

Are You Afraid of the Dark? Study Guide

Are You Afraid of the Dark? by Sidney Sheldon

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Plot Summary

Are You Afraid of the Dark? is an action-filled thriller which takes the reader on a tour of the playgrounds of the rich and famous. Tanner Kingsley takes white-collar crime to new heights by using his billion-dollar think tank corporation to create a machine for himself, which can control the weather. Prima is actually the brainchild of Tanner's older brother, Andrew Kingsley, who heads up the Kingsley Group think tank. Andrew initially creates Prima in the hopes of addressing the environmental problem of global warming.

Andrew's brother, Tanner, is not as concerned with solving the world's problems as his older brother. Instead, Tanner dreams of turning the philanthropic Kingsley Group into a supercharged think tank devoted to earning profit and power. He is a megalomaniac of the highest order, who intends to hold the world hostage once he has perfected the Prima project. First, he needs to get his brother Andrew out of the way. Tanner secretly sabotages a dangerous experiment with which Andrew is involved and Andrew's resulting exposure to toxic gases leaves him severely brain-damaged. Now Tanner is free to explore his power-hungry goals as the sole head of the think tank, which he renames Kingsley International Group, or KIG.

Unfortunately for Tanner, four of the scientists under his employ at KIG manage to figure out what Prima can do, despite his best efforts to keep them in the dark. When the scientists learn that Tanner does not intend to give Prima to the government, they realize that he intends to use it for more sinister purposes. The scientists plan a rendezvous in Washington, D.C. where they intend to reveal Prima's existence and purpose to Senator Van Luven, a member of the Senate Select Committee on the Environment. Before they can meet with the senator, all four men are killed. Tanner doesn't stop there; he goes after the men's families as well, just in case the scientists talked to their loved ones about Prima.

Sonja Verbrugge is killed in Berlin, Germany. Her husband had worked for KIG Berlin and was one of the four men scheduled to meet with Senator Van Luven in Washington. Lois Reynolds is attacked in Denver, Colorado, just a few miles from where her brother Gary's airplane mysteriously crashes. The other two scientists killed by Tanner are Richard Stevens and Mark Harris. Their unsuspecting wives, Diane and Kelly, are about to become Tanner's next targets.

Both women have barely recovered from the initial shock of the news of their husbands' deaths when Tanner goes after them. The unsuspecting women should make easy targets for the practiced assassins who Tanner hires. However, time after time, the assassins miss their targets. With a combination of ingenuity and luck, the women escape several death traps and together resolve to learn the secret that got their husbands killed.

Diane Stevens and Kelly Harris are unlikely heroines for an action thriller. Diane is a sensitive artist and Kelly is a glamorous supermodel. The women may be inexperienced investigators, but with their beloved husbands' deaths as motivation, they quickly pick



up Tanner's trail. Kelly and Diane learn about the other related deaths and escape the country to visit the scenes of the crimes. They travel to Berlin, Germany, where Sonja Verbrugge was killed and Paris, France, where Kelly's husband Mark met his untimely death. They are hampered at every turn by Tanner's thugs, Greg Holliday, Vince Carballo and the exceedingly bloodthirsty Harry Flint.

Unable to learn anything in Europe, the two heroines return to the United States, where they visit the site of Gary Reynolds's plane "accident." They discover that Gary's sister Lois is still alive after escaping a firebomb and from Lois the ladies finally learn about the existence of Prima. Intending to finish what their husbands started, the two women make an appointment with Senator Van Luven. They plan to disclose to her the details about the Prima project.

Unfortunately, the women don't realize they are walking into the same trap Tanner had so effectively set for their spouses. Senator Van Luven turns out to be Tanner's co-conspirator and his girlfriend. In a showdown at the senator's home, Tanner sets his goon, Harry Flint, on the trapped women. Kelly and Diane manage to elude Flint's clutches and the women go straight to the press with details about Prima. This forces Tanner to destroy his prized weather machine, but he has one more surprise in store for Kelly and Diane. He has secretly built a second Prima in the French Polynesian islands.

Tanner and Senator Van Luven escape on Tanner's private jet, leaving Prima I set to self-destruct. They intend to hold the world hostage with the power of Prima II. Tanner makes the critical mistake of underestimating his brain-damaged brother Andrew, however. Tanner leaves Andrew behind to die in the Prima explosion. Andrew, even with his mental disability, realizes his brother has become an evil man. As his final act, Andrew sets Prima to destroy the KIG jet with Tanner and Van Luven inside. With Tanner Kingsley dead, his vast conspiracy collapses. Kelly and Diane have survived their ordeal and set about reclaiming the pieces of their lives.

Prologue and Chapters 1-9

Prologue and Chapters 1-9 Summary

Prologue: In Berlin, Germany, Sonja Verbrugge receives an alarming instant message from her husband, Franz. He tells her to flee the house and go to the Artesemia Hotel, a hotel for women only. The message ends abruptly without explanation and the terrified Sonja heads for the Artesemia as Franz had instructed. At a street corner in mid-flight, she is pushed into the street. As if on cue, a double-parked limo leaves its space and heads right for her, knocking her to the ground. A passing ambulance stops for her and as she is strapped onto a gurney, the attendant calls Sonja by name. Before she can react, a hypodermic needle slides into her arm.

In Paris, France, Mark Harris waits on the observation deck of the Eiffel Tower. His mind is on Prima and how the news will impact the world. The men he is supposed to meet are late; it's after midnight. To his relief, the elevator door opens and his companions arrive. Mark asks them if the meeting in Washington is all set. In response, one of the men clubs him over the head with a blunt object. The last thing he feels is his body being lifted and tossed over the parapets to the ground far, far below.

Over Denver, Colorado, Gary Reynolds pilots his Cessna Citation II towards a landing at Denver International Airport. Gary has filed a false flight plan to Kennedy airport hoping to elude anyone who might be pursuing him. He plans to hide out at his sister's house in Denver until the following day when he will head to Washington with the hopes of eliminating Prima. Gary receives clearance to land from the control tower, but before he can do so, a hurricane engulfs his plane. He screams a Mayday to the tower, but the controllers see no sign of the hurricane and are mystified when Gary's Cessna vanishes from their screens.

Meanwhile in Manhattan, New York, a body washes up in the East River. Detective Earl Greenburg is in charge of the homicide. The victim's throat has been slashed and he has two busted kneecaps as well as some broken ribs. His wallet identifies him as Richard Stevens, husband of Diane Stevens, a key witness in a mafia murder trial. In the dead man's pockets are two notes. One refers to a 10 a.m. Prima meeting in Washington and the other note contains a mafia style threat about swimming with the fishes.

Chapter 1: In a downtown Manhattan courthouse, Diane Stevens testifies against mobster Anthony Altieri. Diane is a beautiful, blonde, girl-next-door type with a refined manner. She describes the double homicide she witnessed and leaves the courtroom feeling confident about a conviction. At an intersection, an Italian man approaches her car and brandishes a gun. Diane slams down the accelerator and speeds away. She dials 911 on her cell phone and reports the incident as she drives home.

Inside her apartment, Diane, an artist, hurries to her sketchpad to draw the face of the man who accosted her. Moments later, Detective Earl Greenburg arrives at her door. Diane begins to describe her assailant, but Greenburg merely stares at her, puzzled. He informs her he has come to see her on other business. With a deep breath, he tells her that her husband Richard has been murdered and questions her regarding Richard's possible mafia connections. Diane slaps him across the face and orders him out of her apartment. Refusing to accept the news of her husband's death, Diane sets to work making Richard his favorite dinner. When Richard does not arrive, she tells herself he is simply working late. Diane leaves him a note before she goes to bed. In the middle of the night, she wakes up screaming.

Chapter 2: Diane trembles in her bed until dawn. Mentally, she begs for Richard's forgiveness. If she hadn't testified against Altieri, she thinks, Richard would still be alive. Diane remembers the first time she met Richard. He had approached her in a Fifth Avenue art gallery during Diane's first solo art show. Richard had purchased three of her paintings that night and had invited her to the theatre. Against her better instincts, she had agreed to a date with the handsome stranger.

The following evening over dinner Diane learns that Richard is a scientist working for Kingsley International Group, or KIG, a large think tank responsible for cutting edge technological research. Richard behaves like a perfect gentleman that night and during their subsequent dates as well. He introduces her to the little league baseball team he coaches and Diane realizes she is falling in love. On impulse, a few days later Diane decides to have her fortune read. She asks about her future with Richard and the fortune-teller startles Diane by telling her that death surrounds her new relationship.

Chapter 3: In Berlin, Germany, two uniformed police officers and a building superintendent stare at the dead body of Sonja Verbrugge. She lies naked in her bathtub, a bruise circling her neck. The superintendent informs the police that the Verbrugges have been model tenants for seven years. Franz Verbrugge is nowhere to be found. The police learn that Franz is a scientist and that Sonja had worked at the Cyberlin Internet café. The superintendent also offers the information that an ambulance had been parked outside the building last night, but had disappeared before he could investigate.

Chapter 4: Diane Stevens, alone in her apartment, speaks to her husband Richard, begging him to come back to her. Her solitude is interrupted by her friend Carolyn Ter, who insists that Diane not shut herself away from the world. With Carolyn's help, Diane makes calls and informs Richard's friends of his passing. Visitors begin to stream through the apartment, most notably the little boys whom Richard had coached in little league.

When she ushers them out the door after accepting their flowers and good wishes, Diane's memory transports her back to the first time she and Richard had made love. He had taken her on a picnic in Central Park. When a sudden rain ruins their picnic, Diane had suggestively offered to take him home and get him out of his wet clothing. Before taking her up on her offer, Richard seeks assurance that Diane is not looking for

a one-night stand. The next morning as Diane makes them breakfast, Richard proposes marriage. The wedding takes place a month later and Richard surprises her with a honeymoon to Paris.

Chapter 5: In Paris Mr. and Mrs. Stevens stay at the Hotel Plaza Athénée. Diane is shocked to find six of her own paintings hanging in their honeymoon suite. The only jarring note during the honeymoon is the fact that Richard receives business calls at all hours of the night. Carolyn Ter shakes Diane out of her reverie and offers to help make the funeral arrangements. Diane insists on doing it herself. Later that day she calls Detective Greenburg to apologize for her behavior and to ask about getting Richard's body released from the morgue. The sympathetic Greenburg agrees to cut the red tape for her.

Meanwhile Diane visits the mortuary, but when the manager asks her to choose a suit for the burial, Diane is overcome and flees the building in tears. Back home she lovingly fingers Richard's suits. Overwhelmed by the decision, she chooses one at random and has it sent to the funeral home. The day before the funeral, she receives a surprise call from the manager of the funeral home. He informs her that the body has been cremated as she requested. Diane is shocked because she never requested cremation.

Chapter 6: Kelly Harris is an African-American supermodel in her late twenties. In her luxurious Paris apartment, she dresses for that evening's fashion show. As she gets ready, she thinks about the surprise weekend her husband, Mark, has in store for her. Smiling, she leaves her apartment and heads for the elevator. On the way she encounters her neighbor, Madame Lapointe and a handyman working on a light fixture in the hall. She and Madame Lapointe get on the elevator. The handyman hurries away, speaking into his walkie-talkie. Just as the doors begin to close, Kelly hears her telephone ringing and sprints back to her apartment to answer it. The call is a wrong number. As she hangs up the phone she hears a tremendous crash, which reverberates throughout the building. The elevator bearing Madame Lapointe has fallen to the ground. Kelly stares guiltily at her dead neighbor, then hurries away to work.

At the fashion show, Kelly makes her first trip down the catwalk in a flattering white bikini. When she heads backstage to change outfits, two policemen are waiting to inform her that Mark's body has been found at the bottom of the Eiffel Tower, an apparent suicide. Kelly returns home in a daze. As she walks through the lobby she overhears a man in overalls explain to the concierge that the elevator safety brakes had been deliberately cut.

Chapter 7: That night Kelly's restless mind torments her with thoughts of Mark's death. She remembers how desolate her life had been before Mark. Kelly is the illegitimate daughter of a black maid named Ethel Hackworth. The handsome son of her rich employer seduced Ethel as a young woman. When she becomes pregnant, the family fires her. Ethel spends five years working as an industrial cleaning lady while she saves up to buy her own boardinghouse. Kelly grows up with a series of strange men who live in her mother's boardinghouse. When she is eight years old, Kelly is raped by one of the men. The man threatens to kill her mother if she tells anyone. She never does, but Kelly

vows from that night on never to let another man touch her. She also develops a fear of the dark, which follows her into adulthood.

Chapter 8: Young Kelly's life is full of tedious drudgery. She works hard around the boardinghouse but never receives a word of praise from her preoccupied mother. She learns to escape reality by reading books. When she is fourteen, her mother marries a man named Dan Berke. Dan has a hopelessly negative attitude and drinks too much. At night Kelly can hear him beating her mother. One night she hears her mother tell her husband that she never wanted Kelly.

