

# Death Constant Beyond Love



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

Gabriel [García Márquez](#) was a Colombian writer, screenwriter, and journalist widely regarded as one of the most influential authors of the 20th century. He was born in 1927 in Aracataca, a small town near the northern, tropical coast of Colombia to a mother of indigenous Guajira Indian descent and a Bolivian father. García Márquez was raised by his maternal grandparents, who would prove huge influences on his writing; his grandfather had been a Liberal Colonel in the War of a Thousand Days, and his grandmother's fondness for both Catholic folklore and indigenous Colombian mythology initiated his turn towards the magical. In 1947, García Márquez studied law in Bogotá while writing short stories and poetry; he found some initial success, but his budding writing career was sidelined because of the Bogotá riots of 1948. García Márquez then moved to Cartagena where he worked as a journalist, in Colombia and abroad, for the newspaper *El Universal*. In 1955 he moved to Geneva, then to Rome, then to Paris. García Márquez traveled across Europe, studying cinema and continuing writing, but he found his greatest commercial success in 1967 when he published [One Hundred Years of Solitude](#) (*Cien años de soledad*) in Buenos Aires. García Márquez married Mercedes Barcha and together they had two sons in 1958 and 1962. He was politically active throughout his career and was initially regarded by the US as a communist threat until the commercial success of his popular novels. In 1982, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature for works including [One Hundred Years of Solitude](#) and [Love in the Time of Cholera](#). His health declined in the 2000's after he was diagnosed with cancer, and he died in Mexico City in 2014.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

García Márquez is often associated with a literary movement of the 1960's and '70's called the Latin American Boom (or El Boom) with young Latin American authors such as [Julio Cortázar](#) (from Argentina), Mario Vargas Llosa (from Peru), and Carlos Fuentes (from Mexico). This period saw authors from the global south gaining an international foothold. Their works are typically categorized by experimentation, non-linear narratives, and surreal or fantastic elements. Although "Death Constant Beyond Love" is a somewhat straightforward story for García Márquez, the indicators of the experimentation of this literary movement remain, with inanimate objects appearing lifelike and taking on a sentient quality. Additionally, García Márquez was heavily marked by the United Fruit

Company workers strike and the massacre by the Colombian government in 1928 (and subsequent years of political turmoil in Colombia). In "Death Constant Beyond Love" there is the familiar undertone of distrust in politicians that García Márquez carried with him throughout his career.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Many of the themes found in "Death Constant Beyond Love" are also found in García Márquez's most famous work, *100 Years of Solitude*—a story set in Colombia and featuring seven generations of a single family. *100 Years of Solitude* is known for its incorporation of magical realism, where events take place that couldn't actually happen but in a setting that is recognizably real. There are light touches of this in "Death Constant Beyond Love," like when bank notes floating through the air take on the appearance of butterflies. Also related to "Death Constant Beyond Love" is Julio Cortázar's "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris," an epistolary, surreal short story steeped in magical realism and grappling with the difficulties of existence and mortality. Additionally, though working primarily in a different era than García Márquez, Argentinian author Jorge Louis Borges' short stories, such as his collection *The Alph and Other Stories*, evoke a surreal quality that handle themes such as life and death.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Death Constant Beyond Love
- **When Written:** circa 1970
- **Where Written:** Mexico City
- **When Published:** 1970
- **Literary Period:** El Boom (Latin American Boom in literature), Modernism
- **Genre:** Short story, magical realism
- **Setting:** Rosal del Virrey (a fictional city likely in northern South America, near Paramaribo and French Guiana)
- **Climax:** When Laura Farina is revealed to be wearing an iron padlock and Senator Onésimo Sánchez must decide whether or not to give in to Nelson Farina's demands
- **Antagonist:** Nelson Farina, Death/Mortality
- **Point of View:** Omniscient narrator

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Increasing Recognition:** With his win in 1982, García Márquez became only the fourth Latin American author to be given the Nobel Prize for Literature, though the award has been given annually since 1901.

**Point of Origin:** Though García Márquez is known internationally as a Colombian writer, it may be more accurate to say *Caribbean* Colombian writer, as the geography of northern Colombia is often referred to as the “Colombian Caribbean.” The coastal influence of García Márquez’s early life is clear in stories like “Death Constant Beyond Love,” where people move to Caribbean islands and leave or enter the city on boats.



## PLOT SUMMARY

In the fictional city of Rosal del Virrey, Senator Onésimo Sánchez is a married, 42-year-old politician who has six months and eleven days left to live. He’s making a campaign stop for his reelection effort, and it’s ironic—since he’s so near death—that Senator Onésimo Sánchez will meet the “woman of his life” during this trip. (He already has a family at home.)

The senator and his procession of political aides arrive in Rosal del Virrey—a poor port city known as a haven for smugglers and criminals—on a hot summer’s day. The senator’s reelection convoy comes with all the trappings of political spectacle: music, rockets, even wagons full of people (indigenous Indians) that the campaign has rented to make the senator’s crowd at his speech appear bigger. The city is dry and arid, and its name is a misnomer: there are no **roses** in town, save for the one that the senator carries on his suit.

Before his scheduled speech, the senator takes an hour to himself. Alone in the house that his campaign has rented for his stay, he sets the rose he’s carrying down in a glass of water. He takes his pain medication prior to the time it’s prescribed because he wants to head off the pain rather than wait for it. He undresses and lays down in a hammock for a quick nap, trying hard not to think about the fact that he is dying. As he is the only person besides his doctors who knows of his fatal diagnosis, he feels an overwhelming sense of isolation.

When it is time for his speech, the senator is clean and rested. However, he notices that his emotions are sharper than usual. He begins his speech with a tone that is near fury. Rather than looking to tell the truth in his speech, he intentionally sets an overly grand tone, speaking about “defeating nature.” While the senator is giving his speech, his aides throw **paper birds** in the air, which take on the appearance of real birds flying out to sea. The aides then take out cardboard trees and houses; behind the backs of the citizens, who are turned to face the senator, they set up a fictional city over the real one, covering the run-down homes of the village.

While the senator is speaking, a man named Nelson Farina watches from the hammock of his home. Nelson Farina previously lived on Devil’s Island where he murdered his first wife. He smuggled himself to Rosal del Virrey along with a beautiful woman from Paramaribo with whom he had a

daughter. The woman has since died, but she was buried peacefully in Rosal del Virrey, unlike Nelson Farina’s first wife whose body he used as fertilizer. Nelson Farina sees the senator’s farce from the opposite side as the townspeople, and he sneers at the dishonesty of the politician. Typically, Nelson Farina goes to all of the senator’s speeches; for twelve years, he’s been asking the senator to issue him a false identity card so that his criminal past can’t catch up with him. The senator always refuses, and this year Nelson Farina appears to have given up.

