

Brother Odd Study Guide

Brother Odd by Dean Koontz

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Plot Summary

Brother Odd by Dean Koontz is based on the character Odd Thomas and his attempt to find peace in the Californian mountain monastery of St. Bartholomew's. Odd has a rather unique gift—he sees dead people—those who are unable to cross over are drawn to him in hopes that he can fix what holds them here. Some want comfort, some forgiveness and others have motives he is unable to grasp. They often complicate his life. After a tragic affair in his hometown of Pico Mundo, Odd retreats to the monastery. He is drawn to situations, and running entirely on intuition and faith that his life has purpose, he follows the pull. Odd looks outside the monastery's guest house window and sees his ghost dog Boo acting as though something terrible is in the shadows. He watches to see what has the dog's attention. Something only he and Odd can see, the other worldly, inky and sinuous shape oozes across the lawn in the shadows. Seemingly half man/half wolf, it glides without even rippling the grass it passes over. Odd wants to look away, but senses that should they ever find out he can see them, his life would become much more difficult. Only the Mother Superior (Sister Angela), Abbot Bernard, and Brother Salvatore (Brother Knuckles) are aware of his special gift. Hoping that he can help one of their own, Brother Constantine, who had been found hanged from the bell tower a year earlier, Odd is given a universal key so that no matter where Constantine appears, Odd can reach him; but life for Odd is never that simple. The appearance of a bodach tells Odd that trouble is coming as they are harbingers of chaos. The more that come, the larger the catastrophe that follows. Bodachs are drawn to pain and chaos, like moths to a flame, and while they seem unable to affect this world directly, Odd is unsure of the extent of their control.

Before he is ready to leave the monastery, Odd is instrumental in unraveling the mystery of Brother Constantine's death. The benefactor of St. Bartholomew's, John Heineman, a man Odd respects and admires, harbors a Jekyll and Hyde personality. Heineman creates a program that he believes can offer scientific proof of the existence of God. Instead he unleashes a variety of angry and violent extensions of himself and unwittingly kills a total of three of the Brothers before Odd, with a great deal of help from an NSA agent masquerading as a librarian, helps to put a stop to his manifestations. When he is finally ready to return to his home town of Pico Mundo, he says goodbye to the Brothers and Sisters, and just days before Christmas, barely down from the Sierra Nevada mountains, Odd feels the pull again. Unable to continue, he gets out and begins walking down the side of the highway following the psychic magnetism that controls his life. The surprises aren't over for Odd, though, as he finally says goodbye to the spirit of Elvis, and finds a new friend has joined him with Boo on his journey to the next adventure.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Brother Odd attempts to find peace in the monastery of St. Bartholomew's. Odd has a unique gift. He sees dead people, those who are unable to cross over entirely, are drawn to him hoping that he can fix what holds them here. After a tragic affair in his hometown, Odd retreats to the monastery. He sees something that looks like half man/half wolf, gliding without rippling the grass. Only Mother Superior (Sister Angela), Abbot Bernard, and Brother Salvatore (Brother Knuckles) are aware of his gift to see the dead. Hoping that he can help one of their own, Brother Constantine, who had been found hanged a year earlier, Odd is given a universal key. The appearance of a bodach tells Odd that something bad is coming.

He trails the bodach to St. Bartholomew's School behind the Monastery. It and two others gather around one of the student's bed. They hover around her, feeding on impending violence.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Odd sees dead people. Remarkably, he has a fairly spiritual nature, and when people who are dead but have not quite crossed over come to him, he never turns them away. Despite the interruptions to his own life, he goes out of his way to try to help these spirits continue on their way. Some come to him for comfort, some for justice, and some he never understands completely, but he always tries to help. He also sees other creatures he names bodachs. They are sinuous, inky black shapes that vaguely resemble a cross between wolf and man and glide just above the ground leaving no trace. Odd Thomas has been a guest at St. Bartholomew's Monastery since shortly after his best friend and the love of his life, Stormy Llewellyn was killed, trying once again to find some purpose in his life. Odd follows the bodach. Avoiding contact with anyone else, he finds the bodach and discovers two more as well. Hunched over a student named Justine, they are unaware of his presence, and he behaves as though he is unaware of theirs.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Odd watches the bodachs. They look at the door and quickly leave. Resisting the urge to follow them he sees the student's (Justine) eyes open. Annamarie in the bed next to her says a phrase that Stormy, Odd's girlfriend, used, "Loop me in, Odd one." Wrestling with emotion, he doesn't respond. As much as he wants Stormy back, he knows she's gone. Annamarie fell silent, and looking over at Justine, he sees two tears on her cheek. He leaves the room looking for the bodachs and Boo, his dog.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Odd doesn't want the bodachs to become aware of him, so he wanders around Justine's room adjusting the thermostat and checking the window to make sure it is closed. When the bodachs leave, he doesn't go after them, instead finds himself looking into Justine's open blue eyes. He feels a sudden longing for Stormy that is so strong he wishes Justine's eyes would suddenly become Stormy's. Behind him, Annamarie begins talking in her sleep. At first she just says his name, but then adds the remainder of a phrase that Stormy used to use with him. He is rooted to the spot, unable to speak, knowing if he does, he holds her to a world in which she no longer belongs. Suddenly afraid, he can't even look at Annamarie, but the "Loop me in, Odd one" that comes from her is devastating. He knows he can't respond, but it rattles him. As much as he wants Stormy back, he knows that hoping for the wrong thing will only bring him misery. When Annamarie stops talking to him, he looks over at Justine and sees the tears still left on her jawline. He waits until his heartbeat goes back to normal, and then goes out in search of Boo and bodachs.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

St. Bartholomew's has an advanced computer system that monitors everything. Fear of fire drives Odd to check all the systems; all are green and working properly. The only threat is from people. Somehow Odd has a hard time picturing the sisters or the monks involved in any such atrocity.

Odd suddenly realizes that his time for quiet contemplation is finished, and this is just God's way of starting the ball rolling again. For seven months, he has enjoyed a much needed hiatus from his real life, but now he is definitely getting the message that it's time to return to work. As he backs out of the computer program, he sees a reflection behind him. He spins the chair around to face the intruder.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Knowing violence is coming, the only thing Odd can think of is fire. The possibility sends him to the computer system in the basement, and he goes from one screen to another checking the status of sprinklers and the propane tanks. Everything is normal. He tries to imagine what else could go wrong, but all he is left with after eliminating the larger, and more natural threats, is people. He can't imagine any of the Sisters going on a rampage any more than he can picture it with any of the Brothers. He closes the computer program down, and in the black screen sees a reflection behind him. Startled, he whirls to face the intruder, spinning the chair around between them.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Odd is relieved to find his visitor is the Mother Superior (Sister Angela). Odd tells her about the bodachs, and the possible reason for their appearance. She guesses that something will happen to the children, but Odd assures her that might not be the case. He asks her about the other spiritual pilgrim, a Russian named Rodion Romanovich. Odd leaves, still trying to figure out why the bodachs have come.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Odd is surprised by Sister Angela and finds himself telling her the real reason he is up so late. He tells her about the bodachs and about where he saw them. He also tells her that they are harbingers of disaster as a rule. Sister Angela wants a plan, but Odd has no ideas yet as to what might happen. He wonders about the Russian who has a suite in the guest house as well. Sister Angela agrees to check him out discreetly in the morning, but tells Odd that if he needs her sooner, he can reach her on her cell phone. Odd is surprised by the concept of a sister with a cell phone, but she reminds him that it is no less difficult than accepting a fry cook who sees dead people. Odd agrees and leaves to continue checking the school for bodachs and trying to figure out why they were there.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

When Odd gets back upstairs, the bodachs are gone. The trouble might have root in Brother John's exploration of the structure of reality from his subterranean work place. Odd goes to the Abbey and down a set of stone stairs. There is a door with a sign: Libera Nos A Malo, which means "Deliver Us From Evil." He unlocks the door and walks toward another door: Lumin De Lumine or "Light from Light." A plasma screen reads Odd's palm print, and Odd steps into a small room. The room descends. A rectangle of red light ushers him forward to the third door: Per Omnia Saecula Saeculorum or "Forever and Ever."

Brother John, John Heineman, was Time magazine's most brilliant physicist of the year. Odd silently waits while Brother John decides whether or not to break his silence. Then Brother John offers Odd a cookie.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Leaving the school, Odd is suddenly struck by the idea that the disturbances might be coming from Brother John's work on the structure of reality. He goes in through the Abbey in the early morning hours, and passing the kitchen, he heads down the stone stairs. Then he passes through a series of doors, an elevator and a palm reader before gaining access to the subterranean space that Brother John occupies. Brother John was known to the world as John Heinemen, a brilliant physicist. When admitted, he waits for Brother John to speak first, observing the silence instead, if that is Brother John's choice. He hasn't waited long before Brother John offers him a cookie.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Odd asks Brother John about his project. Can it get out of hand and create chaos? He answers it might but might not. Brother John tells Odd that his gift is God-given and he feels obliged to pursue it. Brother John works with intellect only, while Odd relies on a sixth sense when the dead came to him for help. Suddenly Odd finds himself at the door. The door closes, and in the courtyard, he sees snowflakes. For a brief moment, life is beautiful and right. The feeling lasts until he hears the scream.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Odd hopes Brother John can give him some insight as to what might be coming, but he isn't much help. Instead, he gives vague statements that only leave Odd exactly where he started. He still harbors the suspicion that trouble might originate with Brother John's experiments and science and worries that Brother John isn't guided by faith at all. In fact, his sole motivation is intellect, and untempered by faith, Odd fears it could be dangerous. He leaves Brother John reversing the security procedures to get out, thinking about the inscriptions over the doors as he closes and locks each one with his universal key. "For ever and ever" and "deliver us from evil" are the two inscriptions. He heads outside and is stopped in his tracks by the first snowfall he has ever seen in his life. Struck by the miraculousness of it all, he stands there thinking about how perfect it all is, despite the fact that Stormy is no longer in his life. The feeling lasts right up until he hears a scream.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The cry is cut off quickly, he runs in the direction of the cry. Around the corner of the library, he almost trips over a monk lying on the grass. As he leans in to listen for breath, he is clubbed from behind. Odd rolls, gets to his feet, and runs as fast as he can. He grabs a few stones to throw at the pursuer. He circles back and is surprised that the monk is gone. He searches, but finding nothing and returns to the guest house.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Odd runs toward the outcry and almost falls over a monk lying face down in the grass. Odd tries to check for vital signs, but his hands are so cold he can't be sure whether he is feeling a pulse or not. He leans in to listen for breath just as the assailant swings a club at him from behind. He rolls and gets up running, making his legs move as fast as he can and grabbing stones to throw once he is far enough away to feel safe enough to think of it. By that time though, there is no one following him. He retraces his steps to help the monk, but he is gone also. He searches for a little longer but then heads back to the guest house, teeth chattering.

He is surprised when he gets upstairs to find more light coming from his suite than he had left on. He heads for the open door.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Odd tells Brother Knuckles the entire episode, beginning with the bodach he and Boo saw. Odd tells him about the scream and about the unconscious monk. Brother Knuckles agrees to do an unofficial bed count. He will tell Odd in the morning. He asks if Odd knows how long they have before something happens; Odd estimates a day or two. After Brother Knuckles leaves, Odd braces a chair under the door.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Odd finds Brother Knuckles in his room when he returns, and gratefully shares the events of the evening with him. Leaving nothing out, Brother Knuckles worries for a minute that his past is catching up with him and might harm innocent people around him, but Odd assures him that is not the case. In fact, Brother Knuckles is ashamed of his past, and lives his life now in a manner that he hopes makes up for it a little bit. Having lived most of his first forty years as muscle for the mob, he had an awakening of spirit that began when he read the boss' daughter a bedtime story. So taken with the plight of the main character, he finally bought the book a few days later to find out how the story ended. When the rabbit found its way home, he cried. He sat a long time, thinking about the story and reading it over again and again, understanding the symbolism more each time. Eventually, he understands that he is crying for himself and the person he has become and begins to make changes. After a brief time in witness protection, fate brought Brother Knuckles to the monastery, where he now thrived. He tells Odd that he will look for a monk with a headache and report back to Odd in the morning. Odd is nervous enough that he jams a chair under the door handle so he can sleep, and then gives himself yet another opportunity to laugh at himself and at life. At times, Odd feels like he is the hapless character locked in a slapstick movie and when he mixes aspirin and coke and finds himself frothing at the mouth, he wonders at the amount of times things like that happen to him.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Too tired to care about where Boo had been hiding, Odd climbs into bed and falls asleep. He dreams that a bodach is standing in front of him, but it morphs into the Russian guest who reads aloud the card that is framed on the nightstand, "YOU ARE DESTINED TO BE TOGETHER." It was more important than air to Odd.

The dream continues as memories of Stormy overwhelm, and he wakes after less than four hours of a sleep. The framed card was now face down on the nightstand. He checks the chair under the door handle and the latch on the window. Both are secure. Out the window he sees three police cruisers and men searching the grounds.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Odd cleans up and gets into bed, with Boo at the foot end. He had been hiding in Odds' suite until Odd got into the shower. His company is not unusual, and Odd climbs into bed exhausted. He falls asleep and has troubling dreams that include the Russian guest, Rodion Romanovich and Stormy. His dream is vivid and bittersweet, and he wakes after little more than four hours of disturbing sleep. In his dream, the Russian had read the card in the frame aloud, and now awake, Odd notices the frame face down on the desk. He believes that someone must have come in, but the door is still blocked with the chair, and the window is latched.

Standing there as he fully comes awake, he realizes the flashing lights he sees belong to the three police cars below, and looking closer, he sees that they are systematically searching the meadow.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The police take immediate interest in Odd as he is the only one not in a monk's robe. Brother Knuckles tells Odd that he did a bed check and found all in bed. In the morning, Brother Timothy did not show up for Lauds, and Knuckles found pillows stuffed in his bed. Brother Knuckles thinks Brother Timothy is dead, confirming Odd's fears.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Odd is quick to dress and get downstairs. He wants to know what is going on, but knows that he will only attract attention to himself by going over and asking the police who are standing to one side quietly waiting for Abbot Bernard to finish prayers. Odd tries to look casual, knowing he stands out if not for anything other than that he dresses differently. Brother Knuckles sees him and takes him into the grand cloister to tell him what he discovered. The missing monk is Brother Timothy. Strangely, someone took the time to stuff his bed with pillows to make everyone think he was still in it. By doing so, the search for Brother Timothy was delayed by hours, and snow now covered any traces of what might have happened. Odd asks Brother Knuckles whether or not he thinks Brother Timothy is dead, already sensing the answer before he confirms it. In his professional opinion, Brother Knuckles believes Brother Timothy is already dead.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Odd thinks he should talk to the police, but Brother Knuckles convinces him not to. Odd has a gift that not all will understand, and "we need you here." Odd can't argue with that logic.