By the time she is seventeen, Dan Berke is suggesting that Kelly would do better to sell her body than to waste her time in college. Kelly begins spending long hours at the library, both to avoid her home life and the attention of the boys who have discovered her beauty. The librarian, Mrs. Lisa Marie Houston, befriends Kelly and helps the young girl see she has options in life. She gives Kelly a list of the top modeling agencies in Manhattan and sends her off into the world. Kelly leaves town with the two hundred dollars she has saved from baby-sitting jobs. The first agency she visits signs her on the spot.

Chapter 9: Lois Reynolds waits for her brother Gary to arrive. Gary is the most important male figure in her life. He had stood by her side through a painful divorce when Lois's "Mr. Wonderful" turned out to be a twisted wife-beater. Gary had helped Lois flee town and find a job with a Midwestern insurance company. Lois is interrupted in her thoughts by a knock at the door. Gary's friend Tom is at her doorstep. He informs her of the accident that killed her brother. Grief stricken, she sends Tom away.

Lois recalls the last time she saw Gary, a week ago. Gary had told her about Prima and about the upcoming meeting in Washington. He had told her his life was in danger. Now Gary is dead, murdered. Lois intends to finish what her brother started with Prima and inform the world. But first she must sleep. Grief and exhaustion overcome her and she heads to bed. She is woken hours later by smoke and finds her room transformed into a blazing, fiery inferno.

Prologue and Chapters 1-9 Analysis

The author jumps right into the action in the Prologue, by detailing a gruesome set of murders, which will drive the action throughout the rest of the novel. The reader is aware that the deaths of Sonja Verbrugge, Mark Harris, Richard Stevens and Gary Reynolds are all linked, but only because the author chooses to present them as a group in his Prologue. How and why these murders are linked has yet to be revealed however and solving these seemingly unconnected murders will be the chief preoccupation of the two protagonists, Diane Stevens and Kelly Harris.

In this first section, the reader meets these two women just moments before their lives are turned upside down. By the time Diane and Kelly are introduced to the reader, they have already become widows, but they do not know it yet. Thus the author is able to

show them in their normal world before that normal world is shattered by the news of their husbands' deaths.

As Diane and Kelly learn of the deaths, their reactions consist of shock, grief and denial. Their thoughts are preoccupied by memories of their husbands and through these flashbacks, the reader quickly learns that both women were very much in love with their spouses. These tragic deaths seem to be more than enough for the women to cope with, yet the reader is aware that very soon, the women will be fighting for their own lives.

Tension is built right away because the reader knows a few things the unsuspecting women do not. All four deaths in the Prologue are related to the mysterious Prima and with one notable exception, the murder victims were scientists employed by KIG. The exception is Sonja Verbrugge, who did not work for KIG, but was married to a man who did. Had Diane and Kelly known about her murder, they might have realized by now that their own lives are in danger.

The reader becomes all too aware of this fact in Chapter 9, which describes the murder attempt on Lois Reynolds's life. Lois is the sister of one of the murder victims, Gary Reynolds. Now the reader knows that the killer is going after the victims' entire families and can only read along helplessly as Kelly blithely walks away from an elevator crash, never realizing it was actually an attempt on her life. The author throws enough red herrings into the plot to confuse both the protagonists and the reader. When the reader meets Diane Stevens, she is testifying against an Italian mobster. It makes sense that the attempted assault against her by an Italian man holding a gun is a result of her testimony. Only later will Diane realize that a murderous mastermind is manipulating events to throw her and the police off the track of the real murderer.

Chapters 10 - 19

Chapters 10 - 19 Summary

Chapter 10: Within two years young Kelly rises to the top of the modeling profession. In addition to her looks, she possesses an air of untouchability, which attracts men. She returns to Philadelphia to visit her mother, who thanks her for the money she sends every month. Her stepfather, however, makes it clear that Kelly is no longer welcome in their home. Before she leaves town, Kelly visits Mrs. Houston at the library and thanks her for changing her life.

Kelly returns to Paris, where she meets a man named Mark Harris. Mark, like many men, approaches Kelly with the hopes of getting to know her. Kelly is put off by him at first, but Mark is persistent, sending her flowers and gifts and finally, a beautiful dog named Angel. This, as far as Kelly is concerned, is the last straw. She agrees to meet Mark for lunch, intending only to return Angel and to make her lack of interest clear. However when she learns that Mark's difficult childhood was similar to hers, her heart goes out to him. She agrees to have dinner with him, thinking they will only become friends.

Chapter 11: In Paris, France, two French policemen interrogate the superintendent of the Eiffel Tower. The police have established that Mark Harris had not been suicidal and in fact had made romantic weekend plans with his wife just before he died. The superintendent tells them that the tower elevator had been shut down on the night of Mark's death at ten p.m. Due to a special key system; only authorized personnel are able to run the elevators. The police ask to question the man on duty on the night in question, but the superintendent informs them that the elevator operator has not shown up for work since that night. According to the man's landlord he has moved away leaving no forwarding address.

Back at police headquarters the puzzled investigators discuss the case. They have been unable to identify a man named Prima, but the Prima name has come up both in the Harris homicide and in connection with a homicide in New York City. They decide to send a notice to the New York office.

In New York, Detective Earl Greenburg and his partner are summoned to meet with the chief of detectives. The chief advises them of an Interpol notice received that morning, which potentially links several international murders with the local Richard Stevens homicide, on which Greenburg has been working. The chief mentions the deaths of Sonja Verbrugge in Berlin, Mark Harris in Paris and Gary Reynolds in Denver. Additionally, there is a three-year-old murder case, which may also be related.

Madeleine Smith, a Swiss scientist, supposedly committed suicide while pregnant and shortly before her wedding day. Her friends insisted she had not been suicidal. Detective Greenburg interrupts the chief and asks how all of these cases are related to

the Richard Stevens homicide. The chief responds that according to Interpol, every one of the dead people had worked for a think tank called Kingsley International Group. The chief sends his men on a mission to interview Tanner Kingsley, the head of KIG.

Tanner Kingsley is in Washington, D.C., testifying before a Senate committee regarding the issue of global warming. Kingsley speaks passionately and with anger. Senator Van Luven takes offense to Kingsley's strongly worded statements regarding the responsibility of the government to control fossil fuel emissions. She asks to meet with him after the committee adjourns.

Kingsley joins her in her office, along with the senator's two young female aids. The aids are clearly taken with Kingsley and approve of his impassioned stance on the environment. Senator Van Luven promises only that she and her colleagues will consider giving KIG the funds requested to work on the environmental issues at hand. Kingsley thanks her and offers her a tour of KIG next time she's in New York. Noncommittally, the Senator tells him she'll let him know.

Chapter 12: Kelly Harris is flooded with phone calls, flowers and visitors after Mark's death. The first person to call her is Sam Meadows, Mark's coworker and closest friend. The head of her modeling agency asks Kelly when she will be ready to return to work and she gloomily informs him she will return when Mark returns to her. To Kelly's surprise, Tanner Kingsley's office calls her and requests she fly to New York at KIG's expense for a meeting.

Kelly leaves her beloved dog, Angel, with the friendly concierge, Philippe Cendre. Philippe gladly takes the puppy and tells Kelly the good news that his daughter has been accepted to the Sorbonne. Kelly takes leave of Philippe and Nicole Paradis, the front desk receptionist at Kelly's apartment building. The moment Kelly is out the door, Nicole picks up her cell phone and makes a call. On the airplane, Kelly recalls her and Mark's first date. He had brought the supermodel chocolates, to her amusement and when the time had come to say goodnight, Mark had not made a pass at her.

Chapter 13: Mark prepared for their second date by studying soccer, with which he was unfamiliar but which Kelly loves and by the time they arrive at the stadium, Mark is able to converse intelligently about the game and the players. Kelly is touched by how hard he has worked to impress her. She is jolted out of her pleasant reverie when the plane touches down. The media is at the airport to greet her, asking painful questions about Mark's death. Fortunately, Kelly is saved by her friend, Ben Roberts. A well-known talk show host, Ben is also Kelly's friend and now he shelters her from the unwanted media attention. He offers her a ride but Tanner Kingsley has sent a chauffeur to greet Kelly at the airport.

Chapter 14: In his office, Tanner Kingsley reads a newspaper article about a freak hailstorm in Iran. He instructs his secretary to clip the article and send it to Senator Van Luven as a "global warming update." (pg. 96) As Tanner waits for the NYC detectives to arrive for their appointment, he reflects on the success of KIG.

Seven years ago KIG had been a humble start-up company begun by Tanner and his older brother, Andrew. Andrew's vision for what had then been known as Kingsley Group was to benefit less-developed countries with cutting edge technology. Andrew hadn't cared about profit. Tanner, however, was intent on obtaining government funding and large grants from top corporations. A rivalry between the brothers had existed since their childhoods. Both brothers had excelled in science, but Tanner had remained in the shadow of his older brother. Initially, when Andrew founded Kingsley Group with his brother, the two men had maintained independent laboratories allowing them both to focus on the experiments that most interested them individually.

One day Tanner, a man known for his poor treatment of women and refusal to engage in any relationship deeper than casual sex, had met the ambitious and fascinating Pauline Cooper. Pauline, who Tanner calls Princess, has played her cards right. She challenges Tanner in a way no woman ever has. Tanner's initial reaction is anger when she refuses to sleep with him on the first date. He decides never to see Pauline again.

Chapter 15: Tanner's thoughts move back to the present as Detective Greenburg and his partner arrive at KIG for their appointment. The detectives are impressed with the state of the art technology evident in the KIG offices. Tanner tells them that KIG is heavily involved in helping third world countries, as that was his brother Andrew's original mission for the company. Greenburg asks Kingsley about a weather experiment he had read KIG was performing. Tanner tells him the experiment had been a colossal failure. The three men get down to business as Greenburg asks him about the four mysterious deaths of KIG employees within the past twenty-four hours. Tanner tells them he is investigating the matter and hopes to find some answers very quickly.

Greenburg asks about the suicides of two other well-known scientists, Madeleine Smith and Akira Iso, which occurred several years ago. Tanner surprises Greenburg by insisting neither death was a suicide. Tanner tells them that he had recruited both Smith and Iso to work for KIG and that shortly thereafter they were found dead. Tanner believes they were killed because they agreed to leave a rival company, Tokyo First Industrial, in favor of KIG.

Tanner promises his full cooperation with the police investigation. Just then Andrew Kingsley enters the room. Andrew's mental capacity is that of a small child. Tanner explains to the police that Andrew had once been a brilliant man and had even won a Nobel Prize. Sadly, an experiment gone awry had stolen Andrew's mind and left him a changed man. The detectives sympathize with Tanner and promise to keep him in the loop regarding their investigation.

Chapter 16: When the detectives leave, Tanner returns to his reminiscence about Princess. His fury at her rejection lasts three days after their first date, but he finds himself unable to dismiss her from his mind. He calls her for a second date and is again caught off guard by her attitude, which is a mixture of iciness and warmth. They continue to date and Tanner finds her intelligence and self-confidence dazzling. The ice princess eventually melts and seduces Tanner. After that, they are inseparable.

Andrew encourages Tanner to propose, but when he does so, Princess turns him down. She tells him she loves him, but that she needs a man who can provide her with a real financial future. Princess is afraid that Andrew's soft heart will prevent Kingsley Group from becoming a real financial force. Tanner insists she meet Andrew. Over dinner, Andrew is impressed with Princess. However, he talks to her about his philanthropic goals for Kingsley Group and puts off Tanner's suggestions that they go after more lucrative corporate contracts. After this dinner, Princess makes it clear she will not see Tanner again unless he finds a way to provide her with a rich financial future.

The next day, Andrew receives the news that he has won the Nobel Prize. Excitedly, Tanner calls Princess and explains that the Nobel will provide Kingsley Group with the ability to reel in many lucrative clients. Princess agrees to marry Tanner and he announces his good news to everyone at Kingsley Group. Andrew later makes it clear to Tanner that he will not use the Nobel Prize to expand the business. Andrew does not plan to change the company's mission at all. Tanner responds by meeting secretly with the Pentagon and agreeing to take on a dangerous experiment involving nano-technology. He must now convince Andrew to go along with his plan.

Chapter 17: Tanner walks into Andrew's office and announces that he's committed Kingsley Group to a top-secret army experiment. Andrew refuses on principal, but Tanner convinces him that it's not about the money, but the defense of their country. He tells Andrew that Kingsley Group will do the project on a pro bono basis. Andrew reluctantly agrees, but tells his brother it is the last time they will stray from their corporate mission of helping the underprivileged.

During the experiment, something goes wrong. Andrew's gas mask leaks and he breathes in a dangerous chemical substance. Andrew is rushed to the hospital where Tanner insists he get the best possible treatment. Unfortunately, the doctors inform him that Andrew's mind will never recover from the toxic exposure.

In the wake of this disaster, Tanner makes plans to turn Kingsley Group into Kingsley International Group, a highly lucrative think tank. He believes that now he can provide for Princess the kind of future she desires. However, before he can tell her of his plans, a message from Princess is delivered to his office. Princess's note tells Tanner that although she loves him, she is marrying someone else, someone who can provide her with the kind of money she feels she needs. Tanner crumples the note into the wastebasket. His triumph over his brother has come too late.

