

Brothers and Bones Study Guide

Brothers and Bones by James Hankins

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Plot Summary

Brothers and Bones is a novel about the search for justice. Written by author James Hankins, the main character, Charlie Beckham, has risen to a high position as a federal prosecutor despite a very challenging childhood. Both of his parents died in a tragic car accident when Charlie was young. Jake, his older brother, took the responsibility of raising him and making sure that Charlie was well educated enough to enter law school and become a successful lawyer. Throughout his childhood and teenage years, Charlie comes to deeply respect what his brother has done for him. Jake becomes an investigative journalist, but he suddenly disappears one day without a trace. Thirteen years later, Charlie's life is changed completely when a homeless man on the street calls him Wiley, which was Jake's nickname for him. Unable to focus in court, Charlie spends every available moment of his time searching for the man, in hopes that it is his brother. The extreme circumstances in which Charlie finds himself do nothing to conceal his playful and lighthearted nature, despite the fact that the challenges he encounters grow increasingly threatening. What he discovers draws the attention of a powerful boss in the world of organized crime, with friends so high up in the government Charlie is left with nowhere to turn. With the help of the homeless man named Bonz, who once worked for the mafia, Charlie is forced to race across the city in search of a tape he believes to be responsible for his brother's disappearance. The one person who believes in his innocence is his fiance Jessica, who has been patient with Charlie's obsession over finding his long lost brother for a very long time now. Despite being completely unable to find the tape, Charlie is able to piece together the information on it from several unlucky encounters and prior knowledge he had about his brother's disappearance. When Jessica is taken prisoner by the mafia for leverage against Charlie, he is able to blackmail them without the actual tape long enough to buy him time to rescue the only woman in the world he loves. Brothers and Bones explores the fine line between revenge and justice in the midst of dire circumstances and unimaginable loss. It takes a careful look at those supposedly protecting society and explores their human natures in a unique way.



Chapters 1-4

Summary

In Chapter 1, Charlie explains to the reader that his life is a cruel one. His parents were killed by an empty fried chicken bucket. Also, a call he was not even part of ruined his life. Years ago, two words ruined him. Back then, he was a U.S. prosecutor on an organized task force. He'd been about to convict a mob boss, but the morning of the first hearing, Charlie decides to eat a power breakfast and winds up late for the hearing. On his way, a homeless person refers to him as "Wiley," which was his brother's nickname for him. His brother has been missing for thirteen years.

In Chapter 2, Charlie has ruined his first day in court, and his boss, Andrew Lippincott, was there to see it. His friend, Angel Medina, is with Charlie in his office and asks him why he blew it. Charlie doesn't explain what he saw near the train. He expects to be fired. He went back to where he'd seen the homeless man before the trial and tried to find him, but he failed to do so. This made him even later for the trial and distracted him more. Andrew calls Charlie into his office, and Charlie excuses himself. Angel expects Charlie to be fired, too.

In Chapter 3, Charlie visits his boss Andrew. Andrew's assistant, Michael Kidder, is there, too. Charlie is dating Andrew's daughter, and Andrew makes it clear that is the only reason he is not fired over his performance in court earlier that day. Andrew demands an explanation. Charlie hides the truth from him. Andrew is disappointed, but he lets him stay in charge of the trial. Later, Charlie speaks about it with Angel, and Angel teases him.

In Chapter 4, Charlie explains to the reader that Jake is his older brother by eleven years. Their parents were killed when Charlie was just a child when teenagers threw an empty fried chicken bucket out of their car window. The bucket bounced off of their parent's windshield and their dad lost control of the car. Jake raised Charlie after this happened. He sacrificed most of his early adulthood raising Charlie. Jake eventually became a well-respected journalist. One day, Jake got a page during lunch with a colleague. He left their table and never returned.

Charlie tries to focus on the case against Vasily Redekov, but he ends up looking for the homeless man, whom he believes to be his brother. He realizes someone is following him. He finds a homeless man and a woman with a child. Scared, he asks the man if he's seen the person he's looking for. Charlie gives the man \$10. The man takes it, but tells him to go away.

Analysis

The introduction of this novel is filled with flashbacks and back story. Charlie quickly establishes himself as a humorous character, despite the tragic circumstances of his



childhood and his young adult life. It is made very clear that the main reason Charlie went into prosecuting organized crime was his belief that organized crime had something to do with his brother's disappearance. This establishes why Charlie is stunned when the homeless man refers to him by "Wiley." It implies that the homeless man knew Jake at some point, if he isn't Jake himself, which is what Charlie suspects. Charlie appears very reluctant to discuss this sighting with anyone. That's also important, and it isn't entirely clear why. It's understandable that he wouldn't mention it to his boss Andrew, especially with Andrew's desire for personal perfection. It is strange that he doesn't mention it to Angel, though, since the two are friends. It's not even clear if Angel is familiar with Charlie's history. The fact that Charlie is willing to wander off in search of the homeless man only serves to reinforce how important finding his brother is to him.

Discussion Question 1

Name two tragic things that happened in Charlie's life and describe how they could have shaped him as an adult.

Discussion Question 2

How does Charlie describe himself? Does he seem like a self-centered character? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Describe how Charlie feels about Jake. What does he say his childhood with Jake was like?

Vocabulary

Absurd, culmination, snazzy, matted, obscenities, sustained, optimistic, stupor, gallows, panoramic, immaculately, subordinates, chafing, extracted.



Chapters 5-8

Summary

In Chapter 5, Charlie is awakened by Angel inside of his office. He spent the entire night looking for Jake. Angel warns Charlie to take it easy, and Charlie realizes Angel is right. An assistant of Charlie's reminds him of a meeting, and Charlie leaves the office.

Outside, he realizes he's being followed. He sees his fiancée Jessica, who is also a lawyer. She wants to know if he can spend some time with her, but he says that he needs to work on the Redekov trial. She reminds him that he has a problem with obsession. He offers to spend a little time with her. He's also reminded that Andrew is speaking Sunday to raise money for the arts. It comes out that her brother, who had severe autism, was killed years ago. No one but Jessica knows that Charlie sees a psychiatrist named Dr. Fielding, but that is where he is presently headed. He's late for his appointment. He's had a problem with paranoia ever since Jake went missing. He lies to the doctor about Jake and does not mention that he thinks he saw him. He does say that he's been having episodes of paranoia lately. Dr. Fielding calls his fear irrational.

In Chapter 6, Jessica overhears a message on Charlie's machine. It is from a private investigator offering to find Jake, which upsets Jessica. She realizes he's thinking about taking the offer. He's spent a lot of money on private investigators trying to find his brother in the past. Charlie says that despite her brother's loss and her mother's death, Jessica doesn't completely understand his loss. She responds that he's not ready to start a life with her until he gives up his search for Jake. When they part, Charlie continues his search for his lost brother.

In Chapter 7, Charlie looks for Jake in Chinatown. After a long search, he thinks he's found the homeless man. The man hurries away, however, and Charlie must chase after him. Finally, Charlie gives up after he realizes he's lost. Then he notices he's being followed. A man with a baseball bat appears.

In Chapter 8, Charlie is surrounded by a gang. They hit him and demand everything he's holding. Charlie punches their leader, then he gets beaten up. He falls to the ground, but the ground around him is attacked.

Analysis

Charlie's situation escalates as he continues his search for Jake despite the possible consequences to his career and his relationship with Jessica. The reader also gains a few important insights into Charlie's personality. He is obsessive and paranoid. Both characteristics can easily be traced back to the fact that he had a traumatic youth, as suggested by Dr. Fielding. The strange thing is that Charlie's instincts with respect to being watched or followed are usually right, at least with what the reader has observed



so far. When Charlie feels as though his being watched, he sees someone watching watching him. It's equally important to note that he keeps the sighting of the person he believes to be Jake secret from his therapist. This suggests that he fears Dr. Fielding's response to the revelation. This section of the novel ends with Charlie suddenly being saved from a group of thugs, most likely by the very person he was looking for. That means the homeless man is aware Charlie has been following him, and that there is almost certainly a connection between him and Jake, if he isn't Charlie's long lost brother himself. Jessica's back story is also introduced at this time in the novel, and it is important because she shares tragic events in her past somewhat similar to Charlie's. Jessica, however, has moved on from her brother's death, whereas Charlie is unable to do so.

Discussion Question 1

What is Jessica's reaction to Charlie's obsession towards finding Jake or Jake's killers? Is she angry with him? Is she understanding? Describe briefly.

Discussion Question 2

How does Charlie describe Dr. Fielding's appearance? His skill as a therapist?

Discussion Question 3

Charlie decides to try and hit the leader of the gang when he is threatened in the streets late at night. What does this suggest about him?

Vocabulary

Efficient, deliberately, prohibited, impromptu, coerced, furtive, manifest, sequestered, compunction, injunction, gullibility, figurative, excruciating, deceptively, fluidity.



