

24 Hours Study Guide

24 Hours by Greg Iles

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Plot Summary

24 Hours by Greg Iles is a terrifying novel of one family's ordeal with kidnapers. Karen Jennings returns home from taking her husband to the airport only to have her child kidnapped out of her own bedroom. A kidnapper remains with Karen, instructing her that her daughter is being held in an unknown location and her husband is in the company of another kidnapper. The family must wait until morning to make a money transfer that will pay the kidnapers' ransom. However, the kidnapers are unaware that Abby, Karen's six year old daughter, is a diabetic, dependent on insulin. The kidnapers also do not know to what extent the Jennings will go to get their little girl back. 24 Hours is a frightening thriller that will leave the reader mesmerized until the final page.

Karen and her daughter Abby drive her husband Will to the airport so that he can fly to a medical convention in Biloxi. Karen and Will argue because Will wants his family to accompany him, as they would normally do, but Karen must stay at home to prepare for a Junior League flower show. Karen takes Abby home, where she argues with the little girl over a snack that could compromise her diabetes. Finally Abby relents and goes to wash up as her mother has instructed. Before Abby can return to the kitchen, however, a kidnapper steps out of her bedroom and grabs the child, knocking her out with chloroform. The kidnapper slides the girl out a window to his partner and then goes to inform Karen of the situation.

A short time later, Will arrives at the hotel just in time to present a speech on a new drug he has developed that will be released the following month. After the speech, Will is approached by a young woman who talks her way into his hotel room and tells him that her partner has kidnapped his little girl. Will is to stay with this woman, Cheryl, until morning when he will make arrangements for two hundred thousand dollars to be transferred to a local bank and withdrawn to pay the ransom.

At home, Karen is trying to convince the kidnapper, Joe Hickey, that her daughter is diabetic and needs her insulin immediately. As they talk, a friend from the Junior League stops by. Karen manages to convince the woman to leave seconds before Hickey pulled his gun. Back in the house, Hickey relents and agrees to call his partner to warn him not to feed Abby any sweets.

Across town, a doctor and his wife are discussing an ordeal that happened to them a year before. Dr. and Mrs. McDill are previous victims of Hickey. Mrs. McDill does not want to go to the FBI because of her fears that her son will be harmed. Mrs. McDill also has a secret that she has kept from her husband: Hickey raped her during the kidnapping. Dr. McDill assures his wife that no one needs to know the details of her ordeal and convinces her to go with him to the FBI.

Hickey takes Karen to Abby, allowing her to give her a shot and leave insulin with her. On the way home, Hickey makes sexual overtures to Karen, forcing her to remove her pants and underwear. Back at the house, Hickey makes Karen dance a striptease for him. Karen convinces Hickey she needs to insert a diaphragm before he rapes her and



Hickey allows her to enter the bathroom alone. Karen finds a scalper and hides it on her body before returning to Hickey. On the bed, Karen convinces Hickey she wants to perform oral sex. Instead, Karen holds the scalper to Hickey and forces him to call Abby's captor. Hickey complies for a moment, but then hits Karen over the head, causing her to slice his thigh with the scalpel.

Abby manages to escape the cabin where Huey Cotton is holding her captive. Abby hides in the woods and calls her mother on a cell phone. Karen speaks to her and puts in a call to her husband, informing him of these developments. Unfortunately, Huey finds Abby and returns her to the cabin, forcing Karen to relinquish her control over Hickey. Karen sews up Hickey's leg and becomes his docile servant once more.

Will holds a gun on Cheryl and calls the owner of the major cell phone provider in hopes that he can track the cell phone Abby was using. However, Will has trouble getting hold of the man. Will relinquishes the gun to Cheryl and begins thinking the situation over. Will knows he needs Cheryl's cooperation in whatever he does to keep Hickey in the dark. Will uses the drugs he has brought for his presentation to convince Cheryl to help. Later Will gets a hold of the cell phone provider's president, but the cell phone does not remain on long enough to get enough information to find Abby.

The following day, Karen's friend shows up again as she and Hickey are leaving to approve the money transfer. Hickey shoots the woman and leaves her for dead in the Jennings' driveway. Karen approves the transfer, but then Hickey becomes aware of police surveillance of her car. Hickey goes to the airport and steals a car from a woman, driving Karen on the highway toward the motel where he is to meet Cheryl with the money. At the same time, Will goes to the bank to withdraw the money and finds the FBI waiting for him. Will is unhappy with the way the FBI is handling the case and he decides to handle it on his own. Will withdraws extra money and offers it to Cheryl if she will help him.

Will and Cheryl go to the airport and take Will's plane up to try to find Abby. Will locates both Abby and Karen in the stolen car. Will lands the plane on the highway in front of the car in which Abby and Huey are. Will rescues Abby and helps Huey out of his crashed car. At the same time, Karen sees the plane and she attacks Hickey, causing him to shoot her. Hickey goes after Will, threatening to shoot Abby. Huey cannot allow harm to come to Abby, so he attacks Hickey, killing him instead. Cheryl is arrested, Huey placed in the hospital, and the Jennings family is rushed to the hospital, together, a family again.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

Joe Hickey, his cousin Huey Cotton, and his wife Cheryl Lynn Tilly have committed five kidnappings in which they hold the child of a doctor for ransom while keeping the parents under lock and key for twenty-four hours until they receive their money. None of these families have gone to the police because Hickey promises to return and kill their child if that occurs. Now Hickey and his team are about to commit their sixth kidnapping.

In chapter one, Margaret McDill sits in a car with Joe Hickey, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her son in another vehicle. Margaret is convinced that she will never see her child again because Hickey has allowed her to see his face and to know his name. Hickey promises that the child will survive, that has always been his motto in these kidnappings. However, he warns Margaret if she ever goes to the police, he will return and kill her son.

Huey Cotton arrives at the McDonalds' parking lot and finishes a carving of a bear. Huey gives this figurine to Peter McDill. A phone call informs Huey that it is alright to release the child. Huey tells Peter to go into the play area of the McDonalds and look for his mother. Peter enters the restaurant but is frightened when he does not see his mother. When Peter does see his mother, he becomes even more afraid because of her wild, unusual appearance. Margaret hugs her child and refuses to let him go.

In chapter two, a year has passed. Karen and Abby Jennings are driving Karen's husband, Will, to the airport. Will is on his way to the Mississippi Medical Association's annual meeting in Biloxi. This year Will is the keynote speaker. In his speech, Will intends to announce the release of his new drug, Restorase. Will wants Karen and Abby to go with him, but Karen is the chairperson of a Junior League flower show that is scheduled in a few days and she has a lot of work to do to prepare. Karen and Abby drop Will at his personal plane and say their goodbyes. Will flies away, doing a waggle of the wings as a goodbye to his daughter.

Karen takes Abby home and sends her to the bathroom to wash up before checking her blood sugar. Abby is a diabetic with juvenile onset diabetes, and her blood sugars must be monitored closely. However, before Abby returns to the kitchen, she pauses outside her bedroom. A man steps out and subdues Abby with a rag soaked in chloroform. The man then slips Abby through the window to his partner. The partner, Huey, puts the girl in his truck and rolls the truck down the driveway to the street. In the kitchen, Karen is looking through the New England Journal of Medicine, thinking about her derailed medical career, when Joe Hickey comes into the room.



Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The novel begins with Hickey promising Margaret McDill that the child always makes it. This line alerts the reader that something unusual is going on. Even though the couple appears to be any normal couple sitting in a parking lot, it soon becomes clear that this is the end of a kidnapping scheme and Hickey is the mastermind behind the scam. Margaret McDill is convinced that she or her son or both are about to be murdered by these strangers who have disrupted their quiet, privileged lives, but this does not happen. Both are allowed to go free after Hickey receives confirmation that the ransom for young Peter has been paid. However, Margaret is clearly traumatized by the entire episode and the reader suspects that the night she spent with Hickey was not a pleasant one. However, the trauma is over, at least for the McDills.

