

# **Death Du Jour Study Guide**

## **Death Du Jour by Kathy Reichs**

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# Plot Summary

Death du Jour is the second novel by award winning author Kathy Reichs. Reichs' heroine, Tempe Brennan, is back attempting to help solve murders in Montreal and mold young minds in Charlotte. In this novel, Tempe helps exhume the skeleton of a nun who is a candidate for sainthood, only to discover stories of the nun's paternity are false. At the same time, Tempe is called to a house fire where she helps excavate the skeleton of a woman who was a victim of a gunshot prior to the fire. This skeleton, and other bodies found at the house, send Tempe and Detective Andrew Ryan in search of callous killers in an investigation that will come too close to home for Tempe. Death du Jour is a forensic crime novel that compares to bestsellers in the genre and holds its own.

Tempe Brennan is in Montreal during a school break to excavate the skeleton of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet in order to provide forensic evidence needed in an application for sainthood the nun's convent is preparing to send the Vatican. Tempe has difficulties finding the skeletal remains but finally has success. Tempe returns home in a snowstorm only to learn that a house fire in St-Jovite's was so bad that it will require her assistance in recovering the victims. As the house is searched in the aftermath of the fire, two bodies are found upstairs and a skeleton in discovered in the basement. Tempe must use all her forensic skills to preserve and excavate the remains of what she later determines is an elderly woman, shot before the fire began.

Back at the lab, Tempe examines the fire victim and catches up on other cases awaiting her attention before finding the free time to examine Sister Elisabeth's remains. Tempe finds that the skeleton is clearly that of Sister Elisabeth, proof that will help the application for sainthood. However, when Tempe examines the skull, she finds that the known facts about Sister Elisabeth's paternity might not be correct. Tempe talks to the nun at the convent that has been spearheading the application, Sister Julienne, and gets the name of a professor at McGill University who might be able to help her learn more about Sister Elisabeth's birth.

As Tempe is focusing on Sister Elisabeth, she learns that more bodies were found at the location of the house fire in St-Jovite. Tempe speaks to Detective Ryan and learns that the young family rumored to have been living at the house was found in an outbuilding, stuffed behind a water heater. The family, a young couple and their infant sons, were brutally murdered. Tempe attends the autopsy, heartbroken to see the murdered twins, and assists in preserving a bruise that might later help identify the killer.

Tempe visits the office of Professor Daisy Jeannotte, a religion scholar who might be able to help find information on the birth of Elisabeth Nicolet. While waiting for the professor, Tempe meets Jeannotte's teaching assistant, a skittish young woman who appears to be frightened of incurring the professor's wrath. Tempe will later learn this young woman is Anna Goyette, the niece of Sister Julienne. Tempe speaks to Professor Jeannotte and is told to check the newspapers prior to and after the year of Sister Elisabeth's birth. Later, Professor Jeannotte will contact Tempe and give her some



journals written by the uncle of Sister Elisabeth with the hopes that they might mention something helpful.

About this time, Tempe's sister arrives in Montreal to attend a seminar for some counseling course she is taking. Tempe is not thrilled about Harry's arrival, especially when Harry begins flirting with Ryan; therefore, Tempe does not notice Harry's change in behavior in the days before Tempe prepares to return to Charlotte. Once in Charlotte, Tempe focuses on her research into Sister Elisabeth's parentage and her classes at the University of North Carolina. After a few days, however, the St-Jovite returns to Tempe's plate when Ryan convinces her, through a phone call to her boss in Montreal, to join him in Beaufort where he intends to follow up on a possible lead in the case.

Tempe arranges to go to Beaufort with her daughter, Katy, a few days early so they can visit Murtry Island. Murtry is a refuge for monkeys that is run by an old friend of Tempe's, and this friend has agreed to allow Katy to observe the monkeys for a project for one of her classes. While waiting for Katy to complete her work, Tempe relaxes on the island. Unfortunately, life intrudes when one of the monkeys drops a human jaw near the main office. Tempe and her friend follow the monkey and soon stumble upon a shallow grave. Tempe at first refuses to participate in the exhumation but agrees when it becomes clear there is no other option. Tempe finds not one set of remains, but two. Tempe carefully packs them up and sends them to a coroner's office.

Ryan arrives that evening. Tempe introduces Ryan to the local sheriff and visits a private residence where Ryan learned phone calls were made from the house in St-Jovite. This home turns out to be a commune where the leader denies any knowledge of the phone calls or the young couple who were found murdered. Later, however, in town Ryan and Tempe run into one of the young women living at the commune. This young girl appears sympathetic, so Tempe slips her one of her cards hoping she will call. Ryan and Tempe then retire for the day, sharing dinner on the boat where Tempe is staying. One thing leads to another and they find themselves in a romantic embrace that quickly ends when the young woman leaves a message on the answering machine.