Chapters 9-12

Summary

In Chapter 9, Charlie has a dream about his brother protecting him on the playground. The dream turns into a nightmare. Then, he wakes up in the hospital. Dr. Henshaw introduces himself and tells him he's lucky to be alive. It is Saturday morning, and they do not have any idea who brought him in to the hospital. He feels better after resting there a few hours.

In Chapter 10, Jessica comes to get Charlie at the hospital and is surprised by how badly he was hurt. He has her take him to his parent's graves. He tells Jessica that he does not believe Jake is dead. From there, she drives him back to her apartment. He tells her that he doesn't think he should go to the charity with how badly hurt he looks. She responds that she'd still like him to be there, and he agrees to go anyway.

In Chapter 11, Charlie awakens the next morning at about one-thirty. He leaves Jessica's apartment and goes back to his place. When he looks down at the street he sees a figure staring back up at him. When he looks again, it is gone. He hurries downstairs, but can't find anyone on the street or near the sidewalk. He goes back upstairs, and someone speaks to him from the dark of his living room. The homeless man is there. He knocks Charlie to the ground and warns him not to try anything. The homeless man tells Charlie to unlock the front door, and go back outside. He takes him into an alley, and it turns out not to be Jake after all. He calls himself Bones. He insists Charlie's name is Wiley. Bones asks why Charlie has been following him. Charlie tries to get him to go back inside, but instead Bones asks to eat at a restaurant.

In Chapter 12, Bones eats a huge amount of food at the diner Charlie selected. When Bones is full, he explains that his real name is Bonzetti, or "Bonz." He asks Charlie why he was looking for him again. Charlie begins to ask for information about Jake, but Bonz refuses to say anything. He says that "Wiley" was Charlie's actual name. Bonz clearly has trouble with his memory. However, when he saw Charlie, he started to remember things. Charlie asks Bonz if he knew Jake, and Bonz suddenly has a meltdown. He knocks the diner's manager to the ground as he runs away.

Analysis

Charlie's introduction to Bonz promises to reveal information about Jake, although the prospects of Jake being alive have almost disappeared. Bonz suffers from a lot of mental disorders fairly common in homeless people, but Charlie seems to suspect that something deeper has affected him somehow. His attempts at providing Bonz with food in exchange for information represent the beginning of an association with the man, since Bonz is unable to presently remember much from his past. This seems to suggest that Charlie will need to help Bonz recover his memory in some way. The two



individuals represent stark contrasts to one another. Bonz is completely wild, and appears to have been for a long time. Nevertheless, Charlie is closer to the mystery behind his brother's disappearance than he has ever been, and he's certain to try and follow Bonz to continue his search, which will further jeopardize his personal and professional life.

Discussion Question 1

Where does the name "Bonzetti" likely come from? What might this suggest about Bonz? He also seems like a very capable fighter, taking out several thugs to protect Charlie at once. Does this seem to say anything about his past?

Discussion Question 2

What is Jessica's reaction to seeing Charlie's face? How does she treat him afterwards?

Discussion Question 3

What does Charlie notice when Bonz takes him back down into the alley? Why might Charlie have noticed this?

Vocabulary

Silhouette, jargon, coconspirator, navigating, swanky, mausoleum, incoherently, loitering, imminent, non sequitur, porcine.



Chapters 13-16

Summary

In Chapter 13, Charlie takes Jessica to the ballroom for the charity on Sunday. He can't stop thinking about Bonz and wonders where he went. He runs into powerful prosecutors at the charity event who stare at his badly injured face. As they talk, members of the Italian mafia come in. Charlie and those near him all try to ignore Carmen Siracuse, the mob boss. When Andrew finishes speaking, Jessica asks Charlie where his mind was. Charlie pages Dr. Fielding, and leaves the hall to take Fielding's call. He asks the doctor if a person could lose memory from being tortured. Fielding confirms this idea, and also hints that a familiar face could bring memories back. Fielding tries to warn Charlie about what a person's reaction to suddenly remembering past events might be, but Charlie hangs up on him. Jessica overheard the conversation, so Charlie explains everything to her. To his surprise, she tells him that he has to find out what Bonz knows.

In Chapter 14, back inside the charity, Charlie starts drinking. He goes over to Carmen's table and confronts him. He believes the mob boss killed his brother. Another prosecutor, Norm Balzer, tries to get Charlie away from the table. Charlie asks him what happened to his brother. Carmen claims not to know. Finally, Andrew comes and takes him away. Carmen asks Andrew to stay as Charlie goes back to his table.

In Chapter 15, Andrew confronts Charlie for speaking to Carmen. He asks if Charlie isn't taking on too much at work, and Charlie insists that he's okay. Andrew demands to know what the problem is, because Charlie is risking his career and firm's reputation by speaking to Carmen the way he did. Jessica spends much of the night making sure Charlie is okay, until he insists that she go socialize with important attorneys. Charlie runs into Angel, who is mad because he has betrayed him somehow, although he won't explain how. Angel shoves him to the floor and leaves. Embarrassed and totally confused, Charlie decides to go home.

In Chapter 16, Jessica calls to Charlie as he leaves the charity. She asks if she can stay. He agrees to call her tomorrow. Afterwards, Andrew comes up to him and tells him to fix whatever happened with Angel. He takes a cab back to his place and leaves a message with Angel demanding to know why he attacked him. He finds Angel waiting for him inside his apartment when he gets home. Charlie realizes that someone has searched his apartment, and Angel tells him he already called the police. Angel apologizes, but doesn't give a good reason for getting upset with him earlier. He asks what has been going on with Charlie, but by this time Charlie has gotten suspicious of Angel and he doesn't tell him the truth. Angel admits to Charlie that he was ordered by someone to push Charlie down at the charity. He also knows why Charlie has been acting so strange lately, and mentions Bonz. Angel suddenly starts to threaten Charlie, who realizes the cops aren't actually coming. Angel says he was looking for something of Jake's, but rushes at Charlie suddenly and is unexpectedly shot in the eye.



Analysis

Charlie finds himself in the middle of a very bizarre situation that seems to confirm his worse fears that he's being watched. Almost everything that can go wrong for him does go wrong in this section, and even Jessica seems very dismayed by his behavior at the charity event, even as she still continues to exhibit concern for him. It is as if she is beginning to believe there is something very wrong with him, but still refuses to accept that possibility as fact. Charlie's confrontation of Carmen establishes the fact that he is an important antagonist in the story, especially since Charlie seems convinced that the gangster had something to do with his brother's death, even though the mob boss completely denies any connection between himself and Jake's disappearance. The conflict between Charlie and Carmen is halted abruptly and rather strangely, as it winds up being Andrew who separates the two and shares a few brief words with Carmen outside of what Charlie can hear. Since Charlie understands himself to be paranoid, he may feel at this point as though he is being betrayed by those closest to him. And yet, he does not. He assumes he is the one with the problem and exits the situation just when a true paranoid personality would believe that something was very wrong. Despite being on the edge and having had too much to drink, Charlie manages to control himself, which is not in the least suggestive of a paranoid person.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Andrew and the other prosecutors try to discourage Charlie from speaking to Carmen? What does Charlie say to Carmen and how does this seem to tie into Charlie's life?

Discussion Question 2

Is it surprising that Jessica encourages Charlie to find Jake if he still can? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Angel briefly and discuss whether or not there was prior evidence that he might be something other than a friend to Charlie.

Vocabulary

Dashing, capacity, rotund, hypothetically, underlying, coronary, impediment, evident, loathed, supremacy, monumental, paramesium, convey, altercation, spectacle.



Chapters 17-20

Summary

In Chapter 17, Charlie turns to see a gun inches from his nose. He also sees the man who shot Angel, who asks him for a thank you. Charlie doesn't know what the man wants, but he understands it is the same thing that Angel was after. Charlie tells the man he doesn't know what they're looking for or where it could be. The man asks about Bonz, and Charlie has to say he doesn't know where the other man is, either. The intruder suspects Charlie of lying. He nearly shoots Charlie, but a novelty clock in Charlie's kitchen starts barking, which throws the killer off and Charlie jumps on him. He grabs the gun and gets it away from the killer. Charlie has him put his hands up, but is forced to shoot at him when the man pulls another gun. He tells Charlie that the bullets left in the gun are all blanks anyway. He has Charlie give him back the weapon, then tells him that he is going to be framed for Angel's murder. The people the killer is working for need Charlie's help finding an audio tape. He threatens Charlie with a hammer if Charlie doesn't help him.

In Chapter 18, the killer explains that he'll tie Charlie into a chair and hammer nails into his skull if he doesn't help. He wants the tape, or at least Bonz. He threatens to frame Charlie for Angel's murder if he does not help. He also promises to give Charlie answers about Jake if he does help. Bonz suddenly crashes into the room and attacks the killer, knocking him out. Charlie hears people starting to notice all of the noise coming from his apartment. Bonz tells Charlie to run away. The sounds of police sirens draw nearer, and Charlie runs, following Bonz as he flees the scene.