When they get to the guest house, Elvis is waiting for Odd. He has been with Odd off and on since his death. He really wants to see his mother, Gladys, but is afraid he let her down. Elvis isn't easy to convince that his mother loves him regardless, and he should have no fear of a reunion.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Brother Knuckles helps Odd to see that talking to the police is a mistake. He reminds Odd that while those who knew him accepted his gifts as they were, and worked with Odd on occasion, there were many out there who wouldn't share this enthusiasm. The police here could just as easily detain Odd, and then he would be no help to Brother Knuckles at all.

Walking back to the guest cloisters, they go in to find Elvis, who is waiting for Odd. Odd tells Brother Knuckles Elvis is there. The dead don't talk to Odd, but they seem as real to him as anyone else. When Elvis puts his arm around Odd comfortingly, Odd feels the warmth of it, even though at any moment Elvis could walk through the wall as well. Elvis stays with Odd because he hopes that being with him will help him summon the courage he needs to go to that higher place. Odd tries to convince him that he should go. His mother Gladys would be so happy to see him, but Elvis feels profoundly guilty about the way he let his gift go, and traded it for a life of drugs and alcohol. Still, Odd tells him he would be welcomed.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Odd and Brother Knuckles search, but find no trace of Brother Timothy. Odd retreats to the library, Elvis with him, but Brother Knuckles looks over invoices and then goes to mass. Odd is startled momentarily when Romanovich the Russian shows up in the library.

After the Russian leaves, Brother Rafael tells Odd that Brother Timothy has not been found, but the police are giving up their search. They unofficially determined that Brother Timothy is probably taking a break from the tedium of the monastery.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Odd and Brother Knuckles search for, but don't locate Brother Timothy. Neither of them really expects to; instead, Odd and Elvis spend some time in the library, where Odd literally runs into Rodion Romanovich while looking through the stacks. They have a meaningless conversation after which Odd wonders why neither of them brought up the missing Brother Timothy. Did they both intuitively know the answers already? Odd thought that perhaps that was the case. When the decision came to abandon the search for Brother Timothy, Brother Rafael is beside himself. He can't understand the attitude the police have taken in assuming that Brother Timothy was merely AWOL. By eight-forty, they are all gone. Elvis stands outside in the snow trying to catch snowflakes in his mouth.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Odd finally gives in to his "psychic magnetism" and begins looking for Brother Timothy. He finally follows his instincts outside. After wandering for some time, he gives up thinking about Brother Timothy. Part of him didn't really want to find his dead body and therefore inhibited the "search." He heads for the school, but before he arrives, he hears a keening sound, and can't shake the feeling that he is being watched. He hears otherworldly noise coming from every direction.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Odd wants to help Brother Knuckles find Brother Timothy and figure out what is going to happen, but he has little faith in himself. He knows and admits that he has a stronger "psychic magnetism" than most people, but he still has a hard time believing he can help. Still, he goes outside and concentrates on Brother Timothy, hoping to find him. The effort was halfhearted, though, as Odd didn't really want to find Brother Timothy's corpse. Finally, he decides to concentrate on bodachs and the upcoming nightmare instead and finds himself heading towards the school. Halfway there, he gets the feeling he is being followed and about to be attacked, but turning quickly finds no one. He hears a sound that he can't identify as being from our world and stands in the snow, trying to figure out which direction it is coming from, but it seems to be from all directions.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Odd starts toward the school again and the keening stops, but he senses movement. Then something crosses his path, ten feet ahead. Moving with a grace that doesn't seem possible, it appears to be a construct of bones with an icy covering. Odd hurries forward, noting the prints the creature makes as he passes them. As soon as he is inside, he hears scraping on the far side of the door.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Odd isn't as easily rattled as most people are, mostly because he's been around and helped dead people for some time. He stands out in the snow, taking his hood down and listening for the source of the noise. He sees a shape moving in the distance, but can't make out what it is. He has a feeling that there is some form of intelligence involved, and whatever it is, it has its own locomotion. He gets the feeling something is behind him and turns, but nothing is there. Then, heading for the school, he sees another figure just ten feet ahead. Bones clad in ice and moving with a grace that seems impossible, Odd watches as it goes across his path. He sees the footprints it made, knowing for sure he isn't crazy now, and hurries into the school. Right away, the strangeness fades, and he begins to second guess himself, but then he hears the sound at the door.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Sounding like bone on wood, the scraping continues, and then the doorknob rattles. Pressing his nose to the window he sees bone-like structures longer than fingers lined up like a serpentine keyboard, and curved through still more rows of bone that join with what appears to be knuckles and sockets. He watches it remake itself again and again. Then it flexed away from the window and was gone, leaving Odd hugging himself with a mix of wonder and dread.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Inside the school, Odd feels safe at first, and even starts to second guess what he saw and heard outside, but when the noises start at the door, all doubt is gone. The door rattles, and Odd goes to the window to get a closer look. What he sees defies everything he knows. A kaleidoscope of bones that are longer than fingers and are lined up like a keyboard and are connected with knuckles and sockets. Odd isn't as surprised by that as he is by the fact that it keeps remaking itself into more and more intricate and beautiful patterns. At first mesmerized, Odd stands with his hand against the glass watching, but then the glass under his hand cracks and breaks the spell he is under. He backs up, but instead of breaking in, the creature flexes and heads into the snow. Odd is so unnerved that he can't move. He stands there, hugging himself until Sister Clair Marie rescues him by asking him to take off his boots.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Sister Clair Marie asks him what's wrong. He doesn't want to worry her. Then she grabs Odd's boots and opening the front door, begins beating the snow off them. Odd hurries over to her expecting immediate problems, but by the time he reaches her, she is closing the door unscathed. Then she sends him to see Mother Superior, who had summoned him.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Odd takes stock of himself, and still struggling with what he witnessed, he is pale. When Sister Clair Marie notices that, she asks him what's wrong, but Odd doesn't want to frighten her, so he can't tell her the truth. Instead, he tells a lie. He tells her that the snow outside is the trouble. He has never seen it before and makes her believe that he feels the weather is ominous. She goes to great lengths to tell Odd that he should make an effort to embrace the weather, in order to understand the balance in the world. Odd doesn't want the sister to go outside again, and nervously tells her so as she sends him off to see the Mother Superior.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

There were several categories of children at St. Bartholomew's, ranging from severe physical retardation with mild mental retardation to severe mental retardation and all manner of affliction in between. Most of these children were abused. A ten-year-old prodigy sits at the piano playing softly, and the children play and laugh while bodachs crawl through the room. The three Odd had seen the night before have become seven.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Odd notices the recreation room on his way to Mother Superior's and looking in he can't help reflecting on the varying children, who made their lives at the school. Some were severely physically retarded, and some mentally, and some in between the two, but one thing they all had in common was the need for affection. One child is playing the piano softly, although unable to dress himself, and Odd can't help wishing those who hurt children into a special pit in hell. He watches, and glancing around the room notes that there are now seven bodachs, where yesterday there were only three.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Mother Superior is certain Brother Timothy didn't run off for R&R as the police suggested; Odd agrees. He tells her about the seven bodachs in the children's recreation room. She suggests moving the kids, but Odd points out that this could play right into the problem. He asks her to trust him and issue an order for all to stay indoors and to lock and latch all entrances and windows.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Odd goes to Mother Superior's office and is reluctant to tell her too much. After a little small talk, she comes straight to the point and asks about Brother Timothy. Odd has to admit he doesn't know exactly what happened, but it wasn't anything good. He tells her about the four additional bodachs in the recreation room, and she suggests they should move the children, but Odd is worried it might make things even worse. He asks Sister Angela to do him a favor and accept something on faith without asking questions. When she agrees, he tells her to announce that everyone is to stay indoors for the duration of the storm and keep windows and doors locked. Mother Superior agrees and asks Odd what is out there. He doesn't want to tell her what he saw, so he tells another white lie. He says he doesn't know, but he feels that their intent is harmful.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Odd finds himself in Justine's room. Justine is propped up in bed with her hands in her lap, and to Odd it appears as though she is looking right at him. Suddenly he is caught off guard by the smell of peaches exactly like the shampoo Stormy used to insist he use. Then Justine struggles to communicate something to Odd. With intense effort, she lifts her arm and points out the window. He sees a not-human figure at the window, that reminds him eerily of the shapeless bodachs.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Odd concentrates on finding the source of the imminent danger, but finds himself in Justine's room again. He tries to fight the urge to go there, but having put out a call for information, he can't seem to redirect himself. Going into room 32, he finds Justine seemingly aware and looking straight at him, but what truly unnerves him is the smell of peach shampoo. Not any peach shampoo, but exactly the same as the stuff Stormy used to give him after a day working as a fry cook. It was the only scent that covered the smell of hamburgers and french fries. He stands there, unable to move until strangled sounds come from Justine. Despite partial paralysis, after a strangled "no" from Odd, Justine somehow finds the strength to raise her arm and point out the window. Odd goes to look and sees light in a window across from them. Then he see a shapeless form, similar to a bodach, but not, standing in the window. Now he has a direction, and though he knows the time is near, he still can't pull himself out of room 32, until no trace of the peach shampoo lingers in the room.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Odd goes to Jacob's room. Odd sits at the table across from him and looks at Jacob's drawing. Jacob was born with some affliction that reminds Odd of Down's Syndrome in some ways, but not in others. Jacob is working carefully on a woman's portrait. Odd tells Jacob how talented he is. Jacob asks Odd if he ever floats away when the dark comes, and that he's afraid he'll float wrong when the dark comes. After a while, Jacob says simply, "he wants me dead."

Chapter 20 Analysis

When Odd crosses the courtyard and finds the room opposite Justine's, he finds Jacob sitting at a table drawing. Odd asks if he can come in and takes the silence he gets as assent. Jacob is drawing one of dozens of portraits of the same woman. Speaking quietly to Odd, he asks him if he ever floats away at night and then tells Odd that sometimes Jacob sees the ocean. Jacob's worried though. The ocean keeps moving, and he's afraid that he'll float the wrong way when the dark comes. Jacob seems convinced that when it gets dark, the darkness is coming, which Odd interprets to mean that death is coming, possibly tonight. He tells Odd that the dark wants him dead. Odd doesn't entirely understand, but it seems as though the trouble might be coming tonight.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Odd asks Jacob who wants him dead. The answer: the Neverwas. Neverwas once came to him, and seeing that Jacob was full of black said, "Let him die." Odd is painfully aware that Jacob knows something that will help him figure this all out, but when Odd presses him for more information, he says he saw Them and the Neverwas, but he fears that when the darkness comes, he'll float off in the wrong direction and not be able to find the bell.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Odd tries to get more out of Jacob, but it seems as though their conversation just goes around in circles. He asks Jacob who wants him dead, and Jacob tells him that it's the Neverwas. Jacob tells Odd that he's (Jacob) dumb but not stupid and that he knows what he saw. Odd tells him he isn't dumb because dumb can't draw like Michelangelo, but Jacob isn't convinced. Instead he launches into a barrage of sing-song rhymes about "dumb" until Odd begs him to stop. Odd tries to explain to Jacob that the children who made up those rhymes were just jealous of him and his ability to draw, but Jacob doesn't believe him. He quietly tells Odd that the Neverwas came once before, when Jacob was filled with black, and said "let him die," but he still tells Odd that his isn't afraid of Them or the Neverwas. The only thing Jacob is afraid of is floating the wrong way in the dark and not finding the bell. Odd knows there is some information inside Jacob that will probably help him, but he can't figure out how to extract it. He tries several tactics before in frustration, he tells Jacob he'll be back in the afternoon to visit, but Jacob is not responding anymore.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Sister Miriam tells Odd that the portrait Jacob draws is indeed Jacob's mother who raised him on her own. Before she died when he was thirteen, she made arrangements for Jacob to stay with the church. After her death, her ashes were scattered in the ocean. Jacob is convinced that he might not be able to find her when he dies, despite assurances that his mother now waits in heaven for him.

Odd turns to see a hooded figure in the doorway. The figure seems to be without a face, though he is standing under a light that should easily illuminate him. The figure retreats. Odd follows, but finds no sign of it.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Odd goes back down to the nurse's station and finds Sister Miriam there. He asks her about Jacob, confirming that the portrait he draws over and over is that of his mother. He asks her about the Neverwas, but Sister Miriam hasn't heard Jacob use that expression and can't help. She doesn't understand Odd's interest in Jacob, and Odd can't exactly tell her that Stormy sent him a message from beyond that told him that Jacob held the key to the mystery that was unfolding. Sister Miriam tells Odd that Jacob's mother had died of cancer when he was just thirteen, and she had been cremated and her ashes spread at sea. It explains why Jacob is so worried about not being able to find her when the darkness comes for him. He's afraid that when he dies, he won't be able to find her, despite Sister Miriam's constant reassurances that his mother is waiting for him in heaven.

Sister Miriam intuitively gathers that Odd's relationship with his mother was less than stellar, and she offers to listen if he wants to talk, but Odd knows there isn't time. He thanks her anyway, telling her she is a credit to nuns everywhere, and turning away from the nurse's station, he sees a figure standing in a doorway. Though there is plenty of light from the bulb overhead, the figure standing there has only blackness where his face should have been. Knowing he is spotted, he disappears into the stairwell letting the door close. Odd follows and searches but doesn't see the figure again. He can't help reflecting on the darkness that should have been his face.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Odd heads to the kitchen for a sandwich. He sees Rodion Romanovich applying icing to cakes. Rodion claims to be from Indianapolis, but Odd doesn't believe him and tries to catch him in a half truth. It doesn't work.

Rodion asks Odd have a discussion about subatomic particles behavior. Rodion explains how quantum theory tells us that every point in the universe is connected with every other point, regardless of distance. That being so, people, information or objects should be able to move between one point and any other instantly. What holds us back is our lack of sufficient understanding. With that nugget, Odd excuses himself.

Chapter 23 Analysis

When Odd can't find the mysterious faceless figure he saw, he heads for the kitchen, suddenly hungry. Sister Regina Marie makes him a sandwich in less time than it takes Odd to wash his hands. He takes it and looking for a seat finds himself looking at Rodion. Still suspicious though he is of the Russian, Odd isn't impolite, and takes the chair offered. He watches Romanovich icing one of ten pan cakes laid out, and he tells Odd that baking is something he finds very relaxing. Odd learns that he is from Indiana, and asks him questions trying to trap him in a mistake that would give away the true reason he is staying in the guest quarters. The big Russian feels much the same way about Odd. He has the impression that there is more to Odd than Odd lets on, and Rodion is right. They discuss quantum theory, and Odd is reminded by Rodion that on some scale, we can shape reality. He also speaks of the fact that every point in the universe is connected. Odd is polite, but makes his exit when his sandwich and vanilla coke are done.

