

Atchafalaya

- **Page 11:** “His name was Oliver Houck. “The greatest arrogance was the stealing of the sun,” he said. “The second-greatest arrogance is running rivers backward. The third-greatest arrogance is trying to hold the Mississippi in place. The ancient channels of the river go almost to Texas. Human beings have tried to restrict the river to one course – that’s where the arrogance began.””
- **Page 15:** “And Dugie said, “You’ve heard of Murphy – ‘What can happen will happen’? This is where Murphy lives.””
- **Page 20:** “Man against nature. That’s what life’s all about.”
- **Page 39:** “A book he [Mark Twain] happened to be working on was “Life on the Mississippi.” Through a character called Uncle Mumford, he remarked that “four years at West Point, and plenty of books and schooling, will learn a man a good deal, I reckon, but it won’t learn him the river.””
- **Page 50:** “The Washington Post, in an editorial in November of 1980, called attention to the Corps’ efforts to prevent the great shift at Old River, and concluded with this paragraph: Who will win as this slow-motion confrontation between humankind and nature goes on? No one really knows. But after watching Mt. St. Helens and listening to the guesses about its performance, if we had to bet, we would bet on the river.”
- **Page 63:** ““The coast is sinking out of sight,” Oliver Houck has said. “We’ve reversed Mother Nature.””
- **Page 63:** ““We must recognize that natural processes cannot be restored,” he told me. “We can’t put it back the way it was. The best we can do is try to get it back in balance, try to treat early symptoms. It’s like treating cancer. You get in early, you may do something.””
- **Page 64:** “Society required artifice to survive in a region where nature might reasonably have asked a few more eons to finish a work of creation that was incomplete.””
- **Page 91:** “General Sands, reflecting on these matters, once said, “The Old River Control Structure was put in the wrong place. It was designed to a dollar figure.””

Cooling the Lava

- **Page 105:** “In Vestmannaeyjar, as in much of Iceland, it is not easy to differentiate between bad weather and a natural disaster, because hundred-knot winds are common and waves will break over an islet two hundred feet high.”
- **Page 106:** “I laughed. I laughed because I did not believe that we could stop Mother Nature. The television showed a small fire truck putting water up against the lava front. I laughed. I asked myself, ‘What are they really trying to do?’”
- **Page 115:** “If the third seismograph had been working, it would have completed the triangulation, locating the disturbance under Heimaey. Without it – and in the absence of

complaints from anywhere – seismologists and the Civil Defense had been given a warning they could not understand.”

- **Page 122:** “After the people were evacuated to Reykjavik and began to wait out the uncertainties of the eruption, it was said of them that not the least of their rigors was the adjustment they had to make to the lower standard of living in the capital city. In their separation, they were not being supported in the manner to which they were accustomed.”
- **Page 126:** “In other words, the people of Vestmannaeyjar, who were emblematic of the people of Iceland, had lived since the year of settlement in the endless presence of disaster. They had obviously not been dissuaded by it, and had learned to subdue their residual fears. No matter how overwhelming a situation might seem to be, if there was any possibility of fighting back they had done so, and this seemed to have produced evolutionary effects, expressed in the battle against the lava...”
- **Page 147:** “The Hawaiian heritage is to be fatalistic... They accept the renewal of land by volcanic eruption. There’s no feasible way of dealing with large, continuing flows. Political issues have aligned the state and country in a fatalistic mode. The consequences of diverting lava from one place onto another would be unacceptable.”
- **Page 165:** “When the eruption was less than two weeks old, the Icelandic parliament increased the national sales tax, and in other ways created a repository known as the Catastrophe Fund... The surtax has never been rescinded, and has evolved into an insurance system against natural disasters.”
- **Page 168:** “I didn’t like the lava. It was all black. I thought it was very ugly. Now I can see it has a beauty, too.”
- **Page 179:** “We issued a proclamation that the eruption had stopped. We took the risk of telling people that the eruption was over, so they could come out and settle down again and build up the town.”

Los Angeles Against the Mountains

- **Page 195:** “...the widespread notion that everything in Los Angeles is disposable. Advancing this national prejudice even further, debris flows, mudslides, and related phenomena have “provided literary minds with a ready-made metaphor of the alleged moral decay of Los Angeles.”
- **Page 195:** “The financial and topographical contours correspond almost exactly.”
- **Page 203:** “Exceptional flows are frequent, in other words, but not frequent enough to deter people from building pantiled mansions in the war zone, dingbats in the line of fire.”
- **Page 203:** “Even with a geology functioning at such remarkably short intervals, the people have ample time to forget.”
- **Page 215:** “The heaviest downpours always occur on the watersheds most recently burned. Why this is so is a question that has not been answered.”
- **Page 229:** ““Why does anybody live there?” “They’re not well informed. Most folks don’t know the story of the fire-flood sequence. When it happens in the next canyon, they say, ‘Thank God it didn’t happen here.’””
- **Page 232:** ““That’s an awful pile of rock and dirt up there, and we’re proposing to hold it back,” he said. “To do something like that is extremely expensive, but there are so many of us here to pay the bill, to protect those who insist on living up there.””