Chapter 18: Andrew returns to Kingsley Group as a mental zombie. Tanner gives him an office next door and a staff house on the property where he can be watched over. The employees of Kingsley Group, although nervous for their futures, are touched by how Tanner treats his unfortunate brother. The staff sympathizes with Tanner when the newspaper announces Princess's marriage to billionaire media tycoon, Edmond Barclay.

Kingsley staff watch as Tanner throws himself into his work and involves himself in a top secret project, which he discusses with no one. His staff is thrilled for him when he

introduces them to the beautiful and brilliant Sebastiana Cortez. Sebastiana is married to a businessman in Cincinnati, but the staff overhear her and Tanner planning secret rendezvous. Tanner begins to disappear once a month on mysterious trips and always returns looking happy and refreshed. The staff members wink at one another, pleased that their boss has found love with Sebastiana.

Chapter 19: Diane Stevens is stunned that the funeral home cremated her husband's body and confused that they think she requested the cremation. As she contemplates the urn, her telephone rings. It is KIG calling to request a meeting between her and Tanner Kingsley. At the appointed time, Diane shows up at the KIG offices in Manhattan. Tanner Kingsley expresses his condolences and informs Diane he is investigating Richard's death.

Diane believes that she is the cause of Richard's death. Had she not testified against Tony Altieri her husband would still be alive. Tanner hands her a business card containing his private number and asks her to call if she needs anything. As Diane returns to the reception room, she overhears the receptionist tell Kelly Harris how sorry she is to hear of Mark's death. Diane's instincts tell her she needs to speak with Kelly.

In Tanner's office, Kelly is being grilled by the head of KIG. Tanner asks her who Olga is and explains that the French police had found a note in Mark's pocket signed "Love, Olga." (pg. 139) Tanner tells Kelly that the KIG investigation has revealed that Mark had been involved with this woman. Feeling sick, Kelly excuses herself. Before she leaves, Tanner hands her a card with his private number. In the reception room, Diane approaches Kelly and asks her to have coffee and discuss Mark's death.

Meanwhile, back in Tanner's office, his associate John Higholt arrives to discuss the deaths. Tanner plays back recordings he made of his meeting with Diane and with Kelly. He tells Higholt that a voice stress analyzer indicates that both women were telling the truth. Tanner tells Higholt that the women might know more than they realize and that for their protection, he has installed surveillance cameras and sound wiring in Diane's apartment. Kelly's home in Paris cannot be bugged since it is a hotel. Tanner would like to offer a five million dollar reward for solving the homicide cases.

Chapters 10 - 19 Analysis

The author reveals much of his character development through flashback. This style allows Sidney Sheldon to keep the action at a fast pace without pausing it to develop his characters. The first section of the novel plunges the women into instantaneous widowhood. This second section shows the flurry of activity immediately following the deaths of Mark Harris and Richard Stevens. Both law enforcement and the men's employer, KIG, move quickly to investigate. Thus the events of the plot unfold rapidly, giving the reader and the two main characters little time to think about the case.

The women, Diane and Kelly, are both in a state of shock and at this point in the novel they allow events to lead them. When Tanner Kingsley calls them in for an interview,

they respond automatically. Neither woman at this point is working to solve the mystery. They are confident that law enforcement and KIG will eventually be able to answer any questions about their husbands' deaths. Thus it is a turning point for Diane's character when she decides, on sheer instinct, to speak with Kelly. Diane's instincts as an investigator will continue to be excellent as the novel progresses. Had she not made this first move by seeking out Kelly, it is likely both women would have been dead by nightfall.

The author presents an intentionally confusing portrayal of Tanner Kingsley. Tanner is introduced as a philanthropist who is passionate about the environment. He garners his staff's sympathy by taking care of his poor brother, Andrew. When speaking with the senator about KIG, Tanner proudly discusses the KIG focus on third-world development, which he has continued since his brother's tragic accident.

Rich, handsome and apparently concerned for the good of mankind, Tanner seems an unlikely criminal mastermind; and yet, the author drops hints that this is precisely what he is. All of Tanner's positive qualities are put on for show. Tanner uses his brother's disability as a public relations ploy and even takes credit for the third-world developmental projects which Andrew started against Tanner's wishes.

When Tanner decides to put Diane's home under surveillance, he advises his associate, John Higholt, that he wants to keep an eye on Diane *for her own protection*. By dropping clues as to Tanner's evil motives, the author takes a great deal of suspense out of the plot. Already the reader suspects Tanner to be the criminal mastermind behind the string of deaths. However, this somewhat unusual choice by the author does have the benefit of making Tanner seem even stronger and more evil than he might have otherwise. Tanner's ability to show a philanthropic, caring face to the world while hiding his inner cruelty makes him a tougher adversary for the women to face because Tanner clearly has the world on his side. The women will be forced to pit themselves against a powerful man with many allies, while they will only have each other and their own wits to rely on.

Chapters 20 - 29

Chapters 20 - 29 Summary

Chapter 20: Kelly and Diane sit in a coffee shop across the street from KIG. Diane tries to explain that she and Kelly have the same problem and may be able to help one another. Kelly is still reeling from Tanner's insinuations about her dead husband and a woman named Olga and does not really wish to know what Diane might have to say about her husband. When Kelly sees Diane's face on the coffee shop's television and hears her televised image describe the details of Altieri's homicide for the cameras and courtroom, her eyes widen in fear. The not guilty verdict is announced and Anthony Altieri answers the reporters' questions. He indicates that he plans to retire and "clean up a few old debts." (pg. 146) Kelly knocks over her cup of tea in her haste to exit the coffee shop.

Diane calls after her, telling her she's overreacting. As they stand at the exit, an elderly man trips in the doorway and both women duck down to help him. Just then two bullets penetrate the glass doors where their heads had been seconds before. They seek refuge in a waiting taxi, which drops Diane at her apartment. Kelly refuses to come inside and finish their conversation, but before the cab pulls away, Kelly hears a piercing scream from Diane's apartment. She rushes inside after Diane.

When Kelly reaches Diane's apartment, she finds that there has been a break-in. Diane tells her Richard's briefcase is gone, but someone has left his wedding ring in its place. Kelly insists she call the police and Diane gets Detective Greenburg on the line. Satisfied, Kelly leaves Diane and returns to her hotel.

Chapter 21: Back in her hotel room, Kelly resolves to stay as far away as possible from Diane. She orders room service and is told she'll have her food in half an hour. Kelly slumps on the couch and thinks about Olga. A man knocks on her door and announces her room service has arrived. Suspicious, she calls downstairs before answering the door and is told her food will not be ready for another twenty minutes. She quickly dials the operator and tells her there is a man trying to gain entrance to her room. Moments later another knock comes. A man's voice tells her he is security.

Again Kelly thinks the knock came too quickly. She dials the operator again and learns the security man will be heading upstairs in a minute or two. She hears whispers in the hallway and fear courses through her body. A minute later, another knock and another male voice announces himself as security. She asks his name and then opens the door. The real security guard stands there. He escorts Kelly downstairs to the taxi stand and promises to watch over her room in her absence. She notices a limousine creep up next to her cab at the intersection. Kelly asks the taxi driver to make a sharp left and drop her off a block away, where she hails another cab. The limousine races after the first cab and Kelly's cab gets away.

In Diane's apartment, Detective Greenburg tells Diane that the bullets they dug out of the café's window were pretty heavy artillery. Greenburg suspects Altieri arranged the hit. Kelly storms in and interrupts them. She informs Greenburg that someone just tried to break into her hotel room. Diane downplays her words, telling Kelly the tension is understandably causing her to imagine things. Kelly tells them she's going back to Paris and stomps out of the apartment.

After she leaves, Diane explains to Greenburg that Kelly's husband has just been killed and that he also worked at KIG. Back at her hotel, Kelly asks the front desk to check her out and reserve a plane ticket for her to France. She gets on the elevator to go up to her room, but two burly men get on with her. Kelly quickly backs out and takes the stairs.

Kelly is met in the stairwell by a man holding a gun with a silencer. He forces her out through the lobby and towards an SUV. Kelly notices a traffic cop writing tickets just ahead and loudly tells her captor his request is going to cost him extra. Under the policeman's watchful eye, Kelly walks away from her captor. She tells the cop that man is bothering her and jumps into a taxi cab. The policeman asks the man for some identification. His name is Harry Flint. Flint watches Kelly's cab drive off and vows to kill her slowly.

Chapter 22: Kelly gets out of the cab at Diane's apartment. Detective Greenburg lets her in and Kelly immediately confronts Diane. She demands to know why Diane's mafia pals are after her. When Kelly insists that Diane talk to Altieri about leaving her alone, Greenburg thinks it's a good idea. The detective feels if they pay Altieri a visit and let him know the cops are keeping an eye on him, he might leave the women alone.

The three of them drive to Altieri's gorgeous fifteen-acre estate in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The guard lets them in when Greenburg informs him it's a "social call." (pg. 158) They find Altieri in his sick bed, a priest and a nurse at his side. The old man is obviously dying. When he tells them he had nothing to do with the murder attempts, Diane believes him. On the drive back, Greenburg and Kelly agree that Altieri looked too sick to care about revenge, especially since he was acquitted of all charges.

Greenburg drops the women off at Diane's apartment, promising them police protection for twenty-four hours and that he will contact them then with whatever he turns up. After he leaves, Kelly and Diane discuss their predicament. Kelly suggests their husbands may have been killed over a top secret KIG project and that whoever killed them must think the women know more than they do.

In his office, Tanner listens to their conversation with his surveillance equipment. He listens as the women decide to call him to find out more about what their husbands were working on before they died. Diane looks out the window and sees no patrol car in front of her home. She calls Detective Greenburg but is told both he and his partner have been transferred to another precinct.

Diane tells Kelly she forgot to mention to Greenburg about Richard's trip to Washington. Kelly replies that Mark had scheduled a trip to Washington, too and both men had

insisted on going alone. They decide to find out why their husbands meant to go there. In the meantime, Diane suggests they stay at an out-of-the-way hotel in Chinatown called the Mandarin. In his office at KIG, Tanner turns to his chief security officer, Harry Flint and orders him to go to the Mandarin and kill the two women.

Chapter 23: Tanner knows Flint will "take good care of the women." Tanner had recruited Flint from a halfway house for ex-felons, which was one of Andrew's bleeding heart liberal causes. From Andrew's halfway house, he had acquired not only Flint but also an ex-felon named Vince Carballo. Carballo is a dangerous man, but Flint is a psychopath who has been actively violent since he started killing and torturing animals as a young boy. Flint carries a scar from an alley fight which quirks his face into a perpetual half smile. Tanner admires how much Flint enjoys his work for KIG. After the Japanese scientist, Akira Iso, had turned down Tanner's job offer six years ago, Tanner had sent Flint to Iso's hotel room to kill him. Iso's body had been found hanging in his room; the official verdict was suicide.

Chapter 24: Kelly and Diane arrive at the Mandarin Hotel in Chinatown, where the clerk overcharges the two well-dressed women for their room. They pay cash and once they get to their room, Diane pulls out Tanner Kingsley's card and dials his private number. Tanner answers at once and informs Diane his investigators have solved the case and that she and Mrs. Harris are now perfectly safe. Tanner tells her to stay where she is and he'll send a car to pick them up in half an hour.

Kelly passes the time reminiscing about an awards ceremony in Mark's honor she had attended when she and Mark first became friends. She had been seated with Mark's best friend, Sam Meadows. Over dinner Sam warns her that Mark wants to propose to her and tells her he hopes she won't hurt Mark. Kelly feels guilty for leading Mark on. She knows she can never have a romantic or sexual relationship with any man and vows to stop dating Mark before he gets hurt.

Diane calls her attention back to the present. Diane has realized that she didn't tell Tanner they were at the Mandarin Hotel, yet Tanner had known where to pick them up. Kelly understands the implications and the women flee. Downstairs, Harry Flint finds out their room number before shooting the clerk in the head. The women watch from a diner across the street as Flint exits the Mandarin with a snarl on his face. They discuss where to go next. Kelly says that KIG will be watching the airports, bus stations and train stations. Diane comes up with an idea.

Chapter 25: In his office, Tanner clips another news article about a freak weather occurrence and asks his secretary to send it to Senator Van Luven as another global warming update. Meanwhile Kelly and Diane take refuge in the Wilton Hotel for Women. Holed up in the room, they are both tense and rude to one another.

Kingsley is absolutely furious when he hears that Flint missed the women at the Mandarin. He screams out his brother's name. Andrew enters the office and Tanner orders him to sit down. Tanner uses Andrew as a sounding board as he talks through the status of his plans. He explains to the uncomprehending Andrew that he has

managed to convince Diane the mafia killed Richard, while Kelly thinks her husband's death is related to a woman named Olga, who doesn't even exist.

Tanner muses aloud over his next step. He reasons through the women's options and decides they will go to a women's-only hotel for safety. Tanner finds four such hotels listed in the phone book, one of which is the Wilton Hotel for Women. Triumphantly, Tanner tells his brother that the women are carrying microdot computer chips embedded in the business cards he gave them. The microdots can be tracked by the Global Positioning System. Tanner flicks on his GPS and is pleased to find his logic is correct; the women are at the Wilton.

