

Asylum Study Guide

Asylum by Madeleine Roux

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Plot Summary

Asylum is a novel by writer Madeleine Roux. In this novel, Dan Crawford is spending his summer at the New Hampshire College Prep program. Always an outsider, Dan hopes that this summer will bring a change, allowing him to make friends with interests similar to his own. Dan's hopes seem to come true when he befriends Abby and Jordan. However, things begin to change after they begin exploring the basement rooms of the old asylum where their dorm rooms are housed. Asylum is a novel of the supernatural as well as a novel of friendship and overcoming difficult obstacles.

Dan Crawford arrives at New Hampshire College and immediately goes to Brookline, the former asylum that now houses the dorm rooms for the summer program Dan is there to attend. Dan finds an odd photo in a drawer in his room. When Dan tells his roommate, Felix, he learns that the former warden's office is on the first floor and there are more photos there.

Dan goes to the ice cream social for the program attendees and meets a girl, Abby. Abby introduces Dan to her friend, Jordan. The trio immediately hit it off. During a discussion of Brookline and its history, Dan tells his new friends what Felix told him about the warden's office. The trio decides to go explore the offices. Dan finds the pictures Felix mentioned and Abby finds another photo of a young girl with vacant eyes. Abby is so taken with the photo that she decides to take it.

The following day, Dan and his friends choose their first set of classes, deciding to take several classes together. They become inseparable during this first week of the program. Dan even gets up the nerve to take Abby out on a date. However, things begin to change. First, Jordan is annoyed with them for not informing him of their date. Jordan also becomes obsessed with a mathematical problem that is supposed to be unsolvable. At the same time, Abby has become oddly obsessed with the picture she took from the warden's office.

The trio make another trip into the basement, this time going much further than before. What they see is creepy and they come to the conclusion they should not go again. However, among the patient files, Abby finds an admittance card that suggests her aunt was once a patient at Brookline. Abby becomes obsessed with learning more about her.

As Abby and Jordan become distracted by their own problems, Dan finds himself drawn into the history of Brookline. Dan even goes to visit a local man who has published a website about the asylum. However, Dan's visit is not welcome particularly since his name is the same as the last warden.

A boy is killed at Brookline. Another is injured. Dan is then drawn into the criminal case when a man attacks his roommate and himself. The police suspect Dan of lying, but Dan feels that the asylum and its most famous inmate, a serial killer known as the Sculptor. Therefore, when Dan is invited into the basement by the killer, he goes. Dan is confronted by his roommate, Felix, who apparently has been taken over by the

consciousness of the Sculptor. A fight ensues, but with the help of his friends, Dan comes out victorious.

In the aftermath of Dan's ordeal, Abby finds her aunt. Jordan reveals that his parents, who do not accept his sexuality, might kick him out. Dan, whose adoptive parents are kind and open minded, invites Jordan to come live with him with the hopes that the trio will remain close for years to come.

Prologue and Chapters 1-8

Summary

Prologue

The prologue is a brief description of Brookline.

Chapter 1

Dan Crawford arrives by taxi at New Hampshire College. The driver takes him to Brookline, the building that houses the dorms for the New Hampshire College Prep program Dan is there to participate in. Dan is excited to participate in this program because he feels he might have a better chance of meeting like-minded kids as opposed to the kids at his high school who are there more to socialize than to learn.

Chapter 2

Dan finds his room in the dorm and discovers that his roommate has already arrived. As Dan unpacks on his side of the room, he finds a disturbing picture of a man whose eyes have been scratched out.

Chapter 3

Dan's roommate, Felix, comes into the room. Dan tells him about the picture and Felix tells him that there is an old office on the lower floor that has similar photos in it. The two then decide to go to the ice cream social to welcome the participants. Dan finds Felix's company to be annoying, so he is happy when Felix wanders off. Then Dan begins to feel faints and is rescued by a beautiful young girl who introduces herself as Abby Valdez. They talk for a few minutes and seem to hit it off. Abby then introduces Dan to Jordan, a young man she met on the bus to the college. The three of them begin to talk and the conversation turns to Brookline. Dan tells them about the pictures Felix told him about. Abby, an artist, is immediately interested and convinces the boys they should check it out.

Chapter 4

Dan leads his new friends to the room Felix told him about and is surprised to discover it is locked up. Jordan picks the lock. The trio make their way to the back of the reception room and enter what appears to be the warden's office. Inside they find a great many photos that are unsettling. When Abby finds a picture of a sad little girl, she decides to take it despite the fact that Dan and Jordan try to talk her out of it. Finally, Abby leaves the photo in its place on the wall.

