill Camp). Somehow, this is all we need to know about her: her guilt tells us that she's notably different from Prothero and Lilliman.*



## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10: VENOM

In December 23, 1997, Derek Almond enters his wife's bedroom carrying a gun. Rosemary wakes up and finds Derek pointing a gun at her—she begs him to stop. Derek pulls the trigger and says "bang"—it's not loaded. He smirks and leaves the room.

*Derek's cruelty to his wife has an unmistakably sexual side: he won't have sex with her, but he'll point a gun (surely a phallic symbol) at her and pull the trigger. Moore makes a point of mentioning the unloaded gun, which will be a plot point later—and it also foreshadows Rosemary's own connection to a gun later.*



At **the Nose**, Dominic and Finch are still researching the guards at Larkhill. The vast majority are dead. Finch begins to realize the truth: V has been killing off Larkhill guards for the last four years—it's only now that the police have started to take notice. Dominic objects that many of the Larkhill guards have died of natural causes, or died in accidents. Finch doesn't know what to say. He remembers giving one of V's **roses** to Delia—a colleague of his who worked as a doctor at Larkhill. Panicked, he goes to call Delia immediately. Finding the line engaged, he sends Derek Almond to Delia's house in Plaiston.

*We learn that the woman whom V has come to kill is Delia, a former doctor at Larkhill Camp. We're also reminded of the strange incompetence of the Norsefire surveillance—somehow, a criminal has been eliminating Larkhill guards for four years without anyone batting an eye. This reminds us that Norsefire England is a heavily elitist society: the police have only become involved in the Larkhill killings because important people have started to die. V's less powerful, less wealthy victims hadn't attracted any attention before.*



In Plaiston, V is standing over Delia's bed. V asks Delia if she's afraid of death, and she replies that she isn't. On the contrary, she's been expecting death for many years. After the "fire," she explains, she saw V looking directly at her, and she knew that he'd take his revenge sooner or later. She mentions a famous psychological experiment, where subjects were asked to shock patients who got the wrong answers on a test. Amazingly, 80% of the subjects calmly continued to administer lethal shocks to their patients, simply because an authority figure told them to do so. Delia has long since concluded that there is something evil and horrible about the human race—she's ashamed to be a member of it, and welcomes death.

*The experiment Delia mentions is real—it was conducted in California in the 1970s. Moore likes to allude to real-life examples of man's inhumanity to man in his graphic novels (in [Watchmen](#), there's a long, painful discussion of the Kitty Genovese rape case, in which a woman was raped for hours while her neighbors did nothing). Delia seems to have come to a conclusion about humanity that doesn't fit with Norsefire's Fascist perfectionism at all: there is no "perfect race," because humanity itself is evil.*



Mr. Finch calls Derek Almond and sends him to Delia's home. Almond leaves, carrying his gun.

*Almond's cruel prank on his wife will now "backfire" on him, when he needs a loaded gun against someone other than his helpless wife.*



Back in Plaiston, Delia tells V that Eric Finch gave her one of V's **roses** that morning—he's trying to track V down. V says nothing, but holds up a syringe—he says he already killed Delia "ten minutes ago," while she was sleeping. He adds that there's no pain. Delia nods peacefully, and asks to see V's face one more time before her death. V obliges, removing his **mask**. Delia stares at V's face (which we don't see), unafraid, and whispers, "It's beautiful." With these words, she collapses.

V leaves Delia's bedroom. Before he's gotten far, a voice tells him to stop—it is Derek Almond, holding a gun. Almond tries to shoot V—but because he forgot to reload his gun after threatening his wife, no shot is fired. V attacks Almond, overpowering him easily. Almond falls to the floor, seemingly dead.

The next day, Finch and Dominic talk about V's murders. Derek Almond is dead, along with Delia Surridge. Finch is furious about Delia's death: he insists that she was a good woman, devoted to helping people using her medical knowledge. Dominic notes that the police found Delia's diary next to her body. Noting that the diary covers Delia's time working at Larkhill, Finch takes it.

## BOOK 1, CHAPTER 11: THE VORTEX

On December 24, 1997, Mr. Finch is standing with the Leader. He insists that "it's a Vendetta"—V is killing off important government officials, culminating in the deaths of Derek Almond and Delia Surridge. He holds up Delia's diary, which he's read many times. Based on this document, he thinks that he might know "what" V is, if not "who."

Finch offers to read the Leader the key excerpts from Delia's diary. The first excerpt is from April 30th. Delia arrives at the Larkhill camps, and is instantly disgusted by Lewis Prothero and Anthony Lilliman, the camps' conditions, and the "subjects" she's been assigned. Delia has come to Larkhill to conduct hormone research on human beings. She believes that her research will benefit the human race. She administers experiments with pills and drugs for the prisoners of the camp. Delia notes that these prisoners are weak and pathetic—barely even human.

By June, Delia's diary continues, nearly all of the subjects that Delia was assigned for her research have died off, many of them with hideous mutations as a result of the "Batch 5" drug Delia gave them. Curiously, Delia notes, the patients who are still alive tend to be either black or women. A lesbian woman named Rita Boyd, she notes, died that day.

*Delia's death is strange and oddly moving: unlike the other victims of V's aggression, Delia isn't afraid of V in the slightest, and even welcomes his presence as "beautiful." V, for his part, seems to recognize that Delia regrets what she's done to V, and has already punished herself enough with her own guilt and self-hatred. Thus, he lets her die in peace.*



*Derek Almond—much like Prothero and Lilliman—is a victim of his own evil. Just as Lilliman dies by poisoned communion, Almond gets his ironic comeuppance when his sadistic prank on his wife backfires.*



*We end with the possibility that Delia's diary will answer some of our questions about Larkhill, V, and the Norsefire state. This section is also important because Eric Finch shows genuine sympathy for one of V's victims for the first time—it's as if he despised Prothero and Lilliman as much as V did.*



*That V is on a vendetta against the Norsefire government is plain before we even open the graphic novel (it's in the title, after all). Yet it's still not clear why V is on this vendetta—if it's a personal quest for revenge, or something with a broader ideology behind it.*



*Delia is clearly more sympathetic than Prothero and Lilliman, but she still participated in the same atrocities at Larkhill. Delia treats the patients at Larkhill just as Prothero and Lilliman do: she considers them barely human, disgusting, and altogether unworthy of being alive. Even so, Delia at least believes in the goodness of her research—she thinks that she can use her experiments to promote health for all.*



*We see, once again, V's fondness for the letter V and the number 5. We also realize that V may be the product of medical experiments gone awry: perhaps he took some of "Batch 5," and as a result became extra strong and intelligent—like a superhero.*



By July, there are only five patients left for Delia to study. One of them—the man in room five—hasn't experienced any mutations at all. Nevertheless, Delia notes that he's become schizophrenic, with a "magnetic" personality. The man looks at Delia with disgust, she realizes.

The man in room five, Delia continues, asks to work as a gardener for the Larkhill camp. Lewis Prothero reluctantly agrees, since there's been a food shortage recently. The man turns out to be a brilliant gardener, producing a great deal of food, which Prothero greedily eats. The man from room five also grows beautiful **roses**. He asks for new gardening supplies, including ammonia for fertilizer. Prothero reluctantly orders these supplies so that the man can continue with his gardening.

The man in room five uses the ammonia to plant more crops, but he also arranges piles of ammonia in his room. Delia assumes that this is a symptom of his schizophrenia.

The next entry is from December 24, 1993. Finch notes that the entry begins, "He looked at me," but then continues in a differently colored ink, with the note, "can't write about it yet." Delia explains that there was an explosion at Larkhill camp. The man in room five had been using ammonia to make other products, such as mustard gas and napalm. Delia and many of her coworkers were able to escape Larkhill alive. As Delia ran away, however, she saw the man from room five emerging from the prison. He looked directly at her, and she knew that he'd one day kill her.

Mr. Finch concludes his reading of the diary. He notes that nearly all the guards and workers at Larkhill prison have died in mysterious accidents in the last four years, with the exception of the three people who've died in the last few months. There are two motives for V's vendetta, he points out. First, V could be searching for revenge, and second, he could be trying to eliminate anyone who could identify him. Finch notes that he finds the first explanation more reassuring, since it means that V is finished with his killings.

*One thinks of Nietzsche's famous notion that "when one stares into the abyss, the abyss stares back." Delia stares at her patients with disgust, and here, her mysterious patient returns her stare, judging Delia for her blind participation in murder.*



*According to the diary, we are meant to see that the man in Room V is probably V. He grows beautiful roses, just as V uses roses to mark his murders. Much as before, V uses his enemies' weaknesses against them. Thus, he's able to escape from prison, we can sense, because Lewis Prothero greedily demands more food for himself, and thus gives V more fertilizer.*



*The piles of ammonia in the man's room are a decent metaphor for the structure of these early chapters of the graphic novel: they're a complex puzzle that only a few people are capable of fully understanding.*



*Here, we run into the concept of the "unreliable narrator." Delia seems to be explaining the state of affairs at Larkhill prison, but admits that she finds it difficult to write about the man in room V rationally. It's also possible that V is tampering with Delia's diary, or even that he forged it altogether. Delia's awareness of V's gaze suggests her awareness of her own guilt—her involvement in a horrible, genocidal experiment.*



*Finch recognizes the scope of the problem he and the Nose are dealing with. It's possible that V is acting out of revenge: he wants to cause pain to the people who hurt him long ago. But it's also possible that V is trying to cover his tracks, preparing himself for a far more dangerous and large-scale assault on the Norsefire state. Moore is a fan of the novels of Thomas Pynchon (especially V, which V reads at several points in the graphic novel). Pynchon maintains that it is better to be certain and terrified than "uncertain and paranoid"—Finch echoes these exact sentiments.*



Mr. Finch goes on explaining V's background to the Leader. He notes that V *wanted* the police to find Delia's diary. Strangely, though, V didn't want the police to find everything in Delia's diary: there are entire pages that have been crossed out or removed. V didn't want the police knowing anything about his identity: his race, his age, his sexual orientation, etc.

As Mr. Finch explains V's background to the Leader, we see V sitting in the Shadow Gallery, watching film footage of a mysterious woman. V buries his head in his hands, seemingly weeping.

The Leader suggests to Mr. Finch that V has forged the entire diary. There's no way to corroborate his story with records of Larkhill Camp, since these records simply don't exist. Furthermore, the Leader continues, it would be "madness" for V to kill fifty people simply to give himself a cover story. As he says this, the Leader realizes that this is precisely Finch's point: V is mad. With this, the Leader dismisses Mr. Finch with a quiet "Happy Christmas."

## BOOK 2, PRELUDE

As the prelude begins, V sits at a piano, playing "For every heart on Broadway." As he plays, we see people walking through the streets of London, as well as a close-up of a letter to Rosemary Almond, explaining that she's been denied benefits after her husband's death. We then see the Leader staring at the Fate Computer with a look of rapture, and finally, Evey staring at a photograph of her father. As Evey stares, V sings about how "a girl" would rather live in the land of "Do as you please" than in the real world.

V continues to sing. The "real world," he claims, is full of "puppets strangled by their strings." This world seems inviting, but in fact it's been cleared of all homosexuals, blacks, and other minorities. This, V concludes, is the "vicious cabaret."