After his speech, Senator Onésimo Sanchez walks through town, shaking people’s hands and promising his constituents favors—but no favors that would be too burdensome for him to fulfill. The senator reaches Nelson Farina’s house; Farina sits in his hammock, looking unhappy, but the senator still walks over to say hello. The two exchange stiff pleasantries; then, Nelson Farina’s daughter, Laura Farina, comes outside. Though she is dressed in a worn robe and with sunscreen on her face and bows in her hair, the senator thinks she is possibly the most beautiful woman in the world. He mutters in awe to himself.

A little while later, the senator meets in his office with the politically important people of Rosal del Virrey. Here, behind closed doors, he is much more forthcoming than he was with the citizens. He criticizes the others for not wanting to change the conditions of the city, for making a living off of the inhospitable weather and climate. However, he also crudely insults the village and the conditions of the city.

Meanwhile, Laura Farina waits outside the senator’s office; Nelson Farina has dressed her in their best clothes and sent her to the senator. When his meeting is over, Senator Onésimo Sánchez sees Laura Farina in the hall and asks her why she’s there. She responds that it is on behalf of her father. The senator believes he understands what this means—that she’s been sent as a bribe in exchange for a false identification card. The senator hesitates, but then lets her into his office.

Once inside, the two don’t quite know what to do. The senator shows her the rose that he’s had since he arrived, which has wilted in the heat. They talk, awkwardly; she tells him her age—nineteen—and birthday, and he notes that they are both Aires, which he says is the sign of solitude. Then, the senator has them lay down next to each other. He attempts to touch Laura Farina, but realizes she is wearing an iron chastity belt. She tells him that her father has the key and will only give it to him if he gets him a false identity card. The senator sighs, then considers the fact that he will be dead soon. This reality, coupled with her beauty, makes the senator agree to Laura that he will help her father. She offers to go get the key, but the senator instead asks that she stay with him; he holds her close to him and lays his head beneath her arm, while she stares ahead at the rose.

Six months later, as predicted by his doctors, the senator dies. He died marred in scandal because of this affair with Laura

Farina, but at the end he was weeping only because she didn't follow him in death.



## CHARACTERS

**Senator Onésimo Sánchez** – Senator Onésimo Sánchez is the protagonist of “Death Constant Beyond Love.” At 42, he is a politician recently diagnosed with an unspecified terminal illness who reads Latin and once studied to be a metallurgical engineer in Germany. He is a standard politician in that he overpromises and underdelivers to his constituents. He has a “radiant” German wife and five children, and prior to his fatal diagnosis, he was quite happy with his life. However, he feels deep isolation because of his prognosis and has compounded that solitude by telling no one that he’s sick. This loneliness impacts his disposition: he becomes more irritable, direct, and somber than before. While campaigning for reelection in the city of Rosal del Virrey, he feels contempt towards his constituents when they try to shake his hand, and he gives a speech with an unusual inflection of rage. By the end of his campaign visit, he will ruin his political reputation on account of an affair with a nineteen-year-old woman named Laura Farina, described as “the woman of his life.” Laura Farina is sent to him as a bribe by her father Nelson Farina, a criminal who wanted the senator to trade sex with his daughter for a false identity card. Though Laura Farina offers to have sex with him once the senator has agreed to the favor, he instead asks only that she stay and sleep next to him. When he does indeed die at the end of the story, six months later, Senator Onésimo Sánchez is sobbing and despondent that Laura Farina is not with him.

**Laura Farina** – Laura Farina, a resident of Rosal del Virrey, is nineteen years old and the daughter of Nelson Farina. She is likely mixed-race, as the story describes her mother as Black while not addressing her father’s race. Her beauty is a focus of the narrative, as both her father and Senator Onésimo Sanchez believe she might be the most beautiful woman in the world. Her father takes advantage of the fact that the senator finds her attractive by sending her to the senator’s office as part of an exchange: sex with his daughter for a false ID card, since he murdered his first wife and wants falsified identification to evade prosecution. The senator treats Laura delicately, but ultimately also takes advantage of his power over her by having her spend the night with him while she holds him. In addition to being called beautiful, she is often described as having animalistic or naturalistic qualities. Laura Farina is a character who appears to have very little autonomy or authority over her own life.

**Nelson Farina** – Nelson Farina, the father of Laura Farina, is a criminal who fled from Devil’s Island to Rosal del Virrey after he murdered his first wife and desecrated her body. Stashing himself away on a ship with “innocent macaws,” he was able to reach the Rosal del Virrey with the woman from Paramaribo

who would give birth to Laura Farina and later die of natural causes (and whom Nelson Farina buries respectfully). Nelson Farina and his daughter speak French, likely as a result of colonialization in French Guiana. For twelve years, he has been attending Senator Onésimo Sánchez’s election speeches in the hopes of convincing the senator to give him a false identification card so he might be “beyond the reach of the law” and avoid being arrested for murder. This year, however, he appears to have given up and stays home during the speech. But, when Nelson Farina notices that the senator finds his daughter attractive, he dresses her up in their best clothes and sends her to the senator wearing an iron padlock over herself that he will only unlock if the senator promises to finally grant him his false ID card. Nelson Farina’s ultimate fate is unknown by the end of the story; the senator says he’ll agree to the terms of the bribe, but that is before his political career ends in scandal.



## 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.



### POLITICS, DECEPTION, AND ABSURDITY

“Death Constant Beyond Love” centers on Senator Onésimo Sánchez, a politician who’s campaigning for reelection in Rosal del Virrey, a small island town. Rosal del Virrey is dried up, impoverished, and crime-ridden, but the senator’s campaign focuses on masking reality and making outlandish promises rather than proposing practical solutions to the town’s problems. For instance, his political aides create a “world of fiction” by paying people to inflate the size of the crowd at his speech and putting up prop trees and cardboard buildings to cover the townspeople’s “miserable shacks.” And during his speech, the senator assures the people that he’ll give them “rainmaking machines” to make their crops grow, among other impossible solutions. Yet despite all of this dishonesty, the townspeople still trust and revere the senator, swarming him after the speech to confide in him and ask him for help. In a later meeting with town officials, it’s revealed that he doesn’t even believe in his own campaign—the officials are pressuring him to fool the townspeople because his reelection will benefit them. In other words, he’s betraying not only his constituents but also his own moral compass. The story thus critiques the fanfare and false posturing that’s common in politics, and it pessimistically suggests that it’s easy for even the most deceitful and manipulative politicians to gain loyal followings.