Chapter 5

Dan returns to his dorm room, but he does not see his room but a dirty cell. Dan closes the door, checks the number, and opens the door again. When he does, his dorm room has returned. Later, Dan cannot sleep so he does some research about Brookline on the Internet. Dan finds a website that talks about the history of the asylum, but the only new information it offers Dan is the fact that Brookline once housed a notorious serial killer known as the Sculptor. This man, Dennis Heimline, is thought to have died the day the asylum closed, but his body was never found.

Chapter 6

Dan has breakfast with Abby the following morning. As they go to sign up for their courses, they decide the three of them should take a few classes together. Afterward they go to orientation.

Chapter 7

Dan has a nightmare and decides to go outside for some fresh air. Dan finds Abby sitting on the steps outside. Her family is in turmoil as her parents fight over her father's career ambitions. They talk for a while before returning to their rooms.

Chapter 8

Dan attends his first class, History of Psychology. Afterward, Dan approaches the professor to ask about a possible extra credit project she jokingly mentioned. Dan wants to do research into Brookline. The professor seems passionate about Brookline, mentioning that the locals want it torn down despite the history of the building, but reminds Dan that they are not earning credit for the courses.

Dan, Abby, and Jordan spend a great deal of time together of the following few days. Dan wants to ask Abby out, but lacks the courage, especially when Felix suggests Abby is out of his league. However, Dan finally finds the courage and asks Abby to have dinner with him.

Analysis

The prologue gives a brief description of Brookline and its history. This sets a dark tone for the novel, suggesting that those who were patients at Brookline never truly left. This adds a supernatural note to the novel, allowing the reader a hint to where the plot will be going.

The novel begins by introducing the main character, Dan Crawford. Dan is a troubled young man who has been in and out of foster care and has only recently found an adoptive family. Dan has come to the New Hampshire College Prep program because he is a studious young man who has had trouble making friends among his carefree classmates and hopes to find like-minded companions in the program. It seems that everything is going Dan's way when he quickly makes friends with Abby and Jordan.



Dan is immediately drawn to the history of Brookline, the building in which the program attendees are housed. Along with Abby and Jordan, Dan goes into the offices in the lower floors of the building. They find a great number of photos that are clearly of former patients and are deeply disturbing. The photos suggest that bad things happened to the patients at Brookline. The trio are disturbed by what they see, but they quickly put it behind them.

Discussion Question 1

What is Brookline? Where is it? Why does Dan Crawford come to stay in Brookline?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Dan Crawford? Why has he come to New Hampshire? What does he hope to get out of this situation?

Discussion Question 3

What does Abby find in the warden's office at Brookline? How does she respond to it? Why does Dan not want her to take what she found? Does she?

Vocabulary

Disappeared, gathered, monitors, source, judgment, margin, notebooks, anxious, history, inseparable, basically, dramatic, sanatorium, particularly, infomercials, loony, promptly, syllabi, familiar, sleepless, mandatory, individual, unevenly, companionable, silence, definitely, automatically.

Chapter 9-17

Summary

Chapter 9

Dan is very nervous about his date with Abby, especially since he is not really sure it is a date. This nervousness turns to annoyance when the counter guy at the diner flirts with Abby. In a lull in the conversation, Dan tells Abby about a mystery email he had in his sent folder that disappeared. Abby finds it amusing and teases him.

Chapter 10

Dan and Abby return to Brookline where they find Jordan waiting in the hall outside Abby's room. Jordan is mad because Abby is late for their standing study date. After some conversation, Jordan forgives them. They discuss Dan's mystery email and Jordan suggests it might have been a data ghost, something he saw on Dr. Who.

Chapter 11

The trio decide to go into the basement again. Jordan once again picks the lock and they reenter the warden's office. Dan discovers a hidden doorway behind a file cabinet. Through the doorway they find a file store room and stairs into a deeper level. Abby and Dan descend the stairs while Jordan remains in the file room. Dan and Abby find multiple patient rooms, another file room, and another office. Dan is fascinated by the pristine condition of the office. Jordan calls to Dan and Abby. They go back to the first file room and discover the cabinets are filled with admittance cards for the patients.

Chapter 12

Dan, Abby, and Jordan are caught in the file room by hall monitor Joe. Dan quickly snatches the admittance card for Dennis Heimline before Joe escorts them out.

Chapter 13

Dan looks at the admittance card for Dennis Heimline once he got to his room and is surprised to see it indicates that Heimline was recovered at some point. Dan then looks inside an envelope he took from the pristine office and reads a note that appears to be a doctor's ruminations on insanity and its possible cure. When Dan finally falls asleep he has a nightmare.