In Chapter 19, Charlie and Bonz run down the stairs and out into the streets. Charlie hears the killer come after them, but he is limping. They run to Charlie's Corolla. Bonz demands the keys, and begins to drive just as Angel's killer rounds the corner. He speeds away, and Charlie realizes that he's kept some of Jake's notes with him and left them at his apartment.

In Chapter 20, Charlie and Bonz hide out on the streets. After they get somewhat more situated and feel safer, Charlie asks him what happened to his brother. Finally, Bonz admits that Jake has been dead for the past thirteen years.

Analysis

This section of the novel changes the focus from Charlie's investigation of his brother's disappearance to his own survival. It isn't understood exactly who the people are or why they are after Charlie, and he doesn't have much time to think about what is happening. Bonz does admit to knowing his brother thirteen years ago. It may even be surprising to the reader that Jake is no longer alive, as Charlie has exhibited good judgement throughout the novel to this point, and has seemed to think his brother was still alive



somewhere. There is no doubt through the rest of the novel. What Charlie must do is attempt to find the tape and use it in order to combat whoever is after him. This would have been impossible for he met Bonz, but now that the other man seems to be retrieving his memory, it is very likely he will be able to help Charlie in some way.

Discussion Question 1

How does Charlie deal with the man about to kill him? Is this unexpected? What else has Charlie done like this?

Discussion Question 2

What does Bonz's role in the story appear to be at this point? Is he a friend to Charlie?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the events in this section. Based on what has happened, does it seem that Charlie was actually paranoid for the past thirteen years of his life?

Vocabulary

Wavering, indicated, unnerving, halo, appraisingly, noncommittal, anonymous, hesitated, groggily, descending, foyer, vital, sadistic.



Chapters 21-24

Summary

In Chapter 21, Charlie dreams of Jake, and is awakened by Bonz. They're in the drainage pipes they hid inside the night before. Charlie is in shock, even though he'd come to expect the news of his brother's death. His life up to this point has been about finding Jake. Now, Jessica is the only thing that means anything to him. Angry, he decides to go after the people who did this to him.

In Chapter 22, Charlie decides to find the audiotape. He tells this to Bonz, who takes them to get new clothes. Charlie drives this time, and asks questions about Jake on the way. Bonz thinks about how to tell the story for a moment. He has to remind Charlie that his mind was broken for quite a while. He would remember something once in a while, and when he saw Charlie, he remembered a lot very quickly. Charlie asks him how he went crazy to begin with, but Bonz wants to tell that part of the story later. He does say that Carmen Siracuse is responsible for Jake's death. Bonz used to work for Carmen. Carmen's men kidnapped Jake to learn about an audiotape he'd hidden somewhere. Someone had been blackmailing Carmen with the same tape for years. Somehow, Jake found out about it and Carmen tortured him to try and find it. Despite two full weeks of torture, Jake never gave away the location of the tape. Instead, Jake warned Carmen and the others that if anything ever happened to Charlie the tape would be found. Bonz knows all of this because he saw all of it happen.

In Chapter 23, Bonz says that he never tortured Jake, but he let it happen. Bonz happened to know Jake when they were younger in elementary school, and while Carmen held Jake prisoner Bonz did his best to help him. Somehow, says Bonz, they found out that they'd been talking to each other. They thought Bonz knew where the tape was, but Jake said nothing at all about it to Bonz. When Jake died, they started torturing Bonz. Charlie and Bonz get out of the car, and Jake smashes the window of another car with a brick, pops the trunk open through the shattered window, and retrieves a toolkit from the trunk. Bonz tells Charlie he escaped from Carmen one day when his thugs thought he was unconscious. He leads Charlie to a small used clothes shop where he breaks in through the window and lets Charlie in through the front door. While looking for clothes to steal, Bonz tells Charlie the man who attacked him and murdered Angel is called Grossi. He tortured Jake and Bonz. Jake had a picture of Charlie in his wallet and talked about him often, which is how Bonz knew he was called Wiley.

In Chapter 24, they cross back past the Charles River and return into the larger Boston area. Charlie realizes he needs to try to find the tape or his life is over. He asks what Jake said before he died. Bonz says that Jake wanted Charlie to find religion. This confuses Charlie because Jake was never religious. Bonz thinks about it more as Charlie realizes he knows where they should try to look for the tape.



Analysis

Bonz takes over in this section as the main protagonist, not because his story grows more important than Charlie's, but because Charlie is hopelessly out of his element. The mafia, led by Carmen, attacked him in the exact way they needed to in order to make him look like a criminal. Evidence of Angel's murder is still in Charlie's apartment, and virtually everything connects him directly to the death. This means that Charlie is totally reliant upon Bonz, who is steadily regaining his sanity alongside his memory. It is not completely clear why Bonz is helping Charlie. It is a surprise that a man who once worked for the mafia would risk himself in this way. Clues to this behavior can be found in the things that Bonz has already said about himself, but more importantly he seems to have an innate sense for justice, or at least a desire to seek revenge against Carmen and the others for what they did to him. Charlie himself is totally reliant upon Bonz's skills in this situation, and seems very dismayed at how easy committing petty crimes is along the way. He is also naturally resistant towards committing those crimes, being aware of the real possibility that they could permanently damage his career. Nevertheless, he has no choice but to work with Bonz if he wants to find a way to prove his innocence.

Discussion Question 1

Why would Bonz decide to help Charlie? Is it for Jake, or is it for himself? What evidence is there of either case?

Discussion Question 2

Bonz seems like a very different character from the last time the reader saw him. Why is this the case? Explain briefly.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Charlie puzzled by Jake's last words to him? Does Bonz seem clear on what they meant or what they even were? Explain.

Vocabulary

Sadistic, kaleidoscopic, furtherance, obtained, inconvenient, panhandling, verbose, unprecedented, implements, rummaged, compounding, enumerating, incriminating, clarification.



Chapters 25-27

Summary

In Chapter 25, Bonz and Charlie go to St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. To break in, they check for unlocked windows. Bonz is finally able to unlatch one, and inside they begin to look for the tape. Charlie asks about how Bonz became such a great fighter. Bonz reveals that he was in the military, and wanted to be in special forces, but was dishonorably discharged for selling their equipment. After that, Carmen was the only person who would hire him. The two are caught by someone as they are checking wall panels by a man who says he has dialed 9-1-1.

In Chapter 26, Charlie figures out that the man calling the police is a priest. When he explains why he and Bonz are there, Father Sean hangs up and says he wasn't really calling anyone. Charlie asks Father Sean if he knows where the tape could possibly be. The priest has no idea, but he helps them look for it anyway. Charlie memorizes the inside of the church. They look in every room, but find nothing. He and Bonz say goodbye to Father Sean, then leave.

In Chapter 27, Charlie realizes that the Redekov trial starts in several hours. He wants to talk to Jessica before she learns about everything on television. He asks Bonz what happened to him after he escaped Carmen's men. Bonz isn't sure, but he thinks he stayed in Boston to find Charlie. They both go back to Charlie's Corolla. Bonz has him pop the trunk open. There is a man bound and gagged inside.

Analysis

More proof that Charlie is not unreasonably paranoid is demonstrated when he tells Father Sean of his plight. This is important, because it shows that Charlie is not a naturally suspicious person, despite what happened to his brother. However, their complete failure to find anything of significance at the church suggests Bonz still needs to recall more detail about Jake's last words. In a situation where they are seriously pressed for time, this represents a large problem. Now, they have no idea where the tape might be, and there is no clear way to find out. To make matters worse, Charlie's situation has severely deepened when Bonz reveals the bound man in his toyota. Up to this point, Charlie has only been guilty of assisting in petty thefts and breaking and entering. Now, he is responsible for a kidnapping. This represents a serious threat to Charlie's moral philosophy, if not his legal career, and represents the idea that in order to overcome Carmen and the evidence mounting against him, he is going to have to willingly commit such crimes.



Discussion Question 1

What is Father Sean's reaction when Charlie explains the situation? What sorts of things does Charlie understand about the priest right away?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Bonz and Charlie search the church? Do they have a very good reason for doing so?

Discussion Question 3

What is Jessica's significance to Charlie at this point in the novel?

Vocabulary

Affluent, formidable, sacristy, gruff, narthex, agnosticism, entrusted, intuition, ascended, depicting, eidetic, sacrament, pew, imprudent, vandalism.



Chapters 28-30

Summary

In Chapter 28, Charlie is stunned that Bonz has kidnapped someone. He realizes it is the homeless man that he saw in an alleyway earlier. A police car arrives suddenly, and Bonz disappears. They tell Charlie to get on the ground. Bonz surprises them and knocks out one of the officers, then makes the other one drop his weapon. Reluctantly, Charlie helps cuff both officers. They move their captive into the truck. Charlie gets Jake's notes out of the Corolla and then drives away with Bonz.