He takes his plate and glass back to the kitchen, and Sister Regina Marie mysteriously appears to take them from him. As they are standing there discussing Rodion Romanovich's ability to bake, the bells of the abbey begin to peal. It isn't a regular time for bells, and Odd excuses himself immediately and hurries to see if Brother Constantine is the reason they are ringing.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Quickly Odd heads up the stairs, the noise of the bells now so angry and loud that Odd can't block it out. He gets to the top, and watches dead Brother Constantine. He is psychically sending out waves of poltergeist energy that make the bells ring angrily. Finally the noise is reduced to small harmonic tones.

Odd notices movement behind the bells. Constantine sees the black robed figure and shrinks back. The figure comes forward, there is an empty space where his face should be. He has no hands or feet and wears a necklace of three finger bones with human teeth on either side. He has a woven cord of what looks like human hair around his waist.. He drifts forward and Odd backs up.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Odd hurries to the bell tower in the new abbey, taking care to use an indoor route as he had earlier advised the nuns to stay inside. When he reaches the top of the bell tower, he finds Brother Constantine in a state of agitation. He is jumping from bell to bell, and while he can't physically make the bells ring, his agitated energy comes out in waves, which pushes the bells. The sound is angry and loud, much louder as Odd approaches, and he shrugs his shoulders and holds out his hands with palms up as if to ask Brother Constantine what he was doing, but Constantine doesn't stop. The bells ring just as sharply as before, and Odd puts his hands in his pockets and yawns, feigning boredom. It takes a minute for Odd's mime act to produce the desired result, but finally the bells slow and then stop. Brother Constantine gets off the bells, landing gracefully in front of Odd. Odd notices movement behind the bells and is surprised to see the faceless monk he had chased earlier. Now, he was suddenly nervous. Brother Constantine follows his gaze and shrinks back when he sees the black robed monk.

Odd takes in details that weren't visible to him earlier. For example, the robe is longer and made of what appears to be silk. He is missing both hands and feet. He wears a necklace of human teeth with three finger bones hung in the middle like a pendant, and the cord around his waist appears to be constructed from human hair. Though Odd isn't afraid of dying and being together with Stormy in "service," he still backs up as the monk drifts towards him, as unwilling to be close to him as Brother Constantine appears to be.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Looking straight at Odd, the figure extends a white hand. A noose appears in Death's left hand. Death points at Odd, and Constantine steps forward to draw away Death's attention.

Constantine jumps on the bells as the Reaper suddenly lunges forward and tries twice to put the noose over Odd's neck. Odd knows if the Reaper manages to get the noose on, he will die. In a sudden flash of intuition, Odd says "I know you." Odd repeats himself. The face forms further, then the Reaper leaps out the bell tower window. The Reaper's tunic spreads like wings, he glides to the church roof, then jumps off toward the Abbey's lower roof. He seems to become a million pieces, then reassembles as he lands.

Chapter 25 Analysis

The Reaper makes it obvious that his intention is to hang Odd. He fashions a noose from rope he brought with him, and when Odd is reluctant and backs up, the Reaper hurries forward and pins Odd, trying to slip the noose over his neck. Odd knows if that happens, he will announce his own hanging with the next ringing of the bells. In a flash of intuition, Odd gets the feeling he knows this Reaper and says so. When he does, the Reaper's face begins to take form. He still doesn't know who it is, but after asking again, the face clears even more. Still Odd can't make out who it is. He asks a third time with a little more force, and the Reaper lets him go. Throwing the noose at him, it appears the Reaper prefers to keep his identity a secret, even if it means he doesn't accomplish his task. The Reaper jumps onto the parapet, and after the briefest hesitation, he jumps out into the snowstorm, his tunic spreading out like wings. He seemed to separate into million of pieces not unlike the snowflakes, and Odd watches as he lands on the church roof and then jumps again to the lower roof of the abbey.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Odd returns to the reception area. He has never encountered these kind of spirits. Odd tells Sister Angela that Brother Constantine was murdered. His reluctance to leave this world is because he fears for the Abbey brothers. Odd tells Mother Superior that the murderer came back for Brother Timothy and how he tried to hang him (Odd) in the bell tower. Odd tells her the murderer is someone he knows. Brother Constantine must have witnessed something before he was killed. Maybe Brother Timothy as well. Odd asks her to keep the children safe and to fortify and defend the indoor space.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Odd returns to the reception area where he puts his now dry boots on his cold feet, still trying to figure out who he saw, and why. One thing was certain; he was seeing things he had never before encountered. Sister Angela shows up, and Odd explains that Brother Constantine had been murdered and lingers now because he fears for the safety of the remaining brothers, and doesn't want to leave while they all still believe he hung himself. Mother Superior asks if Brother Constantine is present and when Odd points to where he is standing, Mother Superior tells him they pray for him and miss him every day. Odd continues to surmise that Brother Constantine saw something he shouldn't have and so did Brother Timothy. When she digests that, and the fact that Odd was also almost killed in the bell tower, she comes to the logical conclusion that Odd has also seen something he shouldn't have. He tells her that the only way he can describe it is extraordinary, and he hopes that he can keep the children safe by fortifying and defending.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Fortifying the school is the first priority, but Odd knows he needs more than ten strong and courageous men who aren't afraid to do battle if necessary. Odd and Mother Superior pick five names. Each has some previous experience that would qualify him to be helpful. His plan is to arm the five with bats and wait. Odd decides to drive to the abbey and pick up as many Brothers as possible. Odd wants Romanovich to drive the second vehicle. He doesn't trust Rodion and would prefer that Rodion be outside their defenses rather than inside. Odd plans to leave Rodion in the Abbey.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Odd and Mother Superior sit in her office thinking of which of the Brothers might be best equipped to deal with this kind of problem. Brother Knuckles is, of course, at the top of Odd's list, and together they agree on a total of five names. Odd would like to have three times that, but he thinks the best way to assemble them is to let the five strongest Brothers chosen to select the rest themselves. Two obstacles need to be overcome. The Brothers need to be transported to the school safely, and Odd wants Rodion outside his defenses when trouble starts. He doesn't know why, but somehow he doesn't trust the man. He decides to drive over to the abbey in one vehicle and ask Rodion to drive over in another. Then he will find some reason to leave Rodion behind, and have Brother Salvatore take his place as driver of the second vehicle on the way back. The sooner he can do this the better.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Romanovich is in the kitchen decorating an orange-almond cake. Odd approaches and tries to trick the self-proclaimed librarian. Odd's mistrust of him grows every time he sees him. He asks Rodion to drive the second plow-equipped vehicle, and Rodion agrees. Rodion comments about Odd's knowledge of Indiana and Indianapolis, but Odd lies smoothly. They exchange another barb or two until they were even.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Odd goes to the kitchen to enlist Rodion's help but also to continue the verbal sparring that has become their medium of conversation. Odd continues to try to make Rodion slip up in areas that he should know for sure if he truly is a librarian from Indianapolis. Rodion never slips up, but that only makes Odd distrust him more. There is an air of deceit about the man that bothers Odd. Treachery and villainy are likely more the character traits of this chameleon. He enlists Rodion's aid in driving the second plow equipped vehicle, and Rodion agrees. They plan to meet just before one in the parking garage. Even once arrangements are made, Odd tosses out a statement of half truths to see if Rodion catches them, and of course he does, but it only increases Rodion's suspicion of Odd and his claims that he is just fascinated with everything Indiana. Odd saying he is a self-proclaimed Hoosier is like Rodion saying he's an Indianapolis librarian.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Odd heads toward the garage, and then starts one of the vehicles. Then he shuts it off again and gets out to find Boo waiting. Odd's psychic magnetism kicks in and he realizes that Boo is trying to get him to open the door. He goes through and finds himself in a boiler room. There are monitors in all the rooms, and all seems normal. Odd notices that the pipes disappear behind a panel and approaches warily. Using a tool hanging on the wall, he opens the bolts holding the panel in place.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Odd heads to the garage, thinking about Boo, who seems to summon him. Boo tries to get Odd to pay attention to a particular door, but Odd is consumed with the upcoming expedition and fails to notice the psychic pull that Boo obviously has. Once Odd has a chance to check out one of the vehicles, Boo again takes him to the door, and this time Odd pays attention. He goes in and finds a boiler room with four large boilers that heat the water that runs through the walls to heat the school. Everything seems to be alright, and his eyes follow the pipes until they disappear behind an access panel. A switch beside the panel activates a series of lights behind the panel illuminating a long rectangular tunnel. Boo goes forward with purpose, and Odd tries to follow as quietly as he can in his ski boots, but he is nervous.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

A passage opens on the right, while another heads toward the cooling tower. Boo goes in that direction, and Odd follows him. He thinks about the other passage and how it seems to originate from the new abbey. Odd keeps feeling that something is behind him, twice turning to look, but finds nothing.

When Boo gets to the cooling tower, Odd unlocks the fire door with his universal key, and he and Boo go in. Between two banks of metal boxes, hanging on a clear section of wall is Brother Timothy.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Odd doesn't really want to go into the passageway, but the pull is so strong that even Boo moves with purpose. Two-hundred feet down the passageway, another passage opens on the right and slopes upwards, but Boo stays on the route that heads in the direction of the cooling towers. The other passage seemed to head toward the new abbey, and Odd makes a mental note to try bringing the Brothers back through that passage if possible. He followed Boo, despite the distinct feeling that they were being followed, and for some reason, a story his friend Tommy told him came to mind. It is a story about the three-headed form the Trickster took, and when Tommy recognized him and offered him some of whatever he was smoking, the Trickster left him alone. The next morning, Tommy stumbled on a hiker whose head had been removed; near the body was the middle head the Trickster had on the night before.

Odd didn't know why he was remembering that story now, but his subconscious realized the importance of it and brought it to his mind anyway. He and Boo reach the cooling tower, which he unlocks with his universal key. Upon entering the large room, they finally find the source of their magnetism. Between two banks of metal boxes, hanging on a clear space of wall is Brother Timothy, who had disappeared earlier.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Brother Timothy is suspended up off the floor. Six feet above him, white pegs are driven into the concrete wall, and inch wide lengths of cloth are used to suspend him to them. The scene mocks the crucifixion of Christ. Odd calls out twice, but Brother Timothy appears to be deceased. Wanting to cut him down, Odd closely examines the white bands. The material is icy cold, and Odd's fingers begin to grow numb. The pegs are like wedges driven into the concrete and look like bleached bone. A strong feeling that the Trickster is behind him makes Odd's scalp crawl. He turns to face him, but only Boo is behind him. He turns back to Brother Timothy, just as Timothy's eyes open.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Odd examines more closely how Brother Timothy is suspended. The cloth that is hanging him isn't cloth at all and thirteen pegs are arranged in the concrete wall above him. He calls out Brother Timothy's name twice but gets no response. He wants to take him down though, so he plucks one of the thirteen cords, which produces an ugly, frightening note. After just a beat, the other twelve strands join in like a haunted Theremin, producing an ugly combination of sound that makes Odd's scalp prickle. He examines the wedges, but they seem to be fused with the wall, showing no cracks or seams. Like bleached bone, they seem to have grown out of the wall. He suddenly has the distinct feeling that the Trickster is right behind him. He can feel his hot breath and even smell him, so he whirls to face him head on, but only Boo is behind him. He turns back to Brother Timothy just in time to see Timothy's eyes open.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

More accurately, Brother Timothy's eyelids opened. There are no eyes in the sockets, only a kaleidoscope of little bones. Brother Timothy's body is being used as a chrysalis of some kind. Odd watches as the uberskeleton clicks, flexes, and churns, peeling away the remnants of Brother Tim. Under his tunic, something moves aggressively, and a piton pops out of the wall. Boo is already long gone. Odd pulls the door shut behind him, and doesn't bother to lock it. Although only 400 feet to the school, it seems miles away.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Odd is once again thrust into a situation over which he has no explanation or control. Brother Timothy's eyelids open, but what Odd sees beyond them have no resemblance to eyes. A series of bone like structures make and remake themselves in the sockets, reminding Odd of a terrifying chrysalis. With a mocking similarity to the crucifixion of Christ, Brother Timothy hangs there, while under his tunic an uberskeleton from hell is using him as raw material. Odd can't move, he's so transfixed. When the first piton pops, he snaps out of it, and realizes that Boo is already long gone. The dog had not been compelled to stay and watch. Odd goes out the door, but knew that locking it was a useless gesture, so he didn't stop. A mere four-hundred feet to the school suddenly appears like it is miles away instead, and Odd wishes he'd left with Boo.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Odd keeps running but can't help looking back. It is moving forward along the ceiling and the wall instead of the floor, which makes protecting the children more difficult. It never stops rotating like a machine, but it has the clumsiness of a newborn and falls, which slows it down.

Odd reaches the other end of the tunnel and hears the odd keening sound he'd heard earlier. He races for the service entrance, but trips. Then the bony creature is upon him. Terrified, he watches as patterns make and remake themselves in a display of control and strength. Odd senses vanity and arrogance that is strangely human. He tells it to kiss his posterior and climbs out the service entrance. Unbelievably, it doesn't follow. It goes away. Odd screws the panel back on.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Odd is in his ski boots, but is running for his life. He can't resist looking at the thing that is following him though. It has little resemblance to humans. It uses a bony structure of locomotion, but is nothing like legs we are familiar with—in pairs. Its legs have no conformity and are not confined to ground. It moves just as easily on the ceiling. New to its own locomotion, it loses its grip now and then, giving Odd a chance to stay ahead. He reaches the juncture before it. He hears the same kind of calling coming from the other tunnel and runs faster still towards the access panel. He can still hear the creature clattering behind him, but when he gets to the panel, his legs become entangled. Panicking for a second, he looks down to see his own jacket left behind earlier, but in the time it takes to get untangled, the creature is upon him. Standing facing it, he watches as it makes and remakes itself in a way that smacks of vanity and arrogance. With nothing to lose, he tells it to kiss his ass and drops down, crawling through the panel access. To his surprise, nothing grabs him or follows him through. He doesn't get it. He can't understand why it doesn't follow him out, but after standing there a few minutes, he screws the panel back on.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Odd asks Rodion about his bearskin hat, and he admits that in Russia he killed the bear from which the hat came. He also admits that in Russia, he was not a librarian, but a mortician. He was so good at his trade that he required no formal training and merely was allowed to perform his task.

Odd tells him where to get keys and which SUV to drive. Since he has snow driving experience, Odd asks him to lead. Rodion reminds Odd that under chaos is order looking for a way out, and tells him that if he could see the storm from another perspective, he wouldn't fear it. Odd knows that isn't true. He tells Rodion to lock his doors and not to stop no matter what he sees.