Tanner dismisses Andrew, but Andrew stays behind to ask his brother if he will be getting his Nobel Prize soon. Impatiently, Tanner explains to Andrew that the Nobel Prize had been awarded seven years ago. Tanner's own thoughts drift back three years in time to the day he met Madeleine Smith in a restaurant in Zurich. Tanner offers to steal her away from Tokyo First International for twice her salary. Madeleine loves the idea, but tells Tanner she cannot start her new job until she finishes up an important project for Tokyo First. The next day Tanner sends Harry Flint to kill Madeleine in her apartment. He makes it look like suicide. Now Tanner thinks about Diane and Kelly. He is confident Flint will come through. Once they're out of the way, his project can continue unhindered.

Chapter 26: The clerk at the Wilton Hotel refuses to allow Harry Flint upstairs. Flint checks in with Tanner, who decides to send Vince Carballo to help Flint in case the women decide to split up when they leave the hotel. In their room, the women continue to get on each other's nerves. Diane has an inspiration and calls her husband's secretary, thinking Betty Barker might know why Richard was going to Washington.

When Diane speaks into the phone, a voice recognition light goes off in Tanner's office. He picks up the phone and listens as the KIG operator tells her Miss Barker is not at her desk. When Diane hangs up, Kelly takes a moment to speak to Phillipe and her dog Angel. Phillipe assures her everything is all right in Paris. Over dinner, Diane tells Kelly she is the coldest human being Diane has ever met. She suggests Kelly let down her walls a bit, but Kelly has no interest in becoming friendly with Diane.

Kelly retires to the bathroom to take a shower. Under the warm water, her thoughts drift back to Sam Meadows's warning. After the award ceremony, Kelly had refused to see Mark again. When Mark calls her the following day, she tells him she's in love with someone else. Over the next several weeks Kelly tries to forget Mark. One night at work, Kelly trips on the runway and falls flat on her face in front of a large audience.

Humiliated, she retreats backstage, where she tells her dresser she has no intention of going back out there to finish the show. Mark's voice surprises her; he tells her she will go back out and insists her fall had been a good thing. "Kelly, before you walked out there, the audience thought you were just a beautiful, untouchable dream, a fantasy, out of reach. When you tripped and fell, it showed them that you're human and they adored you for it. Now you go back out there and make them happy." (pg. 192) Kelly looks into

his eyes and realizes she is in love with Mark. Her confidence restored, she goes back out on the catwalk and is greeted by thunderous applause.

When the water grows cold, Kelly gets out of the shower and tells Diane the bathroom's all hers. Diane is infuriated to see Kelly's towels lying on the floor. She is irritated by her distant, thoughtless roommate. The two unhappy women finally lie down for the night. Kelly panics when Diane turns off the light; she admits to being afraid of the dark. In their own beds, both women cry themselves to sleep.

Chapter 27: The next morning Diane awakens and immediately starts pressuring Kelly to help her make a plan. Annoyed at having her morning meditation interrupted, Kelly flips on the news. Her friend Ben Roberts is on the air, reporting the cancer-related death of mobster Anthony Altieri. The two women decide to split up and go their separate ways.

They part at the entrance to the hotel; each woman heads a different way down the sidewalk. They have only gone a few steps when Flint and Carballo close in on them. The women cluster together in front of the hotel entrance, but the morning crowd blocks their entrance. Diane picks up her cell phone and speaks into it loudly; she smiles and flashes Kelly the victory sign as the two thugs watch. Diane steps off the curb and excitedly signals to a passing car, which pulls to the curb. Flint and Carballo walk quickly away as Kelly wonders who Diane has on the phone. Diane smiles that her ruse worked; there was no one on the phone with her.

Chapter 28: In front of the hotel, Kelly still insists on splitting up. They say goodbye again and Diane steps into a cab. Kelly looks around the unfamiliar street and then runs to catch up with Diane's cab. Already doubting her decision, Kelly accompanies Diane to the Adams Hotel in Brooklyn. They sign in as Emily Brontë and Mary Cassatt and pay their bill in cash.

The two women head across the street to a clothing store and go on a huge spending spree, acquiring enough clothes and toiletries to fill their four new suitcases. They pay again in cash and Diane realizes their cash reserves are getting low. In their room at the Adams they carefully unpack everything. A chambermaid arrives with fresh towels for them. The moment she leaves Kelly instructs Diane to leave everything behind and exit the hotel immediately. Puzzled but convinced by the urgency in Kelly's voice, Diane flees with Kelly out the door. Moments after they exit the Adams, an explosion rocks the hotel. A stunned Diane gazes at Kelly.

Kelly explains that she noticed the chambermaid was wearing four-hundred-dollar Manolo Blahnik shoes. Diane asks if Tanner gave Kelly anything that day at his office. Their eyes widen when they realize they both took a business card from him. They find the cards to be unbendable and indestructible. Diane angrily tosses the cards into the road. The women again decide to split up, but the tension between them evaporates and is replaced by a new warmth. They exchange cell phone numbers and Kelly walks away.

Chapter 29: Tanner Kingsley's secretary brings him a morning paper with several freakish weather reports in banner-size headlines. At his direction, she hurries away to send the Senator the articles. Tanner checks his watch and smiles. The bomb will have gone off by now. Senator Van Luven calls and asks if she and her assistants can drop by KIG headquarters. Tanner tells her she is welcome and as he hangs up, he thinks of her husband's obituary, which he'd seen in the paper a few weeks ago.

A few minutes later the Senator arrives with the same two young assistants who had been so impressed by Tanner's environmental speech. Tanner offers her a grand tour. Its highlights include the sound spectrograph machine, which creates voiceprints and a redbrick building which houses top secret research and is deemed off limits by Tanner. He buttonholes the Senator on her way out to ask if her committee has come to a decision regarding his environmental proposal. Van Luven declines to give him a definitive answer.

The moment she and her aides leave, Tanner is on the phone to Saida Hernandez. Saida's voice trembles with fear as she informs her boss that the bomb she planted at the Adams Hotel has missed its targets. Tanner is furious to learn Kelly and Diane have escaped again. He sends for Flint and Carballo. Tanner tells his henchmen he won't tolerate any further failures. His anger hits a higher peak when he turns on his GPS system and discovers that the women have disposed of their tracking cards.

Tanner will not be deterred. He traces the women using their cell phone numbers and discovers that Diane is at the Nelson Gallery; Kelly is at a bus station. Tanner uses his voice synthesizer to duplicate the women's voices from the voiceprints he had previously recorded. Using Diane's voice, he calls Kelly and claims to have proof of the murderer's identity. He uses the same ruse when he calls Diane and gets both women to agree to meet in the penthouse of the Delmont Hotel. Tanner sends Flint to lie in wait at the penthouse. He sends Carballo to kill Saida Hernandez for her failure with the bomb.

Chapters 20 - 29 Analysis

In order to survive the events of the story, both Diane Stevens and Kelly Harris will have to transcend their ordinary lives and call upon courage and cleverness they don't yet know they possess. As this section of the novel begins, the women have left their ordinary world, but they are still ordinary women. They have not transformed themselves yet into heroines, which they will shortly be forced to become.

Despite their riches and glamour, they are, in the best possible sense, quite ordinary women. Diane loves to cook for her husband and enjoys tending the house while he works. Kelly adores her dog and has overcome a difficult childhood with the help of her beloved Mark. When they become widows, both women struggle to cope with their bereavement and can be seen undergoing the various, normal stages of grief. Because they still see themselves as ordinary women, they do not initially rise to the challenges that face them.

The turning point in Diane and Kelly's behavior starts with their meeting at the coffee shop. Although each woman has already dealt with one attempt on her life, their shock and bereavement have prevented them, up till now, from accepting the idea that their husband's killer is after them, too. While it was Diane's instinct which brought the two women together, Diane's sense of denial is stronger than Kelly's and Diane proves to be a bit of an obstacle through her stubborn lack of belief that anyone could be trying to kill Kelly. Diane still sees Richard's death as being mafia related. Thus a second major turning point in this section comes when Anthony Altieri is eliminated as a suspect in Richard Harris's death. Now Diane and Kelly have to start looking at the big picture. They must accept additionally the cruel twist of fate, which has caught them both up in a nightmare.

Their acceptance comes slowly. Even after Kelly's brilliant instinct saves both of their lives from a bomb intended to kill them, the women still act as if their lives are under control. They actually go on a shopping spree to cheer themselves up, instead of coping with the reality of their situation. They spend their cash carelessly, not realizing that having cash on hand may be necessary to save their lives.

These unlikely heroines finally wise up when they realize that Tanner Kingsley is out to kill them. They begin to react to their danger with quick-thinking and surprising courage. Yet their transformation from ordinary women to heroines is still not complete. They waste a great deal of time and further endanger themselves in this section because they allow their personality differences to hamper their quest to save themselves.

Chapters 30 - 39

Chapters 30 - 39 Summary

Chapter 30: As Harry Flint waits for the women in the penthouse suite, he recalls office functions previously held there. Three times a year KIG hosts "board meetings" in the suite, which are actually orgies with beautiful prostitutes supplied by Tanner's money. Flint gets turned on thinking about the orgies and plans to take out his lust on Kelly and Diane when they arrive.

Unaware she is walking into a trap, Diane exits the elevator and walks down the hall towards the penthouse. She is momentarily delayed by a bellboy who is blocking the hallway with his luggage cart. In that moment, Kelly gets off the elevator and sees Diane in the hall. They quickly realize that neither of them set up this meeting. They stare at the door to the penthouse suite for a moment before racing away together down the stairs. Harry Flint continues to wait in the penthouse as the women hop a subway car and flee the area. On the subway they put their heads together and realize that Tanner must have used their cell phones to trace them. They give their phones to two men on the train and then find lodging at a modest boardinghouse on the West Side. Meanwhile Flint advises Tanner that the women never showed. Tanner calls Kelly's cell phone and realizes the women have disposed of their phones. The next morning, Flint and Carballo reconvene at KIG and to their surprise, Tanner informs them the two women will show up at KIG at eleven-fifteen the following day.

Chapter 31: The women awake in the boardinghouse the following morning. Diane reflects on the amazing luck, which has thus far kept them alive. She asks Kelly if she thinks it's a coincidence, or if she believes their husbands' spirits might be watching over them. Kelly tells Diane she doesn't believe in that sort of thing and changes the subject to practical matters like breakfast. Before they head out to eat, Diane tries to reach Richard's secretary again. Betty Barker cannot be reached either at the office or at her home number, which has been disconnected.

The two women walk to a local diner, but make a quick stop in a clothing store to buy necessities. This time the women conserve their cash and buy only what they need. Their final purchase of the morning is a pair of disposable cell phones. In the diner they see a newspaper notice announcing a memorial for their husbands at the KIG headquarters, scheduled for eleven-fifteen the next day. Kelly assumes it's a trap, but Diane insists they attend so she can hopefully speak with Betty Barker. Kelly comes up with a plan to get them out of the trap, but keeps the details to herself. That evening she makes a phone call before bedtime. Both women sleep poorly.

Chapter 32: The next morning at KIG headquarters, Tanner Kingsley smiles in satisfaction when the women arrive. Diane spots Betty Barker in the crowd, but before she and Kelly can approach Richard's former secretary, they find themselves hemmed in by Flint and Carballo. They turn to find all the exits blocked by burly men. Just then,

Tanner announces Diane and Kelly by name and calls them up on stage to join him at the podium. With all eyes on them, the two women hesitantly approach the podium. In the nick of time, Kelly's media friend, Ben Roberts, arrives with his camera crew to save them.

Tanner tells Ben that the media is not allowed at the memorial service. Unperturbed, Ben simply explains to Tanner that the two women have scheduled an interview with his crew and if the media is not welcome, he will simply escort the women back to his television studio. Tanner watches helplessly as Ben leads the women away, out of danger. In the media truck, Kelly refuses to give Ben any information, but thanks him for coming to their rescue. Ben drops them off at Times Square.

Diane tells Kelly it's time they stopped running and went after KIG. They enter an Internet café and search out other KIG employee obituaries. They find one for Sonja Verbrugge as well as one for Gary Reynolds. They vow to solve the mystery together. On a lark, Kelly stops into a computer store and arranges to have three-dozen computers delivered to Tanner Kingsley at KIG, cash on delivery.

Back at KIG, Tanner sends more environmental articles to Senator Van Luven, then he calls for his brother Andrew to join him in his office. Andrew has been reliving the moments just prior to his disabling accident. He recalls that Tanner had switched Andrew's environmental suit and gas mask at the last moment. Tanner's shout interrupts Andrew's reverie and he goes to his brother. Tanner, using Andrew as a sounding board again, tells his brother that Kelly and Diane have been searching the Internet for information regarding the Verbrugge and Reynolds murders. At that moment the computers that Kelly had ordered arrive; Tanner refuses delivery.

