Reading: Anil’s Ghost, through the end of “Ananda”
Reading: the rest of the novel.

NOTE: possibly you are somewhat busy at the moment. Below you will find an outline of the novel, which includes sections marked “**” which can be skipped by the overworked – just read the outline.

Outline for Michael Ondaatje, Anil’s Ghost

Introductory material

Miner's folk song
Anil with forensic team in Guatemala

Sarath (9)

Anil lands in Sri Lanka.
A Buddhist cave temple desecrated.

She examines victims of political violence; she has been sent by the Center for Human Rights in Geneva; as the international specialist, she is teamed with a local archeologist, Sarath; in his lab -- which is on the ship -- she examines skeletons from an ancient sacred cave and finds a fragment of bone which is recent.

(22) Anil visits Lalitha, an elderly Tamil woman she knew as a child.
(27) Anil worries about Sarath’s politics.
* A government official is murdered on a train.*
*(33) Anil and her married boyfriend, Cullis
What the National Atlas of Sri Lanka includes and leaves out
(41) A list of the missing; the politics of violence.
(44) Sarath and Anil drive towards Bandarawela, the place where the skeletons were found. On the drive, Sarath mentions two brothers, Palipana and Narada, his teachers; Narada, a monk, was murdered.

(50) as they excavate deep in the caves, Anil finds a whole skeleton which is new: proof of a murder by the government; they name it Sailor. She can tell that it has been moved from somewhere else and reburied in this restricted area.

(57) Sarath told Anil his wife was dead; the rest house owner mentions that she is alive, that Sarath has visited with her, and with a cousin in the government. Anil becomes ill, dreams, talks long distance to her friend Leaf (first reference to Cherry Valance); they return to Colombo and she continues to examine the skeleton.

*(66) Anil's background; she makes contact with Chitra, who works on insects, and asks for help with the skeleton.
(74) Sarath at work; he cuts off Sailor's skull; knows that "he and Anil needed help".

The Grove of Ascetics (79)

Palipana introduced: he is a historian of inscriptions who was Sarath’s teacher. After an academic scandal, he retired into the forest to live in the ruins of an ancient monastery; he is
blind, and cared for by a young girl, Lakma, his niece. Sarath and Anil go there, bringing the skull.

_A day in the life of Ananda, a miner._

How can they identify the skeleton? Palipana says they should find a ritual painter; he describes the ritual of painting eyes on statues. Lakma's story: as a 12-year-old, she saw her parents killed and became frightened of everything; Palipana brought her to the forest and taught her, while she helped him as he lost his vision. The narrative looks ahead to Palipana's death, when she will carve an inscription for him at the edge of the water as he is dying. Palipana tells the visitors that the ritual painter he has in mind became a drunk now works in the mines.

*(109)* They return to Colombo, but find a truck driver (Gunasena) is crucified alive on the road, and bring him to the hospital.

A Brother (118)

*Doctors and political violence: Gamini, a doctor, works with the victims of violence in a base hospital. Linus Corea, a neurosurgeon, is kidnapped by the insurgents to work for them. Gamini does triage after bomb explosions. Gamini is now working in accident services hospital in Colombo.

* Sarath brings Gunasena to Gamini, who is his brother; Gunasena's injury is common; Gamini thinks their work with the skeleton is dangerous.

* Anil remembers what Sarath would only say once she turned off her tape recorder.


* Anil's forensic work in the American Southwest, and relations with other pathologists.

Sarath brings a soil sample which identifies Sailor's first burial site. They plan to go there; he has kept this secret from the authorities, remembering worse times.

(156) Sarath remembers rock drawings discovered in the times of worst violence.

Ananda (161)

They find the former ritual painter Ananda, and bring him along.

They set up shop in an old estate Sarath visited as a child.

Ananda begins to work on reconstructing the head, Anil studies the skeleton, Sarath goes back and forth to Colombo for supplies. Anil no longer has the fluency to talk with Ananda. Ananda builds up the skull with clay, and breaks it up at the end of each day.

Sririssa, a teacher, finds her students beheaded.

Anil sees what Sailor's skeleton suggests about his daily life, and begins to reconstruct his history.

Ananda has finished the head; Sarath remembers when people were being beheaded; Sririssa was Ananda's wife, and she disappeared at that time.

What Sarath told Anil and Gamini about the intuition which got Palipana kicked out of the profession. What Gamini said about his family and Palipana.

*(195)* Anil finds Ananda trying to to stab himself; Sarath takes him to the hospital.
The Mouse (209)

*After Gamini’s wife left him, he was attracted to his brother's wife. He is taking drugs in order to keep working in emergency services the services; it is also his job to identify the bodies of victims.
*Gamini remembers taking time off at the beach; guerrillas found him and insisted he come give treatment to their wounded.
*Gamini, nicknamed "the Mouse" by his family, thinks about his rivalry with Sarath. Divorced, solitary, "he was a perfect participant in the war".
He remembers his early days at a doctor at the base hospital in the Northeast. He passes on to Anil something important that he was told then.

Between Heartbeats (235)

*Anil met her friend Leaf in Arizona; they watched movies together from a forensic perspective. (Who Cherry Valance is).
*Gamini remembers a nurse he was attracted to.
*Gamini telling Anil that Sarath’s wife should have married him; he was in the hospital when she was brought in as a suicide.
*Leaf left Arizona; much later, she asks Anil to visit her, and reveals that she has Alzheimer's and is losing her memory.
*A letter from Anil and Leaf about the forensics of a Lee Marvin movie.
Anil and Sarath talk about secrets; he remembers an excavation in China; *she remembers meeting Cullis, her boyfriend, a science writer.
*Anil remembers early days, then when she left him, before going to Sri Lanka.

The Life Wheel (270)

Anil, ready to make the report about the political murder of Sailor, calls Dr. Perera, who is a family friend, for help (he is introduced early in the book, and later on 181).
A car brings her to Colombo, the doctor meets her, the skeleton of sailor is misplaced. She is now delivering her report to officials, the military, and police; she accuses them; Sarath sees the audience's hostility, challenges and patronizes her in order to defuse it. He challenges her to do a forensic analysis of another skeleton; her papers and tape recorder are confiscated; she is told to leave.
Sarath and Gunasena take two skeletons out of the building; he remembers aftermath of his marriage; he knows he has just taken a big step. When Anil finally emerges from the building, everything she has has been taken. He tells her to go to the lab and work on the skeleton.
Sarath has given her the skeleton of Sailor and her tape recorder, along with a message: report and leave.
Anil realizes Gamini and Sarath could speak easily only because she was there; she remembers how they talked about leaving as a feature of Western movies.
Gamini, reviewing the photographs of victims, recognizes his brother. He tends his brother's body.
National Heroes Day: the Sri Lankan president goes out to meet the people and is killed by a bomber; his body is not found.
A statue of the Buddha is dynamited by thieves. **Ananda** is brought to supervise reconstruction of the statue. As he works, another statue is built to replace the one destroyed. He wears **Sarath**'s shirt under his costume as he does the ritual of painting on the statue's eyes.