Chapter 14

Dan meets Abby and Jordan in the dining hall, but accidentally angers Abby for unknown reasons. Dan goes to class alone and then returns to his room where he finds an envelope waiting for him containing a disturbing note.



Chapter 15

Dan asks Felix about the note, but Felix appears clueless. Dan decides to skip his next class and go to visit the man who wrote the website about Brookline. When Dan arrives, the man, Sal Weathers, welcomes him inside and introduces him to his wife. However, when Dan tells the couple his name, Sal kicks him out of the house. Dan returns to campus and goes to the dining hall. When Jordan and Abby join him, Abby tells the boys that she found an admittance card in the basement for her aunt, Lucy Valdez.

Chapter 16

Abby explains to Jordan and Dan that her aunt was a difficult child. For this reason, Abby's grandparents sent her away, but no one knew for sure where. Abby once found letters from her grandfather to her father that suggested he visited New Hampshire often in those years. For this reason, Abby thought there was a possibility Lucy had been sent to Brookline, so when they found the admittance cards, she looked for her aunt's name and found it. For this reason, Abby wants to go into the basement again, but both Jordan and Dan refuse to go with her.

Chapter 17

The following day the participants in the program are required to pick new classes. Dan is saddened that he, Abby, and Jordan do not pick any classes together. Later, Jordan sits at dinner working a mathematical problem that is supposed to be unsolvable that he has decided to solve. When Abby arrives, Jordan admits that he has been having nightmares since going into the warden's office, explaining why he does not want to go in there again. At the same time, Dan discovers that Abby has been drawing pictures of the little girl whose photo she saw in the warden's office.

Analysis

During the first few days of the program, it seemed that Dan was finally making friends and going to have a good time. However, after visiting the warden's office of the old asylum twice, Dan becomes obsessed with the history of the building as well as the patients who once lived there, especially the serial killer, Dennis Heimline. At the same time, it becomes clear that the asylum is beginning to affect Dan's friends.

Abby finds what she believes is evidence that her long missing aunt once was a patient at Brookline. This seems to be connected to a photo she saw in the warden's office, a picture with which Abby has become obsessed. Jordan dismisses Abby's belief. It is a difficult situation that puts a wedge between the friends. This wedge grows as time passes, and it becomes a wall that is growing between all three friends. Dan becomes obsessed with the history of Brookline, and Jordan becomes obsessed with a mathematical problem that cannot be solved.

Discussion Question 1

What is unusual about an email Dan finds in his sent folder? Why does this email upset him? What do his friends think of it?

Discussion Question 2

What problems does Jordan have with his family? How do these problems color his behavior? How do these problems affect Jordan's relationship with Dan and Abby?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Lucy? Why does Abby think she might be related to her? What evidence does she have?

Vocabulary

Answers, insanity, serial killer, beauty, mathematic, sketchbook, photograph, inspired, attention, expectant, proof, solution, unsolvable, remember, troubled, mathematician, acknowledged, direction, drama, hydra, conversation, trio, horrified, ridiculous, composing, spoonful, strangers, departure.

Chapters 18-25

Summary

Chapter 18

Dan goes to check his mail and finds an odd letter marked with only his room number.

Chapter 19

Inside the odd letter is a quote about insanity by Ray Bradbury. Dan decides he has to go back into the basement to get answers.

Chapter 20

Dan passes Joe as he heads down to the basement. He waits a few minutes to make sure Joe will not catch him. In the basement, Dan finds a music box with an engraving that makes him think it belongs to Lucy, Abby's aunt.

Chapter 21

Dan returns to the pristine office and finds a set of stairs that go lower under the building. At the bottom of the stairs, Dan discovers an operation theater. Dan passes out and has a vision of a man beginning an operation in the operation theater. Abby finds him.

Chapter 22

Abby rouses Dan.

Chapter 23

Abby and Dan come out of the basement to find chaos in the lobby. Joe has been found dead by Felix. The police are there and they question everyone, forcing Abby and Dan to come up with a lie to cover the fact they were in the basement.

Chapter 24

In his room, Dan finds some papers in his pocket. Dan reads them and realizes they are notes written by the warden suggesting he was experimenting on the patients. Dan is shocked to see the warden's signature as they have the same name.

Chapter 25

Dan calls his parents the next day to find out if he could be related to the former warden of Brookline, but they are less than helpful.

Analysis

Many odd things have happened to Dan, including the odd email in his sent folder, the note about himself and his friends, and now one with a quote about insanity from Ray Bradbury. All of these things seem connected to Brookline, so Dan continues his investigation into the asylum by going into the basement again. Dan has a vision of sorts that seems to imply a connection between him and the warden. Later, Dan learns that his name is the same as the warden's, so this seems to suggest that there is an odd connection between the two.