Tempe returns to Charlotte while Ryan continues to attempt to find out more about the people at the commune in Beaufort. Kathryn, the young woman from the commune, attempts to call Tempe again, but again Tempe misses the call. At the same time, Tempe examines the skeletal remains recovered on Murtry Island, establishing both gender and approximate time of death. Tempe also discovers mode of death when she realizes small scratches on the bones are consistent with a dog attack. When Ryan calls, Tempe is able to connect these bodies with the murders in St-Jovite. Ryan also has discovered information that connects the commune in Beaufort with the house in St-Jovite. It appears that both are owned by the same person.

Tempe begins doing research into cults, while Ryan continues to research the leader of the commune in Beaufort. When Ryan is finally able to get a warrant for the arrest of the leader, he discovers everyone has disappeared. At the same time, Kathryn visits Tempe and tells her that the leader of her group, a woman Ryan and Tempe have yet to meet, is planning something huge. About that time, Tempe gets a phone call from her nephew



informing her that her sister, Harry, has disappeared. Growing concerned, Tempe returns to Montreal.

In Montreal, Tempe encounters Anna Goyette, a young woman she had thought was missing and possibly dead, who tells her about a place where students have been enticed to visit and are brainwashed into joining a cult. Anna escaped, but Tempe is afraid Harry was not so lucky. When Tempe returns home, Professor Jeannotte visits her and asks her to stay away from the cult. Tempe not only refuses but suddenly recalls a farm named Ange Gardien, most likely the location where Harry is being held. Tempe convinces Ryan to visit this place with her despite an ice storm that is beginning to shut down the city. Tempe and Ryan drive to this farm; Ryan insists on informing the local police about their intentions, but Tempe and Ryan are unable to make the drive. Instead, Ryan returns to the farm and approaches it alone. Ryan is shot and Tempe is knocked unconscious.

Tempe wakes in a basement. Tempe is able to get free, only to be confronted by Elle, the leader of the cult. Elle has been planning to commit mass suicide with her people, but it must be a specific number, which is why they forced Harry to remain against her will. As Tempe argues with Elle, she buys time until the cavalry arrives in the disguise of the local police. Tempe and Harry are rescued and return to their respective homes. Tempe invites Ryan to come to Charlotte to recover from his wounds. While waiting for Ryan to arrive, Tempe speaks to Sister Julienne, informing her that Sister Elisabeth's father was a black activist with whom her mother has an affair while traveling in Europe in the year before Elisabeth's death. This fact means that Elisabeth most likely came to the convent against her will, but Sister Julienne assures Tempe that it does not detract from her heroic acts later during the smallpox epidemic and will not change her application for sainthood.



# Chapters 1-4

## Chapters 1-4 Summary

Temperance Brennan is an anthropologist who is on staff at the University of North Carolina with their anthropology department. Tempe also works with the Laboratoire des Sciences Judiciaires et de Médecine Légale for the province of Quebec during the summer and school breaks. Tempe is currently in Montreal for spring break to assist in the application for sainthood for a nun who acted heroically during the smallpox epidemic in Montreal in the 1880s.

In chapter 1, Tempe battles the freezing cold to dig in an abandoned church to find the remains of Elisabeth Nicolet, a nun whose acts of heroism during the smallpox epidemic has made her a candidate for sainthood. Tempe cannot find Sister Elisabeth where she was supposed to be buried until an elderly nun informs Tempe that the body was moved shortly before a fire necessitated the closing of the church. Tempe digs in the new location and quickly discovers a tiny coffin. Tempe removes the coffin and arranges for it to be transported to her lab in Montreal before leaving herself. Once home, Tempe settles in for the night, planning to examine Sister Elisabeth's remains the following morning. However, her plans change when she receives a phone call from her boss informing her that her assistance will be required at a house fire in St-Jovite. In chapter 2, Tempe rides to the location of the house fire with her boss. Once there, they learn two bodies were discovered in an upstairs bedroom. Tempe and her boss examine the bodies, finding them badly burned, but not bad enough to require Tempe's assistance. However, they are quickly informed that another body was discovered in the rubble in the basement that will require Tempe's expertise.

In chapter 3, Tempe must wait while the basement is secured. When she is finally allowed downstairs, Tempe discovers a skeleton that appears to be that of an adult. Because the neighbors claim a young couple lived in the house with twin infants, Tempe has several people walk a grid in the basement to look for any other remains. None are found. Tempe carefully begins excavating the skeleton, taking care with the fragile bones to prevent further damage. As she works on the jaw, Tempe is joined by Detective Andrew Ryan, a homicide detective she has worked with in the past. They speak for a few minutes, then Ryan goes upstairs. Tempe examines the skull and calls Ryan back, showing him proof that the remains are that of a homicide victim. In chapter 4, Tempe gets a ride back to Montreal with Ryan and his partner. Once home, Tempe fixes herself a quick dinner and speaks to her daughter, Katy, in Charlotte. Tempe spends the rest of the weekend at home, speaking to her sister briefly on Sunday. On Monday, Tempe attends the weekly meeting at the office before turning her attention to the skeletal remains she excavated from the house in St-Jovite. Tempe has the bones x-rayed and examines the bones carefully, establishing that the bones belonged to an elderly woman who had given birth, possibly more than once, and that she had been shot in the head prior to the fire being set.



## Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Tempe Brennan is introduced in these chapters. Tempe is an anthropologist and an expert with bones. Tempe is highly educated, professional, and independent. Tempe is separated from her husband and has one child, Katy, a college student in Charlotte, but not at the university where Tempe works. Tempe is close to her daughter, but not with her sister, who is the complete opposite of Tempe. Where Tempe is dedicated to her career, Harry is flighty, taking on a new career whenever the whim strikes. Harry has recently sold her latest business and is divorcing for the fourth or fifth time. Tempe has little patience for her sister and therefore keeps their conversations short and sweet.

Tempe is currently in Montreal where she is assisting a convent in excavating the bones of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet, a candidate for sainthood. Tempe is able to find the bones after some confusion and has them sent to her lab to be examined at a later date, foreshadowing to the reader that the situation about Sister Elisabeth will be an ongoing thing in the developing plot. At the same time, Tempe is called to a house fire where it is expected that the victims will be so badly burned that Tempe will be needed to help remove their bodies. Two victims are found in the upstairs bedroom in good shape, but another is found in the basement. The basement victim is so badly burned that Tempe must take extra care in extracting the skeleton. Tempe is later able to establish that this is a woman, most likely in her seventies or eighties, who has been shot in the head. This finding makes the fire in St-Jovite a crime scene, probably arson as well as murder. Not only this, but a young family has been rumored to be living there, but those bodies have yet to be found. The missing family leads the reader to suspect that something terrible has happened in St-Jovite and that Ryan and Tempe face a difficult case as the plot continues to unfold.



# Chapters 5-8

## Chapters 5-8 Summary

In chapter 5, Tempe works on the report on the skeleton found in the house in St-Jovite. Ryan and his partner arrive, so Tempe discusses her findings with them. When they leave, Tempe finishes a few loose ends on other cases before taking a few minutes to examine Elisabeth Nicolet's skeleton. Tempe finds many of the things she had hoped to find, confirming in her mind that the body is that of Elisabeth Nicolet. However, Tempe also finds something surprising in Elisabeth's skull, leading her to call the convent and attempt to find out more about Elisabeth's paternity. Tempe learns that no birth certificate was ever located for Elisabeth. Later, Ryan calls to inform Tempe that the fire at the house in St-Jovite was set intentionally using gasoline and propane tanks. Ryan also tells Tempe that the bodies found upstairs contained Rohypnol, the drug commonly known as the date rape drug. In chapter 6, Tempe calls Sister Julienne, the nun at Lac Memphremagog who has taken on the task of chronicling the history of the convent and its occupants. Sister Julienne has no more information on Sister Elisabeth but gives Tempe the name of a professor at McGill who might be able to help Tempe with secular records. Tempe goes to the university over her lunch hour where she meets Professor Jeannotte's teaching assistant. The young woman is high strung and seems very nervous about incurring Professor Jeannotte's wrath. When the professor herself appears, she is polite, though reserved, and offers to look into the question for Tempe. Afterward, Tempe stops by the library to look through their collection of books about the area in hopes of finding something about the Nicolet family but has no luck.

In chapter 7, four bodies have been found in the outbuildings at the house in St-Jovite. Tempe attends the autopsies of the youngest victims, twin infant boys. Tempe helps the coroner preserve a bruise on the chest of Mathias, one of the infants, and promises to examine the bones to help determine the age of the infants. Tempe is deeply disturbed by the murders of these infants, particularly the brutality of it. The infant's hearts were removed while they were still alive. Later, after examining the x-rays taken of the infants' hands, Tempe is able to establish that they were four months old at their deaths. In chapter 8, Sister Julienne calls Tempe and tells her that her niece is missing. Tempe is the only person the nun knows who is remotely involved with the police, so she hopes she can offer some help. Tempe makes a few phone calls, but even her position does not offer much help. That same morning, Tempe gets a phone call from Professor Jeannotte asking her to stop by and pick up some materials that Tempe might find helpful. When Tempe arrives, a different young woman is working in the professor's office. When Tempe asks about the girl from the day before, Tempe learns her name is Anna Goyette. Professor Jeannotte's teaching assistant is Sister Julienne's niece. Not only this, but the young woman tells Tempe that she thinks Anna is involved in a satanic cult of some kind.





## Chapters 5-8 Analysis

Tempe discovers something odd about Sister Elisabeth's skull, but the reader at this point is not yet informed about what this is. Tempe turns to the people for whom she is examining the remains for answers, but they do not have any, so Tempe reaches out to a professor of religious studies at the local university. This leads Tempe to meet a nervous young woman who turns out to be the niece of Sister Julienne, the historian with the convent and one of Tempe's contacts. Not only this, but the young woman turns up missing the very next day. This leads the reader to wonder if the young woman's disappearance is somehow connected to the case Tempe is working on. The fact that another girl suspects Anna is involved in a satanic cult only deepens this mystery for the reader.