Chapter 34 Analysis

When Rodion gets to the garage, he finds Odd lying on his back staring at the ceiling. Rodion asks Odd what he is doing, and Odd explains that the patterns from the water stains are soothing, mostly because they are so unlike bone. Odd doesn't want to be around anything with bone for a while. He isn't quite ready to go, so instead, he and Rodion talk, but as usual their chats are anything but normal. Rodion shares with Odd that he killed the bear that his bearskin hat was made from, and that he was a mortician in Russia. Rodion even shares the circumstances of his birth; Rodion's mother was an assassin, and Rodion was born during a blizzard.

Odd gets up and tells him which SUV he'll be driving, and that Rodion will be first since Rodion is experienced in snow. He tells Rodion to lock his doors and windows and not to stop for anything. Rodion thinks Odd might be losing it a little, but he agrees. He uses the remote to open the garage door.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Odd drove his SUV out behind Rodion, and Elvis materializes in the seat beside him. Elvis changes from one outfit to another. Odd tells Elvis he's been a blessing to him in a really hard time and nothing would make him happier than to be a blessing to him back. Elvis knew what he meant. With nothing left to say, Odd pulls out into the cold winter wind.

Chapter 35 Analysis

As soon as Odd pulls out of the garage, Elvis materializes. He makes Odd laugh, wearing some of his more silly costumes and then tells Odd that he was the one who taught him how to laugh at himself. Odd is touched, and Elvis continues his pantomime in the passenger seat, changing from one outfit to another, finally settling on the doctor's outfit he wore in *Change of Habit*. He uses the stethoscope on Odd's chest and looks at him meaningfully. Odd knows what he's trying to say and assures him that he's alright, but Elvis isn't convinced. He tells Elvis that Elvis has been a great comfort to him (Odd), and Odd wishes he could fulfill the same need for Elvis and help him move on. Elvis gives the back of Odd's neck a gentle squeeze and gets out of the vehicle.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Odd tells Rodion to go into the Abbey and get the Brothers ready. Odd collects the keys from both vehicles and pockets them, to prevent Rodion from driving back to the school. Odd tries to explain without telling Brother Knuckles too much. Trusting him explicitly, Odd tells him he found Brother Timothy, but there is no body to show the Sheriff.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Odd and Rodion get to the Abbey and find the Brothers ready to go. Odd spends a couple minutes trying to bring Brother Knuckles up to date without telling him any details. He tells him he found Brother Timothy, but also that no body is left to show the Sheriff. Odd wants Rodion to stay behind, but he outsmarts Odd. Odd had taken the keys from both vehicles on the way in, but while he was speaking privately to Brother Knuckles, Rodion loaded half the Brothers into his SUV and using the second set of keys which he had also pocketed, drove off before Odd could ask him to stay behind. Feeling foolishly outmaneuvered, Odd gives his keys to Brother Knuckles to drive back. Brother Knuckles tells him that this is just God's will, but Odd is not convinced.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

It is anything but silent in the second SUV as they follow Rodion back to the school. One by one the Brothers ask questions, and Odd finds ways to evade them. They are almost back to the school when out of the storm comes a scuttling collection of bones.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Brother Knuckles drives the second SUV with Odd and the remaining Brothers, following Rodion in the first. He is still disturbed that he didn't foresee the second set of keys scenario, and though the Brothers are full of questions, Odd isn't ready to answer them yet. He wants to have them all together in the school before he tries to describe what he has seen, and what Brother Timothy has become. Brother Quentin makes the observation that Odd's left eye twitches when he is being evasive, which is often during this drive. He is about to debate that observation when he turns and out the window sees Boo and Elvis capering across the courtyard together. It is the unabridged joy with which they romp together that makes Odd glad for once that he has the gift that allows him to "see." His smile prompts questions from Brother Knuckles and he explains that Elvis might be moving soon. Brother Knuckles is thrilled, and Brother Quentin is even more confused. Still, Odd reveals nothing. They almost make it to the school uneventfully, but just before they do, one of those bony structures lumbers out in front of them.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Part of Odd hopes that he is the only one who can see the monsters, but that hope is quickly dispelled. Rodion lurches to a halt as a structure of bones as big as two horses running nose to tail, lumbers across the road in front of him and out of sight over the embankment. Odd wants to get inside, but Rodion's SUV blocks the way. Brother Knuckles honks the horn, and Rodion rolls forward slowly, but before he can get anywhere, the creature is back displaying much more malevolent intention. With pincer-like extrusions, it reaches forward, grabs Rodion's SUV and tips it on its side.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Odd often wishes he wasn't the only one who sees what he does, but right now, he hopes he is alone in his vision of the bones. He doesn't get to hope for long as the Brother's exclaim in one fashion or another. Rodion stops to let it cross in front of him, but instead of getting going right away again, he hesitates, seemingly waiting for the monster to return. Odd wants to get inside where there is some hope of safety, and gets Brother Knuckles to honk, but by the time Rodion gets rolling, it is too late. The creature picks up his vehicle and puts it on its side.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

The tires turn slowly in the air as the SUV lays there, with no easy way for the Brothers to exit. The Russian and eight Monks stay inside while the beast, rather than pursuing them, retreats a little and watches them. Brother Knuckles backs up his SUV then builds up the revolutions and accelerates. He turns at the last possible moment slamming into the creature, and when it explodes, it takes the windshield and Odd's courage with it. They quickly help the Monks and Rodion out of the other SUV. While most of them gather their tools, Rodion scoops a hat full of creature pieces, grabs a briefcase, and heads for the school. Seventeen Monks, Rodion, and Odd arrive at the school with their tools. It is obvious that Brother Leopold and Rodion are in some way aligned.

Chapter 39 Analysis

When the beast steps back after puncturing the tires of the first SUV and turning it on its side, Odd can't believe that it doesn't just climb inside and begin hauling the Monks out one at a time and treating them to the same fate as Brother Timothy. Instead, it stands back and watches, and before Odd can figure out what to do, Brother Knuckles has their SUV in reverse and is leaving. Odd is horrified, thinking they are leaving the Brothers behind, but Knuckles quickly corrects him. When they hit the creature and it explodes, leaving pieces of itself in Odd's lap, he shrieks like a girl and feeling like one, too, can't resist the urge to pull his feet up onto the seat, once he'd knocked the pieces onto the floor. He is understandably surprised to see Rodion picking the pieces up with the obvious intentions of bringing them inside.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Romanovich spills out his cap full of pieces. One of the larger pieces shook and clattered apart into four exactly the same pieces, the rest began shaking and separating into smaller pieces. Brother Leopold and Rodion exchange glances. Odd knows they knew each other previously.

The Brothers asks Odd what he knows. He is reluctant, so the Abbot tells the Brothers to consider this a confession, and the Brothers take his story on faith. Rodion asks if he knows when the trouble might start. Odd had counted only seven bodachs, which meant they still had time. Rodion suggests they count again. Going from room to room, Odd counts 72 and knows more would be on the second floor. "It's coming soon."

Chapter 40 Analysis

Odd is understandably nervous when Rodion spills his hat full out onto the concrete. The Brothers gather around and watch as these dice from some netherworld separate and separate, becoming smaller and smaller until they disappear. Odd is more afraid of the apparent relationship between Rodion and Brother Leopold, but the rest of the Brothers are now looking to Odd for explanations. That leaves Odd in the awkward position of having to tell them all his long-kept secret. He is more than reluctant to do so, even though the Abbot assures him that the Brothers will treat it as a confession. The fact that Rodion is not a member of the Abbey, and Leopold's dedication is suspect, makes him nervous but he is left with little choice. The Brothers take it all on faith, and seem to believe him absolutely, which is a big relief to Odd.

Rodion manages to cut to the heart of things, asking when things will start and suggesting they look in on the bodach situation again. When they go upstairs with all of their tools, Odd is shocked to find seventy-two bodachs, and knowing there are probably more, he tells the Abbot that it will happen soon. Very soon.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Odd asks Sister Angela about Justine and the circumstances surrounding her death. Specifically, he wants to know if Justine had actually been dead for a small period of time when her father tried to drown her, but been revived. The fact about Justine's past confirmed what Odd had already suspected because it is the only way that he could make sense of the fact that Justine had been a bridge between Stormy and him. Odd then asks Mother Superior if there are any other children who had been clinically dead and then revived. Sister Miriam and Sister Angela confirm that a few other children, and Odd to talk to them. What he wants is a child like Justine, who was clinically dead, but revived again and retains the ability to speak.

Chapter 41 Analysis

While the Monks are left to fortify the stairwells, Odd is approached by Mother Superior. She asks if Rodion is doing anything, and Odd confesses that he is only skulking and scheming but better in his eyesight than not. When offering help, Odd tells the Sisters that what he needs most is to find a child like Justine, who had been clinically dead at one time, but who survived and whose speech capability also survived. He realized that Justine is a bridge because she had actually been dead, and that is why Stormy was able to communicate to him in that crude way. Now, needing more information, he needs a child who can still speak. Sister Miriam, who is the only one who doesn't know about Odd's gifts continues to see him as a special young man surrounded in clouds of mystery.



Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

Odd returns to Jacob's room. He asks Jacob questions, but can't find the way into Jacob's mind. Rodion stands at the doorway, impatiently. Odd notices another sketchpad and opens it to see a perfect rendering of the ice monster. Rodion is about to enter the room, but Odd stops him, holding the book up instead. He sees more detailed drawings of the ice creature, and a drawing of the hooded, faceless monk with the necklace of teeth. Just then several bodachs come in, and he quickly closes the book.

Chapter 42 Analysis

Odd is running out of time. He returns to Jacob's room and finds a second sketch pad with detailed drawings of the ice creature and the faceless monk. Odd is going to show it to Rodion but bodachs come and Jacob's secret is safe.



Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Three bodachs gather around Jacob, seemingly oblivious of Odd and Rodion. When the bodachs leave the room, Jacob says the robed and faceless figure is the Neverwas, which Odd interprets as Death. The Neverwas first came to Jacob in the hospital, he was seven, and the Neverwas had a face, but it hurts to remember. Jacob says that the ice monsters are like Neverwas's dogs. Neverwas teaches them to kill and sends them to do bad things. When Odd tells him his mother would have been proud of him, his face softens.

Chapter 43 Analysis

The bodachs don't stay long with Jacob, and it's a good thing. Despite the small amount of information that can be gleaned from Jacob because he talks very little, and to very few people, Odd manages to learn that the hooded and faceless monk that he saw in the bell tower is the same figure that Jacob refers to as the Neverwas. He is pretty sure that the Neverwas is really Death. Jacob told him that the first time he saw the Neverwas, when he was in the hospital as a child, the Neverwas had a face, but it hurts too bad to remember. The Neverwas came to the hospital and told Jacob's mother to let Jacob die. The Neverwas wouldn't go near Jacob, let alone touch him. Jacob doesn't grasp that this could only have been his father.

He also tells Odd that there are several ice monsters, and they are the dogs of the Neverwas. He teaches them and then sends them to kill. Lastly, he reminds Odd of something his mother taught him. Everyone has a grace, which is a gift given by God, and it is our choice whether we use it for the betterment of humankind or not use it all.



Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Romanovich praises Odd's ability to extract information from Jacob. Odd knows the key is with Jacob and his father. Mother Superior approaches, scattering bodachs. Odd asks her the name of Jacob's father, she says it is unknown. Odd reminds her that they have to find a child like Justine, but who can speak. Flossie Bodenblatt, had been through it all, but is a child of spirit and has regained the ability to speak. She had been brought back to her room for Odd.

Chapter 44 Analysis

After leaving Jacob, Odd and Rodion run into Sister Angela. Odd asks her about Jacob's father, but she tells him there is nothing in the file. Odd is under the impression that Rodion knows more than he is telling, and when he voices his opinion on that subject, Rodion doesn't disagree. In fact, Odd openly discusses his distrust of Rodion, and his belief that he is in the Abbey under false pretenses. Sister Angela is disturbed to the degree that she is almost ready to throw Romanovich out into the cold and probably still would have if she'd have believed that they could have. Rodion tells Odd that Odd already knows who the father is, but doesn't want to admit it because it will be difficult for him.

Odd doesn't believe anything Rodion says and makes no secret of his feelings. He reminds Sister Angela of his quest to find a girl like Justine, and it turns out that Sister Angela has found one. Flossie Bodenblatt fits the criteria and is in her room waiting for Odd.



Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary

Flossie is sitting on the floor with a book about dogs. One night her cousin showed up high on something and shot and killed her family. He then sodomized the 7-year-old girl until the drugs began to wear off. Then he fed the exhaust into the car, and, taking her with him, tried to kill himself. He lost his nerve and called 911. Odd explains that he could lightly hypnotize Flossie and then communicate with someone who might be able to tell them what is going to happen, but he can't do it and have her suffer the painful memories.

Rodion confesses that under the circumstances, he can trust them, and gives them his NSA card. Sister Angela asks Odd and Rodion who Jacob's father is, and they say Brother John Heineman, the patron of their Abbey.

Chapter 45 Analysis

Flossie turns out to be so much like a younger Stormy that Odd simply can't bring himself to make the connection. He can barely sit beside her and keep his emotions in check, and after just a couple of minutes, he knows he can't. He explains the situation to Sister Angela, telling her that Stormy has tried to communicate with him twice through Justine, and that he believes she could tell him what is going to happen, but he can't use an innocent. Sister Angela takes it all in without a whisper of disbelief, as, surprisingly, does Rodion. When they leave Flossie and go down to the pharmacy so they can speak freely, Odd and Rodion finally tell Sister Angela who they think is Jacob's father. John Heineman. Brother John, the patron who gave up all his money for the abbey they are in now. They fear he wants all the children dead. When Sister Angela expresses disbelief, Odd reminds her that she has yet to see the uberskeleton.



Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary

Romanovich explains that John Heineman got his fiancée, Jennifer Calvino, pregnant. She carried the child to term, much to John's dismay. He wanted nothing to do with his deformed son, and his hostility was so intense that Jennifer thought it best they had no contact. She raised Jacob lovingly alone, and he thrived right up until she became ill. She arranged for the church charity to care for Jacob for his remaining years.

Heineman, meanwhile, had become famous and wealthy, and in the process of his research, he discovered that when the universe was viewed from a subatomic scale, there was indisputable design. He looked at his life, and as penance, gave his fortune away and retreated to a monastery where he funded the facility that cares for children, including Jacob.

Months earlier, John contacted old colleagues, saying he had found a way to prove the existence of God. Because of the related security risks, someone from the NSA had been a monastery guest ever since, Rodion was the most recent. They became alarmed when Brother Constantine committed suicide; Heineman ended all outside contact. Brother John may not be aware of the violence he has unleashed.

Chapter 46 Analysis

Despite his earlier instincts, Odd now finds himself beginning to trust Rodion Romanovich. It helps that he is from the NSA, but it is more than that. Perhaps it had something to do with the way he talked to Sister Angela about his experience with Stormy, or about his feelings about Jacob's father, but either way, Odd finds that the more Rodion explains, the more he trusts him. When Rodion lays it all out, it makes perfect sense, and Odd actually agrees with him, and finds himself liking him even a little. The fact that he is quite droll certainly plays into it, and when their conversation in the pharmacy is finished, Odd finds himself agreeing to go down to John's Mew with Rodion as if they were old friends. He only hopes they will survive the experience.



Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary

Odd and Romanovich deduce that if Brother John is responsible for the monsters and is in some way in control of them, the child most at risk is Jacob. Whether Heineman is aware or not, it seems that Jacob is the target. They enlist the help of Brothers Knuckles and Maxwell, and go to Jacob's room, where they find him embroidering. They check the windows, finding that the casements open outward and are made of bronze able to withstand attack. Satisfied that only the stairwells need be guarded, Odd asks Jacob if he's all right. He tells Odd that "he wants him dead," and Odd tells Jacob that "he" can't have what "he" wants. Odd tells Jacob that his mother called him "Neverwas" because he never was around and he never will be. Now Odd promises him that Neverwas won't get him because they love him. Jacob makes eye contact, and asks Odd if Odd is in danger. Jacob asks if Odd has gone to confession, and Odd says he has and Jacob says then he is ready. Odd squats down beside Jacob, and Jacob tells him he is sorry. Sorry about his girl. He tells Odd that he knows something Odd doesn't. He knows what Stormy saw in him. Then he leaned his head on Odd's shoulder.

Chapter 47 Analysis

While bodachs are not concentrating in any particular area, because they believe John Heineman is at the root of the disturbances, Odd and Rodion think Jacob is the child most at risk. Because John was so vehemently against having anything to do with him as a child, it stands to reason that any monstrous creation of his would be bent to claim his son as its first trophy. As such, their fortifications concentrate on keeping all the children safe, but with special care taken to keeping Jacob safe.

For Odd, gifts arrive in the most unexpected places, and at the most unexpected times. Jacob is one of these gifts. Seeing right into his heart, he tells Odd that he knows what it was that Stormy saw in him, and what it is that Odd still doesn't see in himself. It leaves Odd speechless, as does the simple gesture from Jacob of putting his arm around Odd's shoulder and looking him straight in the eye when speaking to him. Conversation of any kind is a big step for Jacob, but with Odd Jacob progresses leaps forward in each visit.



Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

After doing all they can to make sure the children are secure, Rodion and Odd go to John's Mew. Rodion goes into the only room not occupied by a child and opens a case. Inside are two guns, one of which he offers to Odd, but Odd refuses. Odd prefers to use self-defense methods. They ride the elevator to the basement, hoping to use the same access tunnel Odd had been in earlier. They reach the panel and Odd takes the tool off the wall. They wait for a moment, but hearing nothing, Odd backs off the first screw. He stops after a couple of turns and bangs on the panel and immediately hears a frenzied clatter of rage and keening that seem to be coming from several voices. Carefully Odd tightens the bolt, and they ride the elevator to the ground floor. The only other way to reach the monastery is to cross the courtyard in the snow.

Chapter 48 Analysis

Rodion offers Odd a pistol as protection for their trip to John's Mew, but Odd won't take it. He'd rather use whatever weapon makes itself available at the time but definitely prefers not to use guns. It has always been that way, even before a gun took Stormy's life. Rodion thinks Odd is strange but puts both weapons in his pocket instead. They go down to the basement in the elevator, intending to go to the monastery by way of the tunnel Odd was in earlier, but when they begin to undo the first bolt, Odd is aware of sound on the other side. To be sure, he bangs on the door and is rewarded right away with an unearthly keening. Odd tightens the bolt again, and Odd and Rodion will be forced to make their way across the courtyard in the blizzard. At the door, Rodion tells Odd he wishes his wife were here. She'd enjoy this, he tells Odd.



Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

Deciding the obvious exits would be watched, Odd and Rodion left by climbing out Sister Angela's window. Fearing they would lose each other in the blinding snow, Odd took a section of drapery cord secured one end to his wrist, Rodion did the same. Odd explains that his psychic magnetism will almost always take him to the person he is thinking about, and he didn't want to lose Rodion in the process. They make it to the stairwell leading to John's Mew in a matter of minutes. Rodion translates the words over the door: light from light. Odd takes that to be a passage from the Bible, Rodion sees something entirely different: that out of the invisible can be born the visible, and that thought is energy that can be turned into the object imagined.

Odd puts his palm against the plasma screen and the pneumatic door opens. Odd believes they are in an elevator going down; Rodion agrees. The door opens into a vestibule and Odd and Rodion went directly to the door with "Forever and Ever" written above it. The door opens and in the center of the room on a Persian rug four chairs sit, each with a table lamp beside it. Three were lit, and in one of those chairs Brother John sits waiting.

Chapter 49 Analysis

Rodion and Odd leave the school through Sister Angela's window for fear that other exits may be watched by the ice monsters. Reasonably sure his psychic magnetism would work, Odd's biggest concern was keeping Rodion with him, so he took a length of drapery cord and they each tied an end to their wrists. They set out, and as Odd promised, found the entrance and stone steps quickly and without incident. Rodion is impressed, but Odd claims it is no more a talent than using his kidney is. Going down the stairs, Rodion reads the sayings above the doors, and his interpretations of them are quite different from Odd's ideas of what the sayings mean. Odd had always attributed them to the Bible and as tributes to God, but Rodion sees them as brash and even full of hubris in the case of for ever and ever. Odd had never even considered it from that perspective.

When they reach the inner sanctum, they find Brother John waiting for them. He is sitting on one of four chairs. Next to those four chairs are four lamps. Three are lit, and two sit waiting for Rodion and Odd.



Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary

Stepping into John's Mew, Odd and Romanovich take the seats obviously prepared for them. Odd sees no traces of hostility or suspicion in Brother John's eyes, and he greets Odd as warmly as ever. Rodion reintroduces himself as an agent of the NSA. He offered identification to back it up, but Brother John asks Odd's opinion instead of looking at it. Odd confirms. Brother John confirms everything Rodion has already heard. He tells Rodion and Odd that he's created a model that reveals the deepest structure of what we understand as reality. Under all the apparent chaos there is order again, the order of thought. He knows the model is correct because he has applied it and it works. The model was created by the computers after inputting all the relevant data to eliminate human bias entirely.

To prove his point, he claps his hands once and the dark walls become a light show of intricate and delicate patterns and harmonic and flowing colors, changing and reforming in front of their eyes. Odd was overwhelmed by emotion he couldn't explain. It has the same effect on Rodion. This was a representation of God's thought based on the model. Brother John clapped his hands twice and the "light show" disappeared. It brings out such waves of emotion that it is impossible to look at it for more than a minute at a time. Brother John sums it up: "God imagines the world, and the world becomes." Humans also have this ability to create because we have been given will, thought, and imagination. Most importantly, his work brought him right back to his faith. Having applied the model and its principles, he'd created life.

Chapter 50 Analysis

Brother John welcomes them, and when Rodion and Odd have cleared up the identity issues, Brother John begins to explain the complexities of his work. He is convinced he has found the basis of everything, and out of all the chaos comes order at the very deepest structural level. Odd and Rodion are having trouble grasping what Brother John is saying, and still doubt him, but Brother John insists that the data is pure and all he did was feed it into the computers, which did the rest. Everything else was based on that, and he believed it because it worked.

He claps his hands and the oceans of color that appear where dark walls used to be are astounding. Mesmerizing, the patterns shift and changes, lines and shapes mixing with color that so profoundly affects Odd that he feels as though he should get to his knees. There is obvious order in the complexities of it. Brother John explains that this is just a simulation of God's thoughts, based on the model, but that people can't look at it for more than a minute because it causes such profound emotional responses. Clapping twice, the colors vanish, but he isn't finished with surprises. He explains simply that God thought and the world became. On some level, he continues, humans have also been



given this gift. He knows because he has put it to practice, and conspiratorially, he tells them that he has created life.

Odd asks Rodion if he's ever seen the movie, Forbidden Planet and when Rodion says no, Odd suggests that they watch it together one day soon.



Chapter 51

Chapter 51 Summary

Rodion wants clarification about this "created life," so Brother John says he will create a floppy for them. He concentrates, and then explains that the room is wired to him specifically; and in front of them on the floor small cubes appear very similar to the ones into which the ice monster disappeared. When it is finished, Brother John is looking at it with a mixture of joy and wonder. He tells him that it isn't proof of God. At first Odd doesn't see it, but then he looks closer at what at first glance is a cute and cuddly, little critter fully formed, with big eyes—but the eyes are empty. The creature has no soul, though it displays indications of life.

Rodion tells Brother John that for all of his soul searching, John doesn't know himself very well. He is still the man who rejected his deformed son, no matter how much he has tried to change and no matter how contrite he is. The man that behaved that way is still inside him, and will be until the day he meets God himself.

Meanwhile in the school, dusk and the quiet lulls the Brothers into complacency. Brother Knuckles sits at the door to Jacob's room with a baseball bat, and Brother Maxwell is at the stairway. Both are lost in their own thoughts when the ice creature comes. Brother Maxwell whispers to Brother Knuckles to alert him, but Brother Knuckles doesn't hear him. He walks over to tell him when he realizes he's left his bat behind. He goes back to retrieve it just as the glass cracks.

Chapter 51 Analysis

Brother John "creates" a floppy for them, which is simply a furry little creature with big eyes. Harmless, and relatively cute looking at first glance, there are a couple of problems with his creation. The first is the method by which it grew. It began its life as a collection of little cubes that looked exactly like the collection of cubes from the ice monster that vanished before their eyes in the school. The second is that when you look a little closer, you see that there is no life in the eyes. The eyes are without soul, which makes this an abomination, not a creation of God or representative of God.

Rodion points out to Brother John that inside him is still the same man that shunned his deformed son, and while he has certainly made efforts to change, that man still lurked in him somewhere. It is clear that Brother John disagrees.

Meanwhile, the school is under attack. At the same time as Odd and Rodion are bearing witness to the creation of a floppy, an ice creature is making itself known to the school. Not merely on the window, this time the beast appears to be coming in. The glass cracks in the stairwell as Brother Maxwell calls for Brother Knuckles.



Chapter 52

Chapter 52 Summary

At the school, the ice creature is slowly breaking his way in, but Brother Knuckles leans against his bat unafraid. Brother Maxwell admits to being afraid, but Knuckles tells him that he has nothing to fear. In his room, Jacob continues his embroidery, unafraid and seemingly unaffected.

The atmosphere in the Mew is disturbing. Rodion asks Brother John how he gets rid of his creations, because unlike real life, they do not decompose or decay, and Brother John tells them that he just thinks them away. Rodion tells him to get rid of the abomination, and with some reluctance, he does.

Rodion asks Brother John if he is aware of the other abominations he has created, and though it is clear that Brother John is unsure. Some other part of John, the Other John, made these, and the Other John was nothing more than an angry child. Odd shows him the ice monster drawing, and explains that Jacob calls them the dogs of the Neverwas, and Jennifer called him (Brother John) the Neverwas. Jacob remembers him telling his mother to let the infection take him. He remembers it all. At first denying it, he looks at the drawing more closely. He tells him that the same obsessed child who used forty-seven sets of Lego to build a model of quantum foam had to have created this creature, and slowly Brother John agrees. Most of all, he tells Brother John that it isn't too late to fix it all, but Brother John sadly disagrees.

Chapter 52 Analysis

While Rodion is explaining to Brother John that some part of him must have manifested the beasts that they have seen, Odd is thinking about the creatures here at the abbey versus every other supernatural or other worldly creature he's come across. Without exception, the others all died by decomposition, not deconstruction. The very vanity displayed by each of the creations seen here point to something created as opposed to something of the nature he's dealt with before. Rodion makes him "think away" the creature on the floor, and asks him about the other creatures, but John denies having anything to do with them.

One of the ice creatures is attempting to break into the school, but Brother Knuckles is not afraid. He counsels Brother Maxwell to be unafraid as well because they have some advantages over the creature outside. The biggest of which is that they are essentially good, and the fact that they are made out of flesh and blood doesn't hurt either.

Odd has a sudden flash of understanding and tells Brother John that the Other John who is creating these creatures is like an angry child, but that there is still time to fix all of this. There was still time to heal the wounded and broken heart of the boy who was his son. Brother John sadly disagrees.



Chapter 53

Chapter 53 Summary

Without warning, the figure of Death comes toward Odd out of nowhere and knocks him flying. Odd moves as fast as he can after landing, and a wing chair quickly follows, crashing where he had been. This time Death has the face of Brother John. Death came at Odd again. Rodion pulls out his pistol and fires at death until he dissolves, but as quickly as he does, he rematerializes and it begins again. Rodion quickly empties another clip into it, noticing that Brother John stands in the corner with his eyes closed, creating it again and again.

At the school, Brother Maxwell realizes that the ice monster isn't afraid of them. A tentacle came through the window and ejected or broke off; it immediately reformed into a smaller version of itself. Brother Knuckles took two good swings and it broke into a million pieces but more were being dropped through the window. Brother Maxwell tells Brother Fletcher to remove Jacob. The two Brothers keep swinging, and then Brother Maxwell was pierced by one that rematerialized behind him. He watches in horror as Brother Maxwell is transformed into one of these things, shredding the storm suit as it emerges. The noise is horrendous, and they hope that Jacob is safe.

In desperation, to stop Death from reforming, Rodion shoots Brother John twice. The impact takes him off his feet, and he is unable to reform himself. Death reached Rodion, but after laying one hand on his shoulder, did nothing else. Then Death dissolved into a million pieces.

Chapter 53 Analysis

Suddenly, Death appeared and knocked Odd flying. Odd got out of the way quickly and managed to avoid the wing chair that followed, but Death continues to stalk him. Odd notices that this time Death has John's face - but not the face that Odd is used to. This face is hard, mean and in control. Rodion comes to his aid immediately, pulling out his pistol and shooting Death until he dissolves, but immediately he begins to reassemble. Rodion notices Brother John standing off to one side of the room, eyes closed, and concentrating, and did the only thing he could. He shot Brother John twice. Brother John fell to the floor, and Death turned to look at John, surprised that his creator has been stopped. Then Death dissolves for good.

Brother Maxwell and Knuckles are left to fight off the ice beast, which has broken the window and is slipping in tentacles that break off and become miniature versions of itself inside. Swinging with all his might, Brother Knuckles manages to break one into a many pieces, and Brother Maxwell shouts at Brother Fletcher to get Jacob out. Brother Maxwell hits one, but behind him another one pierces him, and Brother Knuckles

watches in horror as Brother Maxwell becomes one of them. Brother Knuckles retreats and gets help barring the doors, leaving what is left of Maxwell on the other side.