Furthermore, the story continuously blurs the line between

artifice and reality to highlight the absurdity of life in Rosal del Virrey. The story uses magical realism—as when the senator’s aides release paper birds that seem to actually come alive and fly into the sea—to emphasize that one can never fully distinguish reality from artifice in a place where corrupt politicians and criminals run amok. Even the reference to **roses** in the island’s name is an ironic joke that obscures the truth, since it’s actually an arid, desolate, economically depressed place where no roses grow. Finally, when the criminal Nelson Farina sends his daughter Laura Farina to have sex with the Senator Onésimo Sánchez, seemingly as a kind of peace offering, even the senator is duped: he discovers that the young woman is actually wearing a chastity belt that he can only unlock if he gives in to Farina’s extortion. Through its use of magical realism and dark absurdist humor, “Death Constant Beyond Love” suggests that in a place where deceptive people hold power, the truth is never certain.



### ISOLATION AND POWERLESSNESS

The characters in “Death Constant Beyond Love” who do not have any sense of power or control over their lives feel a deep solitude and isolation.

Senator Onésimo Sánchez—who’s come to the impoverished town Rosal del Virrey as part of a reelection campaign—has a great deal of power politically (he has been in office for at least twelve years), financially (his campaign is well-funded, and he has a rotating array of linen and silk clothes), and socially (his constituents appear to cherish him, and he has a wife and five children and a “happy home”). Yet, all of this is offset by the fact that he has been given a fatal prognosis and has only six months left to live. Rather than share his diagnosis, the senator tells no one, and thus is plagued throughout the story by an unavoidable feeling of isolation.

Other characters, too, appear to retreat from society when in a place of powerlessness. Nelson Farina, a criminal who’s taken refuge in Rosal del Virrey, doesn’t attend the senator’s speech this year because he seems to have accepted his powerlessness to make the senator do his bidding. Nelson is bitter and alone, swinging in his hammock, as the rest of the town flocks to the senator’s speech. And Laura Farina, Nelson Farina’s nineteen-year-old daughter, has perhaps the least amount of power; she is young, poor, and female, and she must listen to her father when he sends her to the senator’s office as a bribe. When Senator Onésimo Sánchez and Laura Farina are together, the senator comments that “no one loves [them],” because Laura has no mother and her only parent has used her as a bargaining chip. The senator connects with the young girl because he believes she is as alone as he is, despite their radically different positions in life. By showcasing characters who have a spectrum of social and interpersonal power but who, nevertheless, are lonely and isolated, García Márquez makes the case that solitude often comes from feeling a total lack of

control over one’s life.



### DEATH, NATURE, AND INEVITABILITY

Death and nature loom large in “Death Constant Beyond Love,” both as things that cannot be avoided or defeated. García Márquez emphasizes death’s presence by acknowledging in the first sentence that the protagonist, Senator Onésimo Sánchez, has “six months and eleven days to go before his death.” The senator chooses to tell no one of his illness, either out of fear, stubbornness, or both, and he goes about his political business as though he is not dying. In addition to keeping his diagnosis a secret, the senator takes his prescribed medication ahead of schedule, hoping to stave off the pain associated with his illness. However, despite these efforts to ignore his prognosis, the senator feels himself changed: he is more irritable than before, finding himself annoyed with the citizens of Rosal del Virrey, forceful when he speaks, and, ultimately, reckless when he agrees to an affair with Laura Farina, a young woman sent to the senator as a bribe by her father who needed a favor from the senator. Through the senator’s behavior, García Márquez suggests the impossibility of avoiding the effects of mortality.

Moreover, this attempt to avoid death is mirrored in the senator’s (hollow) suggestion to his constituents that they can “defeat nature” and change the dismal conditions of the city’s climate. The senator knows this is impossible, that Rosal del Virrey will never be fertile land. The climate is always hot, arid, and even when the senator sits in an air-conditioned car (avoiding nature by being “weatherless”) he eventually has to leave it, and it is getting hit with a gust of hot air that reminds him of his own mortality. Additionally, by having his aides construct wooden houses and place them in front of the real shacks the villagers live in, he is suggesting an alternate reality, one apart from nature. However, he cannot avoid nature’s inevitable destructive hand, as the senator realizes that even the cardboard houses meant to symbolize a better life for the townspeople are run down on account of the real climate.

Ultimately, through both Senator Onésimo Sánchez’s reaction to a fatal diagnosis and his broader attempts to avoid natural realities, García Márquez suggests the importance of recognizing that death and natural decay are inevitable parts of existence.



### SYMBOLS

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



### THE ROSE

The rose, which Senator Onésimo Sánchez carries

to Rosal del Virrey on his suit, symbolizes the inevitability of death. Typically used as a symbol of love, García Márquez turns the image of the rose on its head by insisting—much as he does with the title of his story—that the one constant in life is not love but death.

When the rose is first introduced, it is already dying, just like the senator himself. The senator seems to pay particular attention to the rose. For instance, when he first reaches the city, he places it in a glass of water before having a snack or undressing. The senator's fixation on keeping the rose alive gestures towards his tendency to avoid or deny the reality of death, which is also reflected in his staunch denial of his own terminal illness (which he never tells anyone about, seemingly because he doesn't want to acknowledge the truth).

Later, when Laura Farina is in Senator Onésimo Sánchez's office, she takes an interest in the rose and, when the senator explains to her what it is, she says she already knows. This scene can be interpreted as an older person explaining to someone much younger about death, but Laura Farina has indeed learned of death already since her mother has already passed away. The last paragraph of the story is peculiar, as it skips ahead six months: in the first sentence, Laura Farina and the senator are still alone in his office, laying next to each other, and she has her eyes "fixed" on the rose; by the last sentence—and the end of the story—the senator is dead. By including Laura Farina's fixation on the rose in the same paragraph as the senator's final moments, García Márquez emphasizes the rose as a symbol of the inevitability of death.



## THE PAPER BIRDS

The paper birds that Senator Onésimo Sánchez's aides throw into the air during his speech to his constituents symbolize the deceitful nature of politics. During the senator's speech, when political theater is at its height, the paper birds appear to "take on life" and fly out to sea. These birds are described in a contradictory way as "artificial creatures" ("creatures" suggesting living beings and "artificial" acknowledging that they are not, in fact, alive). These paper birds are embodiments of the hollow promises that politicians make, since these promises can seem real when there is enough fanfare, but they're often proved empty when all of the excitement dies down. Indeed, later on, when in his office with only the "important" people of Rosal del Virrey, the senator admits that they "can't, of course, eat paper birds." The senator's acknowledgement of the performance that the birds put on shows his acceptance of the deceptive nature of political spectacle. By having the birds appear real in one scene only to confirm their artificiality in another, García Márquez draws attention to the tricks and illusions of politicians.





## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harper Perennial edition of *Collected Stories* published in 2008.

### Death Constant Beyond Love Quotes

☛ Senator Onésimo Sánchez had six months and eleven days to go before his death when he found the woman of his life.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez, Laura Farina

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 255



#### Explanation and Analysis

This is the first sentence of "Death Constant Beyond Love," and it is significant that García Márquez starts off by telling the reader two of the most important plot points: that the protagonist, Senator Onésimo Sánchez, will die, and that over the course of the story he will meet someone he considers the love of his life. This makes the story unfold with less suspense but with more drama: for example, when the reader finds out that the senator is married with five children, they realize that it must be a woman *other* than his wife that he falls for. Additionally, by giving away the senator's fatal situation in the very beginning, García Márquez aligns the reader with the senator and his feelings of powerlessness and lack of control, since both the character's ending and the story's ending are similarly inevitable.

This opening sentence is more casual than someone might expect ("to go" is fairly informal), which contrasts with the seriousness of its content. The irony here—that one might find "the woman of [their] life" just months before their death, and so they wouldn't be able to take much pleasure in that affair—is indicative of the dark, ironic humor running throughout the story. Importantly, this phrasing—"six months and eleven days"—will reappear in the very last sentence of "Death Constant Beyond Love," suggesting a cyclicity to the story that almost mirrors the cyclicity of life, death, and rebirth found in nature.

●● He met her in Rosal del Virrey, an illusory village which by night was the furtive wharf for smugglers' ships, and on the other hand, in broad daylight looked like the most useless inlet on the desert (...) so far from everything that no one would have suspected that someone capable of changing the destiny of anyone lived there.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez, Laura Farina

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 255



### Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the city of Rosal del Virrey, where Senator Onésimo Sánchez will meet the “woman of his life,” Laura Farina. The town’s misleading appearance (in that it looks “useless” during the day but at night is an active place for smugglers and criminals) foreshadows the consistent motif of things, people, and places not being what they appear. García Márquez uses this mismatch of appearance and reality to emphasize the difficulty of being sure of anything when living under deceptive politics.

Additionally, the fact that Rosal del Virrey is a haven for criminals suggests that it is an unruly city, lacking a sense of control. Further, the fact that it is surprising that anyone “capable of changing the destiny of anyone” lives in this town indicates that it does not generally have much influence over anything. The city being also “useless” suggests that this it is not financially powerful. Through “Death Constant Beyond Love,” García Márquez shows that where there is a lack of power, feelings of isolation and solitude will follow, so he literalizes this idea with the city of Rosal del Virrey being “so far from everything:” just like many of the characters in the story, the city itself is isolated, remote, and powerless.

●● Senator Onésimo Sánchez was placid and weatherless inside the airconditioned car, but as soon as he opened the door he was shaken by a gust of fire and his shirt of pure silk was soaked in a kind of light colored soup and he felt many years older and more alone than ever.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 256


### Explanation and Analysis


Here, the senator is arriving in Rosal del Virrey in his government car, which keeps him cool and away from the heat of the city. However, when he opens the door and is “shaken” by the reality of the climate, he immediately begins to sweat and feels “more alone than ever.” This reaction links the town’s climate to the senator’s feelings of solitude and isolation, which are already linked to his impending death. That the climate would remind the senator of his fatal illness is logical, since both death and weather are natural and unchangeable, no matter how much he might wish otherwise. By defining the senator as “weatherless,” García Márquez suggests that that the senator has attempted to remove himself entirely from the environment around him. He frequently sweats through his shirts despite his attempt to avoid the climate, demonstrating how nature will always find a way to show its effects in the end.

The senator is also the only character who gets to enjoy air conditioning, and he is also seen here wearing a silk shirt, which confirms his status as far wealthier than his constituents. Despite his wealth, he still feels terribly lonely, which shows his class and political status are not salves for his deep sense of isolation.

●● Before he lay down he put in a glass of drinking water the rose he had kept alive all across the desert (...) and he took several analgesic pills before the time prescribed so that he would have the remedy ahead of the pain. Then he put the electric fan close to the hammock and stretched out naked for fifteen minutes in the shadow of the rose, making a great effort at mental distraction so as not to think about death while he dozed. Except for the doctors, no one knew that he had been sentenced to a fixed term, for he had decided to endure his secret all alone, with no change in his life, not out of pride but out of shame.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 256

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes what the senator does when he is alone in the rented house right after he and his team arrive in Rosal del Virrey. The first thing he does is set the rose in

water, presumably to prolong its life. This makes the rose a stand-in for the senator himself, who is also slowly dying but is still somewhat in denial about his inevitable death. That he'd kept the rose "alive all across the desert" is an indicator that the rose does not have much longer left to live, just like the senator.

By taking his medication ahead of time, the senator is trying to preserve the illusion that he isn't dying—he thinks that if he doesn't feel the pain of his condition, he won't have to acknowledge its reality. And when the senator lays in "the shadow of the rose," García Márquez's language subtly suggests that the rose is associated with death, because this image sounds ominous and lethal, like "the shadow of death."

This passage also shows that the senator's isolation is entirely related to his inability to process his illness, since he has "decided" not to tell anyone about his diagnosis out of shame. This is proof of the senator attempting to deny nature, because, although the illness is never named, there is no indication that the diagnosis came out of any fault of his own. This points to an irrationality that is mirrored in the senator's politics, when he suggests to his constituents that they can "defeat" the natural climate of Rosal del Virrey.

Nevertheless, the erosion of death was much more pernicious than he had supposed, for as he went up onto the platform he felt a strange disdain for those who were fighting for the good luck to shake his hand, and he didn't feel sorry as he had at other times for the groups of barefoot Indians who could scarcely bear the hot saltpeter coals of the sterile little square.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 257

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage shows two things: first, that even if the senator isn't in physical pain from his illness, he's in tremendous emotional pain, and second, that even though he's somewhat sympathetic as a character because he is dying, he is still guilty of political deception.