As Tempe is investigating Sister Elisabeth, Ryan and his partner are called back to St-Jovite where several more bodies have been found. These bodies appear to be the young couple and their infant sons who were reported living in the house. Tempe attends the autopsies of the small babies and is heartbroken by what she finds. The babies were tortured and their hearts removed while they were still alive. The reader begins to wonder again about the satanic cult connection when thinking about these poor babies. Tempe is determined that Ryan find the killer of these tiny victims, suggesting her willingness to do all she can to help as the investigation progresses.



# Chapters 9-13

## Chapters 9-13 Summary

In chapter 9, Professor Jeannotte gives Tempe a stack of books that reference the Nicolet family as well as a journal written by the uncle of Elisabeth Nicolet in hopes Tempe might find what she needs. Professor Jeannotte also suggests that Tempe look in the newspapers published at the time for a birth announcement. Before Tempe leaves, she asks Professor Jeannotte about the rumor that Anna is involved with a satanic cult. Professor Jeannotte gives Tempe a lecture about the nature of a cult and the misnomer that makes people assume they are evil or violent. Ryan calls Tempe later that night and asks her out to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, but she turns him down. In chapter 10, Harry, Tempe's sister, arrives at her office. Harry tells Tempe that she is in Montreal to attend a seminar for a new counseling career she is hoping to get off the ground. When Ryan shows up, Harry finds him attractive and promises to meet him later at a bar even as Tempe refuses. Tempe takes Harry home and they freshen up before heading out to dinner. In chapter 11, Tempe and Harry have a nice dinner out, and then Harry talks Tempe into joining Ryan at the bar. The bar is noisy and there is no chance for conversation. Harry goes off to dance with some guy, leaving Ryan and Tempe alone. Tempe tells Harry about Anna, but there is little he can do. Tempe decides to go home, leaving Ryan and Harry there. Tempe worries about Ryan and Harry having a one night stand but figures there is nothing she can do about it. On the way home someone grabs Tempe from behind and drags her into an alley, warning her to back off but not saying from what to back off.

In chapter 12, Tempe wakes to find Harry gone. Tempe again worries that Harry spent the night with Ryan. Tempe gets a call that a young woman was found tortured and mauled by dogs. Tempe worries it might be Anna, but Sister Julienne assures Tempe that the physical description is not a match. The girl is later identified as Carole Comptois, a teenaged prostitute. Tempe spends most of that evening reading the journal written by Elisabeth Nicolet's uncle. Tempe learns a lot about turn-of-the-century Montreal but nothing about Elisabeth's birth. Harry comes in late and is moody and uncommunicative. In chapter 13, Tempe goes to McGill's library again and begins looking through the newspapers published during the year before and after Elisabeth Nicolet's birth. Tempe finds no birth announcements but does come across a short article about a singing tour Elisabeth's mother was participating in in Europe. Tempe makes copies of the journal, returns the original to Professor Jeannotte's office and catches a plane back to Charlotte. After a hectic day at the school the next day, Tempe has dinner with her ex-husband, turning down his offer to stay the night.

## Chapters 9-13 Analysis

Professor Jeannotte gives Tempe an impassioned speech on cults and the myth of Satanism. This lecture was not only not asked for, but it was so passionate that the



reader wonders if the professor has a personal connection to one of these cults or a member of one of the cults. Tempe does not question Jeannotte's passion at this point, but the reader is left wondering if there might be a connection between Jeannotte and Anna's disappearance. At the same time, the body of a young woman is found that is so badly tortured and mauled by dogs that the images stay with Tempe, again suggesting to the reader that it might somehow be connected to one of the cases upon which Tempe is working. This feeling is increased when Tempe is threatened after leaving a bar.

Harry shows up and immediately comes between Tempe and Ryan. Tempe's reaction to Harry's harmless flirtation with Ryan leaves the reader with no doubt that Tempe has romantic feelings for Ryan. When Tempe later refuses to spend the night with her soon-to-be ex-husband, these feelings seem to be confirmed for the reader, suggesting a time later in the novel when romance might again become a theme. The setting changes in these chapters, moving from the freezing cold of Montreal to the warmth of North Carolina. This change of setting puts some space between Tempe and her cases, as well as Tempe and Ryan, symbolizing the space Tempe is trying to keep between her and work, as well as Ryan, in her attempt to remain impartial. The reader is curious to see if this space is maintained over the next few chapters.



# Chapters 14-18

## Chapters 14-18 Summary

In chapter 14, Ryan calls and asks Tempe to be his guide in Beaufort. It seems Ryan has connected some phone calls made from the house in St-Jovite to a house in Beaufort. Tempe resists but is finally talked into it by her boss. Tempe decides to make the best of it and makes plans to go down early to spend a few days with her daughter, Katy. In chapter 15, Tempe and Katy drive down to Beaufort and settle in on a friend's boat. A friend of Tempe's, Sam, takes them out to dinner. Sam is the mayor of Beaufort and also runs a monkey sanctuary on Murtry Island near Beaufort. Sam has agreed to allow Katy and Tempe to visit the island the following morning so Katy can observe the monkeys for a school project. The following morning they travel to the island and Katy immediately disappears with one of the researchers. While Tempe is relaxing at the main facility, a monkey drops a human jaw. In chapter 16, Tempe and Sam go in search of the source of the jaw. Tempe finds a shallow grave that appears to hold one adult body. Sam wants Tempe to excavate the body to limit the number of strangers who come to the island, but Tempe resists, unwilling to ruin this place for herself that has been a sanctuary to her from her work. Tempe helps Sam arrange for someone to watch over the grave until the sheriff can be reached, then leaves.