A murder has taken place in Brookline. The victim is the hall monitor who caught Dan and his friends in the basement in a previous section of the novel. There is no question that the young man was killed, that it was not an accident. This shakes many of the students, as well as the administrators, resulting in some of the students leaving. Dan, however, is more determined than ever to stay and figure out what is happening at Brookline. This causes the reader to wonder if, perhaps, Dan's life might be in danger as well.

Discussion Question 1

Who sent Dan a letter with a Ray Bradbury quote in it? Why would someone do this? What is the significance of the quote?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Dan return to the basement? What happens while he is in there? Who comes to Dan's rescue?

Discussion Question 3

What happened to Joe? What role does Felix play in this incident? How does this incident affect Dan and his friends?

Vocabulary

Warden, investigation, history, important, maddening, desperately, custody, panicked, interrupted, commons, counselors, conjures, insanity, entry, dangerous, subjected, immortality, performing, sacrifices, unconscious, vision, crumpled, memory, amphitheater, remembered.

Chapters 26-32

Summary

Chapter 26

Abby is concerned about Jordan, so she sends Dan to check on him. When Dan arrives, no one is in Jordan's room, but Jordan's side of the room is covered in mathematical equations. Jordan arrives and demands Dan leave for invading his privacy.

Chapter 27

Dan goes back to his room and takes a nap. He has a nightmare. When Dan wakes, he heads downstairs to meet Abby and finds Yi, Jordan's roommate, unconscious on the stairs. Dan calls for help and is interrogated by the police.

Chapter 28

Abby and Dan hang out with Jordan afterward in his surprisingly clean room. Abby tells them she learned her aunt stayed in the area after the asylum closed. Dan then tells them about the Sculptor, Dennis Heimline. They encourage Dan to tell the cops, but the officer he tells is not impressed.

Chapter 29

Dan has trouble sleeping, so he goes down to the vending machines. Jordan shows up and tells Dan that Dan had sent him a text to meet there. Dan insists that he did not, but the text is on his phone. Dan returns to his room to find Felix gone. Dan gets a text asking him to go to the fifth floor. When Dan arrives, he finds Felix unconscious and a large man standing over him. Dan and the man fight. The man hits Dan on the head and flees out the window as the police arrive. The police do not believe Dan's story.

Chapter 30

A cop follows Dan to his classes the next morning. Afterward, Dan discovers his parents have flown in. Dan, his parents, and the police talk. Dan's parents reveal that Dan has had some mental difficulties in the past and is seeing a therapist.

Chapter 31

Dan returns to his room that afternoon and discovers he has written some odd things in his notebooks in someone else's handwriting.

Chapter 32



Dan goes to the church where Abby learned about her aunt to ask questions of his own. Dan learns that Daniel Crawford, the warden, grew up in the area and had two brothers who lived there. After the asylum was shut down because of Crawford's experiments, Crawford was placed on trial. Crawford killed himself in jail, and his brothers fled town. On the way back to campus, Dan finds Sal Weathers' dead body.

Analysis

Other odd events happen as Dan discovers that someone has been using his phone to send strange texts. Then, Dan and Felix are attacked by a strange man. Dan insists that he does not know what is going on, but the reader must wonder if this is true since Dan has a history of mental therapy and delusions. Also, he has a possible family connection to the man who once ran the asylum and performed experiments on the patients.

One boy has been killed, another injured, and a third attacked in Brookline. This suggests that there is a killer on the loose even though the man who killed the first victim has been arrested. However, the police think that Dan might be involved in what is going on there. Dan himself seems uncertain about his own role in all of this. Dan has been having visions and moments where it seems that someone, or something, is taking over his mind. It is a difficult situation that leaves Dan doubting his own sanity.

Discussion Question 1

What happened to Yi? Who finds him? Who is accused of his injuries? Explain.

Discussion Question 2

Why is Dan followed to classes by a cop? What do the cops think Dan might do? What finally clears Dan's name?

Discussion Question 3

What is Dan seeing a therapist for? How does this relate to the oddness that has been happening around Dan?

Vocabulary

Homicidal, endured, accounted, happened, pastor, registry, experimental, treacherous, downpour, compelling, reasons, shame, rumors, conditions, frightening, realize, parish, loudly, faint, dense, records, coincidence, destiny, mystery, bludgeoned, dissociative, disease, attributed, reverberated, nightmare.

Chapters 33-37

Summary

Chapter 33

Dan returns to Brookline and learns that Abby has told her father about her aunt. Abby's father did not react as she had imagined he would. As Dan consoles her, someone shoves a note under the door that invites Dan into the basement.