The Jennings family is introduced in the second chapter. The relationship between Karen and Will Jennings is clearly strained. The reader learns later in the chapter that this strain is partly caused by Karen's resentment in having to give up her dreams of becoming a doctor in order to raise her only child. This leaves Karen jealous and resentful of the medical career Will enjoys. This strain in the marriage suggests trouble for these people, but when Abby is kidnapped, the reader wonders if perhaps this crisis, this forced acknowledgment on Karen's part that having Abby is worth anything, will help repair the troubled marriage.

Abby is six years old and has just been kidnapped out of her own house. Abby is also a diabetic, which means that her life could be in more danger than from the violence of the kidnapers. Abby's blood sugar can be highly unstable, leaving her vulnerable to a low sugar that could cause coma, or a high sugar that can cause irritability, dizziness, coma, and death. The reader knows that Abby has been taken by the same people who kidnapped Peter McDill the year before, so the reader knows the child always makes it. However, this illness complicates the situation, making the reader wonder just how much the diabetes will affect Hickey's well thought out plan.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

In chapter 3, Hickey attempts to reassure Karen that Abby is safe and will remain so as long as she follows his rules. Karen moves away from him and searches the house. Karen tries to call the police, but the phones have all been dialed into a recorded message. Karen returns to the kitchen with Will's gun and holds Hickey at gunpoint. However, Hickey convinces her that if something happens to him, if he does not call his partner every half hour, Abby will die. Hickey then explains that someone will be joining Will at his hotel in Biloxi and stay with him until morning. Then Will will be instructed to contact his accountant and give him a story about a rare sculpture he has found that he needs to pay cash for immediately. Will will then convince the accountant to transfer two hundred thousand dollars to a bank in Biloxi, which he will pick up and give to Hickey's partner. When the money is received, Karen and Abby will be released in a public area.

Karen resists the idea of waiting twenty-four hours and begs Hickey to allow her to go to the bank immediately. However, Hickey refuses on the basis that the banks are about to close. Then Karen remembers that Abby has not had her shot yet. Karen tells Hickey that Abby is a diabetic and that she needs to be with her in order to monitor her blood sugars. After Karen shows Hickey the vials of Abby's insulin, he calls his partner and instructs him not to feed Abby anything except crackers.

Will lands in Biloxi at a local airport that also services military aircraft. Will is late, so he rushes to the hotel and checks into his suite just in time to take a shower before he is due to give his speech. Back at home, Hickey is explaining to Karen why his plan is so ingenuous. The plan keeps someone with each member of the family to prevent them from calling the police, but keeps them separate so that they cannot work together to find some way out of the situation. The ransom amounts are also well thought out, enough to live on for a year, but little enough that the transfer and withdrawal would not arouse suspicion in an accountant or bank official. Hickey then instructs Karen to relax because it is going to be a long night.

In chapter 4, Will gives his speech on the drug Restorase, a drug he has created to counteract the effects of the drug Anectine, a paralyzing agent used in surgeries and to control violent patients in the ER. During his speech, Will notices a beautiful woman in the front of the room who is clearly attempting to flirt with him. Back at home, Karen is watching Hickey eat when someone begins knocking on the door. The visitor is a fellow Junior League member who wants to talk to Karen about the preparations for the flower show. Karen successfully manages to send the woman, Stephanie Morgan, away by telling her Hickey is a cousin with whom she is attempting to settle her uncle's estate. Hickey congratulates Karen when Stephanie leaves, stating that he might have killed her if Karen had not convinced her to go.



When Will's lecture is over, a couple of his friends try to convince him to go gambling with them. However, Will claims exhaustion and heads up to his room. The beautiful woman from the speech is on the elevator with Will and it turns out she is going to the same floor. When they get off, Will wonders if the woman is a prostitute sent to make him happy. However, the woman walks off to her own room, but returns a second later claiming her key will not work. When Will also fails to get the key to work, he allows the woman to come into his room to use the phone. Once inside, however, the woman pulls a gun and tells him Abby has been kidnapped. Will tries to call the police, but the woman convinces him this would cause Abby's death. The woman, Cheryl, explains the situation to Will. Will tells Cheryl Abby has diabetes, so when Hickey calls, Cheryl offers Will the phone.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Karen and Will both react similarly when they learn their child has been kidnapped. Karen first attempts to find Abby, then tries to call the police, finally pulling a gun on Hickey. However, Hickey's plan is so fool proof that any action on Karen's part could cause her child's death. Hickey assures Karen that his cousin, Huey, is a simple minded man who has been instructed to kill Abby if he fails to hear from Hickey every half hour. That means if anything happens to Hickey, Abby will die. Will is hit with this same realization when Cheryl, Hickey's third partner, traps him in his room and announces that Abby has been kidnapped.

Abby's diabetic condition is an important element to this kidnapping, one that causes her parents more concern than the simple fact that their daughter is being held for ransom. This situation also shows that Hickey intends for the child to live because he makes the effort to call Huey and tell him about Abby's dietary concerns. However, Huey is so simple minded the reader is concerned that he cannot grasp the importance of keeping sweets from Abby and might end up offering her something that could put her in danger.

At the same time Abby's medical condition shows Hickey's compassion, the arrival of Stephanie Morgan shows his ruthless side. If not for Karen talking Stephanie into leaving the house, Hickey might have killed her. This suggests that not only Abby's life is in danger, but perhaps Karen's as well. This also puts into question the safety of anyone else who happens to stop by the Jennings home that day.

Finally, the drugs that are the centerpiece to Will Jennings' keynote speech are a fascinating addition to this equation. These drugs can paralyze a person, leaving them fully aware, but unable to move or breath. This leaves the reader wondering if this drug might not be a weapon Will could use to help his family as the plot continues to develop.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In chapter five, Will speaks to Hickey and tries to convince him to get Abby's insulin to her. Will makes threats, promising that if his daughter has complications because of her diabetes, he will make Hickey pay. Hickey is highly hostile to Will during this conversation even as he agrees to take the medication to Abby. At the same time, Abby wakes in a cabin in the woods with Huey Cotton watching over her. Abby is frightened.

Karen and Hickey drive in Karen's car nearly an hour out into the country. Karen is blindfolded most of the time so that she has no idea where she is going. When the car stops, Hickey allows her to get out and see to Abby's needs. While Karen checks Abby's blood sugar and prepares her insulin injection, she tells Abby to steal Huey's cell phone any chance she gets, run out of the cabin, and call 911. Then Karen is forced to say goodbye to Abby and leave her with Huey. Before she leaves, however, Karen gives Huey a small cooler filled with Abby's insulin and syringes. As they leave, Hickey allows Karen to call Will and let him know that she gave Abby her insulin. After the call, Will attacks Cheryl in an attempt to get the gun. When he does, her dress rips, revealing a huge assortment of bruises. Will suddenly begins to question Cheryl's commitment to the kidnapping and why Hickey insists on staying with the wives during these episodes.

In Jackson, Dr. James McDill is talking with his wife, attempting to convince her that they should go to the FBI regarding their kidnapping ordeal the year before. Margaret is reluctant, afraid of what might happen to Peter if the kidnapers learn what they have done. At the same time, Dr. McDill becomes aware that his wife is hiding something from him regarding the events of that fateful night. Dr. McDill continues to press his wife until she finally admits that Hickey forced her to perform perverted acts of sex on him and that she complied in order to save her son. Dr. McDill is outraged, but he promises to keep this part of the story private when they go to the FBI.

In chapter six, Karen and Hickey are driving back to the Jennings home. Hickey instructs Karen to remove her pants and underwear. Hickey tells Karen that he raped each one of the five mothers involved in the kidnapping and he intends to do the same with Karen. Karen is frightened and humiliated, but she also knows she is willing to do anything to protect her child.