*Finch knows nothing about V's personality, and curiously enough, neither do we. We have to face the possibility that V has forged the entire diary altogether—we really don't know anything about where V came from. Because V is totally anonymous, nothing is necessarily as it seems. As he does in many of his works, here Moore tampers with the "superhero backstory" trope.*



*Although V is shown to be cold and capable of murder, he's also sensitive and emotional. We don't know why V is weeping, but we also sense that there's a side to his personality that Finch has yet to understand. In retrospect, we will recognize this woman as probably being Valerie.*



*V's greatest weapon is his unpredictability. We see this in his maddening allusions to literature and culture of the past, and we see it as well in his mysterious assassinations of government officials. V's very existence is an affront to the certainty and constant surveillance of "Fate" and the Norsefire state: in a world where the government knows and controls everything, V is gleefully, anarchically unknowable.*



*As the second part of the graphic novel begins, we see the characters trapped in their own illusions. The Leader is trapped by his love for a computer—a love which, by definition, can never be returned. We also see Evey trapped in her nostalgia for her family, and in particular, her love for her father. Evey's need for a father figure will play a key role in her actions in this section of the text.*



*The image of puppets strangled by their own strings is an apt one: it describes the Norsefire government we've seen so far. Although Norsefire seems powerful and omnipotent to the people of England, we've seen that Norsefire's bigotry, cruelty, and bureaucracy actually make it weak and fallible. V seems to relish the challenge of dismantling Norsefire step-by-step.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1: THE VANISHING

It is January 5, 1998. Evey stares, delighted, as V performs a magic trick, making a caged rabbit disappear. V then makes the rabbit reappear, without her cage—or, as V puts it, her “home.”

After the magic trick, V and Evey dance together. Tentatively, Evey brings up something that’s been troubling her. She’s noticed that V seems not to “fancy her.” She wonders, aloud, if it’s because V is gay. V suggests that Evey thinks that he’s “her father.” Evey is shocked—this is exactly what she’s been thinking. V stops dancing with Evey and fetches a blindfold for her. He tells her to put it on, and she does so.

V leads Evey out of the Shadow Gallery to the streets of London. It is cold, and Evey is uncomfortable. She stresses to V, who seems to be leading her ahead, that she won’t kill anyone else. Frustrated, she takes off her blindfold, finding herself in an abandoned street. Evey sees V standing a few feet away from her. V tells Evey that he’s not her father. Evey pulls V toward her, begging to go home. To her great surprise, however, “V” falls apart: V has gone, replacing himself with a dummy, **mask**, and tape recorder. Evey is standing alone in the middle of the street.

## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2: THE VEIL

Rosemary Almond attends her husband’s funeral. As Derek’s body lowers into the ground, Rosemary thinks that she never liked him. At the funeral, Roger Dascombe comforts Rosemary, holding her hand for a little too long. Rosemary interprets this to mean that he’s propositioning her—a thought which disgusts her. After Rosemary goes home, Dascombe calls and asks her to join him for dinner, but Rosemary refuses.

Rosemary realizes the misery of her situation: she’s been given no money by the state after her husband’s death, she has no chance of getting a job, and she’s stuck paying off bills. Rosemary once believed that she loved Derek—it’s only now that she can see that their relationship was never strong.

*V again takes on the attributes of a father to Evey—while at the same time teaching her about freedom. As with the rabbit, when a cage becomes familiar enough, it seems like home. The people of England are oppressed by a dictatorship, but it’s not yet clear how much they want to be freed from it.*



*V seems to understand what Evey is thinking, even before Evey herself is aware of it. It’s not clear to us what V is going to do to Evey, but he seems to want to rid Evey of her childish need for a father—part of the freedom V is teaching Evey is a psychological freedom.*



*V has used masks and technology—essentially theatrics—to deceive the leaders of Norsefire, and here, he turns these tactics on his ally, Evey, tricking her into leaving the Shadow Gallery. Again, we’re not sure why V is doing this. At the same time, Moore hints that V is trying to cleanse Evey of her need for a father-figure—indeed, some of V’s last words to Evey are “I’m not your father.”*



*It’s not clear what Roger Dascombe is trying to do with Rosemary. We’ve seen some slight evidence that Roger is gay (in that he seemed to be calling out other closeted officials), but his actions imply that he’s taking advantage of Rosemary’s newly helpless role as a widow—using his position of power to seduce her.*



*In a sense, Evey and Rosemary are in the same boat: they’ve been cruelly ripped away from the men they depended on., and now are left alone and frightened in a world where the opportunities for women are slim.*





As Rosemary continues to think about her loneliness, we see V walking through a strange, deserted building. V sees a poster for a film called *The Salt Flats*, featuring a photograph that matches the film he was watching at the end of Book I. V takes this poster off the wall and carries it with him. He notices a propaganda poster, celebrating “Strength through purity, purity through faith.” V carves a “V” symbol on this poster, and walks away.

We see Rosemary at dinner with Dascombe—she’s taken him up on her offer, realizing that she’ll have to do whatever she can to “survive.” After dinner, Dascombe invites Rosemary to his place for coffee. Rosemary accepts, and as she climbs into Dascombe’s car, he places his hand on her body. Rosemary thinks, “Oh God.”

## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3: VIDEO

It is February 3, 1998. We’re in a film studio, where a group of men are watching a childish adventure film about the “Storm Saxon.” In the film, a handsome blonde man defends a beautiful white woman from the “black butchers” who are taking over the country. As the men watch the film, V walks into their building and easily overpowers all of them.

Elsewhere in the film studio, reporters are broadcasting the news throughout London. A reporter mentions the acts of “senseless terrorism” in Scotland and Ireland that have left hundreds of people dead. As the reporter continues, we “zoom out” to reveal that we’re looking at a sound studio, where Roger Dascombe sits, monitoring many programs at once.

Outside Dascombe’s room, there is an elevator. Two guards are about to step into the elevator. The doors open, and V jumps out and overpowers the guards. As he does so, we continue to hear the sounds of the television programs: the news story about terrorists in Ireland, as well as a childish sex comedy that seems to find humor in sexual harassment. V stabs the guards, killing them instantly, and walks away from the elevator.

V walks into Dascombe’s studio. He pulls up his cape, revealing that he’s covered in high-powered explosives, for which he has the detonator. As Roger and his staff look at V in horror, he hands them a tape and motions for Roger to play it.

*In this short section, V undermines the propaganda of the Norsefire government by defacing a Norsefire sign. In a sense, V is replacing one set of symbols—the Norsefire slogans—with another set of symbols—his own symbol of rebellion and anarchy. V will continue to wage war on Norsefire symbols for the rest of the novel.*



*Rosemary clearly thinks that Roger is going to try to seduce her, and she seems to have resigned herself to having sex with him. In losing her husband, she has suddenly lost her agency and power in the world of Norsefire.*



*In contrast to V’s complex, sophisticated art and literature, we see the “art” of Norsefire England: crude, racist cartoons about sex and violence. The “Storm Saxon” may be Moore’s caricature of the comic book heroes he would later satirize in [Watchmen](#) and *Swamp Thing*; although this one sinisterly reinforces racism and xenophobia.*



*It’s not clear who’s behind the terrorism in Scotland and Ireland—it could be V, or it could be others, inspired by V’s example. It’s also unclear what qualifies as terrorism for Norsefire: are the terrorists in Scotland merely blowing up government buildings, or are they killing innocent people, too? The line between “terrorist” and “freedom fighter” is especially blurred.*



*Alan Moore has expressed his fondness for William Burroughs’s “cut-up technique” (see [Background Info](#)), which we see in action here. The two television programs—the sex comedy and the news story—cut back and forth between one another, sometimes amusingly, sometimes horrifically. Moore adapts the literary technique for his graphic novel.*



*V seems perfectly willing to sacrifice his own life for the sake of his cause. We believe that he’d blow himself up, and so does Dascombe.*



Throughout London, V's videotape plays on television. In the video, V is sitting at a desk, speaking to the camera as if he were a reporter. V greets London and says that he'll begin.

*The chapter ends on a note of suspense, but V still seems totally in control. Everything has gone according to his plans, as far as we know.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4: A VOCATIONAL VIEWPOINT

As the chapter opens, V is beginning his broadcast across London. V begins by explaining why he's "called you here" to talk. Imitating a corporate manager, he explains that he's been disappointed in the human race's "performance," as if thinking about "letting it go."

*V has hijacked Norsefire's own powerful broadcasting system. This is a skillful act of "jujitsu"—because V is weaker than Norsefire, he cleverly uses Norsefire's strength against it. V speaks in riddles and metaphors, as usual.*



V goes on to explain that humans have been in existence for about ten thousand years. In this time, they've accomplished some incredible things: agriculture, putting a man on the Moon, etc. As V names these things, the corresponding photographs pop up behind him. V explains that these achievements don't change the fact that humans show a great reluctance to "move on" and become their own bosses. Humans have been offered a "promotion" many times, and turned it down. As V says this, photographs of the Buddha fade in behind him.

*V's speech is bold and accusatory: he criticizes the human race for refusing to "ascend" to a higher level—being unable to follow the words of its prophets and spiritual leaders (like Buddha, who taught peace and detachment from desire). To V, humans too often refuse to take control of themselves, and rely instead on dictators and tyrants to run their lives.*



As V's broadcast continues, we see the Leader watching it. Police officers race to the studio, ready to attack V. In his broadcast, V explains that "lately," the human race has been having problems: it's rowdy, it exploits lower-class workers, and it's cruel to its women and children—those it is supposed to love most. V acknowledges that "management has been terrible," and photographs of Stalin, Hitler, and other dictators pop up. Nevertheless, V insists, "who elected them?" As the broadcast continues, soldiers and police officers run into the building where V stands, still wired with explosives.

*As V makes his speech, we think about the corruption we've seen in Norsefire society: Bishops abusing children, men beating their wives, police officers attempting to rape prostitutes and then kill them. V's major point is that humans themselves are responsible for their own misery—they've entrusted great power to men like Hitler and Mussolini. It's as if humans want to be hurt and abused by their masters.*



Soldiers rush into the room where V is standing. The broadcast continues: in it, V explains that human beings have consistently made the same mistake, allowing criminals and murderers to rule over them. If humans don't "show improvement" in the next two years, V concludes, they're "fired." As V's broadcast concludes, soldiers open fire on V, and V falls through a window to the ground outside the TV building.

*V ends his message with a veiled threat. This reminds us that, for all his talk of liberty and human progress, V is technically a terrorist: he uses violence to further his ideology. It's ironic that V threatens to fire people at the exact instant that he seems to be shot by soldiers. V has always expected everything before, so we assume this isn't the end for him.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5: THE VACATION

Mr. Finch walks along a beach. He thinks, “Why the hell did I hit him?” The “him” is Peter Creedy, Derek Almond’s replacement at **the Finger**. Immediately after V finished broadcasting his message to London, Creedy was sent to meet with Mr. Finch at the broadcasting building. As Creedy and Finch survey the building, they notice V’s body lying on the ground, riddled with bullets. When they inspect the body, however, they find that “V” is actually Dascombe, wearing V’s **mask** and cloak—V has switched places with Dascombe to make his escape.