Death "eroding" the senator calls to mind the erosion of a cliff, which is slow but sure and which is very often impossible to stop. This is a metaphor for the illness that will kill the senator whether or not he chooses to accept that he is sick. Additionally, the fact that his emotions are different

than they used to be is notable, as this speaks to how he can't avoid all of the symptoms of his illness even if he can stave off some of the physical pain with medication. His temperament getting sharper suggests that his growing isolation is taking a toll.

Additionally, of course, this passage shows how dishonest and callous his political campaign is, since the "barefoot Indians" have been bussed into Rosal del Virrey and made to stand on the hot street only to pretend that the senator has more spectators in the crowd than he really does. This underscores the senator's cruelty; he's subjecting these people to physical pain, just to make himself seem more popular and important, and he doesn't care at all. Sometimes a fatal illness can make a person more empathetic towards others, but in this case, it has the opposite effect, which partially explains the senator's growing isolation.

“We are here for the purpose of defeating nature” he began, against all his convictions. “We will no longer be foundlings in our own country, orphans of God in a realm of thirst and bad climate, exiles in our own land. We will be a different people, ladies and gentlemen, we will be a great and happy people.”

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 257

### Explanation and Analysis


This scene demonstrates the lengths the senator will go to lie—both to his constituents and to himself. In this line from the campaign speech, he suggests that they can “defeat nature,” which refers literally to his idea that he can change the city's climate (he can't), but it also cryptically refers to his own illness (which he also can't defeat). The senator is saying this while fully understanding that he's making a false promise, which is clear when he must force himself to say it anyway “against all his convictions” (in other words, against what he really believes to be true). In making such an insane claim, the senator is counting on the desperation of the people of Rosal del Virrey. Because they have nowhere else to turn for hope, they may choose (perhaps against their own convictions) to believe him and therefore re-elect him.


More than being simply another faulty campaign promise, though, this passage is also indicative of the way that the

senator feels about his own “nature”—his illness. The senator might be intentionally fooling the townspeople, but he’s also subliminally trying to convince *himself* that nature can be defeated—specifically, that his fatal diagnosis can be ignored, perhaps overcome. Even though he doesn’t believe what he’s saying to the townspeople about Rosal del Virrey’s climate, he there is a defiance in this statement that speaks to his willingness to ignore the reality of his own fate.

There was a pattern to his circus. As he spoke his aides threw clusters of paper birds into the air and the artificial creatures took on life, flew about the platform of planks, and went out to sea.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 257

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes the events happening while Senator Onésimo Sánchez is finishing his speech to the people of Rosal del Virrey. The magical effect that occurs with the paper birds—that they “take on life”—is a metaphor for the way that the senator’s speech has twisted reality, promising things to the citizens that are impossible to achieve. This signifies how difficult it is to differentiate reality from fiction when politicians willingly lie to the people. More, the fact that this is a “pattern” for the senator and his team proves that they pull this type of stunt regularly, suggesting a world where they never even bother to try to tell the truth. García Márquez makes it clear how ridiculous their act is, too, by calling it a “circus.” Still, people line up to go to the circus, and the senator continues to have a crowd at his rallies.

It is also noteworthy that these creatures fly “out to sea.” Rosal del Virrey is a desperately isolated city, where the citizens don’t have much money or much power. The image of a bird flying out to sea denotes total freedom: something the isolated citizens do not enjoy at all. So, the image is doubly important, as the real/unreal birds not only represent the difficulty of understanding reality when politicians are being deceitful, they also represent the very thing that is impossible for the townspeople: to be light, free, unburdened, and to fly away to somewhere better.

The audience turned around. An ocean liner made of painted paper was passing behind the houses and it was taller than the tallest houses in the artificial city. Only the senator himself noticed that since it had been set up and taken down and carried from one place to another the superimposed cardboard town had been eaten away by the terrible climate and that it was almost as poor and dusty as Rosal del Virrey.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:**  


**Page Number:** 258

### Explanation and Analysis

There is something a bit tragic about this scene, which comes at the end of the senator’s speech to the citizens of Rosal del Virrey. The senator has just told the crowd to turn around, because his aides have finished erecting fake houses and trees to cover up the crumbling shacks that the people of the city really live in. While his constituents take in the effect of this “artificial” city, the senator thinks to himself how even the fake homes are looking dingy because of the climate.

There are many layers to this realization: first, that the citizens of Rosal del Virrey do not have much to hope for—the senator will not actually change the material conditions of their city, since even the fake city he has created to sell his false promise is already fading. Second, it is a metaphor for the senator’s own situation, since he has been trying to erect a new reality for himself by ignoring his illness, but he is unable to do so because nature, in the end, is an inevitable force.

**Related Characters:** Laura Farina, Nelson Farina, Senator Onésimo Sánchez

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 262

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the senator has just found Laura Farina waiting outside of his office, dressed in her best clothes. When the senator asked her why, she said it was on behalf of her father. The senator believes, here, that he “understands” what this means—that Laura Farina has been sent to him as a gift or peace offering or bribe in exchange for the false identification card that Nelson Farina has





wanted for years. By looking at the guards, the senator suggests that he is considering who might find out about this deal, and what the costs (political or personal) might be. But by convincing himself that Laura Farina's beauty is so "unusual" that it could break him out of his isolation, he concludes that "death had made his decision for him," giving himself over to the impulse of passion and irrationality that he likely would not have succumbed to before he was ill.

At the same time, the senator is certainly evading responsibility when he makes this claim. The reader gets to decide whether or not he actually has control in this situation, despite the senator's belief that death made the choice. The narrative is most clearly aligned with the senator's emotions, even though he is a duplicitous politician. García Márquez does not leave any clues that the senator should have made a different decision here, but it is still a moment up for interpretation by the reader.

☛ Then he realized that she was naked under her dress, for her body gave off the dark fragrance of an animal of the woods, but her heart was frightened and her skin disturbed by a glacial sweat. "No one loves us," he sighed.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez, Laura Farina, Nelson Farina

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 263



### Explanation and Analysis


This passage shows the moment that the senator first begins to touch Laura Farina after she's been sent to him in his office. She is frightened, and her skin sweats, just as the senator's does when he is faced with the climate of Rosal del Virrey. In this way, the senator (and her father who sent her there), can be seen as a force acting on Laura Farina without her ability to stop it, just as the climate and death are forces acting on the senator that he cannot control. By describing the young woman as having a "dark fragrance" like "an animal of the woods," García Márquez animalizes Laura Farina, and this adds to her vulnerability, suggesting she is prey. However, this could also be read as a fetishized or racialized description, because Laura Farina is the only character of explicitly African descent, and there is a history in literature of aligning Black characters with animalistic traits as a form of dehumanization.