Will gives Cheryl the gun back, and as a result she gives Hickey the okay when he calls again. Cheryl then sits on the bed and begins to tell Will the story of her life. Cheryl had an abusive stepfather, so she left home as a teen. Cheryl became a stripper and that led to drugs and prostitution. Hickey met her in the strip clubs and rescued her, helping her through drug withdrawal and getting her out of prostitution. Hickey then put Cheryl in some classier strip clubs where she became a popular dancer. Soon offers to make soft porn movies came in and Hickey made her stop dancing out of jealousy. Now they kidnap children to make the money they need to survive, once a year for twenty-four



hours. Will begins to wonder what Cheryl would do to get away from Hickey and he offers her the entire ransom if she will help him. However, Cheryl turns him down.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Hickey once again shows some common sense and some compassion when he allows Karen to give Abby her insulin shot. However, the reader soon realizes that Hickey is not doing this out of compassion, but to guarantee he will get his ransom money. Hickey's true character comes out as the reader learns that Hickey raped all the mothers involved in these kidnapping schemes and that he beats his wife. Hickey may have saved Cheryl from a world of drugs and prostitution, but in his own way he made money off of her body, prostituting her in a new way, and he holds her back from gaining some form of personal success. Hickey is a self-centered, cruel man who uses people for his own gain, making him extremely dangerous in this situation.

Will learns about Cheryl, a young girl who has been abused and neglected her entire life. Will does not feel sorry for Cheryl, but he hopes to use some of this information to get her to help him save Abby. The only way Will can save Abby is with Cheryl's help, but it is unclear now if Cheryl is strong enough or brave enough, to go against Hickey and help Will out.

As the drama of Abby's kidnapping continues to unfold, the drama has continued in the lives of the McDills. Margaret McDill admits to her husband that she was raped the night her son was kidnapped, a fact the reader suspected in the first chapter but was not clear about. Margaret was also threatened not to go to the police, but now her husband wants to go to the FBI out of a sense of responsibility to another family who might at that moment be going through the same nightmare. This seems like an encouraging step to the reader, but one wonders how FBI involvement might affect the life of Abby Jennings.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

In chapter seven, Hickey takes Karen home and forces her directly into the bedroom. Hickey asks Karen for a drink and then instructs her to strip for him. Karen begins to dance as Hickey has requested, shedding her clothes as slowly as she can, afraid that if she disobeys Hickey her daughter will suffer. Karen watches Hickey drink and hopes that he might become so drunk that he will not be able to rape her. When Karen is naked, Hickey forces her to dance on his lap. As Karen does, she thinks about her suffering love life with Will and regrets the lack of intimacy between them. Finally Hickey has enough and he forces her off his lap, standing to remove his own clothing. Suddenly Karen is struck by the vulnerability of an aroused man, the seed of an idea forming in her mind.

In chapter eight, Huey tries to offer Abby a bowl of Captain Crunch, but she explains that the cereal would raise her blood sugar too much. Huey goes into the kitchen to get some cereal anyway, leaving Abby alone in the living room. While Huey is gone, Abby runs out of the cabin and hides in the trees. Huey returns and is so upset to find Abby gone that he drops his cereal and the cell phone on the floor. At the same time, Karen convinces Hickey to allow her to go into the bathroom and insert a diaphragm. Karen does not use a diaphragm, so she uses the time he has given her to find a weapon she can use. Karen finds a scalpel in the toothbrush holder. Karen hides the scalpel between her butt cheeks and then puts on a sexy negligee Will bought her that she has never worn.

As Huey searches for Abby, frightening her by saying that she might be bitten by snakes, Karen returns to the bedroom. Karen begins to play along with Hickey, convincing him that she wants to perform oral sex on him. When Karen is in position, she pulls out the scalpel and presses it against his penis. Karen tells Hickey to call Abby or she will slice off his organ. Hickey does as he is told, but there is no answer at the cabin. Back at the cabin, Abby can hear the phone ringing. Abby goes back into the cabin and finds the cell phone on the floor. However, it is not the cell phone that is ringing, but a landline in the bedroom. Abby tries to answer it, but the caller has already hung up. Instead, Abby takes the cell phone and runs back outside. Abby tries to call 911, but gets a recording informing her that the service is not available where she is. Instead, Abby calls Karen.

After calling the cabin the second time, Hickey hits Karen on the head with the phone. This causes Karen's hand to slip and Hickey's thigh is sliced open from hip to knee. Hickey demands Karen stitch up the cut. While Hickey is in the bathroom attempting to stop the flow of blood, the phone rings. Karen answers, shocked and happy to find Abby on the other end. Karen then grabs Will's gun and takes control back over Hickey.



Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Hickey clearly intends to rape Karen like he has done the other mothers, using her child's safety as a way to coerce her into cooperation. Despite the fact that Karen is frightened and sickened by the idea of sex with Hickey, she goes along for a time in hopes of sparing Abby pain or death. However, Karen is not the type of woman to just sit back and allow something that dark and horrible to happen without putting up some kind of fight. Karen attacks Hickey with a scalpel, hoping he will call Huey and have Abby brought to her. Unfortunately, Abby picks that particular moment to escape the cabin, taking away any advantage Karen's plan might have offered. As a result, Hickey gets the upper hand momentarily by hitting Karen on the hand. However, this act causes Karen to cut Hickey, giving the control back to her.

Abby has done what she thought her mother would want her to do and run from the cabin. Huey does not like it when children run from him; therefore, this could cause him to become angry and possibly hurt Abby. Then Abby returns to the cabin and finds the cell phone, using it first to call 911. Unfortunately, they are so far out in the country that the service is not available. Instead, Abby calls her mother as all children are bound to do and allows Karen to know that she is free. Unfortunately, Karen has no way of getting to Abby because she has no clue where she is.



Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In chapter nine, Dr. McDill and his wife are in an office with Special Agent Chalmers, telling their story. Chalmers appears interested but skeptical about the story, in part because the McDills took so long to report the crime. However, when Margaret confesses the rape and Dr. McDill explains about the threats the kidnappers made, Chalmers begins to listen more closely. Chalmers promises to allow them to look at mug pictures in hopes of identifying the kidnappers and to notify his boss about the possibility that this could be happening again. However, McDill finds himself forced to encourage caution several times in fear that the FBI might tip off the kidnappers before the ransom has been paid, thereby endangering the child.

In chapter ten, Karen keeps the gun on Hickey while she makes a call on the other line to Will. Karen tells Will what has happened, giving him a chance to speak with Abby. Will then talks to Hickey, demanding to know why he should not trace the cell phone Abby is using. Hickey tells Will that Huey has been given orders to kill Abby should the police make any attempt to raid or otherwise infiltrate his hiding place. Will discounts this advice and decides to contact the president of the cell phone provider, whom he met once through a patient. Will does not believe Huey would kill Abby, and he gets the impression that Cheryl is not convinced either. However, Hickey tells Will how Huey killed Hickey's father for abusing Hickey as a boy. Hickey believes he could get Huey to do anything he wants him to do.

As Will continues to get his cell phone guy on the phone, Karen continues to talk to Abby. Abby is frightened and anxious for her parents to come get her. Karen tries to reassure her, but she is unable to keep the fear out of her own voice. Karen has no way of rescuing her daughter unless Will is successful in reaching the cell phone guy. Unfortunately, Huey finds Abby and takes the cell phone from her. With this news, Hickey once again takes control of the situation. Karen tries to fight him, but Hickey drives her back. They are now back where they started, so Karen relents and sets about stitching up Hickey's leg.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

The McDills go to the FBI a year after their own kidnapping out of fear for the next family, but soon realize there is very little the FBI can do without placing the current kidnapped child in danger. This situation gives the reader some hope, but at the same time it causes fear for Abby because the FBI does not appear to understand the seriousness of the situation. If they move on the cabin or the hotel or the house, they could set into motion the events that will end in Abby's death.