Chapter 54

Chapter 54 Summary

Before midnight that evening, the first group of NSA agents arrive. Odd isn't sure how Romanovich contacted them. The NSA create cover stories for the deaths of Brothers Maxwell and Timothy, and decide to put Brother John's body on ice for a year until he wouldn't be linked and then announce that he'd had a massive heart attack. The icy monsters disappeared into tiny cubes when John had been shot, so there were no more casualties. Brother John's array of computers are impounded by the NSA. Everyone was sworn to secrecy, under threat of lifelong imprisonment, and Abbot Bernard decides to leave his position between Christmas and New Years. He had supported John Heineman and embraced his idea that God could be found through science.

Three days later, Rodion comes to Odd's suite with wine, and everything necessary to make sandwiches. Elvis hung around while they ate, and Odd had the feeling he was waiting to make a spectacular exit. Odd is ready to go back to Pico Mundo. Rodion is headed to California where he intends to meet up with his wife when she returns from space. She was aboard an orbiting platform, and he can discuss no more about it. Odd tells Rodion that he is a little bit worried about the information in the computers, and what would happen if it got into the wrong hands. Rodion puts his mind at ease, telling Odd he made applesauce out of the information before he even called anyone in. Relieved, they toast each other.

Chapter 54 Analysis

The flurry of activity around Bartholomew's is more than they have ever had before, but things begin to settle down into kind of a sad resignation. Odd regrets not figuring things out early enough to save Brother Timothy and Rodion regrets not understanding that if he had shot Brother John sooner, he might have saved Brother Maxwell, but out of it all, they have become friends. Odd trusts him. Odd was told not to discuss any of what he'd seen or heard, but he still wrote the manuscript as a way of sorting it all out in his head. A mass is said for Brothers Timothy and Maxwell, and even Brother John is forgiven for his misguided and troubled intentions. Even the Abbot steps down, unable to excuse his willing acceptance of the attempt Brother John made to use science to prove God's existence.

Odd decides to return to Pico Mundo, sensing it is time, and Rodion shares that he is headed to California to meet his wife, who is returning from time aboard a space station. They drink a toast to each other, having become new friends.



Chapter 55

Chapter 55 Summary

Having already said his goodbyes, Odd chose to leave while the Brothers would be at Mass and the Sisters would be busy getting the children up and ready for the day. The Cadillac pulled up to the guest house, and Odd hurries to tell Ozzie not to bother getting out, but it is too late. Odd puts his bags in the trunk, and after closing it, Odd is surprised to see that all the Brothers were gathered quietly on the steps along with Sister Angela and a dozen of the nuns. Sister Angela unrolls a piece of paper—Jacob had drawn Odd and given it to Sister Angela to put on her wall. There is a riddle that links the three portraits on Mother Superior's wall, and he tells her that the company is too rarefied for him. He confesses that he can't figure out the riddle. Sister Angela tells him that our country offered to make George Washington a king, but he declined. The second portrait of Flannery O'Connor, a renowned writer, lived so quietly that most in her community had no idea who she was. The final portrait is of Harper Lee, who despite being offered uncounted prizes and accolades for her book, she politely turned down all reporters and even professors who made the trip to see her.

Her eyes sparkled brightly as she told him, "Dominus vobiscum, Oddie." He returns her sentiment. When he gets into the Cadillac, he notices Elvis and Boo in the back seat. The Brothers and Sister all stood on the guest house steps and watched until Odd was out of sight. He knew, because he kept looking back until they were out of eyesight of St. Bartholomew's.

Chapter 55 Analysis

Odd tries to leave quietly, but finds that the Brothers and Sisters have other ideas. They aren't about to let him leave without making a little bit of a fuss. Instead of attending to their regular chores, they all gather quietly on the guest house steps to say goodbye. Sister Angela shows Odd a picture Jacob drew of him, and tells him she intends to put it on her wall of fame. He is to join the likes of George Washington, Flannery O'Connor and Harper Lee, who all share the same quality. Humility. All had been offered accolades and enticements and turned them down. All lived a life that used the best of their gifts and asked nothing in return. Odd belonged on the wall, even if he didn't see it right away, and his humility on the whole subject just confirmed it.

Sister Angela says goodbye and kisses his cheek, and he kisses hers back. Then he got into the Cadillac beside his friend and mentor, Ozzie Boone, noticing Elvis and Boo in the back seat, and they drove away. The Brothers and Sisters stood there watching, and Odd kept looking back, until they were out of sight.



Chapter 56

Chapter 56 Summary

The Cadillac had been refitted to accommodate the weight and dimensions Ozzie's 400 pounds, and they were out of the mountains in record time. Odd asks Ozzie for a favor, knowing that he is a wealthy man, would he put together a trust fund for a hundred thousand dollars in the name of Flossie Bodenblatt, to aid her in working with dogs. Ozzie tells Odd that it would be his pleasure not only to create the fund but to also oversee its administrations. Odd is forever grateful. Then Odd is struck with a sudden urge so strong that he can't ignore it.

Knowing his life is not his own, and trusting that one day he will give it in a worthy cause, Odd follows his intuitions wherever they take him, in service of them. He asks Ozzie to pull over. They get out together and Ozzie voices how disappointed he is that they won't be spending Christmas together, and how disappointed the townsfolk of Pico Mundo will be. Odd hugs him, but he has to follow wherever this leads. Elvis and Boo stand with Odd on the side of the road watching Ozzie drive away. Boo falls into step with Odd and Elvis. Elvis starts walking backward in front of Odd, grinning like he has a secret. Elvis disappears slowly still walking backward in front of Odd. It would be the last time Odd sees Elvis. Boo was still with him, though. He is the first ghost dog to ever have joined Odd and had been at the monastery a year before Odd came. Odd liked to think that Boo was waiting for him. It took a few minutes before he realizes that someone has fallen into step beside him.

Odd greets him respectfully, and he tips his hat, smiling his great smile at Odd. Odd tells him he's honored to do the same thing for him as he had for Elvis. He winks at Odd, and just a few days before Christmas, they follow the highway—Odd, Boo, and Frank Sinatra's ghost.

Chapter 56 Analysis

Ozzie is more than just friend and mentor to Odd. He is like a father to him, and the big man feels that Odd is like a son to him. Therefore, when Odd asks him to apply some of the wealth he has accumulated as a writer to a trust fund for Flossie Bodenblatt, Ozzie readily agrees. He is actually thrilled that he can finally do something for Odd, as in the past Odd has given him little opportunity to do so. That easily, a trust fund for working with dogs in the amount of a hundred thousand dollars is established.

Shortly after accomplishing that, Odd is stricken with the urge to get out of the vehicle. He asks Ozzie to pull over, and though he does, Ozzie is not happy about the fact that Odd is not coming all the way back to Pico Mundo, but Odd reminds him that his life is not his own. He lives in service to his gift. Reluctantly, Ozzie hugs him goodbye, and Odd tells him not to worry. He has Boo and Elvis with him. They watch Ozzie leave, and



walking away Odd runs on instinct, with Boo, the first ghost dog he has ever seen and who had been at the Abbey for about a year before Odd came (Odd liked to think he was waiting for him to arrive) and Elvis, who playfully walked backwards in front of Odd. "You can go," Odd tells him. It isn't the first time he's told Elvis that, but this time Elvis grins at Odd and still walking backwards, disappears. Odd walks with Boo and suddenly realizes that someone has fallen into step with him. Turning to see Frank Sinatra is a bit of a shock, but Odd tells him he'll be honored to help if he can, and winking at him, Frank smiles that smile of his, and they set out on the path that pulls Odd to it. Christmas is only days away.



Characters

Odd Thomas (Brother Odd)

Odd Thomas is twenty-one years old, and after losing his best friend and girlfriend sixteen months previously, Odd has chosen to stay at St. Bartholomew's Abbey for an indefinite period of time. He is picking up the pieces slowly, but still has trouble finding any real purpose or meaning in his life since her death. Originally from Pico Mundo, Odd is vouched for by his longtime friend and police chief of Pico Mundo, Wyatt Porter, and the town's Catholic priest, Father Llewellyn. Father Llewellyn was Stormy's uncle, and Stormy was the love of Odd's life.

Odd Thomas has the uncertain gift of being able to see dead people. In fact, he sees more than just dead people. He also sees vile and frightening creatures he has named bodachs after the bodachs of British Isles lore. Troubled souls approach him for help, and Odd does all he can to ease their transition to the next spiritual level, at which point he no longer sees them. Over the years, some of his more regular companions have included Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra. When Stormy died, her soul didn't linger and Odd misses her terribly. He has trouble finding meaning in his life since her death, and this is a large part of the reason that he left his home town of Pico Mundo and set himself up for a stay at St. Bartholomew's Abbey in the Sierra Nevada mountains. In an effort to divorce himself from dead people and the responsibility of having to help or being unable to help them, he ran, but found that his life followed him. There is no place to hide when you have this kind of gift.

Most at home in blue jeans and t-shirts, Odd is not particularly handsome, but makes up for his lack of good looks with an abundance of charm and personal magnetism. Odd Thomas was plain and simply very difficult not to like. He just grew on you. With strong moral standards and spiritual understanding, he spends most of his time helping those who are in distress. When he isn't helping the recently departed on their way, Odd Thomas is a fry cook and a very good one at that. He is a master at the griddle and is often complimented on his ability.

Bodachs

A supernatural entity seen only by Odd Thomas and Boo, the Abbey's only dog, Bodachs are inky black and have little more substance than the shadows themselves. They slink along, low to the ground, as large as an average man. Suggestive of something that resembles a wolf, Bodachs are sleek, sinister and featureless. Though Bodachs are actually part of the folklore of the British Isles and are supposed to be vile beasts that slither down chimneys and steal children that misbehave, they are as close to describing what Odd sees as he can get.



Moving with intention, the Bodachs travel without leaving so much as a ripple in their wake. Odd has seen them enter through keyholes, through small chinks in window panes and even by chimneys as well, but no matter how they arrive, their arrival is cause for immediate concern. Bodachs are attracted to violence or catastrophe and seem to arrive just before whatever suffering is about to erupt. Like spiritual vampires, they hover nearby with certain knowledge of the future, and wait as though they are actually feeding on the human suffering they see. They seem to know that animals see them, but Odd takes great care not to let them know that he can see them as well. Somehow, he feels that if they knew he saw them, they would show him little mercy. Bodachs do not fly, pass through walls or closed doors and are able to lope but not glide like movie ghosts do.

The arrival of a single Bodach usually means that the impending violence is either near and certain or is remote and less probable. When they arrive in twos and threes, there is more likely a greater danger that is more immediate. When seen in packs, in Odd's experience it means that many deaths are only days or even hours away.

Rodion Romanovich

Introducing himself as a librarian from Indianapolis, Rodion Romanovich is actually an NSA agent uncover as a guest at the monastery. One in a long line of agents sent in to keep an eye on John Heineman and his discoveries, Rodion is as much an enigma to Odd Thomas, as Odd is to Rodion. Their conversations are often verbal sparring in which Odd tries to catch Rodion in a lie about his cover story as librarian, and Rodion takes pleasure avoiding and diverting the attention from himself. Odd knows that Rodion is hiding something, and NSA agent Rodion Romanovich knows Odd has secrets as well.

Rodion came from Russia. He is a proficient baker and knowledgeable on a wide range of topics. His discussions with Odd vary in topics including everything from quantum physics to Indianapolis minutia. A mortician before he left his homeland, he claims to have been born with the talent; his job now is to determine whether or not John Heineman has indeed found a way to prove the existence of God through science. In his conversations with Odd, he tells him that his mother was an assassin, and his wife is currently aboard a space station conducting experiments of which he cannot divulge.

Sister Angela (Mother Superior)

Mother Superior at the St. Bartholomew's Abbey, she is one of only three people at the Abbey who know about Odd's rather odd gifts. She claims that she and her sisters live as though from a time in the early part of the last century before the Church had lost its confidence and the Bishop's were all crazy. Though born in 1945, she feels that she would prefer to have lived in the thirty's than in this age of computers and satellites. Her eyes are the same color of blue of the periwinkles on Royal Doulton china, and she is an intelligent and engaging woman with great emotional strength and fortitude.



Accepting Odd's gifts on faith entirely, Sister Angela admires and respects the young man, who seems to want nothing for himself. By selflessly helping those around him to find peace, he earns a place on her wall of fame in the company of such greats as George Washington, Flannery O'Connor, and Harper Lee - all of whom donated their special talents and gifts selflessly, refusing compensation or adulation for their efforts.

Her courage and forthright attitude are a great comfort to Odd as he struggles with the loss of his girlfriend and soul mate, Stormy Llewellyn. Odd is surprised and touched by her display of emotion when it is time for Odd to go.

Brother John Heineman

John Heineman was a scientist of some stature when he was engaged to Jennifer Calvino when she became pregnant. Carrying the child to term, Heineman was already behaving poorly where her pregnancy was concerned, but when she gave birth to a physically-deformed boy, John wanted nothing to do with them. Denying fatherhood, he cut them out of his life and continued his scientific explorations. He became famous over the years, finally driven to the conclusion that the subatomic structure of the universe had indisputable design. He reexamined his life, gave away his entire fortune, and retreated to the monastery. He funded the facility there that cared for children such as Jacob, and for Jacob himself, but couldn't bring himself to take the final step and get to know his son.

When he finally came out of seclusion, it was to inform his colleagues that he had found a way to scientifically prove the existence of God. As such, he attracted the attentions of the NSA, who from that time forward placed an agent as a guest at the abbey. Denying he still harbored ill will towards his disabled child, John Heineman created a program that not only unleashed creations his mind consciously thought of, but simultaneously summoned up creatures with equal capacity for evil. In the end, his vanity would overcome his sanity, and much like the story of Jekyll and Hyde, he seemed to have no knowledge of what he was doing. To put a stop to it, Rodion kills Brother John.

Brother Salvatore (Brother Knuckles)

Brother Knuckles is the only one other than Father Bernard and Mother Angela who knows Odd's secret. Brother Knuckles is also the Abbey's cellarer, keeping an inventory of and purchasing the food and other material goods that the monastery and the school require. Having traded his life in New Jersey for this life at the monastery, Brother Knuckles has lost the edge of violence with which he came arrived at the Abbey. He has very strong looking hands that earned him the moniker Brother Knuckles, but assures Odd that he has never been responsible directly for the death of anyone else. Known as Salvatore Giancomo in his former life, Brother Knuckles had been muscle for the mob for many years, but when he reached forty, he began having second thoughts about the direction of his life. One night while guarding the "boss," he found himself reading a story to the boss' young daughter. The story so captured his attention that when the



child fell asleep before the end, he needed to know what happened. He bought a copy of the book and cried like a child when the moral of the story played out. Reading the story several times, he came to examine his own life more intently, finally giving him the strength to turn state's evidence against the very men for whom he used to work.

The trial complete, Salvatore was given a new name, Bob Loudermilk and relocated to Vermont, but suffered such a culture shock that he couldn't make the transition. The calling to monastic life came from an episode in a restaurant, but as a result, he pursued a path of regret that led to remorse and then finally to contrition. His new life gave him life, and he grew spiritually.