In Chapter 29, the two dump the truck then steal a Dodge Ram pickup. Bonz decides he knows a safe place for them to spend the night, and he decides to question their captive. Charlie realizes he recognizes the man, whose name is Randall Deacon. He has been following Charlie for the past thirteen years, as one of a team of private investigators hired by Carmen. They have been following him very frequently in shifts over all these years, and Charlie realizes that they are responsible for his paranoia, and that he really has actually been followed this entire time. Randy insists they had no choice but to work for Carmen. Charlie's apartment had been bugged and sometimes they even listened to his cell phone conversations. Bonz and Charlie decide to dump Randall, and Bonz takes his driver's license.

In Chapter 30, Charlie and Bonz buy supplies at Walgreens with what cash they've managed to get. Charlie wants to call Jessica but knows it is a bad idea. They arrive at the Stay-Long Motel, and Charlie calls her while Bonz is in the shower. Her machine answers, and he explains that he didn't do anything the media says he's done. He falls asleep, and Bonz wakes him when it's his turn to shower. Afterwards, Charlie shaves and cuts Bonz's hair, and Bonz shaves off his beard. Bonz tries to encourage Charlie to go into hiding, but Charlie is determined to go after Carmen. They both decide that they need to find the tape in order for that to happen. Bonz dyes his hair black and then they get to work on Charlie's appearance. Afterwards they sleep, but Bonz is trouble by night-terrors.

Analysis

Charlie grows increasingly immersed in the world of the criminal on the run. More now than ever, he is alienated from everything he cared about, especially after the kidnapping of the private investigator turns suddenly into an assault on law enforcement. It's difficult to imagine Charlie being safe from that particular charge even if he is proven innocent of everything else. This incident goes a long way towards suggesting there is no turning back for Charlie. And yet, Charlie does not give up. Even as he and Bonz change their appearances so that they will be more difficult to see, Charlie resolves not to continue this way of living--that is to say, he rejects Bonz's suggestion that he go into hiding. Charlie refuses to give up on his brother, just as he



refuses to give up on the idea that he can still do the right thing, even as his situation seems to become unbeatable. Bonz may be unhappy with the decided course of action, but he remains quiet about it. Where there might still be hope for Charlie to return to a normal life, there is very little hope that Bonz can do so. His night terrors represent the permanent damage done to him by Carmen's torturers.

Discussion Question 1

What do the police warn Charlie about after he's helped Bonz handcuff them?

Discussion Question 2

What does Randall explain to Charlie? What does this mean about Charlie's actual mental state?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Charlie refuse to go into hiding? Is it just Jessica, or is there something else?

Vocabulary

Unintelligible, partially, rustle, unkempt, bender, whimper, mollified, vigorously, reluctantly, irregular.



Chapters 31-33

Summary

In Chapter 31, Charlie wakes up late in the afternoon, then realizes he doesn't know what to do next. He thinks about Jake's last words, then looks through Jake's notes. He checks the phone he'd used to call Jessica. He calls her back and she demands an explanation when she picks up. She tries to believe his story, but wants him to turn himself in. Bonz comes out of the bathroom and Charlie hangs up. Bonz suggests that they start pressuring people for information.

In Chapter 32, Charlie continues to try and figure out what his brother meant. They both go to a library to gather information, but find nothing. Charlie winds up telling Bonz that he cheated on an IQ test when he was very young. He's never told anyone that before. As they prepare to leave, two policemen enter.

In Chapter 33, the cops are looking for Charlie and Bonz. Charlie tells a young man that there's a pregnant woman who needs help. They watch him go to the police in order to ask for assistance, then escape while the cops are distracted. They steal another car from a young worker at the hotel when they return because the kid has called the police. As they leave, Bonz asks Charlie if he's figured out what Jake meant. Charlie's phone rings, and it's Jessica. She again tries to make him turn himself in. She also insists that she never told Angel anything about Bonz. This confuses Charlie because she's the only person who knew about Bonz.

Analysis

Charlie is running out of places to look for the tape. The library is an obviously desperate attempt to gather information, and it should be of no surprise to the reader that he and Bonz are unsuccessful uncovering anything of significance. The future looks very grim for them both, but the fact that someone else knew about his meeting Bonz suggests there is still another crucial piece of the puzzle missing. Assuming Jessica is telling the truth about not having mentioned anything to Angel--and Charlie, with his good judgement, makes it a point to believe her--then someone else close to Charlie discovered his encounter with Bonz before the night of the charity. This would have happened incredibly quickly, but at present we have no idea who could have possibly been responsible.

Discussion Question 1

Does Jessica actually believe Charlie is innocent?



Discussion Question 2

In Chapter 32, Charlie explains why his brother called him "Wiley." Briefly discuss the story. Is this important in understanding Charlie as a character?

Discussion Question 3

Come up with a list of three characters, other than Jessica, who may have discovered Charlie had met Bonz. Discuss how each person might have come across the information.

Vocabulary

Continuance, facilities, disjointed, simultaneous, rendered, immaculate, marvel, emphatically, mayhem, unwittingly.



Chapters 34-36

Summary

In Chapter 34 Charlie and Bonz go to Dr. Fielding's office. Charlie thinks he's the one who told Carmen about Bonz. Bonz catches the doctor as he leaves the office, and Charlie accuses him of knowing that he was never paranoid. Fielding admits that he was made to monitor Charlie, because Carmen threatened his family. The mob didn't pay Dr. Fielding anything and they also refused to let him retire. Fielding insists he doesn't know anything else, and that he never told anyone about their phone conversation the night before. Bonz realizes that they've bugged Fielding's home. He and Bonz leave, no closer to the information they're looking for. Finally, Charlie agrees to go with Bonz's plan to pressure the mob directly for information.

In Chapter 35, Charlie suggests that they go after Big Frank D'Amico, Carmen's closest friend. Bonz is confident they can get to him. Charlie thinks about where Big Frank might be and decides to get his whereabouts from yet another gangster, this one named Sweet Sal.

In Chapter 36, they head to the Italian Restaurant Prince of Italy and go around the back door. Bonz taps his gun on a metal door. When it opens, he attacks the man on the other side, forcing himself inside. Charlie follows and they find Sal in his office with four other men. Sal recognizes Bonz, who has Charlie take their weapons. There are dozens of photos of Charlie on a table in the room. Bonz punches Sal and asks if this was the only group supposed to go after him and Charlie. Sal says that they are, but he's clearly lying. Sal admits that a "couple dozen" are after them at this point. Bonz takes Sal into another room and tells Charlie to keep his gun on the others for a minute. When Sal and Bonz come back, Sal is badly beaten. Bonz knocks each of the other mob members out and has Charlie tie them up. They do the same to Sal before they leave, but the door behind them opens.

Analysis

Once again Bonz has taken control of the situation. Charlie accepts this only when he is convinced that there is no other way for him to confront Carmen. Bonz seems even more dangerous and confident than he was when he attacked Grossi in Charlie's apartment. This is most likely due to the fact that all of Bonz's memories have returned to him, and he seems bent on hurting Carmen as seriously as he can. Their decision to go after Carmen's friend is a surprising one, especially since Charlie seemed very resistant to the idea to begin with. The risks associated with going after someone that dangerous seem very high, but then again Bonz has been able to get them through some very difficult situations. This time, however, Charlie is going to be along, and it's unclear if he will be comfortable with bloodshed in order to get the information that he



needs. In fact, Charlie has been opposed to doing things Bonz's way exactly because of the dangers involved and the fact that people could get seriously hurt.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Dr. Fielding help Carmen spy on Charlie?

Discussion Question 2

How is Charlie able to determine that Big Frank is the best person to get information from?

Discussion Question 3

What happens when they reach Sweet Sal's hideout? What does this mean for Charlie and Bonz?

Vocabulary

Platinum, innocuous, rekindling, impinge, ethical, condone, purportedly, swarthy, frequent, albiet, candidly, arsons, tottered.



Chapters 37-39

Summary

In Chapter 37, Grossi walks in, caught totally by surprise by Bonz. He starts shooting into the room. Bonz reaches him and the two begin fighting. Grossi begins winning but they trip over one of the unconscious gangsters. Bonz bites Grossi hard, but another man comes through the door. Bonz charges him and knocks him out. Charlie and Bonz run from the restaurant.

In Chapter 38, they go toward Big Frank, who is supposed to be very close nearby. Charlie realizes that Bonz was grazed with a bullet. They reach Pauli's--the place where Big Frank is--and both decide to go inside. Bonz goes straight to Big Frank, puts a gun to his head and demands information from him. One of Big Frank's thugs decides to pull his gun and Bonz shoots him. The other one--already on the floor, does the same and Charlie kicks him in the head. The man Bonz whom shot accidentally shot Frank in the neck. Bonz convinces Frank to spend the last few seconds of his life giving them the information they want about what is on the tape. Big Frank says something that sounds like "Michael Kidd."