Furious, he hacks into a credit card company database and wipes out all of Kelly and Diane's assets. His anger not slaked, Tanner punches his brother in the face for good measure. Tanner's secretary hears Andrew fall and rushes in to check on them. Tanner tells her poor Andrew has fallen down. His secretary suggests Andrew might be better off in a home, but Tanner tells her he can take better care of his brother than any institution. She smiles at him with admiration. Moments later, she brings him a fax from Senator Van Luven. The fax is to inform Tanner that the Senate Select Committee on the Environment has approved the funding KIG needs to investigate global warming.

Chapter 33: The women have decided to fly to Europe to the scene of Mark's murder and the scene of the Verbrugge killing. Kelly accompanies Diane to her bank, where Diane gets her passport from a safety deposit box and then attempts to close out her account. The teller informs her that the account has already been closed and that according to their records, Diane Stevens is deceased. Diane hurries away, unwilling to call a manager and attract attention to herself. Both women call their credit card companies and discover their assets are gone.

They are low on cash but Kelly volunteers to sell her seven-carat emerald ring set in platinum with three-carat diamonds. She accepts twenty thousand dollars for it, although the ring is worth far more. Its emotional value is even greater. Kelly recalls the



birthday when Mark had given her the ring. He had proposed and Kelly had been forced to refuse. She explains to Mark that because of the rape when she was eight years old, she's not interested in sex. She tells him she can never give him a real marriage. Mark slips the emerald onto her finger and insists that they marry anyway. They plan the wedding for that very weekend and Kelly introduces her fiancé to her fellow models. They are surprised by his goofy looks, but the models realize that Kelly has found true love and sees Mark through loving eyes.

The paparazzi arrives full force at the wedding, where Sam Meadows serves as Mark's best man. In their honeymoon suite in St. Moritz, Mark requests two single beds. That night, Mark reassures Kelly that her presence in his life is worth her absence in his bed. Kelly is overwhelmed with love for her new husband. Mentally, she takes her power back from her childhood abuser and, tossing caution to the wind, she climbs joyfully into bed with her new husband.

Kelly is introduced to the pleasures of sex and joins in enthusiastically. Afterwards, she chides herself for being a fool and waiting so long. When Mark turns out the lights, Kelly finds that her fear of the dark has completely subsided. Diane jolts her out of her reverie and Kelly hands over her engagement ring in exchange for the cash. She gives half the money, ten thousand dollars, to Diane in case they get separated.

Chapter 34: Diane hails a cab for them to LaGuardia airport. There they buy tickets on a flight to L.A. and a flight to Miami before walking out of the airport. Diane and Kelly get into a waiting cab at the airport's taxi stand and ask the driver to get them to Kennedy airport without being followed. The driver complies with a grin and makes a series of quick turns on the long drive to Kennedy. After he drops them off at the airport, the cab driver picks up his cell phone and calls Tanner Kingsley.

The women board a flight to Barcelona, which has a layover in Madrid. On the flight the women plan a route to Paris, Berlin, then Denver and back to New York. They intend to cross the border into France at San Sebastián. Kelly looks forward to returning to Paris, where she shared a home with Mark. She and Diane talk long into the night, sharing with one another for the first time memories of their husbands.

Tanner orders Flint to take the company jet to Barcelona to intercept them. As Tanner hangs up the phone, Andrew walks into his office and starts babbling about Tanner's wedding. Tanner tells his brother that was seven years ago; he insults Andrew and throws him out of his office. Meanwhile, Harry Flint is elbowing his way through the crowd at the Barcelona airport. When the two women fail to disembark at the gate, he flashes fake credentials and boards the plane for an "FAA inspection." He reports back to Kingsley that the women were not on the plane. Tanner realizes they must have deplaned during their layover in Madrid. He instructs Flint to rent a car and intercept them before they can cross the border at San Sebastián.

Chapter 35: Thirty minutes outside of San Sebastián, the girls encounter a burning car in the middle of the roadway. Kelly explains that they are in Basque country, which has been a war zone for the past fifty years while the Basques have been fighting the

Spanish government. Diane refuses to stop for the uniformed officer standing next to the car. She swerves around the obstacle and then notices Harry Flint in a car right behind them. Diane accelerates to one-hundred and ten miles per hour as she speeds toward the border.

As the border checkpoint approaches, Diane orders Kelly to hit her as hard as she can. Hesitantly, Kelly does as she's asked; her diamond wedding ring gashes Diane's face. When Diane rolls down her window to speak to the border guard, she has blood running down her cheek. Diane explains to the guard that her ex-husband, driving the black Citroën just behind them, is trying to kill her. Incensed, the guard promises to take care of him and waves Diane through the checkpoint. When Harry Flint pulls up to the checkpoint, the guard orders the Citroën taken apart and searched for drugs. Flint protests and the guard has him arrested for bribery and resisting arrest.

The women split up when they reach Paris. Diane drops Kelly at her apartment. Kelly plans to have dinner with her husband's best friend and KIG coworker, Sam Meadows, in the hopes of getting some information out of him. She stops short inside her building's lobby when she notices the two new male employees. Only the receptionist's face is familiar. The receptionist, Nicole Paradis, conveys a mute urgency with her look as she tells Kelly that the concierge, Phillipe, has moved to Spain.

Phillipe is supposed to be watching Kelly's dog, Angel and Kelly knows he would never leave the country just when his daughter is starting school at the Sorbonne. The two new employees try to get Kelly to accompany them upstairs to her suite, but she slips out the door and quickly hails a cab. Meanwhile Sam Meadows tells Tanner via telephone that Kelly will be arriving at his home very soon.

Chapter 36: Diane arrives in Berlin and checks into the Kempinski Hotel. She finds the Cyberlin Café where Sonja Verbrugge had been employed and asks for the manager. When Diane asks about Sonja, the manager excuses herself to make a telephone call. Diane's instincts tell her to get out of there right away. From a payphone, she calls KIG Berlin and asks to speak to Franz Verbrugge's secretary. A blue light flashes on in Tanner's office in response to Diane's voice. He listens in while Diane pretends to be a reporter and schedules a dinner meeting at Rockendorf's restaurant with Franz' secretary. Tanner decides to call in his big gun, a man named Greg Holliday, to handle Diane.

Chapter 37: Kelly arrives at Sam Meadows's apartment in Paris. The sight of his familiar, friendly face calms Kelly's nerves. He wraps her in a bear hug and invites her into his luxurious home. She explains she's trying to find out how and why Mark died. Sam tells her he doesn't believe Mark's death was a suicide because how could Mark have left Kelly? He locks her in and then tells Kelly that life must go on and that he knows what a passionate woman like Kelly needs. Sam puts an arm around her and says Mark told him all kinds of intimate details about her.

Kelly knows Mark would never have talked about her in that way. Chillingly, Sam tells her that Mark didn't suffer in the end. He suggests they work up an appetite in bed. Her



mind working furiously, Kelly plays along while she seeks an advantage. She moves away from him, into the kitchen and sees a pot boiling on the stove. Her heart skips a beat when she notices the dinner table has only one place setting. Sam follows her into the kitchen and starts touching her body; he asks her what she likes to do in bed. Kelly tells him she will show him if he drops his pants. Sam quickly complies and Kelly throws a pot of boiling water onto his naked genitals, then grabs the key and flees for her life.

Chapter 38: Diane shows up for her dinner meeting at Rockendorf's. She carefully scans the other diners. At one table an attractive businessman dines alone. The minutes tick by and Franz's secretary fails to show. After an hour, Diane realizes she is not coming. To Diane's dismay, she notices two burly men manning a table near the entrance. They stare openly at her and she realizes she has walked into another trap. Diane seeks refuge in the company of the attractive man dining alone. He introduces himself as Greg Holliday.

Meanwhile Kelly walks the streets of Paris all night, alert to potential pursuers. At dawn she remembers her husband Mark's secretary, Yvonne Renais. She waits until nine a.m. then calls KIG Paris and gets Yvonne on the phone. Tanner listens in from his office in Manhattan as Yvonne agrees to meet Kelly for lunch at Le Ciel de Paris. Kelly arrives for lunch fifteen minutes before Yvonne. She questions Mark's secretary about her husband's behavior immediately prior to his death and asks Yvonne if she's ever heard of a woman named Olga. Yvonne doesn't know any Olga, but says Mark had been acting nervous and secretive before his death. Apologizing for not being more helpful, Yvonne excuses herself to return to work. In the lobby of the restaurant, Kelly is accosted by two large men. She sets off the fire alarm and escapes in the confusion.

Back at Rockendorf's, Diane asks Greg Holliday to see her safely into a taxi. She hopes the burly men by the entrance will not challenge her if she's in the company of a man. Indeed they let her and Greg Holliday exit the restaurant. To her shock, Greg strong-arms her into a waiting Mercedes and climbs in after her. He pulls out a hypodermic needle and tells her it contains a sedative. He promises not to hurt her. The car's driver brakes suddenly to avoid a pedestrian and Diane grabs the needle and plunges it into Holliday's arm. He is dead within seconds. Diane leaps out the door and takes off on foot.

Chapter 39: From Munich, Diane calls Kelly on her disposable cell phone. Kelly is on a train to London. They agree to fly into Denver independently and meet at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver. The women had read about Gary Reynolds's surviving sister in his obituary and hope to speak with her. Meanwhile Tanner learns that Greg Holliday is dead. He decides to take care of the girls personally. Tanner figures their only remaining move is to look into Reynolds's death in Denver.

The two women meet up at the Brown Palace Hotel. Without going into gory detail, they let each other know how things turned out in Europe. They hope to have better luck with Gary's sister, Lois Reynolds. The next morning a cab drops them off at what used to be the Reynolds residence; it is now a pile of charred ashes. Kelly despairs that they've reached a dead end, but Diane thinks they have one final chance to get the information



they seek. They go to the Denver airport and lay their cards on the table for the airport manager. The ladies talk the manager into giving them access to the air traffic controller on duty the night Reynolds died. The manager acquiesces because he, too, has unanswered questions about the crash; the black box had gone missing during the FAA investigation.

The women arrive to interview Howard Miller in his home. The air traffic controller sheds no light on the crash investigation, but he does inform them that Gary Reynolds's sister Lois is in the burn center at the University of Colorado Hospital. At the hospital, the nurse refuses to give Kelly and Diane the patient's room number. The ladies arrange for a messenger to deliver a package so they can obtain the room number. They then sneak into Lois's room.

Lois opens her eyes when they enter and Diane explains that their husbands' recent deaths may be related to Gary's death. Lois gives them the information they've been waiting to hear. Before he died, Gary had confided in his sister about Prima. She tells them Prima is a dangerous weather control experiment, which Gary had been intent on exposing. He had planned to visit Senator Van Loven in Washington to tell her about Prima. Just then a doctor walks in and chases Lois's visitors away. After Kelly and Diane leave, the "doctor" smothers Lois with a pillow.

Chapters 30 - 39 Analysis

Diane and Kelly have finally realized they no longer have the luxury of denial. Both women accept the danger of their situation and begin to react competently to the events of the story. KIG is a formidable adversary. Tanner Kingsley's contacts, intelligence and access to cutting edge technological resources give him every advantage in his quest to silence the women. He takes away their funds and their friends and leaves them with nothing but their wits and the cash they have on hand to save themselves with. The women are quickly forced to wise up by these actions and now spend their cash more judiciously. They rise to the challenge of their situation and decide to proactively find their husbands' killer instead of continuing to merely react to events as they have thus far. They call upon every ounce of ingenuity and instincts they possess and take advantage of the fact that Tanner's henchmen all underestimate them.

For their part, the women do not underestimate Tanner Kingsley. They are aware of his reputation for brilliance and know that KIG is comprised of nothing but brilliant men and women. Diane and Kelly cannot be sure how many KIG employees are in on Kingsley's evil plan and they walk into several traps laid by KIG employees they formerly trusted before they realize that Tanner's influence is so strong that they can afford to trust no one but themselves.

Kelly is betrayed the most when she realizes that her husband's best friend and best man at their wedding was involved in Mark's murder and will cheerfully kill her as well if given the opportunity. The women know that Tanner is capable of out-thinking them as they frantically follow the trail of leads. They anticipate being ambushed at every turn

and Tanner does not disappoint them. He remains always one step ahead of the protagonists. However, this section ends with a triumphant turning point for the women. In Lois Reynolds they have discovered the "Rosetta Stone," which enables them to piece together the puzzle at last.

Chapters 40-46 and Afterword

Chapters 40-46 and Afterword Summary

Chapter 40: Now that Kelly and Diane know who their husbands intended to visit in Washington, they decide to visit Senator Van Luven themselves. They call her office from a pay phone repeatedly, until the receptionist finally agrees to give the senator a message. They wait for two hours at the pay phone before it rings. Senator Van Luven is on the line, sounding irritated.