For the senator, this moment is an indication that Laura Farina is isolated, and he feels bonded to her because of this. It is worth noting that the reader does not know if "no one" loves the senator—the senator's wife and children may love him, as the story only mentions these characters to say that they'd been a happy family before the illness. However, the senator *feels* entirely and irreversibly cut off from his family because of his secret and fatal diagnosis, so he positions his isolation as similar to Laura Farina's, whose mother is dead and whose father uses her as a means to an end. García Márquez doesn't make a judgement on who might really be the lonelier of the two, only that Senator Onésimo Sánchez believes he is terribly isolated, at that is enough to empathize with Laura Farina. It is the only time in the story the senator relates to or connects with any other character.

☛ Then she laid his head on her shoulder with her eyes fixed on the rose. The senator held her about the waist, sank his face into woods-animal armpit, and gave in to terror. Six months and eleven days later he would die in the at same position, debased and repudiated because of the public scandal with Laura Farina and weeping with rage at dying without her.

**Related Characters:** Senator Onésimo Sánchez, Laura Farina

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 264

### Explanation and Analysis

These are the last sentences of "Death Constant Beyond Love," and in them García Márquez echoes the "six months and eleven days" from the opening sentence. This confirms the senator's fate—that he did die, despite trying hard to pretend that he might not. It is noteworthy, though, that in his final moments he is not weeping because he is dying, but instead because Laura Farina isn't following him in death. This suggests some small adjustment in the senator's character: his greatest sorrow is no longer his death, but rather the loss of Laura Farina. But it is also significant that Laura Farina is described in animalistic terms here, a choice that could demonstrate a fetishization of the young woman. Before the passage jumps to the senator's death, Laura Farina takes one long last look at the rose. This "fixation" confirms the rose as a symbol of the death of the senator: it

is almost as though she can see and understand what is happening, even as the senator looks away in “terror.” The rose, already wilted from the weather, is an omen in this passage, confirming the inevitable: that the senator will die.

A few sentences later, he does. The compressing of time in this paragraph by García Márquez reinforces the rose as a beacon of death, but also that death is as natural as a flower.



## 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.

## DEATH CONSTANT BEYOND LOVE

Senator Onésimo Sánchez has just over six months to live when he meets “the woman of his life” in Rosal del Virrey. Rosal del Virrey is a port town that seems uneventful during the day but that turns into a busy dock for criminals at night. Despite the city’s name, the only **rose** in the city is the one that the senator wears on the afternoon he meets Laura Farina.

*Senator Onésimo Sánchez’s fatal diagnosis is the first sentence of the story, and this colors everything to come with a feeling of inevitability: no matter what happens during the narrative—even an affair where the senator will feel great passion—the reader already understands that the senator will die at the end. García Márquez describes the city of Rosal del Virrey in a contradictory way (quiet by day but a busy haven for criminals by night), which is the first hint that things will not always be what they appear. Additionally, there’s an irony to the name of the city (one would expect a city with “Rosal” in its name to be fertile, but the reality is just the opposite) that accentuates the story’s dry sense of humor. The rose introduced in this early passage mirrors the senator’s inevitable death, as the rose has been cut, so it’s in the process of dying, too.*



The senator is in Rosal del Virrey to make the same obligatory campaign stop that he makes every four years. He arrives in town with all the trappings of political spectacle: music, rockets, a caravan of campaign aides. His aides have even brought in “rented Indians” to make the crowd at the senator’s speech look bigger.

*The emphasis on spectacle here demonstrates that politicians often feel if they make you look at something exciting, then they can distract you from what is really happening. Also, the fact that the senator’s aides are bringing in “rented Indians” from other villages to pad the crowd at his speech is an early sign of the senator and his aides swapping reality for fiction.*



The senator sits comfortably inside the air-conditioned car that carries him into the village, but a gust of hot air hits him as soon as he opens the door, and he begins to sweat through his silk shirt. He suddenly feels very old and alone. The senator, who’s only 42, has an engineering degree and is an avid reader of poorly translated Latin classics. His wife (a German woman) and five children are not with him on the trip. Just prior to his arrival, the senator received the diagnosis that he only has a short time left to live, shattering the happiness that he had felt with his family.

*The senator begins feeling lonely and isolated after he’s hit with a gust of hot air while leaving the air-conditioned car, which shows the link between the unforgiving climate of Rosal del Virrey and the senator’s mortality. Just as he likes avoiding the heat in the air conditioned car, he likes living in denial about his disease—but he cannot avoid the arid climate forever, just as he will not be able to avoid thinking about his impending death. The senator had been happy with his life and his family until receiving his diagnosis, which emphasizes how the illness has given him a completely different outlook on life and suggests that he had previously been living as though his mortality were not inevitable.*



[As his staff prepares for his public speech, Senator Onésimo Sánchez steals an hour by himself in the house they've rented for his stay. Before doing anything, he sets the rose he's been carrying in a glass of water. He eats a healthy snack and takes his medication ahead of the prescribed time, wanting to "have the remedy ahead of the pain." He then undresses and briefly has time to lay down in a hammock, fanning himself with a small electric fan and working hard to avoid thinking about death. He's kept his diagnosis a secret from everyone, out of shame rather than pride.](#)

When it is time for the senator to meet the public, he appears in clean, light clothes, feeling rested and stable. However, despite his appearance, and despite feeling stabilized from the pain medication, he realizes that he still feels the "erosion of death" gnawing at him. His emotions are harsher than usual: he feels disdainful of the townspeople who are enthusiastically shaking his hand, and he is practically rageful as he begins his speech to the crowd of Rosal del Virrey's citizens.

The senator starts his speech with an idea that came to him not because of any desire to tell the truth to the village people, but as rejection of Book IV of Marcus Aurelius's [Meditations](#). The senator insists they are all here to "defeat nature," that they who live in this arid and unforgiving location will no longer be "orphans of God in a realm of thirst and bad climate."