After discovering Dascombe’s body, Finch is furious, and lashes out at Creedy’s men. Creedy angrily defends his officers, noting that anyone can make a mistake. Finch yells at Creedy—“When is everybody going to learn?” Creedy sniggers and tells his men that Finch has been depressed since Delia—“that doctor he was kipping”—was murdered. Finch, furious, attacks Creedy. He tries to attack Creedy, but the Fingermen pull them apart.

After attacking Creedy, Finch was sent to the Leader, who was relatively lenient. Instead of firing Finch or killing him, he sent Finch on vacation to Norfolk—thus, he’s now walking on the beach. As he walks, Finch wonders if it was Dominic who told Creedy about Finch’s relationship with Delia—a relationship that has been going on for many years. Finch never knew about Delia’s experiences at Larkhill, however.

We cut to a building in London. The man who owns the building, named Gordon, has a new lodger. He prepares eggs and coffee for the lodger, and takes it to her. We see that his lodger is Evey. The man mentions “the bloke” Evey had been living with before she moved in. Evey shrugs and says that she doesn’t think about him anymore. We see that Evey is reading the paper, which has the headline, “**Guy Fawkes** Video Error.”

## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6: VARIETY

On March 8, 1998, a lounge singer sings about her fetish for men with “armbands” and “the triumphant will.” Evey is sitting with Gordon in the club, and she notes that she’s “a bit too drunk.” Evey likes Gordon, she thinks to herself. He’s an aging gangster who can protect her. Evey notices Rosemary Almond, whom Gordon knows through some of his underworld connections, sitting at a table by herself. No one will befriend her, because the last two men she’s been with have died.

*Thus far, Eric Finch has only appeared to us as a calm, rational detective, albeit one with misgivings about the morality of Norsefire. Here, we get to learn more about Finch’s personality. We also see that V has cleverly manipulated his enemies’ expectations, disguising Roger Dascombe as himself in order to make his invisible escape. V still remains one step ahead of Norsefire.*



*We learn for the first time that Finch and Delia were having an affair. There was no evidence in the earlier sections, and it’s possible that Moore, who published V for Vendetta serially, only thought of the idea after Book I was complete. It’s important to keep this in mind when reading, as Moore is, in essence, altering his artistic vision a little with each issue.*



*It’s surprising that the Leader doesn’t kill or arrest Finch, given Finch’s objections to the Leader’s regime. Perhaps this is meant to be another signal of Finch’s immense talent as a detective—and yet he still hasn’t tracked down V, or come even close to doing so.*



*This section shows us that Evey has temporarily rejected radicalism of any form—she’s “settled” into a complacent life with Gordon. Again the Norsefire propaganda machine uses various clumsy methods to control public opinion and explain away V’s actions. This section also marks the first time that Moore mentions V’s Guy Fawkes mask explicitly. (See Symbols and Background Information).*



*The art in Norsefire is, without exception, crude, propagandistic, and childish. Here, the lounge singer’s act is purely sexual and nationalistic (using language associated with Nazis)—it has no redeeming artistic value. Evey’s relationship with Gordon is remarkably similar to that between Evey and V—she turns to men for protection. She still craves a father-figure, and finds one in Gordon.*



As Evey sits in the club, she notices a gangster Gordon knows, named Robert, talking with another man. Robert begs the man—who we recognize as Peter Creedy—to help him save his mother. While Derek Almond was alive, Robert explains, there was “an understanding” that kept his mother from being sent to “a home.” Creedy impatiently explains that no such understanding exists anymore—Robert’s mother will have to be sent to the home. Robert insists that the “home” is really a gas chamber, and he begins to weep.

Evey watches as Robert cries. He screams, “We shouldn’t have to live like this,” and he begins pushing and shoving, and a fight breaks out. Quickly, Gordon leads Evey out of the club. Outside, Evey begins to weep too, saying that Robert was right—humans shouldn’t have to live like this. Gordon nods, and asks Evey what she’s going to do about it. As they walk away from the club, we see V watching them.

## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7: VISITORS

It is June 11, 1998. A man is running away from two other men, trying to get into a building before they catch him.

We then flash back to April 15, 1998. In Gordon’s building, Gordon tells Evey that she’ll need to leave soon, since he’ll be storing some items in her room. Gordon suggests that Evey stay in his room. Evey tentatively asks Gordon if he likes her, and in response, he kisses her. We see panels in which Evey and Gordon are having sex.

On June 11, 1998, Gordon runs through the door of his building, pursued by two men. He yells to Evey to hide in his room and be very quiet. Evey does so.

While Evey hides in Gordon’s room, the two men who’ve chased Gordon tell him to come outside—they just want to talk. They mention that Gordon owes them money from the items he’s been shipping on the black market. Gordon opens the door, willing to talk. When he does so, one of the men stabs him with a long sword, killing him.

*In this section, we learn new, shocking information about the Norsefire state: the elderly are sent to gas chambers when they’re too old to work. The heartlessness of the Fingermen is obvious—presumably Creedy has a mother of his own, whom he’s either protected using his influence, or sent to the gas chamber.*



*Even after Evey rejects V’s radicalism, she can’t entirely forget what she sees everyday. She recognizes that V is right to be dissatisfied with the status quo in England. The chapter ends with a reminder that V hasn’t disappeared from Evey’s life altogether—he’s still watching her, and presumably has new plans for her.*



*We open in medias res—we don’t know what’s going on, or why the man is running away. Moore jumps back and forth between dates in this chapter.*



*Evey’s desire for a father figure has a sexual side, and in this sense, Evey’s condition reflects Freud’s theory of the Electra complex (the female counterpart to the Oedipus complex). Freud theorized that women are attracted to their fathers, in a sexual way. As they grow older, women overcome this and become adults. Because Evey lost her father at a young age, however, she’s locked into an attraction for father figures.*



*Gordon protects Evey, but he can’t protect himself for very long.*



*Gordon’s willingness to reason with his enemies is his undoing—because he doesn’t resort to violence, he’s violently murdered. Evey and V debate about the merits of violence throughout V for Vendetta, and here we see why defensive violence may be justified.*



Hours after Gordon is stabbed, Evey comes downstairs and finds him dead. She's traumatized by the sight—she remembers the death of her mother, the disappearance of her father, and the disappearance of V. Slowly she walks back upstairs, opens a drawer by her bed, and pulls out a gun.

*After chapters of rejecting violence of any kind, Evey now decides to settle her scores on her own terms—using violence, but not as part of V's plans. The gun she takes from Gordon's room, it would seem, will be used to avenge Gordon.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8: VENGEANCE

Evey walks to the Kitty Kat Killer, the club where she saw Creedy in Chapter 6. On the way there, she bumps into Rosemary, who apologizes for startling her, and walks away.

*There's some satisfying dramatic irony in these kinds of (literal) run-ins. We know that Rosemary and Evey have a great deal in common, but neither Evey nor Rosemary recognizes this fact.*



Evey, carrying the gun she took from Gordon, waits in an alley by the stage door for the Kitty Kat Killer Club. After many hours, she sees a car pulling up. The two men who killed Gordon step out of the car, speaking in their distinctive Yorkshire accents, which Evey remembers hearing yesterday, when Gordon died. Evey is about to shoot the two men when a mysterious figure grabs the gun from her hand and wrestles her to the ground, knocking her out.

*The chapter ends on a mysterious note: we don't know who the figure is (although we can certainly hazard a guess), and we don't know why it's attacking Evey. Evey's first attempt at using violence for her own "vendetta" goes awry at the start.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 9: VICISSITUDE

The chapter opens in complete blackness. Evey is lying in a mysterious place. She smells **roses**, and thinks, half-dreaming, about her childhood.

*The presence of roses here might signal to us where Evey is, but for the time being, Evey has no idea where she is, or what's going on.*



Evey remembers a birthday party she had long ago. In the memory, she has to get ready before she can go to the party—something she finds annoying. Evey's father approaches her, urging her to hurry up so that she can see the Punch and Judy man he's hired. Evey follows her father up the stairs—stairs that remind her of "somewhere else" and depress her.

*In this strange dream sequence, we recognize motifs from V's home and personality: the staircase, the Punch and Judy man (whose face resembles the mask V wears while torturing Prothero), etc.*



At the top of the stairs, Evey's father—who now takes the form of Gordon, points her to a bedroom. Inside, Evey sees that the bedroom resembles the one where Bishop Lilliman tried to have sex with her. In bed, Evey kisses Gordon. Suddenly, her mother walks in. Evey realizes that she's sleeping with her father, and feels very guilty. Yet Evey's mother seems not to mind.

*In this section, we see Evey's Electra complex in its simplest and most overt form: she turns to various father figures for love, comfort, and sex: Gordon, V, and, in her dream, her father himself. The presence of Bishop Lilliman adds an interesting possibility: perhaps it's fair to say that Evey—and the people of England—turn to Norsefire because they crave a strong father-figure after the devastation of nuclear war.*





Evey leaves her mother and father and walks into a mysterious room that resembles an old folks' home she once visited. The Punch and Judy man is there to entertain the old people. Evey sees that the man is wearing a mask like the one V wore before he destroyed Lewis Prothero's doll collection. The masked man uses his club to knock the heads off of Lewis Prothero and Roger Dascombe. Evey wants someone to stop him, but no one does.

*Even in her dreams, Evey expresses her fear of V and V's violent methods of political activism. Perhaps the key theme to recognize here is the desire to "stop him." We've seen that the people of England recognize that their government is evil—but like Evey in her dream, the people of England are too weak, frightened, and complacent to do anything about it.*



Evey runs away from the Punch and Judy man, who follows her. She runs down the stairs, toward an elevator, shouting for her parents. No parents answer her—instead, the Punch and Judy man, who's now dressed like V, catches her, just as the elevator doors are about to open.

*The connection between Evey's dream and V is now more explicit: V is the sinister father figure who both helps and hurts Evey after her parents die.*



Suddenly, Evey wakes up from her dream. She's lying alone in a mysterious prison cell. Outside the cell, she sees the motto of the state written into the wall: "Strength through purity, purity through faith." Evey is terrified.

*The sight of Norsefire slogans by themselves is enough to terrify Evey and clue her in to the fact that she must be in a Norsefire prison, apprehended for who knows what.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 10: VERMIN

Evey sits in her prison cell. The only other life she can see is a rat, and even the rat eventually leaves. Occasionally, a guard shoves a tray of disgusting food under the cell door. Evey is hungry, but she still can't force herself to eat the food.

*We begin with Evey in a state of total imprisonment: she's in a cell, and can only think of the misery of her situation. Even a rat has more freedom than she does.*



One night, a guard wakes Evey from her sleep and drags her to an interrogation room. There, a strange, silhouetted figure asks her questions from behind a desk while the guard watches. The figure shows Evey surveillance footage of Evey being attacked by the **finger**men last November. Evey realizes that the figure knows about her relationship with V. Afterwards, the guard blindfolds Evey and takes her back to her cell.

*In this important expository section, we learn why Evey has been apprehended, and what the jailors want her to do: give up information about V. For the time being, Evey refuses to do so, presumably out of loyalty to V (who, after all, saved Evey's life).*



In the following days, the guard takes Evey to another room, where her hair is shaved off. After the guard takes Evey—now bald—back to her cell, Evey notices a small scrap of toilet paper sticking out of a corner of her room. Evey takes the toilet paper, and is startled to find that it contains a message, written by someone named Valerie.