Chapter 34

Dan decides to go to the basement despite Jordan and Abby's arguments against it. Abby insists on going with Dan while Jordan stands guard in the warden's office. As Dan and Abby make their way through the basement, Dan sees evidence that someone has been there other than them. Then, Dan is attacked from behind.

Chapter 35

Dan wakes in the operating theater. Felix turns out to be his attacker. As Dan engages Felix in conversation, it becomes clear that Felix is not himself. Felix admits to being the one who killed Joe and injured Yi. Felix even admits to killing Sal Weathers. Dan tries to escape and is helped when Jordan suddenly comes into the room. Together Dan and Jordan are able to knock Felix out. They put him on a stretcher and Dan picks up a scalpel to kill him. There is some consciousness inside Dan that wants to kill Felix, but Dan manages to gain control of his own mind and body.

Chapter 36

Dan, Abby, and Jordan carry Felix, stretcher and all, to the stairs. As they go up the stairs, the cops arrive. The trio explain to the police what happened. The police are skeptical, but they seem to believe most of the story. Mrs. Weathers tries to attack Dan in the courtyard, but the police subdue her. Abby then shows her the music box from the basement of Brookline. Abby explains that she believes that Mrs. Weathers' forehead scar proves that she is Abby's Aunt Lucy.

Chapter 37

Dan packs up to leave with his parents. Abby comes by to say goodbye. Dan hopes Abby will come to visit him because Jordan is coming to live with Dan and his adoptive parents. As they leave, Dan finds a note tapped to his door that says, "I'll be seeing you real soon." It is signed by Daniel Crawford.



Analysis

Dan is given an opportunity to confront the person who has been terrorizing him, his friends, and the students at the New Hampshire College Prep program. Dan takes the opportunity despite the danger that it presents for him. Dan is surprised to discover that the culprit is his own roommate, Felix. The reader might not be so surprised, however, because Felix has behaved oddly since he was introduced to the novel, often speaking of women with a knowledge and bitterness that is unusual for his age. There is also the working out that Felix has been doing since arriving at the college program. Clearly there are things about Felix that have always seemed odd. Now, the reader can understand why. Felix is not himself. In fact, it seems that Felix might have been possessed by Dennis Heinline, the serial killer who has fascinated Dan all along.

Dan and his friends are able to figure out what is going on, and Dan is able to fight off the presence of Daniel Crawford in his own mind. In fact, Dan believes that being so close to Brookline is what has caused the problems for himself and his friends. He decides it is best to get away from Brookline. For this reason, they all leave. Jordan decides to move in with Dan because of the problems he is having at home.

Discussion Question 1

Who invites Dan to go into the basement? Who does Dan believe it is? Who is it really?

Discussion Question 2

What about Felix suggests he is no longer the boy he once was before he arrived at Brookline? What does Dan think the explanation is for this change?

Discussion Question 3

Who saves Dan and Abby from their attacker? How? What does this suggest about the relationship between these three children?

Vocabulary

Poised, reality, electricity, stabilized, revenge, transformation, glee, pretended, stairway, chloroform, reflecting, electric, visible, failed, scalpel, crazed, quicker, command, recoiling, amphitheater, preparatory, observers, waited, vision, quickset, steeling, gurney, quickest, adrenaline, ballistic, ballerina, forgave.

Characters

Dan Crawford

Dan Crawford is a troubled young man who has a difficult time in his short life. Dan has grown up in and out of foster homes, unsure of the identity of his birth parents. Dan has recently been adopted by a kind couple who are very understanding of Dan's difficulties. Dan sees a therapist to help him with fainting spells and visions he has been having. Dan has gotten to a point where he believes he can control these things, but when things begin to go badly at Brookline, Dan begins to wonder about his sanity.

Dan begins to experience odd things at Brookline. First he finds a picture of a strange man with his eyes scratched out. Then Dan gets an email in his sent folder that disappears. Strange notes begin to show up and Dan's phone texts his friend without Dan being aware of sending such a text. For this reason, Dan begins to wonder about his own sanity. In the end, however, Dan discovers that his roommate has been using him to cover his own crimes.

As Dan struggles with the odd things happening at Brookline, he has multiple visions of a time past. It seems that Dan is channeling the spirit of the previous warden of Brookline, Daniel Crawford. Dan is able to resist Daniel Crawford, but a note that arrives at the end of the novel suggests that Daniel Crawford is not done with Dan.

Abby Valdez

Abby Valdez is another student at the New Hampshire College Prep program. Abby is an artist who is interested in the advanced art classes. Abby is one of the first girls to seem interested in Dan. Dan takes a long time to ask Abby out; but, eventually, he overcomes his fear.