In chapter 17, Tempe and Katy spend the evening together. The next morning, Sam calls and insists that Tempe does the excavation on the bodies because no other anthropologist is available. Tempe tells Katy what is going on and gives her the option of leaving, which Katy quickly agrees to do. Tempe spends the day on Murtry Island and finds not one body in the shallow grave, but two. A coroner takes custody of both bodies, but insists Tempe examine the one that is mostly skeleton. In chapter 18, Ryan picks Tempe up early in the morning and they go to meet the sheriff. Ryan tells the sheriff about the case and the phone calls they connected to the residence in Beaufort. The sheriff drives them to the house where they find a young man and an older woman caring for a group of infants. Both people seem uncomfortable and insist that the sheriff, Ryan, and Tempe will have to speak to someone named Dom. After a short time a meeting breaks up in a nearby building and several more people come into the house. Ryan, the sheriff, and Tempe are introduced to these people. Dom, the apparent leader of the people living on the property, denies knowing anyone associated with the house in St-Jovite.

## Chapters 14-18 Analysis

The separation the change in setting offered is no longer applicable as Ryan insists on meeting Tempe in Beaufort, a resort town a few hours from Charlotte, to help him check out a connection between a home there and the house in St-Jovite. Tempe reluctantly agrees, deciding to make something of a vacation out of it. Tempe takes her daughter to a monkey reserve run by a friend of hers only to have the real world rudely make an



appearance. Several dead bodies are found on the island, forcing Tempe to go to work even on her weekend off. Tempe exposes the drain her work has on her mental status when she is forced to face this intrusion on her sanctuary. Tempe is angry and disappointed, as well as unwilling to help. Tempe does help, however, because she knows her morals would not allow her to walk away from these poor victims of some unknown crime.

Ryan arrives and Tempe goes with him to investigate the connection between the house in St-Jovite and a home in Beaufort. The home in Beaufort turns out to be some sort of commune, or the astute reader might see it as a cult. The idea of cults has already been introduced into the story, so when Tempe comes across this place where there is a clear leader and a unique philosophy of living, it appears to be a cult. Tempe and Ryan attempt to figure out how this commune or cult is related to the murders, but the leader, Dom, denies knowing anything about the murder victims in St-Jovite, making any connection nearly impossible to find.



# Chapters 19-24

## Chapters 19-24 Summary

In chapter 19, Tempe and Ryan canvas the businesses in Beaufort asking if anyone recognizes the young couple. They have no luck. However, Tempe and Ryan encounter Kathryn, a young woman from the commune, and her baby, as well as another woman, El. Kathryn offers regret for the murder of the young woman but again denies having met her. Tempe notices something inconsistent about Kathryn's statements, however, and offers her a business card with the hope Kathryn will contact Tempe with more truthful facts. That night, Tempe and Ryan have dinner on the boat where Tempe is staying and end up in a lover's embrace that is interrupted when Kathryn calls, leaving a brief message on the answering machine. In chapter 20, things are awkward between Tempe and Ryan for a while the next morning. They return to the commune where they insist on questioning all the residents. Again no one seems to know anything. Tempe does notice that Kathryn is not among the residents. Ryan speaks to the sheriff and makes a plan to research the house in Beaufort and its residents while Tempe returns to Charlotte. In chapter 21, Tempe returns home to find the house empty despite the fact that her cat should have been there. In the middle of the night, Tempe wakes to the smell of smoke. Tempe goes downstairs to find a bundle on fire in her kitchen. When the firemen arrive, Tempe opens the bundle and finds a dead cat inside. Tempe speaks to a friend in the local crime lab, but he has no useful information for her.

In chapter 22, Tempe visits a colleague, Red, in the sociology department to talk about cults. Red tells Tempe that these cults usually have a single leader who breaks people down through negativity followed by positive reinforcement to convince people to believe in things they might not otherwise believe. The leaders then use repetitive behavior to keep these people in line, even when the cult members work within the community. These people are often given meditation or chants to repeat when they are not working. Red says that most of these groups are not violent, but when they are, it usually takes something specific to set them off. In chapter 23, Tempe is examining the bones from Murtry Island when Ryan calls to catch her up on the investigation. Ryan has found nothing illegal on the house in Beaufort and its inhabitants but has discovered that the house is owned by the same man who owns the house in St-Jovite, making a more solid connection than the phone calls. When Ryan hangs up, Tempe returns her attention to the bodies from Murtry. Tempe takes a second look at bite marks on the bones and thinks they were made by scavenging animals.