Diane quickly identifies herself and explains that her husband and Mark Harris were murdered to prevent them from seeing the senator. The senator recalls seeing their names in her appointment book. Someone had called her office and cancelled the men's visit; afterward she learned they had both died. Diane has Senator Van Luven's attention now. Van Luven instructs them to take the next red-eye to New York and promises to have her driver, Kunio, waiting to pick them up in a Lincoln Town Car. On their way to the airport in a rental car, Kelly instructs Diane to pull over in front of a beauty shop. Diane reacts in stunned surprise when Kelly goes inside the beauty parlor to "get a new hairdo." (pg. 301) She returns twenty minutes later wearing a black wig piled high in an elegant upsweep.

Chapter 41: By the time Kelly and Diane's car reaches the airport, they have become aware of a white Lexus containing half a dozen men following their vehicle. Diane pulls up to a private airport entrance and the guard quickly admits them. When the white Lexus attempts to follow, it is denied entrance. The airport manager escorts Kelly and Diane to their waiting airplane, informing them of Lois Reynolds's death. He wishes them luck as they board the plane.

The ladies disembark at La Guardia and are met, as promised, by the senator's driver, Kunio. At the senator's palatial home, a butler shows Kelly and Diane into the drawing room where Van Luven is waiting to greet them. Tanner Kingsley steps out from the shadows and tells the women their luck has run out. Harry Flint draws his pistol on Kingsley's orders and shoots the women. Tanner watches their bodies fall to the floor, then hugs Senator Van Luven. "It's finally over, Princess," he tells her. (pg. 306)

Chapter 42: Tanner tells Flint to weigh down the women's bodies and drop them in the Atlantic. Alone with Pauline Van Luven, Tanner kisses her and they discuss their upcoming wedding plans. Pauline tells Tanner she resigned from the Senate the day before. They are both thrilled that after all these years they can finally be seen together publicly. Tanner takes Pauline back to KIG headquarters to show her the top-secret project hidden in the padlocked redbrick building in the KIG compound.

Tanner introduces her to Prima, the command center of a weather control satellite, which can create any type of weather anywhere in the globe. He smiles to think how much the U.S. army would love to have a machine like this. Tanner is amused at the

irony that Andrew created Prima and sighs as he remembers his brother's former genius. He tells Princess that two scientists from a competing firm had come close to solving the weather control puzzle too, but Tanner had them killed before either Madeleine Smith, in Zurich, or Akira Iso, in Tokyo, could come up with a solution.

Tanner had his own employees, Reynolds, Harris and Verbrugge, working on different aspects of the project; he shared his goal of weather control with none of them. Since they were all in different countries doing their research, Tanner thinks they will never discover Prima's purpose. Somehow they find each other and when they come to see him as a group, Tanner puts them off the scent by telling them Prima is a government sponsored project. He sets a trap for them by putting in a call to Van Luven's office and letting them overhear him deny all knowledge of Prima. They respond by calling the senator's office to request a meeting. That's when Tanner knows he must kill them.

Tanner presses a button and shows Princess a live hidden camera feed from inside the presidential palace in Portugal. The President and his family are breakfasting together in their dining room. The President's private line rings on the screen in front of them. When he answers, Tanner's voice translation software instantly translates their words into the other's language. Tanner is showing Princess a recording of a call he made three days ago.

On the screen, Tanner explains to the President that he must pay him two billion dollars in gold or Tanner will wipe Portugal off the map. Tanner shows Princess his two subsequent conversations with the President, filmed after Tanner used Prima to flood all of Portugal's crop lands. Tanner turns off the tape after Princess hears the President of Portugal agree to Tanner's demands. With the press of a button, Tanner shows her tornadoes in Brazil and subzero temperatures in summertime Florida. Tanner explains his plan to pick up the gold from the various countries he holds hostage to Prima. Pauline is thrilled with her soon-to-be billionaire boyfriend.

Andrew enters and interrupts them. His face grows puzzled; he recognizes Princess. His face lights up as he remembers their wedding plans. Princess explains that she married a rich man and used his influence to send Tanner important clients for KIG. Tanner tells Andrew that his not so secret affair with Sebastiana had been a cover to allow him to meet Princess every month. Tanner asks his brother if he remembers Prima. He does. Tanner ignores his brother as he explains to Princess that there is a hidden Prima II in the French Polynesian islands. He exults that the world is now theirs.

Chapter 43: Kelly Harris opens her eyes. She and Diane are both cuffed and chained to a wall in a concrete basement. Diane comes to and tells Kelly they're at the end of the road. Harry Flint enters and says, "Not quite; he still has plans for them." He tells them that he shot them with Xylocaine bullets instead of killing them because he intended to have a little fun with them first.

Flint takes off his clothes and moves towards Diane. Kelly calls him over, offering herself first. Flint smirks and climbs on top of Kelly. She reaches into her upswept hairdo and pulls out a rat-tailed comb with a five inch steel tip and buries it deep in Harry Flint's

neck. He shudders and goes still; she pushes his dead body off of her and grabs his keys. She frees herself and Diane and the women steal into the garage and take the senator's Toyota, which fortunately has the keys inside.

Chapter 44: Kelly drives them to White Plains, New York. She knows a woman named Grace Seidel who runs a boardinghouse for domestic violence victims. Kelly had once spirited her mother to Grace's to get her away from her abusive stepfather, but Kelly's mom had gone back to her husband. Nevertheless, Grace is glad to see Kelly. She gives the two ladies a room.

Meanwhile, back at KIG, Andrew dozes and dreams of the day his life changed forever. When he wakes up he remembers that his brother had switched his gas mask moments before he entered the room full of toxic gas. He recalls lying in his hospital bed, watching as a KIG employee hands Tanner a gas mask. The employee explains that the mask looks to have been deliberately cut. Tanner accepts the mask and says he'll look into it immediately. Andrew recalls that Tanner had thrown the mask away as soon as the employee had left the room.

Andrew wakes up and rejoins Tanner and Pauline in Tanner's office. Vince Carballo rushes in with the news that Harry Flint is dead and the women have escaped. Tanner orders a dozen men to White Plains, where the police have located the senator's car. In no time, KIG thugs comb White Plains hotels, looking for the women. They promise a five million dollar reward for information leading to the capture of Diane and Kelly. When Vince Carballo arrives at Grace Seidel's boarding house, her face lights up with pleasure at the sight of Kelly's picture. Vince offers her the reward money, but Grace explains she only knows Kelly from magazine pictures. She sends him off in the wrong direction.

At KIG, faxes are pouring in from the media. Every news station in town has accepted Tanner's invitation to the grand unveiling of Prima. Tanner knows Kelly and Diane must be behind this and curses them for going public with Prima. They have ruined everything. Except, he reminds Princess, they still have Prima II on the island of Tamoia. They decide to take off in Tanner's private jet and head straight for the island. Tanner's final instruction to his brother is to tell Andrew to wait until exactly six o'clock and then press the red button on the Prima console three times. He and Princess turn their backs on Andrew and leave. Tanner laughs and explains to Princess that Prima is set to self-destruct at six p.m. and he only wanted to make sure Andrew would be there for the explosion.

Chapter 45: On Tanner's private jet, he and Princess share a romantic moment. They plan their secret life of high tech crime until Princess notices jags of lightning outside the windows and becomes nervous. Back at KIG, Andrew has remembered Prima quite well after all. He watches his brother's plane on a monitor and stabs his finger at the Prima console, sending hurricane winds towards the tiny private jet.

On board, Tanner realizes only Prima could cause this bizarre weather. In the moment of his death, just before the airplane explodes into tiny fragments, Tanner is exultant



with ecstasy at his god-like creation, which controls the weather. Princess, however, merely screams. Moments later the redbrick building on the KIG compound explodes with Andrew inside.

Chapter 46: Grace Seidel knocks on Kelly and Diane's door to advise them that breakfast is ready. In the morning paper as well as on the television they learn about Tanner Kingsley's death and former senator Pauline Van Luven's. The women hug Grace goodbye and treat themselves to the presidential suite at the Waldorf-Astoria Towers. The dinner table in their suite is set for four. Kelly and Diane toast their husbands' empty chairs and thank them for their help in the investigation.

Kelly, only half-joking, suggests to Diane that they start up a private investigation firm together. After dinner, Diane mentions that, "when you cut off a snake's head, the rest of the snake dies." (pg. 332) Kelly decides to test that theory by calling Nicole Paradis, the receptionist at her apartment building in France. Nicole is overjoyed to hear from Kelly. Nicole says when news of Tanner's death reached Paris, the two KIG thugs who had been impersonating hotel personnel simply packed up their bags and left. Philippe and his family are on their way back to the hotel and he's bringing Kelly's dog Angel. Kelly asks Nicole to put Angel on a flight to New York and hangs up the phone.

Diane asks Kelly how they should spend the five million dollar reward money KIG put up for solving the Reynolds-Harris-Stevens-Verbrugge quadruple homicide. They discuss their future plans and both women decide that they are ready to pick up the pieces of their lives. Diane will continue to paint and Kelly will model again. Feeling secure for the first time in a long time, Kelly's fear of the dark subsides again and she tells Diane to turn out the lights as they go to sleep.

Afterword: The author shares with the reader some disturbing facts he discovered while researching the novel. He states that both the United States and Russia have the ability to control the weather and that other countries are seeking this ability as well. He warns that weather control can be a blessing or it can be used as a weapon. He mentions Tesla's energy transmission work in the 1800's and several U.S. patents issued to corporations in the late 1900's for weather modification.

In 1977, the U.S. and Russia signed a joint treaty against the use of weather control for hostile purposes, yet the experimentation continues. In 1992, a Russian company was reported to be selling weather control equipment. The author notes the unusual weather patterns, which began to be noticed in the late 1980's. He further cites that the weather catastrophes that Tanner clipped from newspapers and had delivered to the senator are all based on real weather events. He concludes by stating that weather is the most powerful force known to man and warns that the ability to control weather could be used for mass destruction.

Chapters 40-46 and Afterword Analysis

In this section, the women walk into the ultimate trap as they attempt to carry out the very same plan, which got their husbands killed. No one had suspected that Tanner's conspiracy extended to the U.S. government, in the person of Senator Pauline Van Luven. The conspiracy plot, which only takes a matter of days to unfold, has actually been in the works for seven long years. This revelation clarifies the importance of Andrew's character.

As a brain damaged man with the intellectual capacity of a small child, both the reader and Andrew's brother Tanner are inclined to dismiss his character as unimportant. However, all along the author has been foreshadowing Andrew's importance through the use of his garbled-memory flashbacks. Andrew's memory may not have been reliable, but the fact that his thoughts have remained planted firmly seven years in the past turns out to be important. For it was seven years ago that Tanner and Princess conceived of their far-reaching conspiracy and Andrew's "accident" was merely step one in their plans.

Tanner Kingsley is revealed as a James Bond-style villain in the climactic scene that leads to his death. Tanner's megalomania is so strong that he does not even care about the danger to himself or to his beloved Princess when Andrew turns Prima against them. All Tanner can think about is his god-like success in creating a machine which controls the weather. His drive for power has clouded his judgment severely and this poor judgment eventually leads to his downfall.

Had Tanner indeed cared for his brother Andrew kindly as the world believed, Andrew would have never have been motivated to seek revenge. Tanner spoke freely of his plans in front of Andrew, believing his brother to be too stupid to understand them. However Tanner forgets that only Andrew's mind is damaged, not his emotions. Even a child-like individual reacts negatively to being abused by a family member and it is this abuse that gives Andrew the motive to put a stop to his brother's evil plans.

Characters

Diane Stevens

Diane Stevens is a sensitive, artistic soul who has achieved both personal and professional happiness. An acclaimed artist on the New York scene, her still-young marriage to Richard Stevens provides her with a thoughtful, caring soul mate and, she expects, a long and happy future together. Trouble first arrives in her life when she accidentally witnesses a brutal mafia murder. With her husband's encouragement, Diane bravely does the right thing and testifies against the mafia. Thus she blames herself when she receives the news of Richard's death, thinking that the mafia killed him in retribution for her testimony.

A highly spiritual individual, Diane begs her departed husband's spirit for forgiveness and then immerses herself in the grieving process. Wanting nothing more than to fade away from society and lick her emotional wounds, Diane is brought jarringly back into reality by the realization that something far more sinister than the mafia caused Richard's death.

During the course of the novel, Diane transforms from a trembling, frightened victim to a courageous, intrepid investigator. With Richard watching over her and providing, she believes, angelic help from above, Diane finds the courage to tackle his killers and expose the dangerous Prima project. She has absolutely no experience with criminal investigation and is thus forced to rely on her wits and abundant creativity to save her skin time and again. Eventually her spiritual beliefs and warm heart have a positive effect on her new friend, Kelly. Diane's indomitable optimism even in the face of disaster provides the impetus for her and Kelly to persevere and ultimately triumph, against the evil Tanner Kingsley.

Kelly Harris

Kelly's character has traveled far from her childhood roots in a seedy boardinghouse run by her impoverished mother. Kelly's exotic good looks and strong determination help her escape the dead-end life of poverty and victimization. She goes far, as far as the glamorous catwalks of the Paris fashion scene. No matter how far Kelly travels, however, she carries with her the damaged little girl she once was. Raped by one of her "uncles" at the tender age of eight, Kelly disavows sex in her adult life. Not until she meets and marries her husband, Mark, does Kelly allow herself to get physically or emotionally close to anyone. Mark may have taught Kelly to lower her emotional guard, but she has only ever done so for him. She will not drop her emotional walls for anyone else and when Mark dies, Kelly reverts to her former cold as ice persona.