*This section recalls the imagery of the Holocaust: Evey is shaved, humiliated, and deprived of any identity whatsoever. The dehumanizing measures that Norsefire directed at gays, blacks, and Pakistanis are now being directed at Evey herself. She's gone from an observer of victims to a victim herself.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 11: VALERIE

Evey has been in her prison cell for so long that she knows “every inch” of it. Every day, a guard tortures her by shoving her face into water, demanding information. Her only solace is the message from Valerie that she found in her cell.

Evey reads **Valerie’s letter**. Valerie begins by explaining that she was born in Nottingham in 1957. Growing up, she dreamed of being an actress, and when she was 14, she met her “first girlfriend,” Sara. Her teachers noticed that she was attracted to other girls, and told her that she would outgrow this “phase.” Valerie never did outgrow it. In 1976, she came out to her parents—and her mother said that she “broke her heart.” Shortly thereafter, Valerie moved to London. Valerie notes that she feels horrible about hurting her mother, but adds that she will never give up her own integrity—integrity is “only an inch,” but within it, all human beings are completely free. In the present, we see Evey being tortured before a shadowy figure who demands information from her. Evey refuses to give any information about V.

Evey continues reading **Valerie’s letter**. In London, Valerie became an acclaimed actress, starring in *The Salt Flats*. There, Valerie befriended her costar, an actress named Ruth. Ruth sent Valerie **roses**, and shortly afterwards, they became lovers. These were the best years of Valerie’s life, but they came to an abrupt halt in 1988 with “the war”—after the war, there were no more roses for anybody.

In 1992, after the Norsefire party gained control of England, Ruth was abducted from her home, along with millions of other homosexuals. The police tortured Ruth and forced her to give up Valerie’s name. Valerie continues to love Ruth, and doesn’t fault her for betraying her. After signing a statement saying that Valerie “seduced her,” Ruth killed herself in her cell. Valerie thinks that Ruth couldn’t stand having given up “that last inch.”

After Ruth named Valerie to the police, Valerie was arrested and imprisoned. Her films were burned, and her head was shaved. Valerie notes that another gay woman, Rita, died in her prison only two weeks ago—Valerie realizes that she’ll die very soon. But she writes that despite everything, for three years she had **roses**—thus, there is an inch of her that will never perish. As we read this, we see Evey being tortured, day after day, and refusing to give up information.

*The chapter begins with a key word, “inch.” This word will recur several times in the chapter, signifying a slightly different thing each time.*



*Valerie’s letter seems life-saving to Evey, showing the power of words and communication. The letter is the only thing that keeps Evey going while she’s in prison (see Symbols for more). Valerie’s situation is heartbreaking: she does nothing wrong, and is punished for something she has no control over. The greatest tragedy in Valerie’s situation is that she’s not unique: millions of homosexuals have struggled with the same adversity (in the real world, not just Norsefire), and some of them were murdered for their “crimes.” It’s important that Moore is writing about Valerie at the height of the AIDS crisis, when gays were demonized, and religious leaders like Jerry Falwell even called for their deaths.*



*We can’t help but see a link between V’s roses and Valerie’s roses. For Valerie, roses are a symbol of happiness and contentment. For V, they symbolize a theatrical kind of vengeance and violence. It’s as if the war nuclear war changed the meaning of objects: a rose is now a symbol of tragedy.*



*The “inch” to which Valerie alludes is, among other things, integrity, honesty, self-respect, and love. Valerie steers Evey toward the conclusion that even a totalitarian government can’t entirely deprive humans of their freedom. As long as humans maintain control of this final “inch,” they retain freedom and humanity.*



*Valerie is deprived of her identity, just as Evey is: her head is shaved and her art is destroyed. In this way, Valerie embodies the fate of entire demographic groups under Norsefire. At this point, it seems that Evey has taken Valerie’s example to heart: she refuses to give up her “last inch.”*



Valerie's message concludes with an address directly to the reader. Valerie says that she has no idea who "you" are," but that she loves "you." She stresses that the prison knows every inch of her, "except one." Evey weeps as she reads these words, and kisses Valerie's **letter**.

*Valerie's message to Evey encapsulates everything V has tried to teach her. While Fascist governments may terrorize their own people, people are ultimately responsible for their own freedom. Even in the most horrifying of circumstances, there is always an "inch" that remains under one's control.*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 12: THE VERDICT

The chapter opens with Evey sitting in a dark room, with a guard standing next to her. The same shadowy figure that has demanded information of her reads a statement. In the statement, Evey confesses to being kidnapped by V, aiding in the murder of Derek Almond, Anthony Lilliman, Roger Dascombe, and others. The figure asks Evey to sign this statement. Evey quietly refuses to do so. The figure pauses, then tells the guard to take Evey outside and shoot her.

*In this crucial scene, Evey is given an opportunity to save her life, at the expense of her "final inch." Rather than sacrifice her own self-respect and integrity, Evey refuses to name names. This suggests that she's come to value integrity even more highly than life itself—a paradoxical conclusion, but perhaps one on which human dignity rests.*



Back in her cell, Evey reads Valerie's **letter** one more time. The guard comes to take her to her death. The guard suggests that it's not too late for Evey to save her life: she can still sign the statement. Evey quietly declines to do so—she says that she'd prefer to die. The guard replies, "Then there's nothing left to threaten with, is there? You are free." Evey turns, surprised, and finds that the guard is no longer standing in her cell—she's all alone.

*Here, after weeks of torture (if not months), Evey realizes that she's all alone. This is a literal way of showing what we already recognized was true: Evey's own greatest opponent was her own cowardice and weakness. Now that she's proven her strength by refusing to sacrifice her integrity, she realizes that she is truly free, and can do as she wishes.*



Evey cautiously walks through the door of her cell. She sees the guard standing in the distance, and then she realizes that the guard isn't real—it's a dummy, being wheeled around on a small dolly. Astonished, Evey continues walking through her prison. She goes to the room where she was sentenced to death only a few moments ago. There, she finds the shadowy figure, still seated. She turns on a light and realizes that the figure is a dummy, too. She notices a tape recorder, and plays it—she hears the same death sentence she's already received.

*It's remarkable, in retrospect, that Evey was fooled into believing that she was in a Norsefire prison simply because she saw a sign with the Norsefire slogans on it. This is another reminder of the power of symbols: here they can strike fear into a person's heart and rob her of her reason. We can sense V's presence in this section: the use of tape recorders and dummies sounds exactly like him.*



Evey walks out of the room and toward a door. She finds that it's unlocked. Amazed, she walks through the door, up a staircase, and finds herself in the main room of the Shadow Gallery. V is standing in the center of the room, wearing his usual cloak and **mask**. He says, "Welcome home."

*At this point, V's involvement in Evey's kidnapping is plain: only V would set up such an elaborate hoax for Evey. It remains to be seen how Evey will take the news that her torture was merely a "lesson."*



## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 13: VALUES

Evey looks at V, stunned. She's just learned that V staged her kidnapping, her imprisonment, and her torture. V nods—he admits that it was “only me.” He did this, he insists, because he loves Evey, and wanted to free her. Evey screams at V. She didn't need to be free, she insists—she was happy. V nods and tells Evey that happiness is the most “insidious prison of all.”

Evey continues screaming at V. She found love and affection with Gordon, she tells him. V explains that Gordon was only a “better kind of prisoner.” Eventually, another “inmate” in the prison of society stabbed Gordon. Evey asks V how he could possibly know this, and V replies that Gordon's story isn't uncommon. Evey runs away from V, trying to escape from the Shadow Gallery. V follows Evey calmly. He didn't imprison Evey at all, he insists—he just showed her the bars. Evey is only screaming, he maintains, because freedom is a terrifying thing.

Evey collapses at V's feet, screaming and weeping. V encourages Evey to let out her feelings—she's “so close” to being completely free. He gently pulls Evey to her feet and leads her to the roof of his home, noting that there will be “no more blindfolds.”

V and Evey reach the roof of the Shadow Gallery. It is cold and raining. There, V tells Evey to become “transfixed and transfigured.” Evey screams into the rain.

## BOOK 2, CHAPTER 14: VIGNETTES

It is September 3, 1998 at **the Nose**. Mr. Finch has returned from his vacation. He's sitting with Dominic, discussing upcoming deadlines and duties he must attend to. He acknowledges that he hasn't done any work since returning from the beach. Dominic and Finch note that it's been six months since they've heard anything from V—perhaps his work is “all over.”

*V believes that Evey needed to be freed from her own desire to be happy—as happiness can lead to complacency, and freedom is not a necessary aspect of happiness, so the desire to remain happy can make one look the other way regarding tyranny and oppression.*



*In this section, V makes an important distinction between radicalism and progressivism. V is a radical: he thinks that society is poisoned by its corruption and Fascism, and the only solution is to destroy the government altogether. Gordon, by contrast, was a progressive: he saw some problems in society, but still wanted to survive within it, helping a few other people to survive along with him. In V's view, Gordon is a prisoner, just as Evey was. Moore reminds us that freedom is a complex thing: V believes that freedom consists of diligent education and training.*



*The lack of blindfolds in this scene suggest that Evey really has matured in the course of the last few chapters: she's no longer blinded by her desire for happiness or contentment, and thus can see her society for what it really is.*



*Freedom is a strange, terrifying thing, Moore suggests—a struggle in which there's no guarantee of success or happiness. Nevertheless, freedom over one's integrity and bravery is of the upmost importance: it is better to be free and struggling than imprisoned and naively happy.*



*We know full well that V's work isn't over at all: V is only preparing for a larger, more impressive “finale.”*



In the Shadow Gallery, V sits at the piano. Evey walks into the room and kisses V's **mask**. She thanks him for setting her free. V tells Evey that he didn't do anything—she set herself free. Evey shows V Valerie's **letter**, and notes that he put an extraordinary amount of work into making it convincing. V shakes his head—the letter, he insists, is real. He read it, just as Evey did, five years ago, and was transformed by it. He shows Evey Valerie's movie posters and footage of her face.

Backstage at the Kitty Kat Killer, Rosemary Almond weeps, alone. She's become a showgirl, entertaining the patrons of the club. The announcer bursts into the room, telling Rosemary that she has to go onstage soon. Rosemary explains that she's feeling ill. The announcer nods, placing his hand on her shoulder. He tells her that he'll "keep her company" backstage.

Back at the Shadow Gallery, V shows Evey a huge garden of **roses**, and explains that he's grown them in honor of Valerie. From time to time, he plucks a rose and gives it to one of his victims. V tells Evey that on the day he abducted her, she was about to kill a man named Alistair ("Ally") Harper—one of the men responsible for killing Gordon. V says that if Evey plucks a rose and gives it to V, V promises to kill Harper. Evey is about to pluck the rose when she changes her mind. "Let it grow," she tells V.

At **the Head**, the Leader sits before the Fate Computer. Suddenly, he sees a message on the computer screen: "I love you." He is so surprised that he cries out. Guards burst in and ask if he's all right—he replies that he's fine, and they leave.

At the Shadow Gallery, Evey asks V what he's going to do next. V explains that it's almost time for the "finale." He's going to give the world "what Valerie wanted"—**roses**. Abruptly, he presses a button, and the room turns into a dance floor, complete with a disco ball. He and Evey dance together, very slowly. He'll need her services, he explains, but not for some time.