Tempe calls her bug expert and learns the bodies were buried for about three weeks, placing time of death about the same time as the fire in St-Jovite. In chapter 24, the expert also tells Tempe that some of the bugs tested positive for Rohypnol, just like two of the bodies in St-Jovite. Tempe calls Ryan back and tells him about the drug and asks if he remembers the Order of the Solar Temple, another cult that committed mass suicide several years before. Tempe is beginning to see a connection between Dom's cult and that one, especially when the drug is taken into consideration. Tempe finally



calls it a day and returns home. Tempe gets a call from her neighbor and discovers that her cat, Birdie, had been locked in an abandoned apartment for several days, but is still alive and well.

## Chapters 19-24 Analysis

Tempe and Ryan come across a young woman from Dom's cult who appears to be willing to help, but they keep missing her calls and then the young woman disappears. This makes the reader fear that Dom and his cult are behind the deaths of the family in St-Jovite and that Kathryn has been killed to keep her silent, adding tension to the novel. At the same time, Tempe makes several connections between the bodies found on Murtry Island and the bodies in St-Jovite. Tempe does speak to a sociology professor and learns a little background on cults, but what she learns does little to alleviate her fear that this cult is murdering its members.

Tempe receives another threat, this time when her cat appears to have been lit on fire and thrown through a broken window in her kitchen. Tempe shows her softer side as she grieves for this cat. Tempe never stops to think that she might be in danger, nor does she take steps to protect herself. Instead, Tempe continues to work her cases, refusing to back down. Tempe's actions show how strong a woman she is and how deep her commitment to her work goes. Therefore, the reader sighs almost as big a sigh of relief when the cat is found to be alive as Tempe does. At the same time, Tempe and Ryan appear to have taken a new step toward a romantic relationship. However, they keep being interrupted by the case leaving the reader wondering if Tempe and Ryan will ever find the time to express their feelings for one another.



# Chapters 25-28

## Chapters 25-28 Summary

In chapter 25, Tempe is about to read through the autopsy report on the one woman found at Murtry Island when Kathryn arrives. Kathryn tells Tempe that Heidi, the mother of the murdered twins, was a member of the commune who came to them with a young man she knew before. As part of the commune's beliefs, Heidi was to mate with another man in the commune, but she became pregnant with her boyfriend's baby instead. Heidi ran away when she realized how angry Dom and his fellow leaders were with her. Kathryn also tells Tempe that she overheard an argument between El and Jennifer Cannon, one of the victims from Murtry, and later Jennifer disappeared along with a friend of hers named Anne or Alice. In chapter 26, Tempe calls Red while Kathryn naps upstairs and asks if based on what Kathryn said if Dom's cult was nearing a mass suicide like the Order of the Solar Temple. Red tells Tempe if the leader of the cult feels threatened by a loss of members, then it could be nearing something like Waco or Jonestown. Tempe then speaks to Ryan and tells him what Kathryn said. Tempe also expresses concern that the skeleton found with Jennifer Cannon could be Anna Goyette. Ryan tries to reassure Tempe while making plans to get a warrant for the house in Beaufort.

In chapter 27, Tempe goes upstairs to check on Kathryn and finds her gone. Tempe returns to the autopsy report on Jennifer Cannon and notices hair missing in the pictures that is not from decomposition. Tempe races to her office where she reexamines the bones and comes to the conclusion that the two women were killed in a dog attack, much like Carole Comptois in Montreal. That makes a total of ten murders that are all connected. When Tempe returns home, she finds an e-mail from her nephew expressing concern about Harry. Tempe calls her nephew and tries to reassure him even as her own concern is rising. In chapter 28, Ryan calls to tell Tempe that the raid on the commune in Beaufort turned up empty because everyone had left. Not only this, but another commune in Texas connected to Dom has also been deserted overnight. Later in the day Tempe meets with Red who tells her how these communes find people, describing a situation that is exactly like the one that led Harry to her seminar in Montreal. Tempe is now concerned that Harry is somehow involved in Dom's cult. Tempe decides to go to Montreal to find her sister herself.

## Chapters 25-28 Analysis

Kathryn shows up unexpectedly at Tempe's house and confirms almost everything Tempe already knew about Heidi, the mother of the murdered twin. Heidi was a member of Dom's cult for a time but left when she became pregnant by an unapproved union. Heidi's situation serves to show Tempe the depth of the cult's beliefs and the lengths they are willing to go to to protect their beliefs. Now Tempe is growing concerned that this cult might be dangerous and might be on the verge of committing mass suicide like





other cults in history. At the same time, Tempe learns her sister is missing and might be involved with this cult, too. Tempe becomes frightened and decides to rush to Montreal to save her sister herself, preparing the reader for a search and rescue that might have a bad end.

Even as the case is beginning to come together, Tempe is learning more from the bodies that are her life's work. Tempe discovers that the two bodies dumped on Murtry Island not only were member of the cult, but were mauled by dogs as Carole Comptois was in Montreal. This makes a connection to yet another murder, bringing the death toll up to ten. These connections might never have been made without Tempe and hopefully they will lead to the discovery of the truth.