Boo

An entirely-white Shepherd cross, Boo belongs to and lives at the Abbey. He is one hundred and ten pounds and as graceful as he is brave. With clear blue eyes, he and Odd have bonded to a degree that he even hides in Odd's suite at times and sleeps there when he feels the need for companionship. Boo is the first and only ghost dog Odd has ever seen. Most animals leave right away, without hangups to keep them bound to earth, but for some reason Boo has remained at the Abbey for more than a year already. Odd likes to think that perhaps Boo was waiting for him, and he appreciates the dogs' company and companionship. When Odd finally leaves the Abbey, Boo and Elvis go with him.

Stormy Llewellyn

Stormy was the longtime friend and girlfriend of Odd Thomas until sixteen months ago when she died. Born Bronwen Llewellyn, she preferred the name Stormy. She had Egyptian black eyes, and one of her favorite phrases with Odd was "Loop me in, Odd one," which basically meant, "tell me about your day." She had been part of the incident at the Pico Mundo mall that claimed more than 40 lives. She had been shot four times, and by the time Odd managed to return to her, she was gone. Still part of his life, he spends his days trying to live up to being a decent enough person to be worthy of the promise made to them when they first met. The gypsy woman in the machine had told them they would be together forever, and Odd needs that to be true.

Brother Constantine

The only spirit monk to inhabit the Abbey, Brother Constantine manifests himself occasionally by ringing the bells in one of the towers in frustration, or making rare appearances elsewhere in the Abbey. Unable to leave while the circumstances of his death are still so misunderstood, he remains, trying to give Odd clues as to the truth. What none of his fellow Brothers understands is that Brother Constantine did not commit suicide. He was killed by a manifestation created by John Heineman, and died because he had discovered the truth of Heineman's experiments. Having seen one of Heineman's creations, Heineman could not allowed Brother Constantine to live. His soul



remains in torment until the Brothers and Sisters finally realize the truth and are able to send his soul on to peace.

Justine

Justine is one of the girls in the school at the monastery. She has been there eight years already, and the photo of her on the desktop shows a child of real natural beauty. At the age of four, her father had killed her mother and tried to kill her as well by drowning her in the tub, but she survived. Stubbornly, she refused to submit. Clinging to life in a coma for weeks, she finally returned to a semblance of consciousness, but deprived of oxygen for so long, she would never really be the same. Outwardly, she looked like a beautiful, twelve-year-old girl. When her blue eyes were open, you could almost convince yourself that something lingered, but in all of those eight years, she hadn't made intentional eye contact, and speech was also lost, although she made occasional sounds.

Brother Timothy

Loved by everyone, Brother Timothy is in charge of mechanical systems in both the school and the abbey. With an addiction to Kit Kats that borders on what he fears is gluttony, Brother Timothy hides the empty wrappers in the bottom drawer of the computer desk. He is also well known for the brightness of his blush. Neither of these things saves him as he becomes the second killing attributed to the manifestations of Brother John's. He is attacked in the courtyard and vanishes, until Odd finds him in the pipe tunnels later, but by then it is too late as he has already become a chrysalis for another one of these strange beasts.

Jacob Calvino

One of the only adult students at St. Bartholomew's Abbey, Jacob is in his mid twenties and afflicted with a disease similar to Down's Syndrome. A misshapen head and jaw, and one eye lower than the other make his face and head seem somewhat lopsided, but he lacks the flat nose usually characteristic of Down's children. He has a stocky build, a thick neck, and his left temple is convex, while his right temple is concave. His heavy shoulders hunch over one of many drawings, all of the same woman. His mother was John Heineman's fiance in the days when he was just becoming well known for his scientific mind. John, horrified that his son was disabled, renounced him, leaving his fiance to raise him alone. When Jacob's mother died when Jacob was thirteen, his father had reached a point in his scientific exploration that humbled him to such a degree that he gave away everything he owned. He also became the benefactor for St. Bartholomew's Abbey in an attempt to atone for his earlier behavior. Despite Jacob's transfer into St. Bartholomew's, Brother John avoided him, still unable to completely eradicate the depths of his inner cruelty.



Jacob draws flawless reproductions of his mother that are so infused with emotion that the love is evident in her eyes. He also draws the hooded, faceless monk that Odd keeps seeing and the bone and ice structures that he calls the dogs of the Neverwas. Unable to share in detail with Odd the things he knows, he manages to tell Odd that he had seen the Neverwas when he was a younger boy, and in those days he had a face. It is too painful to recall, however. Jacob sees into people with a sensitivity that is uncanny, and he manages to leave Odd speechless when he tells him one afternoon that he knows what Odd's girl saw in him. Odd is so touched he can't speak.

Sister Miriam

A former Los Angeles social worker, Sister Miriam had once worked with troubled girls. She lost that position when some of the parents complained about the spiritual aspect of her counseling, and she was asked to leave. She found her way to the church not long after. She has a large and imposing presence and charisma to spare. While she isn't one of the few who know the truth about Odd, she suspects that he must be at least partially Irish with the amount of blarney he spreads around.

Father Bernard

The Abbott of St. Bartholomew's Abbey and the one of three people aware of Odd's special gift, Father Bernard is a straightforward man with strong convictions. He supports the work done by Brother John Heineman, embracing the idea that science can prove the existence of God. Realizing the enormity of his error, and humbled by how blindly he followed John's pursuit, he resigns in shame and humiliation, even though his feelings about himself are not shared by the other Brothers and Sisters. He still felt unworthy and spiritually unable to lead the others.

Ozzie Boone

Odd's mentor and father figure, not to mention close friend from Pico Mundo. A mystery writer of some fame, Ozzie is the person who first encouraged Odd to keep a manuscript about his adventures in life. He is also the one Odd calls when it is finally time for Odd to go home to Pico Mundo. Driving his specially-made Cadillac, all four hundred pounds of Ozzie is happy to see Odd. Wealthy by all standards, he agrees to put together a trust fund for Flossie Bodenblatt, one of the children in the school.

Flossie Bodenblatt

The young girl Sister Angela found to act as a bridge between Odd and Stormy, but when Odd meets her, he finds her to be so like Stormy that he can't bring himself to use her as the bridge. She has the same dark hair and eyes as his Stormy had, and a similar character. She is forthright, despite her disabilities, and determined to improve enough to work with dogs someday. Odd asks his friend Ozzie to help make that



possible and Ozzie does so happily. Flossie doesn't like her name, preferring to be called Christmas. To her, the name Flossie sounds too much like something you do to your teeth, or a cow's name. Another reminder of Stormy, who had also changed her name.



Objects/Places

St. Bartholomew's Abbey

Located in California and surrounded by the Sierra Nevadas, St. Bartholomew's Abbey is where Odd Thomas secrets himself. Needing to escape the responsibilities associated with his life, and the complications that seeing dead people can bring into it, Odd is staying at the Abbey as their guest. On the east side of the Abbey are the guest house cloisters, where Odd stays, and on the west side of the Abbey, which also contains the church, are the novitiates' quarters. Past those sleeping quarters, and down the sloping meadow is the St. Bartholomew's School. In the school is the convent, where the nuns who teach the students live.

Guesthouse Cloister

Located on the east side of St. Bartholomew's Abbey, the guest house cloister where Odd Thomas stays surrounds a courtyard with a marble statue of the lesser known St. Bartholomew and a reflecting pool. The pool is drained in the winter months. A colonnade leads to the receiving room of the guest house, and from there the front door of the Abbey is accessible.

Odd stays on the third floor of the cloister in one of two guest suites available. The other is empty. The walls are made of stone, and the steps to the ground floor are made of granite and alternate between black and white reminding Odd of piano keys whenever he uses them. The spiral staircase leads to the main parlor.

Pico Mundo

Pico Mundo is the desert town where Odd Thomas lived for most of his life.

St. Bartholomew's School

Located behind the original Abbey, St. Bartholomew's School is a school for children upon whom the rest of the world has abandoned. Not only a school, but a home for these "different" youth, St. Bartholomew's School also houses the nuns who teach and care for the children there. The school is the only building of all those belonging to the Abbey that is actually locked at night for the students' safety.

On the main floor, there are classrooms, a kitchen and dining room, and a clinic. The second floor has two short and two long hallways that together make a rectangle; these are used for the students' quarters where the students room in pairs. At the junctures, there are nurses' stations that were manned all night. So close to Christmas, the halls are decorated with garlands and tinsel.



KitKat Katacombs

St. Bartholomew's school has a computer room in the basement. It is largely the territory of Brother Timothy as he is the one in charge of all things mechanical in the Abbey and in the school. As such, he feels safe there and indulges himself in his one sin.... he is addicted to Kit Kats. As such, the computer room and more specifically the bottom drawer of the computer desk and its ever increasing store of empty wrappers have led the Brothers to refer to the area as the KitKat Katacombs.

Whimpe

The part of a nun's attire that goes around her face.

Lauds

Lauds is the name given to morning prayer. It is the second of seven periods that the Monks observe in the daily Divine Office. At Bartholomew's Abbey, Lauds begins immediately following Matins, which begins at five forty-five in the morning and takes about half an hour.

Matins

Reading from the saints and singing of psalms that is part of the seven periods of the daily Divine Office that the monks of St. Bartholomew's observe.

You are destined to be together forever!

The phrase is on a framed card that sits beside the nightstand clock in Odd's room. Important to Odd because the card had been dispensed to Stormy and himself when they put a quarter into a Gypsy Woman machine after a couple before them had fed in eight quarters to get nothing but bad news. Though Stormy died, Odd takes the card to literally mean that they will be together in their next life, and to him the card is more important than air.

Bell Tower

The site where Brother Constantine was supposed to have hung himself, but where John Heineman's creation had actually killed him. Also the site of Constantine's hauntings until Odd figures out the truth after having seen the creature who killed Constantine and almost becoming a victim himself.



John`s Mew`s

The name given to John Heineman's computer room in the bowels of the monastery. Accessed only by an elevator that descends through a containment of heavy water, this area is the home and scientific base for John's super computers. It is where John believes he has found a way to prove the existence of God through science.

Floppy

The name John Heineman gives to the creation he concocts for Odd and Rodion when they go down to confront him. The size of a hamster, it is similar to a cross between a rabbit and a guinea pig. Cute and cuddly, it gurgles and plays with its own feet until Odd notices that the eyes are completely soulless.

Neverwas

The name Jennifer Calvino gave to John Heineman when he rejected their deformed son Jacob. Jacob grew up knowing him as the Neverwas, and describes him that way to Odd. The Neverwas is also one of Heineman`s unconscious creations appearing like a monk of days gone by, but without face or features.

Psychic magnetism

The force that guides Odd through his life, pointing him in directions where he is needed. It also helps him locate people. By thinking of a specific person or thing, he can pull himself to them.



Themes

Hiding vs Facing Responsibility

Odd Thomas goes to the monastery after a particularly violent incident in a mall in his hometown of Pico Mundo. Among the people who died was the love of his life, Stormy Llewellyn. Feeling terrible guilt that he was unable to stop this event, he left Pico Mundo to live in a monastery in the mountains. Odd has some rather unusual gifts. He sees dead people, or more accurately, he sees those that are no longer living but haven't passed all the way on either. Something troubles them enough to cause them to linger, and when they do, they seek Odd Thomas out for guidance and assistance. Most often, he is able to figure out what keeps them bound to earth, but there are exceptions. One of those is Elvis Presley. So troubled by the kind of life he led, and his unseemly demise, he is afraid to pass on and face his mother, Gladys, and nothing Odd tells him seems to ease his mind. Another "gift" Odd has is the ability to see otherworldly creatures that he finally named "bodachs" after folklore from the British Isles. They are silent and have no more substance than shadows, gliding effortlessly or slinking like cats; they leave no trace behind them. They are unable to affect the living, but are drawn to violence and disaster. The bigger the mayhem, the more bodachs appear in advance to watch. Odd truly believed that having seen the bodachs, and having narrowed the field of disaster, he should have been able to save more people at the mall. With his spirit so low that he couldn't see any meaning to life, he retreated to the monastery to hide from the responsibility that seeing these spirits brought him.

It didn't take long to figure out that he couldn't hide from his gifts. Brother Constantine, who had supposedly committed suicide by hanging himself in the new bell tower, took to ringing the bells now and then in a state of obvious agitation. Constantine had been seen in the older buildings, but seldom; he mostly frequented the bell tower. The monastery also have a mascot named Boo. He is a white shepherd cross, who also sees both bodachs and those souls who linger. In fact, in many ways he shares the intuition that guides Odd during times when he is trying to help. What is most interesting is that by going to the monastery, Odd is able to unravel a mystery that caused the death of Brother Constantine (which enabled him to continue on to his next level of service, as Stormy would say), and helped protect the children from possible death. Odd tried to run from the life of service to the dead, only to find himself thrown into a situation that needed his special skills desperately. It sounds like just another part of his continuing destiny to me!

Heineman`s Guilt vs Redemption

In a monastery that was created from guilt in the hopes that it would buy him redemption, Brother John Heineman, lived out his life but never found the peace he sought. When the new addition came and the old site became the new school for disenfranchised children who had no where else to go, Brother John Heineman finds



that the source of his deepest conflict is once again before him. In yet another opportunity for Brother John's soul to find redemption, his own son Jacob, once long ago denied by Heineman, finds his way to this new school. This quirk of fate is just one more opportunity ignored by Brother John. Fate or God or Whatever controls the marvelously strange and more than just coincidental things that happen in our lives, continues to open doors for Brother John and to give him chances for the redemption his money can't buy, and yet he refuses to repent. His repulsion of the children less than perfect goes so deep that he can't overcome it to save his own soul. Sadly, five minutes with his own son Jacob would have undoubtedly fixed this problem.

Jacob's mother knew the absolute truth. She knew that inside her son was a gentle and beautiful human being with the grace of God, and she told him so. She loved him with the love of a mother, pure and absolute. She taught him lessons that he took with him when she died. The most important of those lessons was that everyone on earth had a grace, and it was our choice whether or not we used it. Grace was a gift from God, and we were meant to use it for the betterment of humankind. Despite all of his physical shortcomings, Jacob knew all this and feared nothing. He took his gifts from God and used them to better mankind. These gifts extended past his ability to draw, although he managed to put on paper a quality that made the scene or subject jump to life. Jacob spoke little, but saw everything. He has a photographic memory and a heart larger than most of humankind put together. Jacob, it turned out, was an honor to know, and once you met him, you never forgot him.

The things we struggle with most in life are put before us again and again, so that we are given a chance to overcome and excel. Is it fate? Karma? God? Regardless of the name given to the power that is at the helm, we should be astounded at the intricacies and complexities of choices we are given in a lifetime.