*Here, Evey makes it clear that she's come to accept her "education." This may be a difficult thing for some readers to accept. One of the more overt paradoxes in Evey's situation is the fact that she's been forcibly led to freedom. V shows that Valerie's letter inspired him just as it inspired Evey.*



*It's jarring, after Evey's transformation into a free agent, to see Rosemary still in the "cage" of society. Rosemary and Evey were both in distress in previous chapters, but where Evey has found new reserves of strength and courage, Rosemary has turned to domineering men for comfort and help.*



*Part of Evey being truly free means that she can refuse to play by V's rules. Instead of following V's violent methods, she decides to spare Harper. Her statement, "let it grow," is almost a pun (sounds a lot like "let it go"), suggesting that Evey is putting Gordon's murder behind her—but it also might imply that she's saving the rose for a more important victim. The full importance of this scene lies in the fact that Evey isn't obeying V's every command anymore. Although she's come to embrace many of his views, she no longer regards him as an infallible father figure.*



*The more we see the Leader in his headquarters in the Head, the more he seems like he too is a prisoner. Just as Evey found herself trapped in a small cell, Susan never seems to leave headquarters, tied to a computer that seems to be coming to life.*



*We end on a note of suspense: V is planning something, but it's not clear what. In the meantime, we can savor Evey's growth and maturity: she's transformed from a frightened young woman to an intelligent, self-controlled adult, capable of making her own decisions and moral judgments.*





## BOOK 3, PROLOGUE

It is November 5, 1998. At **the Ear**, Mr. Etheridge, a high-level executive, sits alone. Dominic enters the room and asks him if he's seen Mr. Finch lately. Mr. Etheridge replies that he hasn't. Dominic explains that Mr. Finch has been acting strange ever since he returned from his vacation. He reads books by Arthur Koestler, the 20th century writer who campaigned for the right to die with dignity, and later killed himself. Etheridge asks Dominic how the "terrorist case" is coming along, and Dominic replies that things have been quiet lately.

At the Shadow Gallery, Evey calls to V—she's moving some things out of her room, since she doesn't need them anymore. V nods, and takes these things into a closet—we see that they include the book about "the Land of Do-As-You-Please." Evey asks V what he's planning to do to London, and when. V tells Evey to be patient: "it'll all be over by Christmas." We see him going to the roof, where he's placed a copy of the orchestral sheet music for Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.

At **the Head**, the Leader stands before the Fate Computer, enraptured. He praises Fate as the ultimate force in the universe, and begs it to answer one question "Am I loved?" He remembers seeing the words "I love you" on the computer, and begs Fate for another sign. He collapses before the screen.

V stands on the roof of his home, mock-conducting the skyline. Suddenly, there is an enormous explosion, and multiple buildings—including **the Ear** and **Eye** headquarters—burst into flames. Outside the Eye, Conrad Heyer rushes away from the flames, followed by Helen Heyer, who yells at her husband for abandoning her inside the building. Suddenly, Dominic runs to Conrad—he left the Ear seconds before it exploded: Mr. Etheridge is surely dead. We cut back to V, who continues to "conduct" the burning skyline.

At **the Head**, the Leader receives an urgent message: the broadcasting headquarters at Jordan Tower have been blown up along with **the Ear** and **the Eye**. The Leader has no way to broadcast to London now. Suddenly, the Leader hears a voice coming from the television screen: "Good evening London," it says, "this is the **Voice of Fate**."

*In this opening scene, we see Finch taking on some of the qualities of V, his supposed nemesis. Like V, Finch reads literature—indeed, literature from long ago (it's possible that Koestler has been banned by the government). Moore also gives us some subtle foreshadowing with the date—it is Guy Fawkes' day, and so V probably won't stay "quiet" for long.*



*There are many allusions in this section. The Land of Do-As-You-Please has already figured prominently in the graphic novel, and here it comes to stand for the state of anarchy that V is intent on producing in England. It's also significant that V brings up the 1812 Overture, a paean to Napoleon's revolution in Europe, which resulted in the deposing of dozens of monarchs.*



*The message "I love you" on the Fate Computer has seemingly driven Adam Susan insane: he spends all his time before the computer, imprisoned by his love for Fate, domination, and control.*



*In contrast to V's calm command of the situation, here we see government authorities displaying their cowardice and weakness. Conrad Heyer isn't even brave enough to help his own wife, Helen. In all, V's attack destroys the most important parts of the Norsefire state: Moore doesn't go into any detail about how V "orchestrated" these bombings, suggesting that for the superhuman V, it was easy.*



*Once again, V has hijacked the weapons of the Norsefire government and used them to advance his own political goals. Here, he uses the broadcasting system to send his messages throughout the city—he is the new "Voice of Fate," declaring the inevitability of anarchy.*



We see the “**Voice of Fate**” broadcasting in radios and televisions all over London. The voice announces that 400 years ago, a great man made a “Great contribution” to culture. In honor of this man, the voice continues, the government of London will return the rights of secrecy and privacy to its citizens. For the next three days, citizens will be able to “do as they wish” without being monitored or followed. We then cut back to V, who is clearly the voice of the broadcast. He leaves the roof of his building.

The “great man”: to whom V alludes is clearly Guy Fawkes, who attempted to blow up Parliament under the rule of King James. It’s interesting that V acts as the voice of Norsefire, rather than an alternative to Norsefire—he’s using Norsefire’s authority to undermine all authority, allowing the people of London to run wild for three days—like children without their tyrannical father.



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 1: VOX POPULI

It is November 6, 1998. A young girl walks through the streets of London. She remembers a conversation she’s heard her parents having, about the complete lack of surveillance people will enjoy in the next three days. Gleefully, the girl spray-paints the word “bollocks” onto the ground, chanting “Bollocks Mr. Susan, bollocks Fate.” On the wall, she spray-paints the same “V” symbol that V makes.

Here we see the power of V’s symbols in action. V’s “V” symbol has become so ubiquitous that children are scrawling it on walls across England. It’s significant that we see a child rebelling. Moore acknowledges that there is something childish about rebellion: before it can evolve into a sophisticated movement, it’s a crude, instinctual response to unwanted authority.



The Leader sits in his room, contemplating how to control London without the help of the **Voice of Fate**. Mr. Creedy, who’s standing behind the Leader, points out that London has been quiet so far, but adds that security will be weak because police officers will want leave to attend the funeral of Mr. Etheridge. The Leader nods and says that it would be foolish to grant them this leave at such a dangerous time—although he notes that Etheridge’s wife will be hurt if no one comes to her husband’s funeral.

We see the Leader at his most heartless. Just as he denied Rosemary Almond a pension after the death of his loyal servant, Derek Almond, he’s now refusing the police force the right to attend the funeral of their superior. This is a huge tactical error, and suggests that the Leader’s Fascist authoritarianism is backfiring—resulting in followers who aren’t as devoted as they used to be.



Soldiers march through the streets of London, shouting for citizens to remain calm—“nothing is happening.” We see the people of London taking advantage of the lack of surveillance: buying food on the black market, looting grocery stores, etc.

The authority of soldiers is now laughably meager: all they can do is deny what’s happening all around them.



During the three days without surveillance, Rosemary Almond goes to Alistair Harper, a gangster at the Kitty Kat Killer Club, and asks to buy a gun. Harper agrees to give her a weapon.

We’re not told what Rosemary hopes to do with her gun, but we can be sure that this weapon will figure in the final chapters of the graphic novel: as Chekhov said, “If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired.”



We see scenes of riots and police brutality throughout London. Two police officers discuss the murder of a Londoner—the police shot her “as if she was a Paki.” As this conversation goes on, we shift to a view of V’s smiling **mask**. V notes that the “silent majority” is easily destroyed—all it takes is one loud noise. We see people screaming and shouting at the police, furious at the officers’ cruelty. V notes that people are “much, much louder” than the government cares to remember.

*The riots occurring throughout London are clearly what V had intended during the three days following his attacks on the Ear and the Eye. But it’s not clear if this is what V wants from the people of England: is this V’s idea of total freedom, or a prerequisite for it? Or is it freedom gone immaturely astray?*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 2: VERWIRRUNG

On November 6, 1998, the police force is overwhelmed by the wave of crime throughout London, and resort to using tear gas to subdue the people. As we hear police officers calling for backup, V, carrying a mysterious suitcase, walks toward Evey. Evey asks V if London has become the “Land of Do-As-You-Please.” V denies this, saying that at the moment, London is the “Land of Take-What-You-Want.” The absence of leaders doesn’t necessarily imply a lack of order—eventually, V maintains, the people will voluntarily choose order. For the time being, however, London will experience an era of “Verwirrung”—total chaos.

*In this opening section, V effectively answers the question that Moore raised at the end of the last chapter: V does want the people of England to riot, at least in the short term. But ultimately, V wants them to voluntarily choose peace and security for themselves. There is nothing wrong with order, V maintains, as long as it is rationally consented to (this parallels Rousseau’s notion of the “Social Contract”). It’s not clear what sort of authority V wants the people of London to agree to, but perhaps this is the point: V has no control over what they do. He wants them to choose for themselves.*



At **the Head**, the Leader sits staring at his computer, reasoning that he’s entitled to some “tenderness” while England runs its course. The Leader watches and moans with pleasure as the Fate Computer tabulates the destruction of the world. Outside, the guards hear his moaning, and look at each other, disturbed.

*The Leader seems weaker and more childish than ever. While his kingdom collapses around him, Susan selfishly turns to the Fate Computer and rejects humanity altogether. Even Susan’s guards are beginning to doubt if the man they’re protecting is worth obeying.*



Outside the Kitty Kat Killer Club, Rosemary Almond meets Alistair Harper, who’d agreed to sell her a gun. He gives her the weapon and advises her to go home immediately—there will be riots in the streets soon.

*It’s still not clear what Rosemary intends to do with her gun, but Moore uses these sections to continue to build up suspense.*



As Rosemary leaves, a group of Fingermen, including Mr. Creedy, approaches Harper, whom they address as Ally. Creedy tells Ally that he’ll be paid for recruiting gangsters to work for the Fingermen—the **Finger** has been recruiting “peacekeepers,” since they’ve been stretched thin lately.

*In an ironic twist of fate, the law enforcement officers of England are now turning to criminals for help running the country. This makes explicit what was already clear from the start: the law enforcement of England is criminal.*



Conrad and Helen Heyer discuss the state of London with each other. As Conrad washes Helen’s back, Helen explains that Mr. Creedy is waiting for the Leader’s forces to crack so that he can stage a coup. Helen insists that she wants Conrad to become the new Leader of England. Helen smirks, and tells Conrad that she could almost admire him—if his success wasn’t entirely due to her efforts.

*An obvious question arises here: why doesn’t Helen Heyer make herself the ruler of England? Why would she have to engineer a situation where her foolish husband becomes the Leader? The obvious answer is that Helen Heyer is a woman—in the harsh, sexist society of Norsefire, she has no chance of being taken seriously as Leader.*



In the Shadow Gallery, V leads Evey down into a room Evey has never seen before, explaining that he's taking Evey to meet his "secret mistress." As V leads Evey, we cut to Mr. Finch's house. Dominic leaves a message on Finch's answering machine, begging him to come into work—everything is "going to bits."