Abby finds evidence that her missing aunt, Lucy, might have been a patient at Brookline Asylum. Abby becomes obsessed with the idea, convincing herself that she can find this person who has been missing all her life. In the end, however, Abby does find her aunt living in the small town near the college.

Jordan

Jordan is a friend of Abby and Dan. Abby met Jordan on a bus while riding to New Hampshire from her home in New York. Jordan is supposed to be going to a camp where he would undergo behavioral therapy to change his sexuality, but instead he has arranged for his uncle to help him go to the New Hampshire College Prep program. Jordan is a mathematician who has come to take a math classes. Jordan spends much of the novel worrying about what might happen should his parents learn the truth about his whereabouts.

Jordan is a dark, angry character throughout the novel. However, when Dan and Abby need him the most, Jordan is there for them. Jordan actually saves Abby and Dan at the end of the novel when Felix overpowers them and prepares to kill them.

Felix

Felix is Dan's roommate. Felix is a quiet, nerdy looking boy when Dan first meets him. However, over the few weeks of the program Felix becomes obsessed with exercise and building muscles. Felix also becomes obsessed with girls. Dan dislikes Felix and feels uncomfortable in his presence. For this reason, Dan avoids Felix most of the time. However, Dan eventually discovers that Felix is the one who has been killing and injuring participants in the New Hampshire College Prep program. Felix appears to have been possessed in some way by Dennis Heimline, the serial killer known as the Sculptor.

Joe

Joe is a hall monitor at Brookline who is there to watch over the program participants and keep them out of trouble. At one point, Joe finds Dan, Abby, and Jordan in the basement where they are not allowed to be. Later, Dan hides from Joe afraid of being caught sneaking into the basement again. That same day, Dan learns that Joe has been murdered and left posed on the stairs of Brookline. The similarities between Joe's death and the victims of the Sculptor are eerie to Dan. Later, Felix confesses to Joe's death even though another man has already been arrested for the murder.

Yi

Yi is Jordan's roommate. Yi is a kind young man who quickly befriends not only Jordan, but Abby and Dan as well. Yi is also the first to suggest to Dan and Abby that something might be wrong with Jordan when Jordan becomes obsessed with an unsolvable mathematical problem. The day after Joe's murder, Dan finds Yi unconscious on the stairs in Brookline. It is later established that Yi was injured by Felix in another murder attempt.

Officer Teague

Officer Teague is one of the cops who works the case of Joe's murder as well as the injury to Yi and to Felix. Officer Teague is suspicious of Dan from the moment Dan finds Yi unconscious on the stairs. Officer Teague seems to think that Dan is responsible in some way for the attack on Felix and that he might have set Yi up for injury as well. However, when Dan and his friends are able to prove that Felix is the culprit, Teague backs off of Dan.

Dennis Heimline

Dennis Heimline was a patient at Brookline. Dennis Heimline was a notorious serial killer in his day known as the Sculptor. Dennis Heimline would remain near his victims after their death long enough to pose their bodies as rigor mortis began to set in. Dan becomes fascinated with Dennis Heimline because of his criminal behavior and because of the fact that an admittance card is marked in such a way that it indicates Dennis Heimline was cured. Later, it becomes clear to the reader that Dennis Heimline's consciousness has somehow taken over Felix, Dan's roommate, to commit murders.

Daniel Crawford

Daniel Crawford was the last warden at Brookline. Crawford was an intelligent man who became a doctor and returned to his hometown to run the local asylum. Crawford thought it was his right to experiment on the patients. Crawford used the patients not only to experiment with ways to cure their insanity, but in an attempt to find a way to become immortal. In the end, Crawford was arrested for the cruelty he committed at Brookline. Crawford committed suicide in prison, but it appears that he has somehow managed to keep his consciousness alive because he continuously haunts Dan throughout the novel.

Lucy Valdez Weathers

Lucy Valdez was only seven when her parents placed her in Brookline to treat her for behavioral trouble. Lucy's brother never really knew where his sister went or why. However, Lucy's niece, Abby, discovers her admittance card in the basement of Brookline fifty years later and begins to piece together the truth about her past. In the end, Abby is able to identify Lucy as the wife of a local man, Sal Weathers, who lives not far from Brookline and is part of a movement to have the building torn down.

Symbols and Symbolism

Warden Picture

As he unpacks in his dorm room, Dan finds a picture of a man with his eyes scratched out. The picture is of the last warden of Brookline, Daniel Crawford.

Little Girl Picture

Abby finds a picture of a little girl on the wall of the warden's office in Brookline. Abby becomes obsessed with the picture, drawing it over and over again, later coming to the conclusion that it is a picture of her long lost Aunt Lucy.