# Chapters 29-32

## Chapters 29-32 Summary

In chapter 29, Tempe and Ryan fly back to Montreal together. On the flight, Tempe reads more of the journal written by Elisabeth Nicolet's uncle, discovering Elisabeth's mother stayed in Europe longer than originally planned for unknown reasons. When they land, Tempe goes straight to her office where she makes a computer-generated image of the person the skull from Murtry Island belongs to in order to help identify the young woman. From there, Tempe rushes to McGill University to speak with Jeannotte but finds Anna Goyette instead. In chapter 30, Tempe is amazed to find Anna Goyette alive and well. Anna takes Tempe to the university museum so they can speak freely. Anna tells Tempe about a group of people who work out of the university recruiting people to join a group that has retreats at a farm in the country. Anna went, but disliked it and never returned. Anna also identifies the picture of the dead girl as Amelie Provencher, the girl who recruited her to go to the farm.

In chapter 31, Tempe is back home when Professor Jeannotte pays her a visit. The professor warns Tempe to stay away from her and Dom's cult. Tempe calls Ryan and tells him Jeannotte must be connected to the cult in some way, perhaps even the female leader about whom Anna spoke. Ryan tells Tempe that the police in North Carolina believe the cult is about to commit mass suicide and have doubled their efforts to find them. This frightens Tempe for her sister's sake, a fear that increases when her nephew calls and tells her about a message Harry left him about being held at a farm against her will. In chapter 32, Tempe has a dream about Elisabeth Nicolet, Jeannotte, and Harry as well as an inscription that says Guardian Angel. Ryan calls to let Tempe know that Kathryn has been found alive and well with her small son. Tempe decides she needs to speak to Anna Goyette again, forcing Ryan to agree to drive her as an ice storm begins to take hold of the city.

## Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Tempe returns to Montreal with Ryan and returns her thoughts briefly to Sister Elisabeth Nicolet. The reader still has no idea what Tempe found so interesting about Elisabeth's skull that it has led her to want to study up on Elisabeth's birth, but the reader finds the investigation interesting for the history it has revealed. However, Tempe and the reader both quickly return to the more pressing investigation into the cult that may have Tempe's sister, Harry. Tempe discovers that Anna Goyette, the niece of the historian at the convent connected to Sister Elisabeth, is no longer missing. Anna is able to identify the second victim from Murtry Island and to connect her to Dom's cult, making official what Tempe has suspected all along. At the same time, Anna insinuates that Professor Jeannotte is behind the recruiting on campus for the cult but will not admit it fully. Jeannotte seems to admit it herself, however, when she arrives on Tempe's doorstep and starts making threats. The reader has suspected all along that Jeannotte most like



had something to do with the cult, so it is no surprise to find she might be its leader. Tension doubles as Ryan and Tempe learn more about the cult and discover the cult appears to be on its way to mass suicide, increasing the need to find them sooner rather than later for Harry's sake.



# Chapters 33-35

## Chapters 33-35 Summary

In chapter 33, Tempe and Ryan carefully make their way to Anna Goyette's house. Anna describes her trip from the farm, giving Tempe what she needs to figure out where the farm is. Tempe insists Ryan drive her there and he reluctantly agrees. Ryan insists on speaking to the local cops before approaching the farm but finds the road blocked due to the ice storm. Ryan returns to the farm and makes Tempe wait as he approaches on foot. Ryan is shot and Tempe is hit over the head by an unknown attacker. In chapter 34, Tempe wakes in a dark basement. Tempe discovers Jeannotte's dead body in the basement with her. Tempe crawls to a set of stairs that lead to some sort of trap door in the ceiling. Tempe is able to release the latch and enter a pantry. Tempe goes into the kitchen and finds Harry asleep on a bed in the corner. While Tempe is checking on her, someone comes into the room behind her. Tempe is confronted by El, the woman who was with Kathryn when they met in Beaufort. Tempe keeps her talking, trying to put off the inevitable order that will result in Tempe's death. As they talk, the house is invaded by a swarm of police. Tempe and Harry are rescued and escorted home.

In chapter 35, Tempe speaks to Sister Julienne from her home in Charlotte. Tempe and the nun discuss Elle, or Sylvie Boudrais, the leader of the cult that nearly ended more than fifty lives that night in Montreal. Tempe tells the nun how Jeannotte's brother had been a member of various cults over the years and how Jennotte nearly ended her career attempting to protect his right to do so. Jeannotte went to the farm that night to protect her brother from the mass suicide but becomes a murder victim instead. Sister Julienne tells Tempe that Jeannotte's death was hard on Anna, but now that Anna has gotten help for her manic depression, things seem to be looking up. They then discuss what Tempe discovered about Sister Elisabeth when Tempe examined Elisabeth's skull. Elisabeth is of mixed race, making it impossible for her father to be Nicolet as earlier believed. Instead, Tempe believes Elisabeth's father was a black activist who traveled on the same ship to Europe as her mother the year before Elisabeth's birth. This paternity suggests that Elisabeth was more than likely sent to the convent to hide Elisabeth rather than a response to a holy calling, but Sister Julienne assures Tempe this does nothing to change Elisabeth's heroic acts during the smallpox epidemic.