*The people are now rising up against their rulers and each other. Some authorities, such as Adam Susan, pretend that all is well. Others, convinced that the government is falling apart, desperately try to take advantage and seize power for themselves.*



V leads Evey into a room. As they walk, V explains that he and the Leader have loved the same woman for many years. The Leader stole this woman away from V, corrupting her and mistreating her. V will avenge this cuckoldry, he explains, by stealing back the Leader's *other* lover, with whom he's been having "an affair" for many years. With these words, we see V sitting before a vast computer screen that looks like the Fate Computer.

*In this section, we learn the truth about V: he has been secretly controlling the Fate Computer all along. This helps us understand how V has been able to blow up government buildings, escape Fingermen's detection, etc. It also explains why the Fate Computer said "I love you"—V hacked into it and used it to drive Adam Susan insane.*



### BOOK 3, CHAPTER 3: VARIOUS VALENTINES

It is November 7, 1998. At the new **Nose** building, Dominic has taken over as the new head—Mr. Finch has been mysteriously absent from his post. Dominic explains to one of his subordinates that mysterious poems have been circulated throughout England. In Manchester, there have been riots over food shortages—shortages which were caused by a computer error.

*In a nice touch of dramatic irony, V has apparently used the Fate Computer to cause riots throughout England. While we recognize this fact, the people at the Nose do not: they continue to believe that Fate is utterly unbreakable, thus putting their trust in a dangerous "false idol."*



At the Kitty Kat Killer Club, Alistair Harper proceeds with recruiting gangsters to help him subdue the rioters. Mr. Creedy greets "Ally" and asks how his work is going—Ally explains that he's recruited many so far. Creedy compliments him on his efforts, and hints that he'd like to have a permanent "auxiliary force" headed by Ally. Ally also notes the stack of cryptic letters that the club has received recently—letters similar, we recognize, to those that Dominic was just discussing. We then see a close-up of V, stacking dominoes on the floor.

*It had already been suggested that Peter Creedy was trying to use his private army to wage war against the Leader, and here Creedy makes his plan even more explicit. With our omniscient view as readers, we can watch Creedy and Harper futilely conspiring to control the government at the same time that V—a far cleverer man—is preparing to destroy government altogether.*



Ally goes to meet with Helen Heyer, whom he knows is the wife of Conrad Heyer, the head of **the Eye**. Helen explains to Ally that Creedy is planning a military coup, to be fought with Ally's private army. Ally pretends not to know what Helen is talking about, but Helen insists that she'll pay him more money to fight on Conrad's side, not Creedy's. Helen tells Ally that if he listens to her, he'll be running the Eye soon enough.

*Helen cleverly and efficiently sways Harper's loyalty: she offers him better money and a better position. Harper seems like "Exhibit A" for V's critique of English society: he's utterly amoral, and totally imprisoned by his desire for money and power. This makes him extremely easy to manipulate.*



We cut to Rosemary Almond, still performing as a showgirl at the Kitty Kat Killer Club. She thinks about how at one time, she and Derek were going to settle down in the country. Then, in 1992, Derek joined "the party." Now that he's dead, Derek has left Rosemary to humiliate herself—she can barely sleep anymore, and keeps a gun beneath her pillow.

*It's unclear if Rosemary is planning to use the gun to kill herself or someone else. In any event, it's poignant to see how Rosemary's life has been ruined by the influence of the Norsefire party.*



We cut to Mr. Finch, who is walking through the country outside London. Finch thinks about Delia. Eventually, he comes to Larkhill Camp, and thinks, “This is where it ends.”

In the Shadow Gallery, V continues stacking dominoes. Evey enters the room, and notes that V is “almost finished.” V nods, and notes that soon, everyone will be able to see the “grand significance” of V’s plan. As V talks to Evey, we cut to Dominic, still puzzling over the letters that have been circulating throughout the country. Suddenly, he seems to have an epiphany—his jaw drops. Dominic runs out of his office, and we see the letter he’s been reading: “You say you have a clockwork love who feeds and cares for you. But I’ve read all her diaries. And I know that she’s untrue.”

V stands up, looking at the rows of dominoes he’s set up. The dominoes are arranged in the shape of his trademark “V” symbol. V notes, ironically, that it’s taken a long time for the Leader to build up his “pretty empire.” Now, with a simple push, V will be able to bring it all down.

As the chapter begins, Dominic bursts into the Leader’s office. Without any introductions, Dominic explains that he knows how V has been orchestrating his terrorist attacks: V has had access to the Fate Computer for years now. In this way, V has engineered food shortages in Manchester and distributed “subversive” leaflets throughout England. As Dominic explains this, he notices that the Leader is burying his face in his hands. He looks at the computer screen, and sees a “V” symbol.

## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 4: VESTIGES

On November 7, 1998, Eric Finch arrives at Larkhill Camp. He realizes why he’s failed to catch V—he’s been unable to think like V. In order to do so, he decides he will take LSD. He takes four tablets and walks through the ruins of the camp. He notices barbed wire, brick buildings, and what appear to be the remains of human corpses. Suddenly, the drugs set in, and Finch instantly regrets his decision—taking LSD at Larkhill will be terrifying.

*In a strange turn of events, Finch decides to get into V’s mindset by following in V’s footsteps, and going to Larkhill Prison.*



*In a good example of the “cut-up” technique, V comments on the “grand significance” of his plan at the exact moment that Dominic realizes it as well. We can sense that the “clockwork love” V refers to is the Fate Computer: Dominic has finally deduced that V can control Fate. At the same time, the poem reminds us of Delia’s diary, especially because of Finch’s current presence at Larkhill. Subtly, Moore reminds us that Delia’s diary may have been “untrue”—forged by V to throw Finch off the scent. (Ironically, this would make Finch’s trip to Larkhill futile.)*



*Throughout the graphic novel, we’ve seen the weakness of the English Norsefire party contrasted with the strength and wiliness of V’s enterprises. Now, it seems, V is about to dismantle Norsefire forever.*



*Adam Susan’s emotional reaction to the news that V controls Fate parallels Prothero’s emotional reaction to the destruction of his dolls. V is an expert at manipulating his enemies, using their loves and obsessions to drive them insane. The V symbol on the screen of Fate is like a flag V has planted there—he’s finally defeated the Leader, stealing Susan’s “lover” away from him.*



*Finch takes an acid trip to simulate V’s atypical state of mind. (Four tabs is far more than anyone should take on their first time—something Alan Moore, a vocal proponent of acid use, knows very well.) Finch’s struggle in this section parallels Evey’s: the road to freedom is long, and frequently terrifying.*





Finch looks up, and sees the faces of his old friends—blacks, homosexuals, and other “subversives.” In his youth, Finch used to attend protests and demonstrations with his friends—now, his friends have all gone. He watches as they run away, into the brick walls of Larkhill.

Finch walks into a building of Larkhill, where he’s surprised to find Delia, cooking dinner. Finch confesses that he’s taken drugs. Delia nods and points him toward two men, Lewis Prothero and Anthony Lilliman. They lead Finch into the depths of the camp, promising to fill him with poison.

Finch feels himself floating into the very room where V once lived: Room Five. As he lies in Room Five, Finch realizes that he, and he alone, is responsible for imprisoning himself in this place. As soon as he realizes this, Finch finds himself outside Larkhill. He screams, “I’m free!” and raises his hands into the air, just as Evey did after being freed from her prison.

Stripped naked, Finch wanders into the distance, chanting words that begin with “V.” Eventually, he finds himself in Stonehenge, just as the sun is rising.

*We learn more about Finch in this section: he was once a friend to the very minorities whom Norsefire exterminated. Perhaps Finch even helped to exterminate them in his role as a government official. This helps us understand why Finch loved Delia: they could understand each other’s guilt.*



*Like V himself, Finch is filled with drugs and escorted into the depths of Larkhill. Moore is a frequent user of LSD, and has said in interviews that he encourages people to use the drug to open up new creative parts of their minds.*



*Finch’s epiphany resembles that of both V and Evey. It remains to be seen what form Finch’s “freedom” will take, but perhaps Moore wants us to think that Finch, like Evey, will distance himself from the government and Norsefire society.*



*Moore endows the scene with a religious significance by setting the action at Stonehenge, the famous English landmark where Druids used to practice their mysterious religion thousands of years ago. It’s hinted that Finch has learned how to “think” like V—intuitively, using games and wordplay.*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 5: THE VALEDICTION

It is November 7, 1998, and we are in the Shadow Gallery. Evey asks V if he’s “going to do something.” V answers, cryptically, that the chaos is “progressing splendidly” without him—for now, he’s just watching. Unconvinced, Evey repeats her question, demanding to know what V plans to do next. V agrees to show Evey.

As V leads Evey to the Fate Computer, Evey asks V why he insists on expressing himself in such cryptic ways. V answers that he’s giving Evey knowledge, which is like air—he must teach Evey to breathe it. Evey is infuriated by this answer. V shows Evey the Fate Computer and explains that in Norsefire, bureaucracy is reality: thus, by changing the information in Fate, he will change reality. With this, he leads Evey away from the computer, to a new room.

*In this scene, we see tension between Evey and V. We’ve seen them disagree over the role of violence in anarchism before, and here Evey is desperate for information—she doesn’t want to be kept in the dark about V’s plans for destroying Norsefire.*



*Instead of explaining himself in plain English, V continues to speak in riddles, allusion, and poetry. By this point we’re used to this, but we can still sympathize with Evey’s anger and frustration. She wants to take action against Norsefire, and suddenly finds that V won’t tell her how to do so, at least not explicitly.*



In the new room of the Shadow Gallery, V shows Evey a huge wall of televisions. These televisions, V explains, continue to show surveillance footage of everywhere in London, despite the fact that the government's surveillance footage has been blacked out for days. Alluding to Dante's *Inferno*, V explains that the television represents an inverted hill: when he and Evey climb to the bottom of this hill, they'll be able to see for miles.

*For not the first time in the graphic novel, we're reminded that V's methods parallel those of the Leader himself—just as Susan uses surveillance to control his people, V uses surveillance to cause riots and manipulate his enemies. It's not clear if V's methods are justified by his anarchistic goals—Moore leaves this up to us to decide.*



V leads Evey to another room: there, he shows her chemicals, instruction books, and other tools for making explosives and drugs. Next, he takes her to the "rose room," where V grows roses for the men he's planning to kill. Evey asks V if there's a rose for the Leader. V says that he's growing this rose elsewhere.

*The irony of Evey's frustration with V is that V is explaining himself clearly, even if Evey can't understand him. It's clear to us, watching V lead Evey through the Shadow Gallery, that V wants Evey to inherit his role soon. This is why he's showing her the tools and weapons available to her.*



V leads Evey down a staircase into the lower rooms of the Shadow Gallery. He gives her a small parcel, and after Evey takes it, V explains that it contains gelignite, a powerful explosive. Evey is shocked, saying that she won't kill anyone on V's behalf. V doesn't respond, but says that anarchy has two faces: one of creation, one of destruction.