In Chapter 39, Charlie assumes that Big Frank said "Michael Kidder." Charlie figures out their next step, which is Andrew Lippincott's home. Charlie thinks that Andrew will still help him because there's a chance he could bring down Carmen with whatever is on the tape. Andrew answers his door and they come inside. They discuss Charlie's situation, and the tape that Jake supposedly had. Charlie asks if there is any connection between Kidder and Carmen. Andrew thinks for a minute, then leaves the room and comes back with a manila folder. He can't find what he's looking for, but recalls being suspicious of Michael early on. Bonz punches him in the head and knocks him out.

Analysis

The violence is even more extreme than was expected, as Charlie discovers the stakes are even higher than he'd imagined. Whatever was on the tape was important enough that very many people seem to be on the hunt for Charlie and Bonz now, so that the police are no longer the biggest of their problems. Perhaps it is the suddenness of this discovery that leads Charlie and Bonz to barge into Big Frank the way that they did. Big Frank was once of Carmen's friends and an important gangster himself, so that it is safe to say he was not a good person. However, Charlie certainly hadn't wanted anyone to get killed, and the fact that he was killed accidentally by his own bodyguard is of very little comfort. The violence spreads and grows even more serious when Bonz knocks out Andrew Lippincott in his own home. It is safe to assume that Bonz had a good reason for doing what he did, but it is interesting to note that this is the first time Charlie's judgement about someone has appeared to fail him.



Discussion Question 1

What does Bonz do to Grossi when both men fall to the ground?

Discussion Question 2

How does Big Frank wind up shot? Is that likely to help Charlie if the authorities accuse him of killing Big Frank?

Discussion Question 3

What could possibly be Bonz's reason for knocking Andrew out?

Vocabulary

Presumably, intensity, oblivious, aroma, crescendo, profound, prominently, renovate, reservations.



Chapters 40-42

Summary

In Chapter 40, Bonz says that Andrew was stalling. Charlie realizes that Andrew was looking through blank papers and nonsense. Bonz checked Andrew's phone, and is convinced that he called the mob. The two hurry away quickly, and wait to see who comes to Lippincott's home. When two cars arrive, eight people get out. Charlie and Bonz run away.

In Chapter 41, Grossi had been in charge of the men who went to Andrew's home. Charlie is shocked that Andrew called them. He knows that Andrew really hates Carmen, so he is confused about what has happened. The two hide out for a while, and Charlie starts thinking about his relationship with Jessica. He starts getting suspicious of her. He dreams about Jake who reassures him that he will solve everything. Charlie wakes up and checks Jake's notes before telling Bonz that they need to go to get help.

In Chapter 42, they go to the residence of a Nicholas Rantham. Rantham is a computer hacker that Charlie prosecuted a few years ago. Another offender named "Big Bopper" lives with Rantham and opens the door. Bopper knows that there is a reward for getting Charlie to Carmen alive. Bonz punches him and knocks him out. Charlie asks Nick for help. Nick gets into the Boston Beacon's archives and searches them until he finds an article about Andrew getting Carmen a job with a building crew. Andrew calls him after he's printed out the article, and tells him to check his e-mail. There's a message from Andrew, with a link to a video of Jake being tortured. Bonz is the one who kills him.

Analysis

By now the reader is obviously suspicious of Andrew Lippincott. While it's not clear why he called the mob or how he came to be working with them, Charlie is shocked because it is very out of character for his boss to associate with organized crime. This is clearly about to become an important part of solving the mystery, even as Andrew tries to reason with Charlie by showing him who really killed his brother. This certainly comes as a surprise to the reader, because it appears as though Bonz has been lying to Charlie, at least in part, the entire time. After all, if Bonz felt bad for Jake, why would he be the one to kill him? These are the questions that Charlie must deal with, and in order to do so, he is going to have to confront Bonz about the video that he saw.

Discussion Question 1

What do Charlie and Bonz discover about Andrew when they go to his home?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Charlie become suspicious of Jessica?

Discussion Question 3

What happens when they visit Nicholas Rantham's place? How do they convince Nick to help them?

Vocabulary

Gibberish, undignified, presumably, despised, inhabited, detritus, obtain, textured, punctuated, apprehension, strutting, mutual, essentially, humility, unprecedented, implements.



Chapters 43-46

Summary

In Chapter 43, Charlie punches Bonz in the nose, then in the face repeatedly, but is knocked out.

In Chapter 44, Charlie dreams of Jake again. He wakes up sitting up in a chair. Bonz says that he shouldn't have hit him. Bonz does admit to killing Jake, but he insists that he did not murder him. He says he killed Jake to put him out of his misery. He'd planned to save Jake, but Jake was already dying, so he quickly killed him instead, at Jake's own request. Grieved by the knowledge, Charlie thanks Bonz.

In Chapter 45, Charlie recovers from his fight with Bonz, then realizes what Jake's last words were. He goes back to the computer and shows Bonz a piece of the video to show him Jake's last words, which look like "seek refuge offered by The Lord's Prayer."

In Chapter 46, Andrew calls Charlie again. Charlie lies to him about Bonz. Andrew admits to doing business with Carmen, and says that Jessica has been kidnapped. Carmen himself takes the phone and tells Charlie that he'll kill her unless he and Bonz give themselves up. Carmen gives Charlie a web-address that takes him to a video of Jessica in the same room as Jake when he died. Grossi punches her in the face. Charlie lies and says that he has the tape. He offers to exchange it for Jessica and for the evidence against him in Angel's murder case. He also demands one-million dollars. Carmen offers him half of the money and gives him until the next morning to get the tape to him.

Analysis

Charlie and Bonz are able to reconcile their differences quickly, considering Bonz is the one who killed his brother. Developments with Andrew Lippincott have accelerated to the point where he is even in the same room as Carmen, and the two seem to be cooperating. This seems to stem from more than just Carmen's abduction of Jessica, and by now a picture is starting to emerge of an Andrew Lippincott that is very different from the one the reader was presented with at the opening of the novel. Charlie's bluff that they have the tape has bought him time, but he still needs to make up the rest as they go along.

Discussion Question 1

What does Jake tell Charlie when Charlie dreams of him in Chapter 44?



Discussion Question 2

How is Charlie able to figure out Jake's last words?

Discussion Question 3

What does Charlie tell Carmen when he learns that the mob boss has Jessica?

Vocabulary

Pulverize, partition, incentive, fiddled, orbiting, segment, refuge, circumstances, distinctive, suppressed, complicity, anticipated, deceptively, shuddering.



Chapters 47-50

Summary

In Chapter 47, Charlie wakes up at Nick Rantham's house the next morning. Still uncertain where to find the tape, he prepares for the day and thinks about what to do. He and Bonz leave in different vehicles. Charlie goes to his meeting with Carmen. Grossi and the other mob thugs are there as well. Carmen asks where Bonz is, and Charlie asks him where Jessica is. Charlie lies, saying that Bonz will bring the tape when he tells him to bring it. His plan is to bring the cops when Charlie gives him the order. Charlie knows that Carmen plans to kill them all. Charlie tells Carmen that he knows he killed Andrew's son, and that Andrew paid him to do it. This convinces both Carmen and Andrew that he has the tape. Carmen accuses him of making a copy, which Charlie doesn't deny. Instead, he promises to destroy the copy once he's safely escaped from Boston. Charlie condemns Andrew for having his own son killed, and Andrew tries to defend himself. Carmen has been blackmailing Andrew for years as a result. In turn, Carmen helped him go after people in the Mafia whenever it helped him. In fact, Andrew hired Charlie to keep an eye on him and make sure he never found the tape. Just before Carmen prepares to let Charlie and Jessica go, Andrew asks Charlie how much he paid to have his son killed.

In Chapter 48, Charlie stumbles over his answer and Carmen and Andrew both realize he's lying about having the tape. Carmen suggests Jake was lying about the tape in the first place. Carmen has no choice but to kill him and Jessica, and Andrew can't bring himself to object. Charlie suddenly realizes what he needs to do.

In Chapter 49, Charlie says that Bonz is about to get the tape. Carmen doesn't believe him, but Charlie keeps up the bluff, and Carmen agrees to the original deal. Charlie agrees to use the car he came in to lead them all to Bonz and the tape. They agree to wait another hour so Bonz doesn't get suspicious. Charlie goes to his car, following by one of Carmen's men. He gets in his car and secretly takes the cell phone. He calls Bonz and explains what he needs to do.