Karen appears to have control and Abby is free from Huey. It seems that the whole situation is about to be happily resolved. However, no one knows where Abby is but Hickey and he is not sharing this information. This leaves Will attempting to track her cell phone, but the man who can do it is not answering his phone. The situation is perilous, and soon the tide tips once more and Karen loses control. Abby is back in Huey's clutches, though he is treating her with some compassion, and Hickey is back in the driver's seat. The reader is frustrated along with Karen and Will, struck by their lack of control, of their helplessness. It seems the situation is growing more desperate by the minute, leaving them unable to do anything but concede like the families before them.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Huey returns Abby to the cabin, convinced that he cannot live without Joey and therefore will do anything he asks. Back at the Jennings house, Karen is sewing up Hickey's leg. Karen asks Hickey why he targeted her family, but he will not answer the question.

In Biloxi, Will is pacing in the hotel suite, wondering why this is happening to his family. Will desperately needs to do something, but feels as though any action on his part would be fatal for Abby, unless Cheryl were to help him. Will tries to ask Cheryl why Hickey targeted his family, but she insists it is nothing personal. Cheryl then offers to have sex with Will to help him relax. Will refuses, but is shocked to learn two other fathers in his position accepted her offer. Cheryl then tells Will how she and Hickey blackmailed men after she quit dancing. They would lure them into hotel rooms and take pictures to blackmail them with. Will points out that this is not much different from prostitution and Cheryl becomes sullen again.

The McDills are at the Jackson Police Department, looking at mug shots. Margaret is emotionally overwrought and no longer helping, but James McDill is determined to find a picture. At the same time, Abby convinces Huey to play Beauty and the Beast with her.

In chapter twelve, Karen is sitting with Hickey, who is drinking heavily and watching an old movie on television. Karen asks Hickey some questions and finally learns that he blames Will for his mother's death. Hickey's mother was having an operation at Will's hospital and he was the anesthesiologist. The surgeon forgot to make sure Hickey's mother was wearing SCDs before the procedure began and the woman died of a blood clot. When Hickey confronted the surgeon, he claimed that the anesthesiologist is responsible for the SCDs. With this news, Karen becomes convinced that Hickey does not plan to return Abby unharmed. Karen also doubts her own chances of survival. Karen knows she needs to tell Will about this, but is not sure how.

Will is nursing a headache and working the problem over in his head, trying to find a way to convince Cheryl to help him. Will is convinced that Hickey has a personal vendetta against him and that he will not free Abby unharmed. Will plans to force Cheryl to tell him.

At the police station, James McDill finds a picture of Cheryl. Chalmers puts her number into the computer and learns that her full name is Cheryl Lynn Tilly. Chalmers tells McDill they will make a copy of the photo and send it to the Beau Rivage to find out if Cheryl has been there tonight, if it is happening again.



Hickey gets hungry and orders Karen to make him an omelet. While Karen is in the kitchen, she calls Will's service and sends a message to him, warning him that Abby is in danger no matter what, so he should do something. Hickey comes into the room, but does not see Karen on the phone.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Both Karen and Will have become convinced that Hickey has targeted them for personal reasons. Karen finally learns that Hickey blames Will for his mother's death even though it was a mistake made on the surgeon's part, not Will's. This changes the game and makes it clear to both Karen and the reader that Abby will most likely die no matter what happens next. Therefore, it is in Karen and Will's best interest to try something.

The McDills are continuing to work with the FBI and they are able to identify Cheryl from mug shots. This makes it possible for the FBI to look for her quietly at the Beau Rivage and receive proof that the crime is really happening again.

Will wants Cheryl to help him. Will figures the only way he can do anything is if Cheryl agrees to continue answering the phone when Hickey calls, assuring him everything is okay. However, Will cannot figure out a way to do this because Cheryl is so afraid of Hickey that she has so far resisted everything Will has tried. This foreshadows a plan to force Cheryl to help that might involve something more than offers of money.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Will attempts to be friendly with Cheryl in an attempt to help her relax. However, when Will gets the message from Karen, he knows he does not have time to sweet talk Cheryl. Will again thinks of money, but he knows he cannot get enough tonight to appease Cheryl. Instead, Will ties her to a chair, lays her on the bed, and fills a syringe with Anectine. Will begins questioning Cheryl, threatening to inject the medication if she refuses to answer. Cheryl fights him at first, so he injects the medication and waits until Cheryl is blue before injecting the Restorase to counteract the effects. Will then demands to know where Abby is being held, but Cheryl insists she does not know. Cheryl says that Huey is at a cabin somewhere in the country, but Hickey had never taken her there. Will asks where she is to take the money and Cheryl gives him the name of a motel. Cheryl insists she does not know anything else. Will injects the Anectine again.

After Cheryl recovers this time, she warns Will that if he kills her she will not be able to answer the phone and Abby will die. Will demands to know why this time is different. Cheryl hesitates, then tells him that he killed Hickey's mother. When Will hears the woman's name, he remembers the case and denies responsibility. Cheryl then tells him the cabin is near Hazelhurst, but insists she does not know exactly where. Will calls the president of the cell phone company again and finally gets an answer. Will tells the man, Harley Ferris, his problem and begs him to trace the phone calls going to Huey's cell phone. Ferris reluctantly agrees on the condition that Will allow him to call the FBI if they find the cabin. Will then releases Cheryl. Cheryl answers Hickey's call like usual, convincing him everything is normal.

In chapter fourteen, Huey is carving a figurine for Abby while Will is trying to compose an e-mail to Karen. Will wants to send an e-mail explaining everything, but he is afraid Hickey might see it, so he decides to write it in a code he thinks Karen will understand. Ferris calls and tells Will that they were not able to pinpoint the location of the call. Will continues to question Cheryl and learns she is supposed to take Will to the ransom drop even though she has never done this before. Will believes this is because Hickey plans to kill Karen and Abby in front of Will.

Hickey has fallen asleep, so Karen is alone when she receives Will's e-mail. Karen understands the message and hopes whatever Will is planning will work. At the same time, a meeting is taking place in the FBI offices. A bellboy has identified Cheryl Lynn Tilly, so now the FBI has confirmation that a kidnapping is taking place. Special Agent in Charge Zwick has notified the Biloxi office and is prepared for a full out raid. However, McDill cautions him that one false move could mean a child's death.

Will becomes concerned when the regular call does not take place, so he calls home. Karen answers and assures him that everything is okay, but Hickey is asleep. Karen



tells Will that Hickey might rape her and asks if he can live with that. Will assures her that he loves her and will live with anything he must. When they hang up, Ferris calls again and once again tells Will that he was unable to find the source of the signal. Will finds himself praying Hickey will be happy with just the money.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Will has become desperate to do something, especially with Karen message warning him that Hickey plans to kill Abby anyway. Will uses his drugs on Cheryl, proving to the reader that he is willing to do anything to save his daughter, even if it means abusing his medical training. Cheryl tells Will all she knows, including the fact that Hickey blames Will for the death of his mother, but her knowledge is deeply limited. This shows how little Hickey trusts Cheryl, even though she is his wife and partner. This also limits Will's ability to do anything, even with Cheryl's help. Will turns to the cell phone company, but their technology is also limited, especially in the country where Huey is. It looks as though this trace is not going to amount to much.

The McDills are becoming concerned that their decision to involve the FBI might mean disaster for the kidnapped child because of their zeal to get the kidnappers, making the reader begin to worry for Abby's safety.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Karen and Hickey dress to go to the accountant's office and approve the transfer. Hickey appears to be in a good mood. He tells Karen about a ranch he has bought in Costa Rica. Hickey plans to retire there after this last kidnapping. In Biloxi, Will gets another call from Ferris and learns they have again failed to pinpoint the signal. Ferris wants to call the FBI now. Will relents, under the condition Ferris not tell them his name. Will also suggests that the FBI get a helicopter into the air and see if they can find the cabin in the area where the signal has been detected. Will then asks Cheryl to work with him a little longer. In exchange, Will promises to give her all the ransom money.

McDill identifies Cheryl in a security photo from the casino. A few moments later a call comes in from Harley Ferris. At the cabin, Huey takes a call from Hickey and tells him that he heard a helicopter overhead. Hickey tells Huey to go to the backup plan. Abby, who ate several bowls of Captain Crunch the night before, is beginning to show symptoms of high blood sugar.