Music Box

Dan finds a music box with a ballerina on it in the basement of Brookline. The inscription on the music box suggests that the box belonged to Lucy Valdez, Abby's aunt.

Glasses

There are a pair of glasses on the wall of the warden's office that appear to have smeared blood on the wall behind them. Dan later sees Daniel Crawford place those glasses there on the day he was arrested for experimenting on patients at Brookline.

Cell Phone

Dan finds a phantom email on his cell phone and later discovers that his phone sent text messages to Jordan even though Dan was asleep at the time.

File Cabinet

Dan finds a file cabinet in the warden's office that is hiding a doorway into a file room and a stairway to a lower section of the basement where Daniel Crawford apparently conducted experiments on the patients.

Notes

Dan receives multiple notes written by an unknown author that appear to be taunting him to doubt his sanity.

Notebook

Dan discovers that during a class he wrote the same line over and over again in his notebook in another person's handwriting. Dan believes it is Daniel Crawford channeling his consciousness somehow.

Abby's Sketchbook

Dan discovers that Abby's sketchbook is filled with pictures of the little girl Abby saw in a photograph in the warden's office.

Baptismal Records

Abby goes to the local church and checks the baptismal records with the help of the pastor and learns that her aunt, Lucy, was baptized there after Brookline closed, suggesting she remained in the area after her release.

Settings

Brookline

Brookline was once an asylum that the New Hampshire College purchased and incorporated as part of their campus. This asylum housed many mental patients, most notably a group of the criminally insane. Among the patients at Brookline in its final days was a serial killer known as the Sculptor, Dennis Heimeline. When Brookline closed in the seventies because of improprieties by the warden, the college took it over and eventually renovated it to turn it into dorms. The participants of the New Hampshire College Prep program stay in Brookline while the regular dorms are being renovated. It is because of this that Dan and his friends manage to gain access to the basement of the asylum.

Camford, New Hampshire

Camford is the small town where New Hampshire College is located. Many of the students patronize the business in Camford. When Abby learns that her aunt might have been a patient at Brookline, she goes to the church in Camford to find out if they have any record of Lucy Valdez. Abby is pleased to learn that they do. Later, she finds out that Lucy grew up in Camford and married Sal Weathers there.

New Hampshire College

New Hampshire College is the university in Camford, New Hampshire, where Dan goes. It is a large campus that includes Brookshire, a building that once housed an asylum.

Themes and Motifs

Outcasts

Dan Crawford considers himself an outcast. Dan does not fit in with the kids in his school because he is a serious scholar while the other kids seem content to spend most of their time socializing. For this reason, Dan has not made any friends at school. However, Dan hopes to make friends at the New Hampshire College Prep program because it is for kids like him.

Jordan is also an outcast. Jordan is a gay teenager. Jordan's parents have not accepted his sexuality and have, in fact, attempted to send him to a program that is supposed to cure him of his sexuality. For this reason, Jordan is also something of an outcast.

Abby is a beautiful young girl who is deep into art. Abby does not seem to have trouble making friends, but still aligns herself with the outcasts. Abby becomes close to both Jordan and Dan during the program.

As outcasts, Dan, Jordan, and Abby often find themselves on the outside of things. For this reason, they are somewhat more vulnerable to malice. Perhaps this is part of the reason they are so easily targeted when Felix begins terrorizing the kids in Brookline.

Immortality

Daniel Crawford was an intelligent man who became a doctor in the sixties. During that time period, treatment of the mentally ill was not always humane. Crawford took advantage of this fact to begin experimenting on the patients at Brookline after he became warden there.

Crawford believed he could cure insanity. Along with this, Crawford believed he could also find the secret to immortality. Crawford would experiment on the patients in front of an audience. This cruelty was eventually discovered by the local law enforcement. Crawford was arrested.

Dan begins to have visions that seem to indicate that he is somehow connected to Crawford's lingering consciousness. Later, when Dan is confronted by Felix, it seems evident that Felix has become possessed by Dennis Heimeline. With these two pieces of evidence, the reader is left with the idea that Crawford was successful in his attempts to find a way to become immortal, even though the author does not fully explain how he managed this.

Cruelty

In the time period that Brookline Asylum was in operation, the mentally ill were not treated with a great deal of respect. In fact, these patients were often treated with disregard to their civil rights. The author of this book has taken this reality of the past and highlighted it with photos taken in real mental hospitals.

Crawford was a man who thought that the mentally ill were something like guinea pigs for his scientific experiments. Crawford practiced all kinds of experiments on these patients without their consent and without concern for their wellbeing. Crawford also took pictures of these experiments, showing patients being shocked with electricity to cure homosexuality, using water as a punishment, and performing lobotomies to cure violent or disturbing behavior.