In Chapter 50, Charlie takes Andrew to the cemetery where they are to meet with Bonz. Bonz meets up with Charlie and hands him an envelope which Charlie takes papers out of. Bonz gives him a gun. The two hurry into the cemetery. Charlie signals Andrew over to a mausoleum, and Carmen's thugs start shooting at Bonz as he runs away. Charlie tells Andrew to let Jessica go, and he demands the tape. They go into the mausoleum, and they check under the coffin lids. They find a case inside one of the urns. Charlie gets it, Andrew takes it from him and asks for the combination, which Charlie agrees to give after he lets go of Jessica. Once Andrew gets the tape, he tells Charlie that the deal has changed. Charlie makes it known to Jessica that her father had her brother killed. Andrew gave Carmen fifty dollars to do it. Charlie gives him the combination to the case and tells him there never was a tape.



Analysis

This is the climax of the novel, where Charlie is forced to use everything he's learned about deception and being a criminal in the last few days to confront the most corrupt person he knows. His very own boss, Andrew Lippincott, turns out to be the major antagonist of the novel. Carmen may be a criminal, but he is honest about it and has never pretended to be anything else. More importantly, he has never lied to himself about who he is. The same is not true of Andrew, who justifies his behavior with all of the good he thinks he has been able to do the city. Whether or not he has been able to put criminals behind bars, he is just as guilty of his son's murder as Carmen, and his crime is worse because it resulted in the death of his wife and shackles him with guilt for many years.

Discussion Question 1

How does Charlie realize that Andrew paid Carmen to have his son killed?

Discussion Question 2

How does Charlie convince Carmen to save his life?

Discussion Question 3

What could possibly be in the case instead of a tape?

Vocabulary

Persuasion, incriminated, obtain, anticipated, incapable, remnant, indictments, imperceptibly, profited, negotiated, staggering, uncanny, inadequately, pinnacles, recruited, resignation, impropriety, impediment, pendulously, mesmerized, surreptitiously, rendezvous, inconspicuously, inquisitive, charade, erratically.



Chapters 51-53

Summary

In Chapter 51, Charlie explains that Carmen has been blackmailing Andrew with the tape for years. Jake prepared a letter to Charlie back before he was captured. Inside the briefcase was a walkie-talkie. Charlie had Bonz rig all of this in the hour he delayed Carmen. He tells Andrew the police are already on their way. Charlie tells him he doesn't plan to give the tape to the police, since it would be inadmissible as evidence anyway. Instead, he plans to have Jessica release them to the public. As Charlie waits for the police to arrive, he hears shots and Carmen's men hunting for Bonz. Bonz appears, but he is shot and falls to the ground. Grossi comes out of the fog but Bonz gets up and the two begin shooting at one another. Charlie goes to help Bonz after he sees the two men fighting on the ground. Bonz tries to make him leave. Charlie hears one of them being killed. The police arrive and Charlie directs them to the fight. Grossi comes toward Charlie, who is knocked to the ground as the police begin shooting.

In Chapter 52, it turns out that Jessica is the one who knocked Charlie down. It turns out that Bonz, not Grossi, had won the fight. Andrew gets in serious trouble very quickly and loses his job. No tape is ever found. Bonz goes to jail, but he is to be released soon. Bonz tells him that Jake had planned for Charlie to figure out everything. Charlie and Jessica are finally going to be married. The charges against him have all been dropped.

In Chapter 53, it is revealed that the letter Jake wrote to Charlie explains there never was a tape. Jake was blackmailing Andrew and Carmen in order to pay for Charlie's schooling. Jake also writes about several million he's hidden away for Charlie. He and Jessica plan to give Bonz some of it.

Analysis

The book ends well for Charlie, Jessica, and Bonz. Charlie was able to deceive his way to safety; and, although he believed that Bonz had been killed in his fight with Grossi, Bonz had actually succeeded in beating the torturer. Carmen and Andrew both got their well-deserved fates, and it's hard to imagine either of them will remain alive for very long at all. The most surprising aspect to the end of this book is Jake's admission. The fact that there never was a tape means that Charlie is where he is because of blackmail, which was very closely related to the same kind of blackmail that was going on between Carmen and Andrew. Yet, this doesn't seem to surprise or even bother Charlie.

Discussion Question 1

How was Bonz able to set everything up before Charlie and Andrew arrived?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Charlie tell Jessica what her father has done in front of him?

Discussion Question 3

What does Jake reveal to Charlie in his final letter to him?

Vocabulary

Distinctive, confidential, compound, gambit, admissable, abruptly, sarcophagus, indistinct, fortuitous, uncanny, warrant, mulled, immunity, inextricably, conspiracy, anonymous.



Characters

Charlie

Charlie Beckham is an assistant District Attorney for the United States, which means he's a federal prosecutor. While he spends his adult life going after organized crime, Charlie actually had quite a traumatic past, that ended with the mysterious disappearance of his brother. His parents died when he was very young, and his older brother, Jake, raised him and made sure that he could afford law school. Jake simply disappeared one day during lunch. Charlie grew up obsessed with his brother's disappearance, and his life is turned upside-down when he meets a homeless man who refers to him as "Wiley," which is his brother's nickname for him. Charlie soon discovers that his history of paranoia is actually well-founded, as almost everyone around him has been spying on him for years. With the help of the homeless man, who he learns is named Bonz, he tries to uncover the secret behind his brother's death. Charlie seems to have a very strong sense of humor, and he loves his Fiance, Jessica, more than anything. Despite this, he spends a lot of time and money trying to find out what happened to his brother, and this gets in the way of their plans for a family. Charlie also seems to have an evolved sense of justice, and even though he must break the law repeatedly when his situation becomes very serious, he makes every effort to solve his problems without violence or breaking the law. He is generally compassionate and understanding, although he is clearly willing to fight, even if he's not very good at it.

Andrew

Andrew Lippincott is a hypocrite and a murderer. Outwardly, Andrew projects morality and perfection. However, he hides a terrible secret that the mob has been using to blackmail him for years. Andrew Lippincott's son had a severe form of autism, and was placing an immense burden on him and his family. His solution to this problem was to have his son killed. The killer, Carmen Siracuse, decided to tape the conversation where Andrew asked him to kill his son, and used it against Andrew for years. Eventually, Charlie's older brother Jake, an investigative journalist, learned of the tape and began blackmailing Carmen to help pay for Charlie's education. This ultimately led to Jake's death. All of this has taken place without the public's knowledge, and Andrew has risen to the status of District Attorney, making him an incredibly dangerous man. He appears to be perfect in every way, although most of his good fortune is due to Carmen, who gives him information on other mob-bosses who stand in his way. Charlie is only able to discover that Carmen was hired by Andrew to kill Andrew's son after he comes across an article that links Andrew to a job Carmen got at the hospital where the boy was killed. Even Jessica has no idea her father is a murderer. She believes exactly what everyone else believes about her father; that he suffered greatly after the loss of his son and wife, who passed away from grief shortly after the boy died.



Bonz

Bonz, or Bonzetti, grew up wanting to be in special forces, but was kicked out of the military for selling the army's equipment. When he came back to Boston, the only person he could find work from was Carmen Siracuse, the mob boss. Bonzetti became one of his men, but ran into trouble when his group caught Jake Beckham and tortured him for the whereabouts of a tape. Bonz knew Jake from elementary school, and had deep misgivings about the way the mob tortured him. Finally, he grew so upset that he killed Jake just to put him out of his misery. The mafia captured him and tortured him in response. He managed to escape one day, but his mind had already been completely shattered, and he wandered the streets homeless for thirteen years before running into Charlie Beckham, Jake's younger brother. This brings Bonz's memories back, and Bonz decides to help Charlie try to find the tape that Jake was hiding from the mob. Bonz is an incredible fighter and has excellent instincts.

Jessica

Jessica Lippincott is Charlie's fiance and Andrew's daughter. She is the only person who believes Andrew when he insists he is innocent. She is a lawyer, like her father. Charlie describes her as beautiful and athletic. She is taken prisoner by Carmen to get Charlie to hand over the tape, but Charlie recovers her unharmed.

Carmen

Carmen Siracuse is a mob boss who made his way to the top through blackmail. Many years ago, Andrew Lippincott paid him fifty dollars to kill his son because of the difficulties raising him presented Andrew and his family. Carmen used that action to continually blackmail Andrew, at the same time feeding him information about organized crime that led to Andrew's rapid advancement. Eventually, Jake Beckham learned of the tape and used this knowledge to blackmail Siracuse, and this ultimately cost him his life. Carmen is crude, offensive, and very direct. He makes no apologies for himself, and he considers his arrangement with Andrew to be beneficial to everyone involved.

Grossi

Grossi is a murderer who works for Carmen Siracuse. He hates Bonz and tries to kill him numerous times. Grossi nearly kills Charlie, but Bonz prevents him from doing so. Bonz eventually kills Grossi in a fight at the cemetery.



Angel

Angel is another lawyer who works for Andrew. He is hired by Carmen to keep an eye on Charlie and make sure he doesn't find the take. He is killed by Grossi, who makes it look like Charlie murdered him.