In chapter sixteen, Karen calls Will's broker and makes arrangements to come in that morning to approve a wire transfer. As she and Hickey prepare to leave, Stephanie Morgan pulls up. Stephanie is insistent that Karen go with her to the Coliseum to deal with some cows that have been left inside. Karen is forceful, but polite in attempting to get Stephanie to leave. Stephanie hesitates, however, convinced something is wrong. Karen assures her everything is fine and Stephanie is finally preparing to leave when Hickey shoots her. Karen wants to help her, but Hickey insists they leave. When Karen tries to call 911, Hickey threatens to kill her. Karen obeys his orders.

Will answers the phone when Hickey calls. Hickey wants to know if Will has contacted the FBI. Will denies it. Cheryl backs him up. A short time later, Karen and Hickey arrive at the brokers. Karen does as she is told. As a reward, Hickey calls 911 and learns someone else has already called. In Biloxi, Will and Cheryl arrive at the bank to make the withdrawal. Will insists on taking the car keys and the cell phone inside with him.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Karen and Hickey take care of their end of the wire transfer, assuring that Hickey will get his ransom money as planned. However, before they can leave the house, Stephanie Morgan shows up. Stephanie is a determined woman and she quickly becomes suspicious of Hickey when he refuses to allow Karen to take care of the problems with the flower show. Before Karen can get her out of there, Stephanie is shot, showing the reader once again that Hickey is a cold blooded killer who is willing to do anything to get what he wants. What he wants is to get his money so he can retire to Costa Rica. The

reader also suspects he wants to hurt Will, suggesting that Karen and Abby will not live much longer.

Will is disappointed with the progress of the trace on the cell phone, so he agrees to FBI involvement in the hopes that they can find the cabin with a helicopter. However, this tips off Huey and Hickey, causing them to change their plans. The reader has no clue now what the plan is, but is sure it cannot be good for Abby. Abby is having symptoms of high blood sugar, suggesting an impending medical crisis that Huey most likely will be unable to handle.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Hickey and Karen are driving down the highway when Hickey becomes aware of police surveillance. Hickey turns toward the airport. Hickey calls Huey and he reports that Abby has been in the bathroom frequently that morning. Karen knows what this means and becomes frantic to reach Abby and give her her medication.

Will is shown into the manager's office at the bank. After he tells the manager what he needs, a man comes out of a bathroom and introduces himself as Special Agent Chalmers with the FBI. Chalmers explains that the FBI have found the cabin and are about to raid it. Chalmers also tells Will that the FBI has located Hickey and placed him under surveillance. Unfortunately, the raid finds an empty house. Will talks to Zwick and learns that the raid was a failure and that it appears that Hickey is on his way to the airport. Will does not like what he hears about the way Zwick plans to handle the case, so he collects his ransom money.

At the airport, Hickey steals a car from long term parking, pushing the woman who owns it into the trunk. Karen feels sick as she listens to the woman pound on the truck lid. Karen demands to know where they are going, but Hickey refuses to tell her.

In chapter eighteen, Will insists on leaving the bank alone with the money. Chalmers agrees with his decision, but asks him to take a GPS tracker with him. Will does, but throws it into a passing truck once he and Cheryl are back on the road. Will gives Cheryl the money, three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and again tries to convince her to help. Cheryl hesitates, but finally begins helping. Will asks Cheryl where Huey might take Abby and they discuss a house in McComb where Hickey once took her. Will decides his best option is to take his plane and try to locate Huey from the sky.

Abby is becoming sicker, nearly passing out when she and Huey stop to fix a flat tire. Abby knows she needs a shot, so she begins to draw the medication into a syringe. Abby has never given herself a shot, but with Huey's help she manages to do it.

Hickey calls and demands to know why the police are following him. Will tells him about Chalmers in the bank and how the McDills went to the FBI. Hickey seems to understand. Hickey tells Will to go back to his hotel and stay in his room. Hickey promises to call every half hour to be sure he is there. When Hickey hangs up, Will mulls over the situation and decides to call the hotel to see if they will forward the calls to Cheryl's cell phone. Will has to pay off the manager, but he finally agrees.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Hickey becomes aware of the FBI following him, but he is too smart to allow it to continue. Hickey steals a car and is able to leave the airport ahead of his surveillance.

However, Hickey is convinced that Will called the FBI and he plans to kill Abby because of it. Fortunately, Abby is on the road and Huey left the cell phone, so Hickey cannot get hold of him to make the order. This gives Will time to convince Hickey he had nothing to do with the FBI by being honest about what happened at the bank. This buys Will time, but not much. Now Will wants to find Abby by plane, but he has to convince Hickey he is in his hotel room. Will does this by bribing the hotel manager, but the man seems so shady to the reader that the reader wonders if it will work.

Karen is still a prisoner of Hickey's and left to his moods and cruelty. The chances that Karen will survive is still in question for the reader, who cannot determine if Hickey is truly interested in the money or revenge. At the same time, Karen is helpless to help her daughter whom she knows is going into ketoacidosis. Abby is stronger than her mother gives her credit for, however, and she manages to treat her diabetes on her own with the medication her mother gave Huey the night before.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

In chapter nineteen, Will and Cheryl arrive at the airport, but the military is running drills so they are told to wait for an opening in the takeoff schedule. Will decides he cannot wait and boards the plane against the instructions of the tower. Will takes off with the tower and the FBI calling him, warning that he is placing himself and his pilot's license in danger. Will shuts off the radio. Will must choose one of two highways to follow and he decides on the I-55, the most logical route for Huey to take. As they are flying toward the highway, the phone rings. Will cuts the engines so that Hickey will not know where they are. Will speaks to Hickey and assures him that everything is okay. A minute later Hickey calls again. Cheryl answers this time and convinces Hickey she is driving toward the motel.

Off of I-55, Karen urges the woman to get out of the trunk of the car. In a fit of compassion, Hickey has agreed to let her go. Back in the car, Hickey is calling Will again. Unfortunately, the desk clerk puts the call through to the suite rather than Cheryl's cell phone. When the Cheryl's cell phone rings a few minutes later, Will assumes it is Hickey and answers. However, Hickey had been expecting Cheryl, so now he knows what Will is up to. Hickey threatens to kill Abby. In the car, Hickey tells Karen that Will is not in the hotel and then hits her when she tries to grab the phone. Back in the plane, Will turns back on the radio to find out what kind of car Hickey is driving. As soon as he does, Will turns the radio off and lowers the plane close enough to the ground so that he can see the makes of the cars. Within minutes, Cheryl recognizes the Rambler Huey is driving.

In chapter twenty, Hickey tells Karen that he plans to let her live, but he is going to kill Abby because her death would hurt Will more. Will flies over the Rambler and wiggles his wings so Abby will know it is him. Abby sees the plane and knows it is her father, come to rescue her. Will begins to fly lower to the ground, hoping to land the plane in front of the Rambler. Will gauges the distance between the cars and feels he has enough room between two cars that are in front of the Rambler, but one slows as he descends and he nearly misses hitting it. Karen sees the plane landing and knows it is Will. Karen grabs the wheel, hoping to cause an accident. Hickey pushes her back. Karen then attacks Hickey. Hickey shoots Karen in the abdomen.

The plane begins to burn as it lands. Will gets out, but Cheryl insists on returning for the money. The Rambler drives off the road and crashes into a tree. Abby is okay, but Huey is injured. Will rushes to Abby and tries to take her to safety, but she insists that he help Huey out of the car. Cheryl is burned, but alive, and she has the money. However, Hickey arrives on the scene and pulls a gun on Will and Abby. Cheryl tries to stop Hickey from killing Abby after he shoots Will in the leg, but he shoots Cheryl instead, convinced she turned on him. Hickey then turns the gun on Abby. Huey comes up from



the ditch and grabs Hickey, choking him as he tells him he should not hurt Abby. Huey breaks Hickey's neck.