*Evey still refuses to kill anyone on behalf of the ideals of freedom. By making one of his protagonists violent and the other non-violent, Moore allows us to decide between the two viewpoints.*



V leads Evey into the lowest room of the Shadow Gallery. There, Evey finds a beautiful, old-fashioned train on train tracks, which stretch down a tunnel, far into the distance. V instructs Evey to place the gelignite inside the train. Inside, Evey finds some beautiful lilies. She asks V what the train is for, but V doesn't answer.

*We can guess what the train is for, since V has already said that he's growing flowers for Susan's death. Nevertheless, Evey continues to remain in the dark about the details and the scope of V's plan.*



V leads Evey back up the stairs. Evey protests that V speaks to her in "crossword puzzles." She demands of V, "What are you trying to tell me?" V doesn't answer, but we see, in close-up, the title of one of V's books: *Farewell, My Lovely*.

*As we end the chapter, we're given a fairly unambiguous signal of V's plans: V will die, and Evey will inherit his home and equipment.*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 6: VECTORS

It is November 9, 1998. Conrad Heyer sits below Helen Heyer, massaging her feet. As she reads through a binder of government information, Helen explains that the Leader is scheduled to appear before the public to restore confidence in the government. This is a risky idea, she acknowledges, because it's rumored that the Leader is slowly going insane. She guesses that Mr. Creedy organized the speech in the hope that the Leader's insanity would cause further riots and allow him to stage his coup.

*Once again, we see that Helen Heyer's drive, ambition, and intellect far outstrips that of any of the men in Norsefire. Yet Helen Heyer herself can never be the Leader of England—she's a woman. Conrad Heyer, for his part, seems utterly weak and powerless: he's massaging his wife's feet as if he's her slave.*



As Conrad continues rubbing his wife's feet, he mentions that when Creedy is the Leader, he'll have a difficult time running the country. Helen whacks Conrad in the face with her binder. She stresses that Conrad will be the Leader soon, and walks out of the room.

Mr. Creedy meets with Alistair Harper early one morning. Walking through the streets (surrounded by guards), Harper cheerily tells Creedy that his predecessor at **the Finger**, Derek Almond, was a superior man—yet even Almond died because of his job. Creedy, Harper continues, isn't "superior" at all. With this, Harper walks away. Creedy is disturbed and suspicious after this conversation.

Rosemary Almond dresses herself one morning. She takes an old photograph of herself standing with Derek Almond, and walks out of the room. We then cut to a room, in which Helen Heyer stands naked. She's explaining to someone (off-screen) that every bedroom in London has a camera—nevertheless, she says, the cameras haven't been working lately. We see that the man she's talking to is Alistair Harper. Helen explains to Harper that she's carefully maneuvered Conrad, her husband, to the point where he can assume power after the Leader is deposed. We see that V is watching Helen and Harper talk, using his own access to the Fate Computer and London's surveillance cameras.

At **the Head**, the Leader sits in his chair, silent and seemingly grieving. A guard enters the room and tells him that a motorcade is ready to take him to his speech. The Leader kisses the Fate Computer, whispers, "I forgive you," and walks out.

Eric Finch, unshaven and dirty-looking, walks through the streets outside London. He continues muttering words that begin with "V" to himself, trying to think like "the terrorist" thinks. Suddenly, he finds himself standing in front of the Victoria subway station. "Of course!" he cries.

*Helen's cruelty and violence parallels that of Derek Almond's earlier in the graphic novel—she has the right temperament to be in the Norsefire government.*



*Harper is clearly planning to attack Creedy in the near future—he seems to be getting pleasure out of hinting at this possibility with riddles and double entendres, much as V speaks in allusions and puns.*



*Curiously, V now takes on the role of Adam Susan or Conrad Heyer—watching the goings-on of Englanders. We can guess that V will use this new information to manipulate both Helen and Alistair. The scene is also important because it reminds us that Helen skillfully uses sex to control the people around her: here, she seems to have no problem using her sexuality to convince Alistair Harper to follow her plan and betray Creedy.*



*The Leader's final words to the Fate Computer are almost moving in their sincerity. Despite knowing full well that V has hacked onto the Fate Computer, The Leader continues to regard it as an autonomous entity, capable of listening to him. Here more than ever, Susan's imprisonment in his own powerful position is apparent. Although he seems to have unlimited control over England, Susan's control ironically deprives him of any happiness or freedom.*



*Finch seems to have embraced V's thought processes now, and so apparently discovers where V is hiding: the "V" in the subway station's name suggests as much. It remains to be seen whether or not Finch will join forces with V, given how close he's come to "being" V.*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 7: VINDICATION

Eric Finch has just arrived at the Victoria subway station. He walks underground, and is shocked to find a subway train full of lilies—the same train V showed Evey.

The Leader sits in the back of a limousine, staring at the cheering people of London as he's driven to make his speech. Other people, the Leader thinks, simply aren't real: the only real things are God and the Leader himself. As a young man, the Leader talked to God for long hours while his colleagues mocked him. For a while, the Leader believed he had found "God on Earth" in the form of the Fate Computer—now, however, he realizes that he's been betrayed. Seeing people waving at him from outside his car, he waves back, blank-faced.

Mr. Finch walks toward the subway car he's just discovered. He hears guitar music, and discovers V playing the guitar, sitting on the ground. V greets Mr. Finch by name and stands up.

In the crowds around the Leader's car, we see soldiers ordering people to "wave harder." Suddenly, Rosemary Almond steps out of the crowd and walks toward the Leader's car. A soldier is about to stop her, but Mr. Creedy orders him to allow Rosemary to pass through—he explains that Rosemary is "high party." As Rosemary approaches the Leader's car, the Leader extends his hand. Rosemary produces the gun she bought, and fires it at the Leader. Guards tackle Rosemary, but they are too late to save the Leader's life.

In the Victoria train station, at the same time that Rosemary is attacking the Leader, V and Mr. Finch attack each other. Finch raises his gun, but V is too quick for him—he stabs him in the shoulder with a knife. Finch fires his gun blindly, unsure whether he's hit anything. V, still standing, whispers to Finch, "you cannot kill me. Ideas are bulletproof," and walks away.

*We now realize, without a doubt, that the Shadow Gallery is located near the Victoria subway station, which has been abandoned for many years. There's something almost amusing about the fact that V has been hiding out in a place that's painfully obvious by contemporary standards (hundreds of people "hide out" in subway stations every day).*



*Susan has no respect for humanity whatsoever, and he can't force himself to sympathize with anyone other than himself. The Leader also lacks any charisma in this section, waving at his followers, blank-faced and emotionless. Clearly, Norsefire has ceased to inspire any real enthusiasm in the people: as Dominic says, everything "is going to bits."*



*V, as usual, is playing games, taking on the persona of the homeless vagrant. That he knows Finch's name is sinister but unsurprising, considering his access to Fate.*



*Here, we realize that even the people who've come out to see the Leader speak have been ordered to do so at gunpoint. We also finally see why Rosemary bought her gun: she wanted to get revenge on the man responsible for her misery. Susan becomes a victim of his own greed and cruelty, as his exploited subject rises up against him. Rosemary had her own kind of "vendetta"—a personal one, but one that is just as powerful in collapsing the government as any of V's plans.*



*V's quote here is one of the most famous in V for Vendetta, and it's a good way to sum up the power of symbols at V sees them. Because they can be communicated to others, symbols and ideas rise above individual lives. We've already seen evidence of this firsthand: V's ideas have already been passed on to the people of England, and to Evey.*



Mr. Finch pulls the dagger out of his shoulder—he’s survived his struggle with V. He sees blood on the ground, and realized that he’s shot V after all. He yells out, “I killed you, you monster!”

*In apparent contrast to his speech, V himself is mortally wounded. Finch assumes that he’s dead, but we have more experience with V’s superhuman qualities.*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 8: VULTURES

As the chapter opens, Mr. Creedy stands over the Leader in a hospital. A doctor tells Creedy that it was pointless even trying to save the Leader’s life: half his head had been blown off. The entire Norsefire government is in chaos following the Leader’s death. Helen Heyer rushes into the hospital and asks Conrad what’s going on. Before Conrad can answer, Mr. Creedy makes an announcement to the hospital, where many party officials have gathered: following the Leader’s death, authority over the country will “naturally” pass to **the Finger**, headed by Creedy himself.

*The name of this chapter is “vultures,” and the name sets the appropriate tone for the aftermath of a political assassination. The Norsefire Leader is dead, and the remaining government officials, such as Peter Creedy and Conrad Heyer, seek to claim the vulnerable state for themselves. They can’t see the plain truth, however—they’re fighting over something that’s already dead, thanks to V’s actions.*



Creedy’s first order of business as head of the new government, he explains, will be to track down V, who no doubt is planning another terrorist attack. Before Creedy can continue, a voice says, “He’s dead.” The party officials turn: it is Mr. Finch, who’s stumbled into the hospital.

*Finch has been isolated from the rest of the action for some time, as he took a leave of absence and left the city altogether. Here, he jumps back into the action, yet remains curiously distanced from the scramble for power, due to his experiences with V and LSD.*



The panels cut back and forth. We see a staircase—the staircase of the Shadow Gallery, we gradually realize—smeared with blood, as though someone has tried to crawl up. In the other half of the panels, Helen and Conrad Heyer talk about V’s death. Though Finch is rumored to be insane due to drug use, Helen acknowledges that he is probably telling the truth. She tells Conrad that Creedy thinks he’s in charge of the new government—nevertheless, by the time night falls, she will have arranged a new government. Helen walks away from Conrad. A messenger then delivers a package to Conrad, and he studies it, puzzled.

*Helen’s plans to maintain control over Norsefire parallel, but also fall short of, V’s plans to destroy the Norsefire regime altogether. Like V, Helen has orchestrated a complicated scheme, but V has more power and information than Helen does: we can sense that V will use his knowledge of Helen’s affair with Alistair Cooper to dismantle her plan. The package that Conrad receives (another good example of “Chekhov’s gun”) will presumably contain some important information.*



Mr. Finch is taken to speak with Dominic. Dominic asks Finch, very gently, if he’s sure V is dead. Finch mutters that V must be dead: he lost an enormous amount of blood, from the look of it. Finch notes that V must have let himself be shot: he’s fast enough that he could easily have disarmed Finch. Dominic asks Finch where he killed V. Finch thinks of the Victoria station, but lies and says that he doesn’t remember. Dominic nods and attributes Finch’s forgetfulness to his drug use.

*Although most of the government officials in Norsefire are frantically trying to maintain control over their people, Dominic seems more concerned with Finch’s personal well-being. Dominic may not be a tremendously sympathetic person, but he’s loyal to Finch, and respects him enough to follow up about V’s death. Even though Finch killed V, he’s not a loyal servant of the Norsefire regime anymore: he suppresses information about V’s location.*





Back in government headquarters, Conrad Heyer opens the parcel he's been sent. It contains a videotape, which he plays. He's shocked to find footage of Helen Heyer having sex with Alistair Harper—the same footage that V recorded in an earlier chapter.

Throughout London, Peter Creedy announces himself the “Emergency Commander.” He explains that V has been shot and mortally wounded—if he doesn't appear by nightfall, London should assume that he is dead. As this information is broadcast repeatedly, Creedy meets with Harper. Creedy compliments Harper on recruiting a private army, but Harper pays no attention. He produces a razor, which he then uses to slit Creedy's throat, noting drily that he's had “a better offer.”