Dr. Fielding

Dr. Fielding is a psychiatrist that Charlie sees to cope with his feelings of paranoia. The only problem is that Charlie isn't really paranoid. People are following him, and in fact, Dr. Fielding has been threatened to act like Charlie's fears are irrational. The people following Charlie go so far as to bug the doctor's phone.

Randall

Randall is one of many private investigators hired to follow Charlie. When Bonz forces him, he admits that Charlie has been under a fairly close watch ever since his brother disappeared.

Nick

Nick is a computer hacker who helps Charlie break into the database controlled by his brother's newspaper.

Big Frank

Big Frank is Carmen's best friend. He is accidentally shot by one of his bodyguards when Bonz pressures him for information.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Tape

The Tape is the most important object in the entire book. Aside from supposedly containing information dangerous to Carmen Siracuse, Charlie comes to learn that it is a conversation between the mob boss and Attorney General Andrew Lippincott, in which Andrew asks him to kill his son. The tape represents blackmail, corruption, and hypocrisy, and in the final moments of the book, this idea is even further reinforced when it becomes known that Jake was never in possession of the tape in the first place.

Punches

A surprising amount of punches are thrown in this novel, and they begin fairly early on, when Charlie accidentally gets cornered by a street gang. Charlie's punches are not effective, and he fails to ever actually hurt anyone; but, they do represent his willingness to fight when cornered, provided the stakes are high enough.

Hammer

One of the most dangerous villains in the novel, a man named Grossi, threatens to torture Charlie with a hammer. He explains that he nails people's heads just to see what will happen. This is significant because Grossi is the man who tortured Jake until he couldn't survive. Overall, the hammer is representative of torture and cruelty, though it is never used in the novel.

Church

The church is used in the novel as a means by which Charlie is thrown astray in his quest. Nevertheless, the priest, Father Sean, is helpful and understanding toward Charlie, which seems to suggest that faith does play an important role in the main character's life, even if he does not know it.

Guns

Many different guns are seen throughout the novel, mostly wielded by the mafia. While they are obviously used as a tool to enforce and threaten people, for Charlie they also represent his descent into the criminal world.



Private Investigators

It comes out in the novel that a number of private investigators have actually been following Charlie ever since he began to feel paranoid. This means that he is not in fact paranoid at all, but instead people have been following him since the death of his brother.

Thugs

Thugs are very common in the novel, often accompanying more important bosses for the mafia. Though some of them have names, they are typically interchangeable and don't have much in the way of individual significance.

Scars

Bonz's face and body are covered in scars from the torture he received from Grossi. This is representative of the struggle Bonz had to escape and survive.

Bruises

Interestingly enough, Charlie's face is badly bruised early on in the novel, in a way that has very little to do with either Bonz or the mafia. Bonz's scars and Charlie's bruises are the result of attacks from other people.

Notes

Jake's notes are important to Charlie, even though they don't seem to hold anything of value regarding his disappearance. This represents Charlie's unwillingness to let his brother's mystery go unsolved, as they are the last piece of information he has that is remotely connected to his brother's death.

Settings

The entire novel takes place within and very close by the Northeastern American city of Boston. Home to skyscrapers, confusing streets, and millions of people, the novel's version of the city consists of a seemingly safe and healthy elite while much of the rest of the city suffers in poverty and crime. Charlie encounters many homeless people and is endangered by them several times while he searches for Bonz. Organized crime also has a very large presence in this city, which Charlie and Bonz being sought after by a large number of mafia hitmen. To make matters worse, corruption is apparently rampant, with the most powerful and important federal prosecutor having very deep ties to the mob. The leaders of this mob mingle freely with other members of the upper-class, as evidenced by Carmen Siracuse's presence at the charity ball attended by Charlie and Jessica. This hints at the connections between Carmen and Andrew, later uncovered by Charlie as he attempts to find the tape his brother supposedly hid from everyone. Meanwhile, a large number of poor people go unnoticed, as represented by the family Charlie stumbles across in the alley while searching for Bonz. This is a world that Charlie is unfamiliar with, as his parents and Jake always worked very hard to make certain he was well-cared for. The family's presence in the novel suggests an entire city within a city. Charlie is a total stranger to that world. He must work hard to become adjusted to it.



Themes and Motifs

Paranoia

Many of Charlie's thoughts and actions spur from a pervasive sense of paranoia. Charlie always feels as though someone is watching him, and, in fact, he sees a psychiatrist to help him get these impressions under control. In the early stages of the novel, almost every thought Charlie expresses is colored with the impression that someone is watching him. This turns out to be true, and the biggest irony is that even the therapist supposedly helping Charlie is guilty of helping the mafia, who need to make certain Charlie never comes in contact with the tape. Halfway through the novel, the theme of paranoia has been expanded upon to the point that not only was Charlie right to feel watched, he was not paranoid enough. Virtually everyone close to him, except for Jessica, was guilty of watching him to ensure that he never came across the tape. This demonstrates that while Charlie has a more or less excellent sense of judgement about these matters, he is actually trusting and friendly by nature. These qualities allow Charlie to persistently establish trustworthy relationships with people despite everything he has experienced in his life. Hence, he and Bonz rapidly grow to rely on one another, and Charlie cannot progress in his mission to discover what happened to his brother without this relationship. It is interesting to note that Charlie trusts many people who are actually the ones he should be most paranoid about, including the Boss and his fiance's father, Andrew Lippincott, one of the men responsible for Jake's death. His best friend Angel turns out to be on the payroll of organized crime to keep a look out for any meetings between Charlie and Bonz. Even his doctor is working for the mob, under threat.

Corruption

The economic disparity between the wealthy and the poor serves to highlight the corruption present in the novel's version of the city of Boston. Andrew Lippincott chooses to donate and speak at a fundraiser for the Arts while Charlie is practically stumbling for who he believes to be his lost brother in the slums of Boston. The poor receive no help or relief in this city. This is due to the outright corruption of people like Lippincott, who consider what they do to be a contribution to society while failing completely to see how economic disparity can lead to extraordinary crime. For example, while Bonz clearly made a mistake during his military career in selling army equipment, his dishonorable discharge leaves him without any other means of making a living other than to work for Carmen in his criminal organization. Carmen himself is clearly very rich. The corruption generated by himself and Andrew Lippincott has helped both men to amass large financial holdings without suffering from the social damages their crimes have caused. The corruption spreads and thickens throughout the novel, until it is discovered that even Charlie's career as a prosecutor was possible only because Jake was blackmailing Carmen with a tape that he did not even have. By this time, Charlie is



able to let go of the past because he has encountered so much corruption. It scarcely surprises him that even Jake was responsible for it.

Brotherhood

The bond between Charlie and Jake is the driving force of the narrative. Jake's disappearance has consumed Charlie's life almost completely, and it is this familial bond that prevents him from forming a closer relationship with Jessica until he can discover what happened to his brother. Charlie is a sympathetic character because of this connection with his family. Even Carmen, who feels a strong sense of brotherhood toward Big Frank, becomes momentarily sympathetic when he expresses sadness over the death of his longtime friend. By stark contrast, Andrew Lippincott does not seem to experience these familial ties at all. Andrew has his son killed for being too much a financial and emotional burden on him and his family. This incident causes the death of his wife, which Andrew refuses to accept. He is so self-involved and focused on his career, that he does not protest when Carmen suggests that Jessica's life needs to be ended due to the fact that she knows too much. Almost no parents anywhere would go along with that decision, but Andrew is so corrupt and morally diseased that he sees it as the only way that all of the "good" he has done can be preserved. Andrew's sense of family is completely inverted from Charlie's, and by the end he is in complete moral opposition to Charlie. In fact, it is exactly this opposition that makes them enemies by the end of the novel.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person. The reader experiences the entire narrative through the voice, thoughts, and actions of Charlie Beckham as though he were explaining the event to us long after it has taken place. Charlie's reliability as a narrator actually turns out to be fairly important to the plot, since he is thought to be paranoid until he discovers this is not in fact the case. Charlie is a very good judge of character, and the reader is often able to glimpse insights into other character's thoughts and actions through Charlie's appraisal of them. Due to the importance of Charlie's family life and the voice in which he relates his story to the reader, this point of view is critical to the novel as a whole.