Karen arrives on the scene and she picks up Cheryl's gun. The police arrive, but Will convinces them Karen is in shock. The FBI arrive a moment later. Will gets the gun from Karen and convinces Zwick to take her to the hospital in his helicopter. As they leave, Cheryl is arrested. Will repeats his promise to testify on her behalf at the trial. Will also promises to arrange to have Huey admitted to the psychiatric ward at the hospital. The helicopter takes off and Karen whispers that they are all a family again.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Will uses his plane to find Abby and then lands on the highway to rescue her. This causes him to place his license in danger and to lose the plane he worked so hard to own. This shows the reader once again how determined Will is to save his little girl. Karen too shows the depths she would go to when she places her own life at risk in order to keep Hickey from getting Abby again.

Cheryl is a weak woman who helped Hickey because she was afraid and who helped Will because she saw an opportunity to get away from Hickey. Cheryl is arrested in the end, losing her one chance to run away with more than a quarter of a million dollars, leaving her the same bitter, broken woman she was before. Huey, however, proves to be the surprise in all this. Hickey has always been convinced that Huey will kill for him because he killed Hickey's father for him. However, Hickey forgot to take into account that Huey killed the father because he was hurting an innocent little boy. Huey did what he thought was right. Now Huey sees that Abby is in danger and he does the same as he did before. Only this time it is Hickey who is the villain and the target of Huey's wrath.

In the end, Will and Karen's love for their daughter has brought them out of this situation, damaged but a whole family.



Characters

Dr. Will Jennings

Dr. Will Jennings is an anesthesiologist who has just developed a new drug that could make him millions of dollars. Will is married and has one child, a daughter. Will grew up the son of a poor ne'er-do-well, a man who sank all his money into a store that quickly failed. Will learned from this experience to take control of his finances and to be careful what he spent his money on. As a result, Will has a sizeable savings account and multiple investments that will net him a good return. For this reason, it seems, a kidnapper has targeted Will and his family.

Will was once an obstetrician, but a rare form of arthritis has forced him to change specialties to anesthesiology. As the novel opens, Will is on his way to an annual medical conference in order to announce the manufacturing of his new drug to counteract a drug often used to subdue violent patients. While at this conference, Will's daughter is kidnapped and he and his wife are held captive by partners in the crime in order to keep them from calling the FBI before arrangements can be made to secure the ransom. Will refuses to sit back and wait for his daughter to die, however, and he begins to plot against his captors in order to find a way to get his daughter back. In the end, Will manages to convince his captor to help mislead the man holding his wife long enough to help him locate his daughter and rescue her. Will is a strong, determined man who refuses to allow kidnappers to dictate his future.

Karen Jennings

Karen Jennings is Will's wife. Karen was once a nurse, but she quit her job to attend medical school. However, during her first year in medical school, Karen became pregnant with her only child. Karen was forced to quit school in order to raise her child. Karen has held a certain amount of resentment against her husband for her failed attempt to become a doctor, a fact that has caused some tension in their marriage.

Karen and her daughter return home from dropping Will off at the airport to find kidnappers in their home. Karen is held captive by the mastermind of the kidnapping plot, Joe Hickey. Karen tries to manipulate Hickey into allowing her to be with Abby due to Abby's medical condition. Hickey allows her to visit Abby in order to give her medication, something that breaks all of Hickey's rules of the kidnapping. When they return to the house, Hickey attempts to rape Karen, but she pulls a scalpel on him and takes control of the situation for a short time. Hickey hits Karen, causing her to cut his thigh. Hickey no longer wants to rape Karen, but he continues to terrorize her until she finally manages to escape. Karen is a strong woman who does all she can for her child, proving her resentment at failing to complete medical school has done nothing to temper her feelings for her child.



Abby Jennings

Abby Jennings is the six year old daughter of Will and Karen Jennings. Abby has been diagnosed with type 1, or juvenile diabetes, and has to carefully monitor her blood sugar and diet to keep the disease from getting out of control and causing coma or death. When Abby is kidnapped, her parents fear that the kidnapper will feed her something high in sugar or carbohydrates that will cause her blood sugar to rocket without the benefit of her medication. This in fact does happen, but Karen has managed to get her insulin to Abby, and for the first time since her diagnosis, Abby is able to inject herself with a proper amount of insulin.

Abby is a strong child who manages to escape her captor briefly and contact her parents. When Abby is re-captured, she is so kind and gentle with her captor that she wins his affection. This situation becomes doubly important when Abby's father makes an attempt to rescue her that threatens to grow out of hand when Hickey comes on the scene. Abby's captor rescues her from Hickey, saving her from sure death.

Joe Hickey

Joe Hickey is a small time criminal who is highly intelligent. Hickey has designed a kidnapping plan that is nearly foolproof. Hickey has one partner stay with the child, the mother, and the father, ensuring that not one person is capable of calling the police during the kidnapping. Hickey then asks for only the amount of money he knows the victims can get out of the bank without causing suspicion. Then Hickey releases his victims and promises to return and kill the child should the parents go to the police. This kidnapping plan has worked five times in the past and he expects it to work a sixth time with the Jennings family.

However, this time it is personal. Hickey's mother died during surgery due to a mistake made by the surgical team. Hickey believes that Will Jennings is responsible for his mother's death; therefore, he plans to kill his wife and daughter after receiving his money. Will becomes aware of this and fights to change the situation so that Hickey cannot harm his family. Hickey is smart, however, and he manages to outsmart Will nearly every turn of events. However, Hickey is injured and he does not anticipate Will Jennings landing his plane on the highway. Hickey is outdone by his own plan in the end.

Cheryl Lynn Tilly

Cheryl Lynn Tilly is Joe Hickey's wife. Cheryl was once a highly successful stripper, but Joe became jealous and made her quit. Now they kidnap doctors' children in order to support themselves a year at a time. Cheryl is in charge of keeping the fathers under control until the money can be taken from the bank and then delivering the money to Hickey. Will is the only one who wonders why Hickey does not stay with the father



rather than the money, making Cheryl realize that Hickey has sexual interest in these mothers that she had not suspected before.

Cheryl is not a smart person and she feels as though she owes Hickey for saving her from prostitution and drug abuse. However, Hickey abuses her and Cheryl is frightened of him. When Will Jennings offers to give Cheryl enough money to escape from Hickey, she hesitates because she knows Hickey will track her down and kill her. However, Cheryl does not want any harm to come to a child, so she allows Will to convince her to help him in order to prevent harm from coming to his daughter, Abby. In the end, Cheryl is shot and arrested, but Will promises to testify on her behalf at trial.

Huey Cotton

Huey Cotton is Joe Hickey's simple minded cousin. Huey is a large man, but he is very gentle unless someone upsets him. Huey was horribly teased as a child; therefore, he does not like children to run from him. Huey also lost his little sister to an illness and he has a soft place in his heart for little girls. When Hickey kidnaps children, he leaves Huey in charge of their care. Huey is gentle with these children, often carving them figurines out of wood. When Huey takes care of Abby, they play together and Huey finds himself comparing her to his sister. This develops a bond between them; therefore, Huey is reluctant to harm Abby should Hickey give this order. In the end, Huey ends up attacking Hickey to stop him from killing Abby.

Dr. James and Margaret McDill

Dr. James McDill and his wife, Margaret, are previous victims of Hickey's. Their son was kidnapped by Hickey the previous year, and Margaret was repeatedly raped by Hickey while awaiting the transfer of the ransom money. Now, a year later, Dr. McDill becomes overwhelmed with a sense of morality and decides to go to the FBI with the information about their ordeal, hoping the FBI can stop this from happening to another family. Unfortunately, the McDills go to the FBI after Abby has already been kidnapped. Their help allows the FBI to identify Cheryl, however, and to be at the bank when Will arrives to withdrawal the ransom money. This help becomes more of a hindrance to Will, however, and he brushes the help off, preferring to deal with the situation on his own.