*The senator is very attentive to the rose, which he puts in a glass of water to extend its life. However, any rose being carried around and placed in a vase is already dying, and so this act of putting the rose in water echoes the senator's desire to ignore the reality of his own impending death. The same is true when he takes the pain medication earlier than prescribed: he doesn't even want to feel the pain of his illness, effectively pretending it doesn't exist. The shame that he feels because he cannot control this facet of his life (his health) prevents him from telling anyone about the illness, which is the root of his isolation.*



*Again, the senator believed he might be able to control his fate by remaining clean and rested, but he realizes that his diagnosis affects him mentally as well as physically, which is much harder for him to ignore. The anger he feels towards the townspeople demonstrates his continued isolation, as he did not always feel so irritated by them. By writing that death is "eroding" the senator, García Márquez uses language tied to nature and inevitability, underscoring the connection between the senator's fatal illness, death, and environmental inevitabilities.*



*In the fourth book of Marcus Aurelius's [Meditations](#), Aurelius argues against fighting nature. He emphasizes the need to respect nature and to accept death, since every person eventually experiences it (a useful quote is: "Pass then through this little space of time conformably to nature, and end thy journey in content, just as an olive falls off when it is ripe, blessing nature who produced it, and thanking the tree on which it grew"). By referencing this chapter of Meditations and writing that Senator Onésimo Sánchez is intentionally rejecting Aurelius's theories, García Márquez underscores the senator's obsession with working against what is natural—be it the climate of Rosal del Virrey or death itself. By beginning his speech like this, the senator is also making a completely false promise to his constituents by suggesting they could possibly change the environment of the city, which demonstrates his willingness to lie for political gain.*



As he is speaking, some of the senator's aides throw **paper birds** in the air, which appear lifelike as though they are flying out to sea. At the same time, other aides—behind the backs of the citizens turned to face the senator—bring out “prop trees” with felt leaves and cardboard houses made to look like brick homes. They place these in front of the run-down shacks that the citizens actually live in. Noticing that his aides are taking longer than usual to set up the “farce,” the senator throws in two extra quotes in Latin.

At the end of his speech, Senator Onésimo Sánchez promises the citizens of Rosal del Virrey all sorts of wonderful things: new technologies that will make rain, breed farm animals, and create fertile soil that will grow abundant vegetables and flowers. “Look! That’s the way it will be for us,” he shouts, and gestures toward the constructed city set up behind the citizens. Though presumably impressing the citizens, the senator notices how dingy the artificial houses have become as a result of the heat and climate. He thinks the artificial city is nearly as decrepit as the town of Rosal del Virrey.

While this speech is happening, Nelson Farina watches from afar. He is a criminal who escaped from Devil’s Island to Rosal del Virrey on a boat filled with “innocent macaws” after murdering and dismembering his first wife then using her body as fertilizer. He lives in the city with his daughter Laura Farina—her mother, a Black woman from Paramaribo, is dead, though she died of natural causes. Laura Farina inherited her mother’s “color and her figure” and her father’s “yellow and astonished eyes” and Nelson Farina feels that his daughter might be the most beautiful woman in the world.

Though he typically goes to the senator’s speeches, this is the first time in years that Nelson Farina has remained at home. For years, he’s been asking the senator for a false identity card to hide his criminal record, and the senator always refuses. This year, Nelson Farina finally appears to have given up, “condemning” himself to “rot alive in that burning den of buccaneers.” Nelson sees the fake city from the back and mutters to himself about how dishonest the performance is. He calls the senator the “Blacamán” of politics.

*This scene encapsulates the senator’s deceitful behavior as a politician because he and his aides are truly swapping reality for fiction. That the paper birds appear lifelike emphasizes how difficult it can sometimes be to determine fact from fiction in a political setting when politicians are actively trying to deceive. Even the senator extending his speech by adding two quotes in Latin adds to his dishonesty, because, if he added them at the end only to buy his aides more time for the setup, it’s clear that he didn’t actually believe they were relevant to the townspeople.*



*Again, the false—even absurd—promises in his speech show the senator’s willingness to lie to and deceive his public. There is an irony to this scene, though, because even though the fake houses are meant to represent a better reality for the citizens of Rosal del Virrey, the senator notices how run-down even the fictitious homes have become because of the city’s climate. This furthers the idea that that trying to fight against nature or natural conditions is ultimately futile, underscoring that the senator also cannot defy death.*



*The disturbing fate of Nelson Farina’s first wife is an eerie reminder that all bodies are a part of nature, and that they will return to the earth eventually. Additionally, by stashing a criminal away on a boat with “innocent macaws,” García Márquez furthers the idea that appearance is not always reality. It is a bit creepy the way Nelson Farina thinks of his daughter here, which foreshadows his willingness to use her beauty to get what he wants.*



*As someone who’s exercised much control over other people (by killing his first wife) and over his own life (by successfully escaping to Rosal del Virrey), Nelson Farina’s frustration at his lack of power in this situation is evident. If he cannot get a fake ID card—which he finally sees as impossible—he feels like he’s officially cut off from the rest of the world forever. By comparing the senator to Blacamán, a performing actor from Italy who was known as an animal hypnotist, Nelson Farina is making a comment about the senator’s distrustfulness.*



When the speech is over, the senator walks through the streets of the town while music plays. The townspeople all swarm him, confiding their problems in him and asking him for things. He makes a few small promises, like getting a donkey for a woman whose husband had just left her for a new life in Aruba. The senator has done this many times before and knows how to make the people of the city feel better without actually doing any “difficult favors.” A little while later, when an aide brings this donkey to the woman’s home, the animal has the senator’s campaign slogan written on its backside.

As the senator is walking, he comes across Nelson Farina, looking unhappy, swinging in his hammock. The senator greets him and asks how he is. While they are speaking, Farina’s daughter, Laura Farina, comes out of their home. She is wearing an old, faded Guajiro Indian robe and some sort of heavy makeup or sunscreen. But even in this state, she leaves the senator stunned. He thinks she is beautiful, and mutters under his breath in shock and awe, saying “the Lord does the craziest things!”

Later that night, Nelson Farina outfits Laura Farina in the best clothes they have and sends her to the senator. Two armed guards who are lazily watching the senator’s office door tell her to wait outside. The senator is in a meeting with everyone who might be politically important in Rosal del Virrey.

While in his meeting, Senator Onésimo Sánchez tells the other attendees everything that he omitted from his public speech. His manner of speech is gruff and direct. He accuses the other people in the room of having no desire to change the area’s dismal conditions, because these conditions are politically useful for them. As he talks, the senator takes a piece of paper and creates a **paper butterfly**, tossing it aimlessly into the air. It soars lightly out of the door. The senator continues berating the Rosal del Virrey officials.

The guards outside the room are asleep, rifles in hand. As Laura Farina waits in the hallway, she sees the **paper butterfly** come out, fly a bit further, and then flatten against a wall. She tries to peel it off, but one of the guards wakes up and tells her that now it is “painted” to the wall.