The story is told through exposition, dialogue, and action. Charlie often uses colorful words and phrases to describe events or people he sees, and these passages tend to take up very large sections of each chapter. The novel most likely possesses this structure because the present story is totally linked to events in the past, so that Charlie must be constantly thinking back to things he knew before the beginning of the novel. Charlie has to check his memory very often as he and Bonz escape both the police and the mafia through the streets of Boston. His constant dreams and flashbacks of Jake remind the reader of Charlie's determination to uncover the mystery of what has happened to his brother.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is relaxed, colorful, and often very entertaining, even in situations that are brutal or cruel in nature. The language goes a long way toward demonstrating Charlie's true personality, as opposed to the one Dr. Fielding insists he has--one that is unreasonably paranoid from traumatic circumstances. In fact, the language will be the first clue to the careful reader that Charlie is not actually paranoid. Since the novel takes place in the modern day, the language used is relaxed and casual, although there are a few notable exceptions. Andrew Lippincott tends to use formal words more than other characters, as this goes in hand with his perfection-obsessed personality. Bonz, Carmen, Grossi, and other characters associated with the mob tend to use the dialect adopted by organized crime. These dialects are not extreme, and are still easily understandable. Charlie's descriptions are often very colorful and entertaining, which lends value to information that might otherwise read dry or seem unimportant. This is a very important aspect of the novel, because it goes to suggest that Charlie is a likable and sympathetic character. In fact, the opening of the novel is a perfect example of the way in which Charlie tends to organize information. He is constantly leaving out details that only matter later on, and he does so in order to ensure that the story progresses as quickly as possible.



Structure

The novel contains fifty-three chapters, each very short. Most chapters are under ten pages. The chapters are only numbered, and occasionally they are further divided by breaks between paragraphs. Charlie tends to describe his thoughts and experiences through most of the chapters, although some are totally dedicated to action.

The plot is straightforward with one important subplot. Charlie is trying to find a tape his brother had in order to save his fiancée and his own life. Charlie has had a very difficult life, but his brother stepped up and did an exceptional job making sure that Charlie was given everything he needed to be successful. Charlie also wants to marry Jessica, which, by the end of the novel, he ends up doing. In order to be successful with both the uncovering of Andrew's corruption and his marriage to Jessica, Charlie has to confront the secrets his brother kept from him during the past.

The novel is generally fast-paced, but encounters a critical slow-down at roughly halfway through the book. Charlie and Bonz, having escaped from Charlie's apartment, spend a long time wondering what to do next and searching for clues in the wrong places. None of these side-tracks really reveals anything of importance, so the reader is genuinely left feeling as though the writer had no idea how the situation was going to resolve itself. Indeed, it turns out the very object they searched for didn't even exist, and this can be viewed by the reader as something of a significant letdown, even if the novel itself ends successfully.



Quotes

I expected Lippincott to stand up and threaten Siracuse, threaten him with exposure, with all the evidence he'd accumulated against Siracuse over the years, with all the forces of justice he could bring to bear. Instead, after a moment, he nodded in resignation, like he'd just done the math himself and had to agree with Siracuse's answer.

-- Charlie (Chapter 48 paragraph 20)

Importance: This demonstrates the true Andrew Lippincott, a man obsessed with his own career who makes every attempt to justify his actions, regardless of how corrupt they are.

He nodded. That's all, just nodded. He didn't even hint that anything I described could have been in my head. He didn't do the same old song and dance about me being paranoid. And I suddenly realized why. 'You knew,' I said. 'You knew I wasn't paranoid. You knew I was being followed all those years, yet you convinced me I was nuts.' His silence was his confession.

-- Charlie (Chapter 34 paragraph 27)

Importance: This is Dr. Fielding's admission of guilt. It is significant because it is the biggest clue that Charlie finds in quite a long time after he begins looking for the tape. It also proves beyond any doubt that Charlie is not actually paranoid.

Bonz kept his gun pressed hard against D'Amico's head as he leaned down slowly, his lips not far from Big Frank's ear. He said, very quietly, so quietly in fact that I'm sure I was the only other person in the room to hear, 'I'm doing it this way, Frank, so no one knows what I'm asking. That way, Uncle Carmen won't be able to blame you for anything, see?'

-- Bonz (Chapter 38 paragraph 38)

Importance: This demonstrates the force with which Bonz can put pressure on even someone as powerful as Big Frank. Although there attempt to get information is only partially successful, Bonz is excellent at intimidating people, and usually gets everything he asks for when he engages in it.

My name isn't Wiley. It's Charlie Beckham. And the only person who ever, ever called me Wiley was my brother, Jake. And Jake went missing thirteen years ago.

-- Charlie (Chapter 1 paragraph 17)

Importance: This establishes the rest of the novel. Charlie suddenly believes he has a link to the past that he can use in order to solve the mystery of his brother's disappearance. In fact, by the point in the novel, the reader is led to believe the homeless man is Jake himself.



Andrew Lippincott was an intimidating man. Not physically, mind you. He couldn't have been taller than five-eight and I doubted he could reach a hundred-fifty pounds on a scale without a soaking-wet cocker spaniel in his arms--which would never happen because he didn't care much for animals. But intellectually, the guy was more than intimidating, really. He was just plain scary.

-- Charlie (Chapter 3 paragraph 4)

Importance: "This is Charlie's first complete appraisal of his boss, Andrew. It establishes Andrew as a very important, influential character without revealing that he is, in fact, the main antagonist of the novel. It is also typical of the way that Charlie likes to describe people and things."

I turned to look at Jessica, who stared at me for a moment, then walked past me and into the kitchen. I heard the thud of Chinese-food-leftover containers dropping onto the kitchen counter. Or maybe the floor.

-- Charlie (Chapter 6 paragraph 3)

Importance: This is a terrific example of the way the relationship between Jessica and Charlie is portrayed. The obstacle between their marriage is, not surprisingly, Jake. Charlie must move past the disappearance of his brother, and the message left by the private detective serves to establish how truly obsessed Charlie has been in trying to find his brother. Jessica is not unreasonable about this, even if she is upset. She understands that Charlie has been traumatized by Jake's disappearance, and so she does not confront him outright after the message has played.

Soon I became aware of a new quality to the sounds around me. The sadistic chuckles were replaced by grunts. There were some angry words. Then shouts. Then scuffling, more grunts, cries of pain, wooden boards snapping sharply--though they might have been bones cracking.

-- Charlie (Chapter 8 paragraph 19)

Importance: This introduces Bonz's ability to fight, although the reader is not fully aware that it is in fact Bonz doing the fighting.

Mr. Siracuse, I just want to know what happened to him. I just want to know." He smiled again, apologetically this time. "You're asking the wrong guy.

-- Charlie/Carmen (Chapter 14 paragraph 37)

Importance: This is the reason that Charlie confronts Carmen at the charity. He exercises extremely bad judgement when he confronts Carmen, but he also seems rightfully convinced that the mob boss has something to do with his brother's death.

Hey, Charlie." I whirled and saw Angel Medina sitting in my La-Z-Boy. "Angel? What are you doing here?" "Came to talk. Man, look at your face. Jessica told me tonight that you'd got beaten up but she didn't say how bad. And I didn't notice before, when you and I...man, you look horrible.

-- Angel/Charlie (Chapter 16 paragraph 39)



Importance: This is the first instance where Charlie's paranoia is verified. Angel Medina, his best friend, has broken into his home. It quickly comes out that he's working for people who have, in fact, been watching him very closely.

See," the killer said, looking down at the hammer in his hand with the kind of fondness a person usually reserves for his children, or maybe a beloved pet, "what I do is, I tie you to a chair. Then I take out a nail." He dipped his hand into the pocket of his windbreaker and extracted a few nails, some black, some gunmetal gray, some dull, some shiny. "I keep a few dozen in my pocket, of various kinds, various lengths. I never know what I'm gonna come up with.

-- Grossi (Chapter 18 paragraph 1)

Importance: This establishes the fact that Grossi is a very sick human being, exhibiting tendencies far beyond psychopathic. This contrasts sharply with Bonz, who still exhibits many human characteristics.

He appeared to be considering how much to tell me. 'I worked for Uncle Carmen. Muscle. Never killed anybody for him, nothing like that, but I put the screws to a few people. They were lowlifes anyway, stupid bastards, shouldn't have been dealing with Siracuse in the first place.

-- Bonz (Chapter 22 paragraph 53)

Importance: This is really the beginning of Bonz telling the story of him and Jake to Charlie. It establishes how Bonz knew both Jake and Carmen, and suggests that Bonz is a good fighter because he had been doing it professionally.

I reached into the car and lifted the trunk latch. I walked back to the join Bonz, who was looking down into the trunk. When I got there and looked in, two eyes looked back at me, full of anger and fear. Inside my trunk was a man, bound hand and foot with duct tape.

-- Charlie (Chapter 27 paragraph 53)

Importance: This is the first time Charlie is an accomplice in a serious crime, and signifies both the reality that Bonz is a dangerous individual and Charlie is steadily becoming more like him.

The irony of Jake's blackmail wasn't lost on me, and I'm sure it wasn't lost on him. Hell, maybe it wasn't lost on Lippincott or even Siracuse. After all, Siracuse used the tape-- even after he no longer had possession of it--to blackmail Lippincott.

-- Charlie (Chapter 53 paragraph 13)

Importance: This explains to the reader how Charlie was able to attempt law school-- with the money Jake got from Carmen Siracuse by blackmailing him with a tape he didn't even have. It represented the final problem that Charlie had in figuring out how Jake had managed to anger the mob.