Harley Ferris

Harley Ferris is the owner of the largest cell phone provider in Mississippi. When Will learns that the man holding Abby has a cell phone from this company, he calls Ferris and has him track the signal in the hopes of finding Abby. Ferris has difficulty tracing the calls, but manages to pinpoint it enough to allow the FBI to use a helicopter to find the cabin where Abby is being held and to raid it. Unfortunately, Huey becomes aware of the helicopter and Hickey orders him to leave before the FBI arrive.



Stephanie Morgan

Stephanie Morgan is a member of the Junior League and is helping Karen put together the flower show the Junior League is to have a day or so after the kidnapping takes place. Stephanie comes to Karen's home minutes after Karen learns her daughter has been kidnapped, but Karen manages to bluff her way out of the situation and send Stephanie home. Unfortunately, Stephanie comes to the Jennings home the following day as Karen and Hickey are leaving to approve the transfer of the ransom money. Karen again tries to talk Stephanie into leaving without alerting her to what is going on, but Stephanie hesitates so long that Hickey shoots her.

Special Agent in Charge Frank Zwick

Special Agent in Charge Frank Zwick is the FBI agent who takes charge of the kidnapping investigation. Zwick wants to charge in and arrest the kidnapers, but Will is afraid this method will end in his daughter's death. Will refuses to do everything Zwick suggests, leaving Zwick a bystander in the ordeal until Will manages to get custody of his daughter again. Zwick then assists Will, helping transport him and his family to the hospital in an FBI helicopter.



Objects/Places

Scalpel

Karen finds a scalpel in her bathroom while trying to find a way to keep Hickey from raping her. Karen holds the scalpel against Hickey and forces him to call Abby. During a struggle, Karen accidentally slashes open Hickey's thigh.

Cell Phone

All three of the kidnappers have cell phones in order to keep in touch with one another at all times. Abby manages to get Huey's cell phone to call her mother, alerting her parents to its use. Will contacts the owner of the cell phone company and has him track the signal to help find Abby.

Money

Will withdraws more than three hundred thousand dollars in ransom from the bank, hoping to give the money to Cheryl in order to enlist her help in rescuing Abby and Karen from Hickey.

Insulin

Abby Jennings is a type 1 diabetic, or juvenile diabetic, who requires regular injections of insulin in order to keep her blood sugar at normal levels. Hickey is unaware of this condition, so he breaks one of his rules and allows Karen to visit Abby long enough to give her an injection.

Succinylcholine or Anectine

Succinylcholine, sold under the brand name Anectine, is a drug that causes immediate paralyzation of the skeleton muscles, including the diaphragm. This drug is used to control violent patients in emergency rooms and in operations in which movement would be fatal. Will uses this medication to convince Cheryl to help him.

Restorase

Restorase is a drug Will developed that counteracts the effects of Anectine almost immediately, returning full function to the patient. Will is at a medical conference to introduce this drug to his colleagues when Abby is kidnapped. Will uses this drug to



counteract Anectine in Cheryl in order to force her to help him recover his daughter safely.

Methotrexate

Will takes methotrexate, a chemotherapy drug, to treat his crippling arthritis.

Sequential Compression Device or SCD

A sequential compression device, or SCD, should have been used during surgery on Hickey's mother but was not, causing a blood clot that ended her life. The surgeon blamed Will Jennings for not putting the device on the patient even though it was the surgeon's responsibility to make sure the device was in place before beginning the procedure.

Beechcraft Baron 58

Will owns a Beechcraft Baron 58 airplane in which he flies himself to Biloxi for the medical conference. The following day Will will use this airplane to find and rescue Abby. Will lands the plane on the highway and it is destroyed by a speeding semi truck.

Cabin in the Woods

Huey holds Abby in a cabin in the woods that is difficult to locate.

Beau Rivage Casino Hotel

The Mississippi Medical Association's annual meeting takes place at the Beau Rivage Casino Hotel each year.

Trucker's Rest

Trucker's Rest is the name of the motel where Cheryl is supposed to meet Hickey with the money and with Will Jennings. Will believes this is where Hickey plans to bring his wife and child with the intention of killing them in front of him.



Themes

Revenge

Joe Hickey is a criminal who finds it easier to steal the money he needs to survive than to go out and work for it. At one time, Hickey lived off the proceeds his wife made dancing in strip clubs, but his jealousy made it impossible for this to continue. Hickey then turned to the idea of kidnapping children in order to get enough money to live on for a year. Hickey's plan is foolproof. Someone stays with the child, the mother, and the father, leaving them no opportunity for escape or to call the police. The ransom is a relatively small amount to keep from raising alarm with the banks. In twenty-four hours, Joe can make enough money to live for a year this way and the child always makes it.

This time is different. Hickey always targets doctors because they make a great deal of money and they are almost always collectors. However, Hickey has targeted Will because he blames him for the death of his mother. Hickey believes that during his mother's surgery less than a year, before Will forgot to put SCDs on his mother, resulting in a fatal blood clot that took her life. For this reason, Hickey has changed the rules, deciding that after he has the money he will kill Will's wife and daughter in front of him. This makes this kidnapping different, it makes it personal. For this reason, revenge is a theme of the book.

Family

Family is an important theme in this novel because it is family that creates the situation that drives the conflict in the plot. Abby is Will and Karen Jennings' only child. When Abby is kidnapped, Will and Karen will do anything to get her back. Increasing the tension and adding to the need to get Abby back is the fact that she is diabetic. Abby's life is in danger not only from the violence of the kidnappers, but from the real possibility that her disease could get quickly out of control and lead to coma or death. Karen must make many choices that directly affect her daughter's safety. Hickey holds Abby's life over Karen's head, forcing her to treat him with respect, forcing her to offer him sexual favors. Karen does this because Abby is the most important thing to her and she will do anything for her. At the same time, Will uses his medical knowledge to force Cheryl, Hickey's wife and partner, to help him.

Hickey, too, takes advantage of family in his plot to take money from the Jennings. Huey is Hickey's cousin, a large, mentally impaired young man who has come to rely on Hickey since they were small children. Huey has a large, kind heart and he will do anything for his cousin. Hickey tells his victim's parents that Huey will even kill for him. This is based on the fact that Huey killed Hickey's father when the man was abusing Hickey for a minor infraction. This control Hickey has over Huey is frightening to the parents, especially those who have seen Huey like Karen has, and forces them to obey all Hickey's instructions. For these reasons, family is an important theme in this novel.



Morality

After Hickey kidnaps his victims, he forces the parents to wait all night before being allowed to pay the ransom. When the ransom is paid and Hickey prepares to free the mother, he warns her that he will return at any time and kill the child if she calls the police. For this reason, none of Hickey's previous five victims have ever contacted the police. However, as the one year anniversary of their son's kidnapping arrives, Dr. James McDill and his wife, Margaret, decide they cannot remain quiet while this happens to another family. When Dr. McDill suggests to his wife that he wants to go to the FBI, she panics, frightened for her son's life. However, it is soon revealed that this is not Mrs. McDill's only fear. It turns out that Hickey likes to remain with the wives during these kidnappings because he likes to rape them.

The McDills go to the FBI, with Dr. McDill promising his wife he will not tell about the rapes, only about the kidnappings. However, in fear for someone else's child, Mrs. McDill tells the truth about her experiences with Hickey. This information relays to the FBI how urgent their story is and convinces them to begin an investigation into the possibility that the kidnapping is happening once more. If the McDills had not been willing to come forward, the FBI might not have become involved in the case until it was too late to help Abby. For this reason, morality is an important theme to this novel.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The novel is told from several points of view, including that of Karen Jennings, her husband Will, and Abby Jennings. The narration also wanders into the minds and emotions of all three kidnappers as well as the McDills, who suffered this same tragic kidnapping the year before. Using so many narrating characters might prove confusing in some novels, but this author is careful with his narration, making transitions from one character to the next clear enough that the reader does not get lost. This change of narration also allows the reader to see the story from multiple angles, allowing for a well rounded, complete story.