Thus when Kelly is thrown into an adventure with her fellow widow, Diane Stevens, she isolates herself at first, shutting Diane out of her thoughts and feelings. Her refusal to



connect with Diane and her constant insistence that they split up hinders their investigation. Only when Kelly finally allows herself to open up to Diane do they finally bond and become friends. Together, the two women muster the strength and courage to face down their enemies and solve the murder mystery. By the end of the novel, Kelly has regained the emotional security she first found with Mark. The fact that she ultimately overcomes her morbid fear of the dark, a carryover from her traumatic childhood, symbolizes to the reader that Kelly has left behind her troubled past for good.

Tanner Kingsley

As an adult male, Tanner's lack of emotional maturity prevents him from letting go of his childish rivalry with his brother, Andrew. Because Andrew is five years older, Tanner constantly found himself in Andrew's shadow back in his school days. It seemed that no matter what pinnacle of success Tanner reached, his brother has always gotten there first. Tanner skillfully hides his resentment for many years.

When Andrew invites Tanner to join with him in forming the Kingsley Group Corporation, Andrew has no idea how much enmity Tanner holds towards him. Andrew's philosophical stance prevents Tanner from engaging the high-priced clients he seeks for their think tank, so Tanner decides to remove his brother from the picture. This decision is reflective of Tanner's pathology. Certainly there were other ways Tanner could have disengaged from his brother's shadow. With Tanner's summa cum laude degree and brilliant mind, he could have formed his own corporation to pursue the money he prizes so highly. However in Tanner's twisted mind, his brother is the cause of all his problems. This hateful fixation with Andrew will ultimately be Tanner's downfall.

Tanner sews the seeds of his own destruction by exposing his brother to a lethal chemical vapor and then abusing the now brain damaged Andrew. It is not enough for Tanner to destroy Andrew's mind and future; Tanner insists on keeping Andrew close by in order to flaunt his power over his disabled brother. This vindictive abusiveness is so blatant that eventually even Andrew can figure out that his brother has become a very bad man. In this Cain versus Abel story, Tanner actually laughs as he sets his brother up to be killed in a bomb blast. However, Tanner has become so evil that his once-loving brother feels the need to blast Tanner's plane out of the sky, taking his brother out with him in a blaze of glory.

Andrew Kingsley

Andrew Kingsley is physically and intellectually cast in the same mold as his younger brother, Tanner. However similar their abilities, Andrew's character is superior to Tanner's in every way. Where Tanner is an opportunist, Andrew is a philanthropist. While Tanner is concerned with making money at any cost, Andrew cares only for sharing the wealth with those less fortunate. Unfortunately for Andrew, his philanthropic nature poses a major obstacle to his younger brother's greedy desires. In order for Tanner to amass the kind of wealth and power he craves, he must first get Andrew out of his way.



Tanner takes advantage of Andrew's soft-heart to convince Andrew to engage in a pro bono experiment to benefit the national defense. Andrew agrees to the plan and unwittingly steps into the trap Tanner has set for him.

Later, when Andrew's once-brilliant mind has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, Tanner believes his control over Andrew to be complete and treats him in a cruel and abusive manner. Tanner underestimates his brother, however. With his impaired mind, it takes Andrew seven years to figure out that Tanner intentionally exposed Andrew to toxic gas. When Andrew finally does figure it out, he surprises the reader with his thirst for revenge. In the end, it seems, Andrew is more like Tanner than anyone realized. For Andrew chooses to destroy his own brother in a violent fit of revenge.

Richard Stevens

Richard was the beloved husband of Diane Stevens. His death occurs during the Prologue, thus the reader only gets to know Richard through the memories of his widow. His wife remembers the brilliant scientist as a romantic man capable of sweeping Diane off her feet with his frequent romantic surprises. Richard is also a man of conscience, which is what spurs his desire to expose the unconscionable Prima project. Unfortunately, Richard's good intentions lead to his death and plunge his wife into battle with the same men who killed him.

Mark Harris

Mark Harris, like Richard Stevens, dies at the very outset of the novel. His character is revealed only through flashbacks of his wife's memories. Kelly remembers Mark as a loveable goofball with a terrible fashion sense, which only endeared him to his supermodel wife. Mark was charming and caring and made Kelly feel safe for the first time in her life. When he falls from the top of the Eiffel Tower, Kelly knows the police are wrong to call it a suicide. Mark had cared too much about life and Kelly to ever kill himself. She sets out to find his killers. This is the final act, which Kelly can perform for her beloved husband and Mark's memory inspires her to persevere in her quest.

Senator Pauline Van Luven

Pauline's character is as fascinating to the reader as she is to her lover, Tanner Kingsley. An intelligent, manipulative ice princess, Pauline's confrontational manner provokes Tanner initially, just as she plans. She plays her cards right, knowing just when to warm up to Tanner and when to throw cold water on his plans to bed her. Her ability to keep him guessing intrigues him enough to want to see her again. Tanner is not known for having second dates with women and it is only Pauline's unusual style that hooks his interest. Pauline's confidence, intelligence and ability to manipulate people make up for her lack of glamorous good looks. Her character is an ideal co-conspirator for Tanner's ambitious scheme of global domination.



Greg Holliday

Greg Holliday is the most potent assassin in Tanner Kingsley's arsenal. Like all of Tanner's muscle men, Greg Holliday is one of the ex-felons who spend time in Andrew Kingsley's charitable halfway houses for released prisoners. Tanner finds this halfway house to be prime recruiting ground for his dirty work and of all the fine criminals he's hired from the house, Greg Holliday is the finest. He is an assassin without parallel. Not even the gruesome Harry Flint gets better results than Holliday.

Harry Flint

Harry Flint is chief security officer at KIG. He is also Tanner Kingsley's primary assassin. Tanner admires Flint because Flint enjoys his work so much. Flint's childhood hobby was torturing and killing animals. Killing has long since ceased to be a hobby and become Flint's full-time vocation. Flint personally killed Madeleine Smith and Akira Iso and is ordered by Tanner to kill Kelly and Diane. Tanner Kingsley has too much dirty work for Flint to handle alone, so the reader is never sure just how many murders Flint is responsible for, but one can be assured that he has killed at least a dozen people in his career and that number may be a gross understatement. Ironically, he is done in at the end by a supermodel and a female painter. Flint's death wins Kelly and Diane Tanner's grudging respect.

Vince Carballo

Vince Carballo is another ex-felon recruited by Tanner from the halfway house run by Andrew. He is neither as vicious as Flint nor as icy as Holliday, but he takes pride in his work and never hesitates to kill if there's profit involved.

Sonja Verbrugge

Sonja is Franz Verbrugge's wife. She is one of the four international murder victims killed in the Prologue, which ultimately spark the investigation into KIG.

Gary Reynolds

Gary Reynolds is another of the four international murder victims, which link KIG to a global conspiracy. Gary was able to convey secret information about Prima to his sister, Lois, prior to his death. This vital communication enables Kelly and Diane to solve the case once they finally track down Lois Reynolds.

Ben Roberts

Ben, in his capacity as a network television talk show host, has interviewed supermodel Kelly several times. They become friends and when Kelly is in trouble and needs media intervention, she summons Ben. He helps her out of friendship alone, for he does not even get an exclusive story for his trouble. His dedication to Kelly demonstrates the loyalty, which Kelly inspires in so many of her colleagues.

Grace Seidel

Grace runs a boardinghouse for domestic violence victims in White Plains, New York. She had occasion to meet the famous supermodel, Kelly, several years ago when she brought her abused mom to the boardinghouse for shelter. Grace gladly gives Kelly shelter again when she and Diane are on the run from KIG.

Carolyn Ter

Carolyn is one of Diane Stevens's closest friends. After Richard's death, Carolyn stands by Diane's side and helps her through the grief process.



Objects/Places

Cessna Citation II

The Cessna Citation is the small plane flown by Gary Reynolds, which crashes down over Denver, Colorado as a result of a freak hurricane.

The Black Citroën

This is the car Harry Flint drives while pursuing Diane and Kelly at the French-Spanish border. Flint could have chosen to rent any type of vehicle, but his choice of the Citroën highlights the glamorous, James Bond feel of this action novel.

Kelly's Engagement Ring

Kelly's ring is a seven-carat emerald ring set in platinum and surrounded by three-carat diamonds. The ring is worth a great deal financially and has an even higher emotional value for Kelly. She is forced to sell the ring when she and Diane are on the run. Her sacrifice gives them the funds they need to solve the case.

KIG Headquarters

KIG Headquarters is a high-tech compound that houses the offices, laboratories and technology needed to support KIG's agenda. Located in Manhattan it also houses the original Prima weather control device, hidden away in a heavily locked redbrick building.

Prima

Prima refers to the satellite control console for a revolutionary new weather control device. First discovered by Andrew, the technology falls into his brother's evil hands after Andrew's unfortunate "accident."

Prima II

Prima II is located in the French Polynesian islands and represents Tanner Kingsley's ace-in-the-hole. Even after Prima is leaked to the press and destroyed, Tanner plans to continue his evil money-making scheme from a luxuriously appointed hotel in the French Polynesian islands.

Rat-tailed Comb

Kelly mystifies her friend Diane by popping into a beauty store to get a new hairdo while the two women are fleeing for their lives. What Diane doesn't realize until later is that Kelly's new wig comes complete with a five inch, steel tipped, rat-tailed comb which Kelly intends to use as a weapon if need be. Thankfully she had the foresight to acquire this hidden weapon, because when the women are stripped of their possessions and chained, no one thinks to search Kelly's hair for a weapon. She is thus able to use the sharp instrument to kill Harry Flint, thus foiling his plans to rape and kill the women.

San Sebastián

San Sebastián is French border town where Kelly and Diane cross into the country from Spain. With Harry Flint hot on their trail, the women enlist a customs guard to help them elude their pursuer.

The Senate Select Committee on the Environment

This senate committee, headed by Senator Pauline Van Luven, represents potential riches for Tanner Kingsley and KIG. Tanner creates weather disturbances using his Prima weather control system and then offers to help the Senate Select Committee on the Environment by researching the supposed source of the weather disturbances-global warming. Tanner is so convincing that the government committee eventually awards him top-level funding to study this environmental problem.

Xylocaine bullets

These non-lethal bullets are used by Harry Flint to shoot the women. For the benefit of his employer, Tanner, Flint makes it look as if he has killed the women. In reality, Flint plans to rape the novel's two gorgeous protagonists, therefore uses the Xylocaine bullets instead of real ones. Flint wants the women to be lively during his sexual assault and only intends to use real bullets after he's had his way with them.

Themes

Conspiracy

A big-brother style conspiracy is at the heart of this action-suspense novel by noted author, Sidney Sheldon. Sheldon, like other conspiracy writers, plays on the natural fear all human beings have of the unknown. Conspiracies seem more frightening to many people than open hostility because it is difficult, if not impossible, to defend oneself against an unknown enemy. The most chilling parts of any conspiracy stories are the moments in which the conspiracy can actually be seen. These fleeting glimpses of a powerful enemy can be more frightening, psychologically, than confronting a powerful enemy face to face.

For Kelly this moment first arrives in her hotel room. When an unseen man lies to her to gain entrance into her suite, she is terrified. Although she does not yet know the scope of the plot against her, she has caught her first glimpse. When Kelly and Diane both realize their assets have been completely wiped out and that Diane is officially listed as being deceased, their terror increases. Their unseen enemy has revealed how powerful he is with this devastating strike.

Now that they know what a vast conspiracy they're up against, the women rightfully realize that bringing the enemy out into the light is their only hope for victory. Conspiracies thrive in the darkness. Tanner Kingsley decides to kill the women precisely to keep his secret project a secret. Every conspiracy-related death in *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* is motivated by the need to keep the conspiracy in the dark. The title itself highlights the nature of conspiracy with its double entendre. However a conspiracy's strength is also its biggest weakness. All Kelly and Diane have to do in the end is go public with the story of Prima. Without the cover of secrecy, Tanner is forced to destroy his weather control machine and steal away into the night, defeated.

Global Destruction

Global destruction has been a favorite theme of authors even before humanity actually acquired the technology to destroy itself. Once the nuclear age became a reality in the twentieth-century, readers all over the world developed an insatiable appetite for stories about global destruction. Thoughtful writers in all parts of the globe have written global disaster scenarios ranging from devastating nuclear strikes to weapons-grade virus pandemics. It is not only man who is capable of destroying the globe. Nature is often the inspiration for stories of mass destruction as well. The devastation of a hurricane, flood, or endless drought can be as powerfully destructive as any man-made device. Sidney Sheldon combines the destructive forces of both man and nature in his taut thriller, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*

The amazing doomsday machine called Prima is a man-made device, which can create any kind of weather condition imaginable. In a powerful Afterword to his novel, Sheldon shares with the reader some disturbing research he turned up while writing *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* According to Sheldon's research, several countries and private corporations around the globe have actually engaged in weather control research since the late 1960's. Sheldon's novel about global destruction is meant to be a cautionary tale about the responsibility, which accompanies the creation of such man-made doomsday machines. If a machine like Prima actually existed, it could solve many environmental problems and enrich the entire world. The author reminds the reader, however, that in the wrong hands such a machine could wreak unimaginable destruction on a planetary scale.