Cruelty is a theme of the novel because it is a reality of the way things were done at Brookline during its final years of operation.

Styles

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. The main character, Dan Crawford, is the sole narrator of the novel. The author uses Dan to tell her story in such a way that the reader sees the entire plot through the eyes of this one character rather than the eyes of many characters. However, there is also a note of an unreliable narrator in this novel as even Dan begins to doubt his role in the killing and injuring of the other students at Brookline.

The point of view of this novel works with the plot because the reader can connect with the main character and care about what might happen to him as the odd events begin to take place at Brookline. This point of view also keeps the reader from figuring out the direction the story is going to take too quickly, as the reader is forced to figure things out alongside Dan.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple English. The main character is an intelligent teenage boy, so there is little slang in the plot, but the language is simple enough that most readers will have no trouble comprehending it.

The language of this novel is authentic to both the plot and the main characters. The language does not contain anything, such as foreign words or phrases, that might impede the readers understanding. For this reason, the language is appropriate as well to the intended audience, young adults, of this novel.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty seven short chapters and contains a prologue. The novel also contains a great many photos, several of which are from real mental hospitals that once operated all over the United States. The novel is written in both narration and dialogue. The novel follows a linear time line with multiple flashbacks to the past when Brookline operated as an asylum.

The novel has one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Dan as he begins to experience odd occurrences in the dorm at Brookline. A subplot follows the development of Dan's friendship with both Abby and Jordan. Another subplot follows the story of Brookline, especially the relationship between Daniel Crawford and Dennis Heimline. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.

Quotes

They built is out of stone--dark grey stone, pried loose from the unforgiving mountains. It was a house for those who could not take care of themselves, for those who heard voices, who had strange thoughts and did strange things. The house was meant to keep them in. Once they came, they never left.

-- Narrator (Prologue paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote is the entire prologue of the novel. This quote describes Brookline and the patients who once resided there.

This summer school--Dan's lifeline--had been the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel all school year long.

-- Dan (chapter 1 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote illustrates Dan's feeling about his school back home as well as the promise of a better future at the NHCP.

It's hard to remember they were here to get help,' Jordan said.

-- Jordan (chapter 4 paragraph 61)

Importance: This quote shows Jordan's reaction to seeing dark photos of the types of treatments the patients got at Brookline before it closed. Treatment of the mentally ill during the time period Brookline was active was not a compassionate thing. Photos that Jordan and his friends find in this chapter illustrate that fact.

The writer of the page was clearly talking about curing someone who was insane.

-- Dan (chapter 13 paragraph 17)

Importance: Dan found a file of papers in the basement of Brookline. In the file, Dan finds notes where someone was talking about curing the insane giving Dan some insight into the experiments conducted at Brookline.

It felt good to get out of the dorm. Things has a way of feeling so heavy there.

-- Dan (chapter 15 paragraph 18)

Importance: This quote indicates that there is something about Brookline that has emotional and physical effects on Dan.

My aunt. My father's sister. She was a patient here.

-- Abby (chapter 15 paragraph 79)

Importance: Abby tells Jordan and Dan she thinks her aunt was a patient at Brookline, but they do not believe her. This causes a rift in their relationship.



Protein shakes and daily trips to the gym were quickly turning Felix's once spindly physique into Fight Club material.

-- Dan (chapter 18 paragraph 6)

Importance: Dan begins to notice the changes in Felix, but he puts them down to a change in habits rather than anything odd.

Dan knew it was not his best idea, sneaking into the basement by himself.

-- Dan (chapter 20 paragraph 1)

Importance: Dan has decided he needs more information about Brookline, so he decides to break into the basement again. However, Dan decides to go alone despite the events that have taken place in Brookline recently. This quote shows that Dan acknowledges there is danger in Brookline.

Was this another memory gap?

-- Dan (chapter 24 paragraph 9)

Importance: Dan admits to himself that he has memory gaps, making the reader wonder if he might be an unreliable narrator.

And he was going to leave Brookline cured if it killed him.

-- Dan (chapter 30 paragraph 70)

Importance: This quote shows that Dan accepts that there is something wrong with him. Ironically, it also describes what most of the patients at Brookline must have felt in their day.

But deep down, Dan knew that this wasn't Felix anymore.

-- Dan (chapter 35 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote illustrates the moment when Felix realizes that Felix is not the boy he might have once been, suggesting that Felix has been possessed by someone else.

I'll be seeing you real soon.

-- Daniel Crawford (chapter 37 paragraph 38)

Importance: Dan finds a note signed Daniel Crawford that suggest that Daniel Crawford found a way for his consciousness to live on and that he plans to use Dan to experience immortality.