In the Shadow Gallery, Evey sits waiting for V. Suddenly V walks into her room. Evey greets him, only to watch in horror as V collapses at her feet.

## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 9: THE VIGIL

Evey has just witnessed V collapse at her feet. V whispers for Evey to listen to him very closely: he doesn't have long before he dies. He insists that England is in rubble—but from this rubble, Evey can help the people to build a new world. He adds that Evey must never remove his **mask**. He tells Evey that the Victoria Line is blocked between Whitehall and St. James, and asks Evey to give him a “Viking funeral.” Evey weeps beside V, unable to believe that her friend and hero is dead.

Evey sits, watching V's body, for some time. Eventually, she climbs to her feet. She remembers what V told her: he's almost done with his plan. Evey walks through the Shadow Gallery, listening to the radio broadcast: Creedy repeats that if V doesn't appear tonight, he'll be presumed dead. Evey finally comes to V's dressing room, where she finds another copy of V's **mask**. She remembers V's advice: anarchy is both a force of destruction and one of creation.

Evey walks to the lowest level of the Shadow Gallery, where she finds that the train of lilies is gone. She remembers V's dying words: the train is blocked between Whitehall and St. James. She's confused by his request for a “Viking funeral.”

*The plot is coming full circle: V is causing the destruction of the Norsefire government via the manipulation of its remaining members.*



*In contrast to V's careful, masterfully-planned maneuvers against Norsefire, the Norsefire officials are disorganized and constantly betraying one another. Norsefire's belief in “strength through unity” is proven to be ironically true: the government's unity is falling apart, and thus it's becoming exceptionally weak.*



*As we approach the end of the graphic novel, it's unclear if V's plan to destroy Norsefire can survive even after V himself dies.*



*In his final moments of life, V gives Evey some important information, but as always, he expresses it in cryptic, riddling form. Even at the end of his life, V doesn't want to merely tell Evey what to do: he wants her to figure out the best course of action for herself. In this way, V is “teaching” Evey to think for herself—a paradoxical process whose success or failure remains to be seen.*



*V, when debating with Evey about the merits of violence in political activism, had brought up the notion of anarchy as a form of both destruction and creation. It's not yet clear how Evey is processing V's death, but it is clear that she has a finite amount of time to do so: the night when millions of people are expecting V to appear is drawing near.*



*Even after V's death, Evey is still struggling to decipher his riddling instructions.*



Evey feels overwhelmed by her responsibilities. She wishes she could walk back into the Shadow Gallery and find V alive, waiting for her. She climbs the staircase, and returns to her room, where she finds V's body, still lying on the ground. She contemplates pulling off V's **mask**, and finding a completely normal face beneath. She also imagines pulling off the mask and seeing her own father's face. Evey shakes off both possibilities—she knows V wasn't her father. More importantly, she realizes, she can't diminish V by seeing his human face: V was much more than a human being—he was a symbol.

*In this section, Evey finally embraces the power of symbols. By himself, V is only a man—an intelligent, strong man, but still mortal. When he dresses up in a mask and cloak, however, V takes on new power: he becomes a symbol of government resistance and anarchy. By refusing to take off V's mask, Evey effectively acknowledges that she respects V more as a symbol than as a person. She also implies that she's no longer in need of a father figure: she reminds herself that V is not her father.*



Evey walks back to V's dressing room. She thinks, "I know who V must be." As she stares at her face in the mirror, her mouth curls into a broad smile: exactly like the smile on V's **mask**.

*In this final, ambiguous scene, it's suggested that Evey will become V. She has the same mask and equipment as V had, and she's just realized that V is more valuable as a symbol than as an individual. Perhaps it's time for Evey to surrender her identity as "Evey" (a name similar to "V," and also a reference to Eve, the Biblical first woman) and act the part of V: anarchy embodied.*



## BOOK 3, CHAPTER 10: THE VOLCANO

It is November 9, 1998. At 9:30 PM, a massive riot has broken out in London. Finch and Dominic stare out at the mob from the safety of their headquarters. Finch notes that the rioters follow the "**Symbol of V**." He reminds Dominic that symbols are all-important—the Leader made a crucial mistake in forgetting this fact.

*At the beginning of this chapter we're again reminded of the importance of symbols. This observation coincides with Evey's realization that symbols are more powerful than individual people.*



Finch turns to go. As he does so, Dominic suggests that drugs have addled Finch's mind. Finch replies that his mind is perfectly clear. As a young man, Finch admits, he lost his entire family to the war. Afterwards, he believed that he could make the pain of this loss disappear by following orders. Now, he realizes that following orders will never ease his pain. Henceforth, he tells Dominic, he'll only follow his own orders. He tells Dominic to take care, and leaves.

*The relationship between Finch and Dominic isn't entirely adversarial or entirely friendly. They have great respect and trust for one another, but ultimately, it's Finch, not Dominic, who fully recognizes the corruption of Norsefire. Whether or not Dominic will follow suit and begin thinking for himself remains to be seen.*



Alistair Harper arrives at the Heyer household. He opens the door and calls to Helen Heyer, whom he's clearly expecting to be there. No one answers him. Harper walks into a room, where he finds a television playing the footage of his sexual encounter with Helen. As Harper watches, Conrad Heyer attacks him with a wrench, brutally killing him. Before he dies, however, Harper manages to slash Conrad on the neck with his razor.

*Here, we see the weakness of Norsefire's bigotry and sexism. Instead of seizing power herself, Helen is forced to work with two intermediaries: Harper and her husband Conrad. These men are weak and violent, and here, they defeat each other instead of working together. Ultimately, Norsefire's own greatest enemy is itself: its violence, its bigotry, and its ignorance.*



Shortly after Conrad kills Harper, Helen Heyer comes home. As she enters her home, she hears Harper's voice—actually coming from the television. She tells Harper—who she thinks is in the house—to go home, since Conrad will be home soon. As she walks into the living room, she finds Harper, lying dead on the ground. Next to Harper, she finds Conrad, bleeding profusely from his neck wound. Conrad begs Helen to take him to a doctor before he dies. Instead, Helen furiously tells Conrad that he's ruined everything: she'd planned for the three of them—Conrad, Helen, and Harper—to control the new government. Then she tells Conrad that he's always loved “to watch”—and she turns on a camera, hooking it up to the television, and leaves Conrad to watch his own death on TV.

In London, the people continue to riot. Soldiers are desperate for orders from Creedy, but of course these orders never come. Suddenly, there is a loud sound, and a cloaked figure appears on top of a high building. The figure speaks into a microphone, and her voice is broadcast across London. She introduces herself as V, noting wryly that reports of her death were “exaggerated.” V announces that tomorrow, Downing Street—the location of **the Head**—will be destroyed. Henceforth, V concludes, the people of England will have to choose for themselves what kind of lives they want—lives in chains, or lives of their own.

After giving her speech, V retreats from the roof. Inspired by V's speech, the people of London attack the police, and a bloody fight breaks out. In the panic, Dominic, apparently wounded, tries to escape from the crowd. He runs into the building where V was standing. Just as he's about to collapse, he sees V. With this, he faints.

It is November 10, 1998. At 2 pm, the “new V” (Evey) stands over V's body. V asked for a “Viking funeral,” Evey thinks. She realizes what V meant: he wanted to be blown up in the explosion on Downing Street. Thus, she carries V into the lily train and sends the train—packed with explosives—on its path to destroy **the Head** (located above the area between Whitehall and St. James, exactly as V specified).

The “new V” leaves the train station and climbs back to the surface. After a few moments, she takes off her **mask**: it is Evey. Evey watches a large explosion in the distance: Downing Street is no more.

*Throughout the graphic novel, we've seen the Norsefire officials receive ironic comeuppances. Perhaps the most ironic is Conrad's. Having spent his entire life watching other people, Conrad is forced to die watching himself bleed out. Helen's indictment of her husband might as well be an indictment of the entire Norsefire government: it's obsessed with controlling other people, dominating them by watching, listening, ordering, etc. Here, in the twilight of Norsefire's power, Helen deals out a punishment V would have been proud of.*



*Here, it's suggested, Evey has taken on the role of V. It's a little mysterious that Evey can speak as V, since she's a woman, and V is (presumably at least) a man. It's certainly possible that V has been a woman all along (though this would contradict the evidence of Delia, Prothero, etc.). Perhaps the broader point here is that Evey's embrace of V's symbols has made her totally anonymous: she has no gender, no age, no sexuality—she is a symbol for the people.*



*The narrative is coming full circle in a highly satisfying way. Just as Evey began the graphic novel as a young, frightened child, Dominic is now being taken in by the “new V.”*



*Evey finally understands what V meant by a Viking funeral—a funeral in which the body is sent away (usually on a boat) and burned. This suggests that Evey has come to think like V, and, more generally, that she's matured both mentally and physically.*



*One interesting question that this chapter raises is whether or not Evey has embraced V's violent methods along with his identity. While it's true that Evey has just blown up Downing Street, she made sure to announce the bombing in advance, making the explosion a symbolic defeat for Norsefire but giving people a chance to escape the building. It could be argued, of course, that in bombing a building Evey has decided to use violence. Moore wants us to resolve this matter for ourselves.*



Evey thinks to herself that the task ahead of her is phenomenally difficult, but crucial. She puts on her **mask** and returns to the Shadow Gallery. There she finds Dominic, lying on the floor. Dominic awakes and asks where he is. The new V welcomes him and explains that they are in the Shadow Gallery—her home.

Outside London, Mr. Finch is walking on a lonely path. Suddenly, he hears a loud explosion—Downing Street has been blown up. He stares at the fiery explosion, then turns back and continues walking. In the distance, he sees a small group of people. As he gets closer, he notices that one of the group is Helen Heyer. Helen recognizes Finch, and excitedly embraces him. She explains that she's been forced to join a group of "tramps" to survive. Helen suggests that she and Finch use their power and influence to assemble a new army and restore "order" to England. In response to Helen's pleas, Mr. Finch gently pushes her away. Helen is furious that Finch is turning her down. She calls him "queer," and yells that all police officers are the same—weak. Indifferent to Helen's words, Finch lights his pipe and walks away into the distance.

*Here at last, we see Evey embracing the role of V as well as the clothes and mask. She will educate her new pupil, just as the former V educated her. One fascinating possibility that this raises is that the former V wasn't the real "man in room V" at all: perhaps he, too, was once a naïve young man (or woman) who learned to use knowledge and violence to achieve his ends.*



*The final section of V for Vendetta essentially places the future of England in Eric Finch's hands. If Finch agrees to align with Helen, they could perhaps succeed in restoring order to England and reestablishing a tyrannical regime. Yet Finch refuses to do so: he's long since given up on the concept of authority altogether. Moore thus ends his graphic novel on a highly uncertain note. We don't know what kind of regime, if any, will arise following the destruction of Norsefire: perhaps people will return to a democracy, or perhaps a new tyrant will emerge. One clue is that Evey is still playing the part of V: this suggests that there is still "work to be done" when it comes to anarchy and freedom. Freedom, as we've seen many times, isn't simply a matter of doing as one pleases. It requires discipline, training, and hard work. Perhaps Evey will continue to be V, passing on important lessons of anarchism and freedom to others—or continue the physical fight against a new tyrant.*





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