Overcoming Personal Trauma

Through the character of Kelly Harris, the author of *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* explores the human ability to transcend personal trauma. Kelly's character is sympathetically drawn and the author clearly celebrates with her when she overcomes her damaging childhood. Through flashback, Sidney Sheldon tells of Kelly's childhood, in which she was neglected by her overworked, underpaid mother. Kelly's mother has been kicked around by life and although she does her best, she finds herself incapable of being a good mother.

After being abandoned by Kelly's dad, her mother works for slave wages for five years and somehow saves up enough money to buy a boardinghouse. Here, she believes, her daughter Kelly will be protected. Yet Kelly is not safe in the rundown boardinghouse because her mother cannot afford to turn down even the seediest paying customer. The beautiful little girl watches a parade of "uncles" stream through the boardinghouse over the years. When she is eight, one of these "uncles" rapes her in her bed and scares the little girl into keeping the attack secret. On that day, Kelly vows never to let another man touch her. Kelly's ability to carry on a romantic, loving relationship is hopelessly crippled from that day on.

Even when Kelly meets Mark Harris, the love of her life, she is unwilling and emotionally unable to carry on a physical relationship with him. Yet despite this deep emotional scar, Kelly has already triumphed over her life of poverty and hardship. Despite a complete lack of parental support, Kelly finds within herself the strength and courage to pursue her dreams.

To her own amazement, Kelly succeeds as a top model and earns a very lucrative living, which she lovingly shares with her mother. Thankfully for Kelly, Mark Harris's love for her is so deep that he wants to marry her in spite of her physical coldness towards him. Mark's understanding and support enable Kelly to overcome the ghosts of her past. On their wedding night, she sees the love in Mark's eyes and takes strength from that love. She mentally takes back her power from the man who raped her. Kelly decides to never let that man come between her and Mark again.

This triumph over her childhood trauma is nearly destroyed by Mark's death, however. Once he is gone, Kelly reverts to her childhood fear of the dark and retreats from the company of her fellow human beings. Mark's death makes Kelly feel more vulnerable than she has ever felt before. In a remarkable, final triumph, Kelly summons within herself the strength to defeat her childhood demons once and for all. This time she does it without Mark. Kelly realizes that she, herself, is the power in her life. Her ability to transcend her traumatic past is an inspiring example of mankind's ability to overcome personal trauma and move forward to a better life.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* takes the form of third person narration. This third person narrative is also omniscient, but only to a certain degree. In order to maintain the suspense, author Sidney Sheldon must withhold certain facts from his otherwise omniscient narration. However, the narrator is easily able to see inside the minds of every character, from major to minor and reveals as much of their thoughts as appropriate. In this way the reader is able to learn about Diane Stevens's and Kelly Harris's relationships to their husbands. The men die at the very outset of the novel, thus it is only through the recollections of the female protagonists that the reader is able to get a sense of the dead men's characters.

Interestingly, this semi-omniscient narrative focuses primarily on the visual action of the story. As a highly successful screenwriter in addition to being a novelist, Sidney Sheldon approaches this novel as if it were a screenplay. In a movie, one cannot truly know what the characters are thinking. The characters in a film are emotionally limited; since the viewer can't see their thoughts, screenwriters must do their best to communicate their characters' emotions through the characters' reactions to the visual action. Sidney Sheldon adheres to this tradition in his novel.

Much of the characters' emotional content is revealed through their reaction to events. Diane's denial about her husband's death, for example, is conveyed not through her thoughts, but through the things she says and does when speaking to the funeral director or Detective Greenburg. Likewise, Kelly's back-up plan is not communicated to the reader until the moment arrives in which she surprises her attacker by pulling a weapon out of her piled-up wig. The reader discovers the women's courage and foresight primarily through their actions, just as one would do if watching a movie. Sheldon's focus on visual action versus narrative is a hallmark of his many years experience writing for the screen.

Setting

Are You Afraid of the Dark? is a James Bond-style thriller which relies heavily on the use of glamorous settings to add intrigue and interest to the plot. Kelly Harris is a fashion supermodel and Diane Stevens is a cultured, refined artist. As both protagonists and the major antagonist are very rich people, the novel's various settings all cater to the monied jet set. Kelly is seen on the catwalks in Paris, a highly glamorous backdrop, while Diane is at home in tiny art galleries amongst the cultural elite of New York. International as well as cosmopolitan, the four primary murder scenes are set in Berlin, Germany; Paris, France; Manhattan, New York; and Denver, Colorado. The murder in Denver occurs in a private plane owned by the murder victim, Gary Reynolds and the climactic death scene with Tanner Kingsley takes place on a KIG private jet. The use of

private aircraft along with flashy cars like Harry Flint's black Citroën further highlights the glamorous settings in the novel.

Time is an important element to the novel's setting as well. The rapid pacing is made possible by the simultaneous actions taking place in the days immediately following the deaths of Mark Stevens and Richard Harris. While the majority of events in the novel take place over this brief span of days following the men's deaths, the author uses flashbacks to show the reader that the current events are a result of a seven-year old plan. Andrew's "accident" and Princess's marriage both date back seven years and are ultimately revealed to be the foundations upon which Tanner's evil schemes are hatched.

Language and Meaning

Sidney Sheldon's expertise as a television and film screenwriter comes across in the style of language he uses to write his novel, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* Screenplays are traditionally written in a minimalist style, which favors action verbs over descriptive passages. Sheldon approaches this novel in that same style. This minimalist style makes the action leap off the page and the story never gets bogged down with extraneous description. The language is deceptively simplistic because it reads at a young adult level, but the plot and emotional content are much more mature. The ability to simplify the language while still telling a complex story is far more difficult than it seems. Sidney Sheldon boils the plot elements down to a barebones narrative style, which provides clarity and ease of absorption for the reader.

Sidney Sheldon also uses language to convey the feel of the novel's glamorous settings. In Berlin, Germany, Diane muses at the unusual German street names such as Brandenburgische Strasse. In Paris, Kelly is comfortable with the French pronunciation of the restaurant Le Ciel de Paris, located in La Tour Montparnasse. In addition, the author includes some simple phrases in both German and French to enhance the realism of the women's trip overseas. These minor touches enhance the multicultural flavor of the novel without impacting its readability.

Structure

Are You Afraid of the Dark? is structured as a linear narrative, but makes heavy use of flashbacks to enhance character development. Nearly all of the dramatic events take place during a short span of days. Anyone in the reading audience who has been exposed to popular media will be aware that most homicide cases are solved within a few days of the murder, or they are not solved at all. Thus it is critical to the investigation that the plot be resolved within days of the four deaths described in the author's Prologue. Sidney Sheldon writes a fast-paced novel that jumps right into the action without the longer build-up typical of classic novel structure.

Sheldon's structure is perhaps more modern than classic novel structure which builds the tension gradually. In the traditional structure, characters are introduced to the reader

in their "normal worlds," before anything of note happens to them. The characters and backstory are developed at a leisurely pace and *then* an inciting incident occurs which pulls the protagonists out of their normal worlds and into the action-driven world of the story. Sidney Sheldon's inciting incident occurs in his Prologue, with the deaths of the main character's husbands. Thus by the time we meet Diane and Kelly, they have already been pulled out of their "normal worlds," they just do not know it yet.

By reordering his plot structure in this fast-paced manner, Sheldon creates tension from the outset. By the time he introduces Diane and Kelly, the reader is already aware their husbands are dead. The women, however, are innocent of this knowledge and so believe that their lives are completely ordinary. To compensate for beginning his story with the inciting incidents, Sheldon must develop his characters through the use of flashback, since he did not take the time to develop them linearly before plunging them into the fray. Sheldon's background as a scriptwriter for the screen may explain his modernized, fast-paced structural techniques. Film writers have greatly altered and modernized the traditional story structure in order to grab their viewing audiences' attention within the first ten minutes of a film. As audiences begin to expect exciting action scenes at the beginning of a story, the audience's patience for a more gradual plot development has begun to fade. The modern techniques used by Sidney Sheldon may, over time, become the accepted method of story development for novels as well as for films.

Quotes

"At the defendant's table sat Anthony Altieri, slouched in a wheelchair, looking like a pale, fat frog folding in on itself. Only his eyes were alive and every time he looked at Diane Stevens in the witness chair, she could literally feel the pulse of his hatred."
Chapter 1, pg. 9

"Diane was signing an autograph when a man came up behind her and said, 'I like your curves.'

Diane stiffened. Furious, she spun around and opened her mouth to make a sharp retort, when he went on:

'They have the delicacy of a Rossetti or a Manet.' He was studying one of her paintings on the wall." Chapter 2, pg. 20

"As Diane observed their departure, she remembered the first time she had watched Richard coach the boys. He had talked to them as though he were their age, in language they understood and they loved him for it. *That was the day I started to fall in love with him.*" Chapter 4, pg. 31

"Kelly's mother sighed. 'Kelly, don't make my mistakes. I had false dreams, too. They'll kill you. You're black and poor. You're not going anywhere.'" Chapter 8, pg. 55

"Much of modeling was attitude and to Kelly that meant acting, because she felt neither beautiful nor desirable." Chapter 10, pg. 67

"Even though she was not up to his standards, she appeared to have a nice body and seemed pleasant enough. And this was certainly an easy lay. Tanner thought of his dates in baseball terms. He would throw a woman one pitch. That was it. If she didn't hit a home run, she was out.

She was watching him. 'I'll pay.'

Tanner laughed. 'I can handle it-if you're not a world-class gourmand.'

'Try me.'

He looked into her eyes and said softly, 'I will.'" Chapter 14, pg. 101

"Tanner looked at her, trying to conceal his fury. *Who does she think she's dealing with-some high school kid?* She was too damned insolent for her own good. *Strike one. The bitch is out.*" Chapter 14, pg. 103

"'What am I nervous about? You tried to have the head of the Mafia sent to prison and he's free and he's going to clean up a few old debts and you want to know what *I'm* nervous about?'" Chapter 20, pg. 146



"Diane said, 'You can spend the night here. We'll be safe. There's a police car stationed outside.' She walked over to the window and pulled the curtain back. There was no car." Chapter 22, pg. 162

"Easier said than done. There are enough eggheads at KIG to make an omelet the size of Kansas."

'Well, we'll just have to out-think them.'" Chapter 25, pg. 178

"Nothing.' Kelly closed her eyes for an instant. This boardinghouse had nothing to do with the boardinghouse she had been brought up in, cleaning toilets and cooking for strangers and listening to the sounds of her drunken stepfather beating her mother. She managed a smile. 'It's okay.'" Chapter 30, pg. 222

"Shhh! Don't make a sound ... If you tell your mother about this, I'll come back and kill her. What that monster had done to her had taken over her whole life. He had killed something in her and made her afraid of the dark ... afraid of men ... afraid of love. She had given him power over her. *I'm not going to let him. Not anymore.*" Chapter 33, pg. 253

"With growing horror, Diane watched Holliday's body go into spasms and then stiffen and collapse. He was dead within seconds." Chapter 38, pg. 288

"Kelly was the first to open her eyes. She was lying on her back, naked, on the bare floor of a concrete basement, her hands handcuffed to eight-inch chains fastened to the wall, just above the floor." Chapter 43, pg. 315

"Good morning. My name is Vince Carballo.' He held up a picture of the two women. 'Have you seen these women? There's a five-million-dollar reward for them.'

Grace Seidel's face lit up. 'Kelly!'" Chapter 44, pg. 323

"As she lifted the glass to her lips, Kelly said, 'Wait a minute.'

Diane turned to her.

Kelly picked up her glass of champagne and looked at the empty chair next to her. 'Mark, I love you so much. Thank you.'

They drank their toasts." Chapter 46, pg. 332

Topics for Discussion

When Kelly seeks to escape her traumatic life, the local librarian suggests she pack up and move to Manhattan to become a model. Would you consider this appropriate advice? Why or why not?

Discuss the contrast between Kelly's public persona as a supermodel and her personal aversion to all things sexual caused by her being raped at age eight.

Did you feel Tanner Kingsley was a well-rounded bad guy character? Why or why not? Support your position using examples from the story.

Sidney Sheldon's characters are drawn with broad, black and white strokes. The good guys are good and the bad guys are really evil. Diane and Kelly, for example, both have fairy tale relationships with their husbands as well as fairy tale successes in their careers. Can you find three other examples from the story in which the characters are painted in black and white terms?

Why do you suppose Andrew's thoughts are stuck seven years in the past?

Do you agree with Kelly that she and Diane would make good private detectives? Why or why not?

In Chapter 46, Diane states that, "when you cut off a snake's head, the rest of the snake dies." (pg. 332) What does she mean by this?