The point of view of this novel is not unique in the modern bestseller, but it is a point of view that is often confusing and difficult to keep up with who the current narrator might be. This writer, however, handles his multiple characters with skill, only shifting characters in ways that lower the possibility of confusion, such as after a new chapter has begun or after a paragraph break. This narration is popular because of its ability to tell a story from multiple points of view, thereby telling the story in such a way that the reader often knows more about the action in the plot than some of the characters. In this way, the reader can sense danger long before some of the characters and anticipate events long before they take place. This creates a more rounded story for the reader, making the novel more suspenseful and entertaining.

Setting

The novel is set in Mississippi. There are four major settings within this state, including the Jennings' home, the Beau Rivage Casino Hotel where Will Jennings is staying, the cabin where Abby is being held, and the FBI office where the McDills are attempting to get help for the Jennings. The setting of the Jennings home is a large house that Karen Jennings designed herself, a home that was meant to be safe and comforting, a good place to raise a child. However, the infiltration of the kidnappers changes this once happy home into a sinister, dangerous place where Karen Jennings will most likely never feel comfortable again. The hotel where Will Jennings is staying in a luxury suite and is supposed to be every comfort a man away from home could expect, but instead it becomes a prison, keeping Will from the action he needs to be engaged in to save his family. The cabin is dark and sparse, but somehow it becomes background noise, neither evil nor comforting to little six-year-old Abby Jennings. Finally, the FBI office is clinical, but filled with hope for a couple who want desperately to stop someone else from experiencing their nightmare.

The setting of this novel is a southern state that is often maligned by tasteless jokes about the state's poor citizens. This novel shows Mississippi as the home of many rich and successful doctors, a place where poverty is more of an idea than a reality. Two of



the main settings to the novel, the Jennings' home and the Beau Rivage Casino Hotel, are luxurious, speaking of great amounts of money and comfort. This is starkly contrasted by the small cabin where Abby is held and the clinical office of the FBI. These settings are symbolic of the two classes of people involved in the story, the rich doctors and their families and the poor, desperate kidnapers. In this way, the settings become a metaphor for the different levels of society attempting to co-exist in this state, even as the two very different pairs of settings trade places during the desperate twenty-four hours in which the novel takes place.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English. The novel contains many medical terms, including the complicated names of several medications in relation to the Will Jennings' profession and his daughter's medical condition. These words are easily explained in the text and do not cause any difficulty to the reader's comprehension of their meaning or use. The novel does not contain any foreign phrases the reader might not comprehend, but does include some phrases of slang that might not be readily recognizable to some readers. These phrases are also explained in the text, leaving little room for misunderstanding.

The language of this novel reflects the setting in which it takes place. The language is simple, but the more educated characters use a language that is fitting to their education, while the other, less educated characters use more slang and simple language. There are some southern slang that appears in the novel, again reflecting the place in which the novel is set, but the slang is easily deciphered within the context and does not represent difficulty to the reader unfamiliar with its use. Finally, the language of this novel works well because it does represent its characters well and reflects the nature of its setting.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty chapters. Each chapter is fairly long and most of them are broken into sections that reflect changes in setting or narration. The novel is written in a linear fashion, covering twenty-four hours of time during which a child is kidnapped and later rescued. The novel is written in both dialogue and exposition, showing the story more than telling.

The novel contains one main plot with several supporting subplots. The main plot follows the kidnapping of Abby Jennings and the captivity of her parents as the kidnapers wait for the appropriate time to arrange delivery of a small ransom. This plot follows three separate pairs of characters, Abby and her captor, Huey, Karen Jennings and her captor, Joe Hickey, and Will Jennings and his captor, Cheryl. Subplots in this novel include the story of Hickey and Huey's childhood, including the day Huey killed Hickey's father, as well as the story of Hickey's relationship with his wife and partner, Cheryl. Finally, the novel includes a subplot in which a previous victim of Hickey's

decides to go to the FBI to stop another possible kidnapping. All these plots work together toward one climactic end, finishing the novel with a bang.



Quotes

"The kid always makes it. I told you that." Chap. 1, p. 1

"Karen cut her eyes at him. Full of repressed anger, they flashed like green warning beacons." Chap. 2, p. 12

"Beside the glasses lay a plastic device for pricking Abby's finger; it looked like a ballpoint pen." Chap. 2, p. 33

"And her father—a Korean War veteran—had taught her very young that this was the way fate came at you: out of the blue, without warning, the worst thing in the world appearing with a leer and a ticking clock." Chap. 2, p. 36

"Hickey was talking about kidnapping the way Will's partners bragged about inside stock trades." Chap. 3, p. 58

"It wasn't quite Sharon Stone in Basic Instinct—this woman was wearing panties—but she had made sure he could see everything but the brand name on the silk." Chap. 4, p. 68

"If I don't get confirmation that Abby's gotten her insulin within seven hours, I'll assume she's gone into ketoacidosis. And you'll talk then. You'll talk if I have to break every bone in your body, one at a time." Chap. 5, p. 89

"Not quite a thought, but the seed of one. A tiny spark of awareness, smoldering and darkly feminine. A ruthless, chthonic knowledge of male vulnerability." Chap. 7, p. 142

"Unbelievable. How could he possibly think that an impending rape could arouse a woman?" Chap. 8, p. 153

"Soon it would be morning, and he was glad. The quicker Joey got his money, the less chance there was that he would tell Huey to do something to Abby." Chap. 14, p. 265

"Those other mothers had actually been raped by the man, had suffered the horror of becoming sexual whipping posts for all his repressed anger and resentment. And they had endured that horror for twenty-four hours. It was unimaginable." Chap. 17, p. 336

"Family,' she whispered. 'Again.'" Chap. 20, p. 415



Topics for Discussion

Who is Joe Hickey? Why has he come to the Jennings home? What does Hickey want from the Jennings? Why does Hickey tell Karen the child always makes it? What does this mean? Is this true in this case? How many times has Hickey done this before? What is different this time?

Who is Cheryl Lynn Tilly? Why is she holding Will Jennings captive in his hotel suite? What does she want from him? Why does Cheryl tell Will her life story? Why does Cheryl offer Will sex? What does this say about Cheryl's personality? How does this reflect Cheryl's difficult life? How many fathers took Cheryl up on her offer of sex? What does this say about those fathers?

Who is Huey Cotton? Why is Huey helping Hickey kidnap Abby Jennings? How does Huey feel about Abby? Is Abby in danger with Huey? Why does Huey get upset when children run away from him? Who does Abby remind Huey of? Is this a good thing? What caused Huey to kill his uncle, Hickey's father? Would Huey kill for Hickey again? Why does Huey attack Hickey in the end?

Who is Karen Jennings? Why does Karen resent her husband and his career? Why does Karen dislike being a mother? Does Karen dislike her child? How does Karen feel when Abby is kidnapped? What is Karen willing to do for Abby? How does this kidnapping help Karen renew her feelings for her husband? How does Karen finally escape Hickey?

Who is Will Jennings? What illness does Will suffer? Why did this illness cause Will to have to switch medical specialties? What type of doctor was Will before his illness? What type has he become since his illness? What has Will created? What does he expect this creation to do for him and his family? How does Will end up trapped in his hotel room? How does he manage to get control of the situation? How does Will hope to find his daughter?

Discuss morality. Why did the McDills finally decide to come forward? What might have happened had they gone to the FBI sooner? Would the Jennings have been spared their nightmare? Would Hickey have followed through on his threat to kill their son? Why did Mrs. McDill hide the fact that she was raped during her ordeal? Who was she trying to protect?

Discuss family. Why does Hickey target families? Why does he take the children? How is Hickey's plan foolproof? Why does Hickey use his wife and cousin in his plan? Does Hickey expect family connections to keep his partners honest? Why? Would the Jennings have fought as hard had the Hickeys taken either of the parents instead of Abby? What impact did Abby's diabetes have on the urgency her parents felt during the kidnapping? How did the kidnapping change Abby's emotions in regards to her disease?