*This moment is a comedic one, but still highlights the dishonest way that Senator Onésimo Sánchez operates politically. He can’t be bothered to put in any more effort than is necessary, and even when he does someone a favor it’s clearly a political stunt.*



*The senator’s reaction to Laura Farina is intensified by his distaste for Nelson Farina—his shock is in part a reaction to her beauty but in part surprise that the sullen criminal who has been pestering him all these years could have such a lovely child. Once again, García Márquez shows that in a world where politics are deceitful, anything could be misleading or deceptive.*



*By suggesting the importance of the people in the room with the senator, it’s clear that Senator Onésimo Sánchez previously didn’t take any of the townspeople—his constituents—seriously, underscoring the senator’s political disingenuousness. Meanwhile, Nelson Farina sending his daughter to the senator shows his willingness to sacrifice her well-being for his own gain, which emphasizes that she is an isolated and powerless character.*



*The senator is at last being honest, but this only emphasizes that he willingly lied to the citizens of Rosal del Virrey. The image of the paper butterfly is reminiscent of the paper birds from earlier and symbolizes the mixing of fiction and reality that the senator does as a politician. The butterfly flies fairly far for a piece of paper, suggesting that it appears lifelike, just like the birds. The senator’s lack of attention to the paper butterfly that he makes underscores how he takes part in propping up these blends of reality and fiction but doesn’t even care about the outcome.*



*The image of the guards sleeping, still holding their rifles, demonstrates again the notion of something not being what it is supposed to be. Likewise, the butterfly is not actually painted to the wall, but the guard suggesting that it is demonstrates the changeability of everything in a political world that is disingenuous.*



The senator comes out of the meeting, and only after everyone else leaves does he notice Laura Farina. He asks her what she is doing there, and she responds in French that she's there on behalf of her father. The senator believes he understands what this means. He then observes the two sleeping guards and deliberates over what he should do. He decides that Laura Farina's beauty is overwhelming, and that death has "made the decision for him." He invites her into his office.

Laura Farina is stunned when she walks into the senator's office and sees thousands of banknotes flying through the air, propelled by the electric fan. When the senator turns the fan off, the money settles on the objects in the room. He jokingly says to her, "even shit can fly." He then finds the **rose** that he brought, which the weather and dry air have wilted, and presents it to her, telling her what it is. Laura replies that she learned about roses before.

Senator Onésimo Sánchez then sits down on a cot and begins to undress while he continues talking about **roses**. He takes off his sweat-soaked shirt, revealing a tattoo of an arrow piercing a heart on his chest. He has Laura Farina help him remove his boots. He watches her, struck by her beauty but also commenting that she is a child. She rejects this, saying she turned 19 last April. The senator asks what her birthday is and comments that the two are both Aries, which he says is "the sign of solitude."

The senator then starts thinking about how he isn't used to impulsive affairs, and that he's not sure what to do now with Laura Farina. He gathers her between his knees and lays her down on the cot beside him as he considers what to do next. When he notices that she is naked underneath her dress, he sighs and comments that "no one loves us."

The air is too stagnant for Laura Farina to respond. When Senator Onésimo Sánchez turns the light off, the two are cast in shadow by the **rose**. The senator begins to stroke her. However, when the senator tries to touch her below the waist, his hand hits metal. He realizes that she is wearing an iron padlock and is angry and shocked. He asks Laura Farina where the key to the padlock is, and she tells him that her father has it. She says to the senator that she's been instructed to tell him that one of his aides can go and collect it from him if the senator promises to "straighten out" Nelson Farina's legal problem.

*Death "making the decision for him" implies that the senator feels as though he is powerless to refuse Laura Farina. By looking at the guards, he shows that he understands he is taking a political risk by inviting her in. However, his agreeing to let her in underscores the senator feeling as though he has truly lost control of his life because of his diagnosis.*



*The banknotes flying in the air reference the paper birds from earlier in the story. By saying that "even shit can fly" in reference to these fluttering notes, the senator is implicitly suggesting his whole political charade is a joke. The rose—which, by now, has succumbed to the climate and is wilted—signifies the impending and inevitable death of the senator. Laura Farina saying she knows about roses suggests she knows about death too.*



*The senator's continued chatter about roses demonstrates his obsession with the idea of death, even if he has still not accepted his own. He is once again sweaty, showing the pervasiveness of the city's climate and the unavailability of nature. In saying that both the senator and Laura Farina are Aries, the "sign of solitude," García Márquez is fairly explicit about the loneliness that these two share, despite their very different social positions.*



*The fact that Laura Farina is naked under her dress confirms for the senator that she has been sent to him by her father to have sex with him. This makes the senator melancholy, as it proves that no one is looking out for the young woman. He then believes he feels a connection to her, thinking her to be terribly isolated on account of her powerlessness, and he recognizes this feeling in himself because of the fatal secret he is carrying around with him.*



*When the senator finds the padlock on Laura Farina's body, he can't believe that he's being blackmailed by Nelson Farina, but, through this bizarre scene, García Márquez is only further commenting on the absurdity of a society where politicians can't be trusted. Laura Farina is barely given any room to speak, confirming that she lacks any control over her life. Additionally, the shadow of the rose that falls over the two characters confirms that the senator's death is near.*



The senator is not happy, and he curses Nelson Farina. But, as he closes his eyes, he seems to surrender to some type of fate, telling himself to remember how it won't be long before he is dead. He shudders. He then asks Laura Farina what she's heard about him. She wonders if he wants to know the truth, and he says that he does. She tells him that people say he's worse than everyone else because he's different. The senator doesn't get upset and decides he'll fix Nelson Farina's problem.

Laura Farina then offers to go get the key from her father herself. But Senator Onésimo Sánchez just asks her to sleep next to him for a while, because it's nice to have companionship when one is lonely. He sinks his face into the crook of her arm. Laura Farina lays next to him, staring at the **rose**. The senator dies six months and eleven days later, disgraced after word of the scandal got out. He dies in much the same position as he slept that night, lying next to Laura Farina and "weeping with rage" because he's "dying without her."

*The senator appears to finally accept his death and the choices that death are guiding him towards. He knows the political consequences both of sleeping with Laura Farina and of giving Nelson Farina what he wants, but he no longer cares. He accepts the inevitability of his death, even as it scares him, and makes his choice specifically because of his illness.*



*As promised by the first sentence of the story, Senator Onésimo Sánchez dies in the last sentence. His isolation is complete by the end, too, as he dies in the midst of a political scandal and is going into death alone, because Laura Farina isn't dying with him. However, he does seem to have changed his outlook on death, because it is not his death nor his political disgrace that makes him weep, only the lack of Laura Farina after death. This implies that he understands the importance of accepting death, and he only wished that he had more time to live with this knowledge.*







## HOW TO CITE

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