Proving the existence of God vs taking it on faith that God

John Heineman forgot some basic truths when he set about to prove the existence of God through science. He believed that if he could unravel the mystery of creation, he could understand God. In his hubris, he ignores what his research shows him. He manages to create a room that magnifies his intentions many fold, creating the item in his mind as per his unspoken instructions. The Floppy he creates is at first glance, cute and cuddly. Cooing and gurgling to itself on the floor, John regards it with a mixture of awe and rapture, while ignoring the most important facet of life itself—the soul. The center of all beings. By the time John has finished his creation, he is no longer emulating God; in his mind, he is God.

Odd and Rodion see the difference almost immediately, and the once cute Floppy takes on a much more sinister appearance. Realizing that the eyes are empty, Odd equates the same problem with the small Floppy to the larger ice and bone structures. Their violent intentions can only be coming from Brother John. At this point, Brother John is still in enough control that he could have put a stop to all of it. Unfortunately, his pride is



larger than his ability to reason, and he refuses to take responsibility for the creatures that are released and killing on his behalf. Despite their previous friendship, John Heineman sends one of his less friendly creations after Odd, and Rodion realizes that he must intervene or Odd will be killed. He fires into the monk form that is throwing Odd around the room, and it temporarily dissolves, but reforms again. When he looks over to find John standing in a corner with his eyes closed, there can no longer be any doubt that he is knowingly creating these beasts. Rodion shoots John Heineman dead, killing his creations along with him.

Abbot Bernard realizes the enormity of his misjudgment after Brother John is killed and immediately resigns as Abbot of St. Bartholomew's, no longer feeling worthy of the post. The one thing he should have known from the start is that God must be taken on faith and while science can point to examples of God's existence, there is no way for science to absolutely prove the existence of God one way or another. This is knowledge that must be taken entirely on faith, but taking note of the underlying order of everything, it is less and less difficult to accept that something extraordinary must be at the helm.

To Serve or Not to Serve.

This is not a question in Odd's mind. While he felt the need to escape his life of service to his gift for a while, it is clear to him that there is no avoiding the responsibilities that are attached to his special abilities. Odd knows that those that seek him out need him to help them go on to the next place. He has often been inconvenienced by the visitors that come to him, and he is quite often put in harms way himself in order to help them. He faces ridicule from his peers if they find out, or just fear that he should be committed somewhere quiet, and his life is never his own. He lost his best friend and soul mate, Stormy, in an incident at the Pico Mundo mall, and through all of it, he still keeps his faith that one day they will be together as was promised in the card they got from the gypsy woman machine. It promised they would be together forever, and Odd believes that it is true. He believes that if he lives his life honoring her memory, he will see her again.

Odd could have quit. He could have ignored the things he saw and hid in plain sight. He could have just wished it all away, but that isn't the kind of man Odd Thomas is. He puts the needs of other selflessly before himself, opening his life up to any spirit who needs him. To walk away from this gift he has would be equivalent to walking away from breathing. It is so much a part of his life. Thankfully, his time with Stormy taught him that he should not begrudge his gift but rather should embrace it, saving all he can. The purity of her heart stays with him, like a guiding light he reminds himself of her when he is low in spirit. Along the way, he gathers friends that ease the travel, including some famous names such as Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra. He picks up a dog named Boo in this adventure, and finds companionship where before he was lonely. The spirit dog is another gift that Odd appreciates and will try to help move forward. There is no question—Odd will serve until his service is no longer required.



Style

Point of View

Brother Odd is told from the first person perspective of Odd Thomas, the main character. Not officially a Brother, Odd is staying at a monastery, looking for a break from a life that left him temporary lifeless. Having lost his girlfriend and the love of his life, Odd has trouble finding purpose in his life. Odd Thomas lives up to his moniker. He has a peculiar ability to see the disenfranchised souls caught between this world and the next. To Odd, they are every bit as real as anyone else, even warm to the touch, but no one else can see them. Somehow, they convey to Odd what they need, and he tries to help them to carry on to the next life. To do anything less would be to do them a disservice. Some spirits don't leave as soon as others. Odd has Elvis as a companion off and on, and though the spirits can't talk, he knows that Elvis is afraid to face his mother Gladys for fear that she is disappointed in him because of his lifestyle and the way he died. Odd tells Elvis that Gladys would be so happy to see him, but still he lingers. He and Odd are friends, and he is reluctant to leave before Odd heals enough to be without him. He stays with Odd until Odd leaves the monastery, and, while at first, Elvis leaves with him, it isn't long before he smiles and fades into his own future, leaving a new friend behind in his place.

Being at the monastery doesn't change the grand design of Odd's life. In many ways, it sharpens his resolve to follow his intuition, no matter where it leads him. A straight forward read, in Odd's shoes that never gets boring. Delving into faith, religion, science and grand design, this is a read with a great deal to think about.

Setting

Brother Odd takes place in St. Bartholomew's Abbey in the Sierra Nevadas on the Californian side of the border. The Abbey includes a church, and a school for disabled children, along with the monastery and guest house. Odd Thomas occupies a third floor suite in the guest house and has done so since a disaster in his hometown of Pico Mundo, when 41 people were shot and nineteen killed seven months earlier.

The abbey contains a super computer in its bowels, created by John Heineman in his effort to prove the existence of God. In the process, John creates blasphemous creatures that kill three monks and would have continued to do much more damage had Odd and Rodion not put a stop to it all by killing John. The abbey is remote, but John Heineman's calls to his colleagues attract the attention of the NSA. In a sudden twist, it is an NSA agent himself who ensures the destruction of the machine that Heineman created, ensuring that further use or abuse of this program will not happen.

In the hills of the Sierra Nevada, Odd sees snow for the very first time and is overwhelmed by the beauty of it; though, at first, he is less than charmed with it when



he finds himself outside weathering the elements. While the story remains on the grounds of the Abbey, there are many references to Pico Mundo, and in the end, Odd comes to realize that it is time to go home.

Language and Meaning

Written in plain English, *Brother Odd* is a charming mixture of belief, faith and science. A story about finding God in many different ways, Odd Thomas opens us up to a world most of us never give a thought to. Living his life in service to his gifts, Odd is not unlike the Brothers and Sisters he fled to after Stormy was killed. While looking for meaning in his life, and finding little, Odd thinks he is hiding from his responsibilities. In actuality, his gift led him to the abbey.

John Heineman is at the abbey, searching for scientific proof of God. While experimenting, he discovers the underlying order in chaos and believes he can bridge the gap between humans and Gods. He tries to convince Odd and Rodion that what he can do with his creation of the Floppy is not unlike the way God created man and everything else we know. Appalled and frightened by the degree of hubris displayed by Brother John, Odd and Rodion try to explain the difference to him, but John's pride won't allow him to admit he's crossed a line.

There is some scientific explanations where quantum physics is concerned, allowing the reader to conclude that Brother John's experiments have some validity. There is some discussion about how an experiment on a subatomic scale will be altered by the simple act of our observations. Brother John's experiments led him to conclude that God imagined and the world became, and because we have the same imagination and will, we are capable of the same on a smaller scale of course. Divine thought is explained as a form of energy that can shape itself into matter. Brother John discovers that under the final layer of apparent chaos, there is a strange order that is characteristic of thought waves.

A compelling read that liberally mixes the subjects of religion and science.

Structure

Written in fifty-six chapters, *Brother Odd* begins by retreating to the abbey to find peace after a traumatic experience in his hometown of Pico Mundo. Feeling as though he has no purpose in life, he sought reflection and contemplation with the Brothers and Sisters of St. Bartholomew's. As a guest of the abbey with special talents, Odd is given a universal key that opens all doors. It is the hope of the Abbot and the Mother Superior that Odd can help one of their own, Brother Constantine, find his way to the afterlife in peace.

Throughout his stay, Odd makes connections with several people that will stay with him forever. Sister Angela, who is the Mother Superior at the abbey, warms to Odd in a way that touches him deeply, even kissing him goodbye on the cheek when he leaves. He is



also reminded by Jacob that Stormy saw something worthwhile in Odd, and while Odd may not see it, Jacob does. What few words Jacobs speaks leaves Odd speechless with love for Jacob. When the story unravels, Odd realizes that it is time for him to go home. Brother Constantine has left the abbey and gone to his reward, and Odd takes the only two remaining spirits, Elvis and Boo, with him when he goes.

With Odd, the adventure of his life is never ending though, and his call to duty comes just as he gets to the bottom of the mountains. Though sad to leave his friend behind, Odd begins yet another adventure, following the psychic magnetism that pulls him from one place to another.



Quotes

"Loop me in, odd one." Pg 23 Chp 2

Phrase spoken by Annamarie in her sleep to Odd as he is standing there the night the bodachs first came. Significant only because it is the exact phrase that his girlfriend Stormy used with him to ask him about his day.

"The devil is in the digital data." Pg 26 Chp 3

Phrase that is in a framed needlepoint sampler in the computer room referred to as the KitKat Katacombs by the Brothers.

"God has many reasons to love you, Oddie, but for certain He loves you because you are such an inexperienced and incompetent liar." Pg 36 Ch 4

Mother Superior to Odd when in answer to why he is up so late, he concocts very thin excuses to cover the truth of his concern.

"Easier than factoring into your philosophy a fry cook who sees dead people." Pg 40 Ch 4

Sister Angela's amused response to Odd's comment about how times have changed. He couldn't get his head around nuns with cell phones.

"...If I could be a tire salesman and nothing else, just a good tire salesman with a little apartment and this girl I once knew, that would be enough." Pg 61 Ch 6

Odd Thomas to Brother John as he is discussing the choices they've each made and whether or not they were happy.

"Humanity is a parade of fools, and I am at the front of it, twirling a baton." Pg 86 Chp 9

Odd Thomas reflecting on himself and his place in humanity.

"You are destined to be together forever." Pg 90 Chp 9

Read by Rodion Romanovich in a dream that Odd has after seeing the bodachs at the monastery for the first time.

"I don't mean how long for Chief Porter to tell the locals you're real. I mean how long for the locals to believe it." Pg 102 Ch 11

Brother Knuckles' question to Odd when Odd is insistent about talking to the police. Odd believes that Chief Porter will vouch for him, which is true, but Brother Knuckles is only too aware that the police here may not believe too easily or too soon.

"Blizzards dress the land in a clean habit, lightning and thunder make a music of celebration, wind blows away all that's stale, even floods raise up everything green." Pg 148 Chp 16

Sister Claire Marie tells Odd how the weather is glorious and a gift because Odd told her the snowstorm was the reason he appeared so frightened.



"To know grief, we must be in the river of time, because grief thrives in the present and promises to be with us in the future until the end point." Pg 166 Ch 19

Odd's observation as he stands in Justine's room, overwhelmed by the smell of peach shampoo that is a poignant reminder of the love of his life, now lost until he makes the journey to the next lifetime himself.

"In this world where too many are willing to see only the light that is visible, never the Light Invisible, we have a daily darkness that is night, and we encounter another darkness from time to time that is death, the deaths of those we love, but the third most constant darkness that is with us every day at all hours of every day, is the darkness of the mind, the pettiness and meanness and hatred, which we have invited into ourselves, and which we pay out with generous interest." Pg 177 Ch 21

Odd's observation about people after listening to Jacob repeat some of the mean singsong type of insults he has heard from other children including rhyming gems like, "Dumb as a duck run down by a truck."

"At least on a subatomic level, human will can in part shape reality." Pg 199 Ch 23

Odd's response to Rodion when Rodion asks if Odd knew that in an experiment with a human observer, subatomic particles behave differently when the experiment is observed than they do if the same experiment is conducted without observation by humans.

"Humankind cannot bear very much reality, and I am too human." Pg 241 Ch 29

Odd's observations in the garage as he stops to give Boo a scratch on his proffered belly.

"Imagine that all the universe and all of time are together kept in right motion and in perfect balance by an infinite gearbox, and in your mind look down into that intricate mechanism, and you will have a sense of my incomprehension, awe, and terror as I stood before the uberskeleton that churned and ticked and flexed and clicked, peeling the gossamer remnants of Brother Tim away from itself. Pg 259 Ch 32

Odd Thomas trying to describe the way he feels as he watches the transformation of Brother Timothy with a mixture of horror and awe.

"Dear, the dark clouds of mystery surrounding you are getting so thick I soon won't be able to see you. The sooty whirl of smog will go past, and people will say, 'There's Odd Thomas. Wonder what he looks like these days.'" Pg 320 Chp 41

Sister Miriam to Odd after he returns to the school with seventeen Monks and Rodion ready to fortify and protect the children.

"If our current barbaric world spirals into greater corruption and brutality, our descendants may become so cruel and so morally perverse that they cross time to watch us suffer, bearing orgasmic witness to the bloodbaths from which their sick civilization grew." Pg 332 Ch 43

Odd's speculation as to what bodach's might really be.



"We can approach belief from an intellectual path, but in the end, God must be taken on faith." Pg 360 Ch 46

Sister Angela to Odd and Rodion after Rodion tells them that Brother John claimed to be able to prove the existence of God.

"All matter, when seen at its root, arises out of a base web that has all the characteristics of thought waves." Pg 387 Ch 50

Brother John to Odd Thomas and Rodion Romanovich in an effort to explain his work.

"...between the mad and the misguided, the line is as thin as a split hair that has been split again." Pg. 391 Ch 51

Odd's observations about Brother John, and his condition.

"The man you were still lives within you, repressed by the man you have struggled to become." Pg 398 Ch 51

Rodion to Brother John when he and Odd try to talk some sense into him.



Topics for Discussion

What is psychic magnetism, and what advantages does it give Odd? Odd has another gift. What is it? Discuss whether this would be a blessing or a curse.

Why doesn't Odd believe that moving the children temporarily will solve their problem? Discuss what could have been done instead.

How many people at the Abbey know about Odd's special gift? Who are they? Discuss why Odd is reluctant to open up to any or all the Brothers and Sisters?

What is the underlying mistake in Brother John's thinking? What does he manifest and why?

What are the signs above the doors to John's Mew's and how does the interpretation differ between Odd and Rodion?

What does Jacob draw other than his mother? Which of his drawings does Odd take and why, and which of his drawings does Jacob willingly give away and to whom?

What is the common theme to the portraits in Sister Angela's office? Who are the portraits of, and why does she display each one? Who's portrait is last to go on the wall and why?

What is John's Mew's and what became of it? Why was it so important to NSA?

Name the three different creations that came out of John's Mew's and what their capabilities were. What killed them?

When Brother Timothy is killed, Brother Salvatore worries his past has caught up with him. Which past is that, and why would he worry?

What does Odd see for the first time in his life?

Why doesn't Odd trust Rodion Romanovich, and what changes his mind? What does Rodion do to solve the problem that concerns Odd the most after Brother John is killed?

Why doesn't Odd make it back to Pico Mundo? Who joins him after Elvis leaves?