After speaking to Sister Julienne, Tempe goes to the airport to pick up Ryan who will be staying with her while he recovers from his gunshot wounds. They discuss the case, talking about how Elle and Dom met, how they tricked an old man into joining their cult and then stole all his money to pay for their homes, cars, and other expenses. They also discuss Elle's obsession with the antichrist and how she ordered Malachy and Mathias, the infant twins, killed because their conception suggested one of them had to be an antichrist. The assassins were the couple found dead in the upstairs bedroom. They set the fire after they committed the murders in order to hide their identities should they be found. Ryan also tells Tempe that one of the employees of Murtry Island was a



member of Dom's cult and that is how the bodies were transported there. Finally, Tempe and Ryan share a quiet lunch, enjoying their time alone together.

## Chapters 33-35 Analysis

Tempe and Ryan rush to Ange Gardien, Guardian Angel, to rescue Harry and to stop a mass suicide. When they arrive, Ryan is shot on sight and Tempe is attacked from behind. The situation looks bleak, but the cult members have underestimated Tempe's strength and will to survive. Tempe gets loose and finds her sister only to be confronted by Elle and nearly killed. However, Ryan has come through again, sending the cavalry in at the last minute. While Tempe is in the farmhouse, however, she discovers Jeannotte's body. It later turns out that Jeannotte is not a member of the cult, nor did she promote it. However, Jeannotte's brother was a member and Jeannotte always went out of her way to support him until she learned about the mass suicide. At that point Jeannotte tries to keep her brother safe only to end up a murder victim for her pains.

Tempe finally reveals the mystery surrounding Sister Elisabeth. It turns out that Elisabeth's skull revealed she was not fully Caucasian as believed but of mixed race. This changes the ideas about Elisabeth's service to the church, suggesting she came to the church as a prisoner rather than by choice; however, it does not change Elisabeth's actions. This situation touches on the theme of family and how family can change a person's life with their actions and their secrets. Elisabeth's story parallels Tempe's, especially when the reader takes into consideration Tempe's relationship with Harry.

The case ends and all the loose ends are tied up. This seems to include Tempe's relationship with Ryan. The reader has been hoping for a romantic turn in their relationship. Tempe's reaction to Ryan being shot suggests the depth of her feelings. When Tempe asks Ryan to recuperate with her in Charlotte, her feelings appear even more obvious, suggesting a love match despite Tempe's determination to deny her romantic feelings for Ryan. Tempe takes Ryan's hand in the last sentence, cementing the idea that she has finally come to admit her own feelings for Ryan run more toward the romantic than she has been previously willing to admit.



# Characters

## Dr. Temperance

Dr. Temperance Brennan, or Tempe, is an anthropologist who is a professor on the staff of the University of North Carolina in Charlotte. Tempe also works with the coroner's office in Montreal, helping whenever a skeleton needs to be analyzed. In this novel, Tempe is working two cases at once. The larger case is that of a house fire in St-Jovite, Quebec, that exposes the murders of seven people. Tempe does the exhumation of a set of bones found in the basement of the house and the examination of the bones. Tempe also assists on the autopsy of two infants found in an outbuilding on the property. The other case Tempe is working on is that of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet, a nun at the turn of the century who has become the subject of an application for sainthood. Tempe exhumes the body and examines it in order to state positively that the body is that of Sister Elisabeth. While examining the skull, Tempe discovers that the genetic profile of the sister is incorrect and she does research to discover the true paternity of the nun.

Tempe returns to Charlotte in the middle of the investigation into the murders at St-Jovite. Tempe must return to work but does find the time to take a few days to spend with her daughter. Tempe and her daughter, Katy, go to visit Murtry Island, a habitat for monkeys where Katy hopes to do some research for a class she is taking at college. While there, Tempe and the man who runs the island discover a human jaw bone. Tempe finds herself forced to help excavate two skeletons from the island's ground. Later, Tempe is able to prove that the bodies belong to two women who once lived at a compound inhabited by a cult believed to be connected to the murders in St-Jovite. At the same time, Tempe is made aware of the fact that her sister, Harry, is missing. Tempe begins looking for her sister, Harry, only to discover that her sister has somehow become involved with the same cult connected to the murders in St-Jovite and that Harry's life is most likely in danger. Tempe places her own life in danger to save her sister, successfully ending a mass suicide planned by the cult's leader.

## Detective Andrew Ryan

Detective Andrew Ryan is a police officer who often works with Tempe on homicide cases. Ryan is known as a lady's man, causing Tempe to use caution whenever she is around him. Tempe has just separated from her husband and is less than trusting when it comes to men and relationships. Tempe does not want to be hurt again. Ryan is persistent, however, attempting to convince Tempe he wants a commitment, not just a fling. At the same time, Ryan and Tempe work the St-Jovite cases together. In order to follow up a lead, Ryan convinces Tempe to join him in Beaufort to investigate a home to whom one of the victims of the house fire made many phone calls over the months before their deaths. Tempe is not excited about this forced time together at first and her



tension only increases when Ryan takes advantage of a vulnerable moment and attempts to seduce her.

Ryan is a strong investigator and a professional police officer and takes his job seriously. At the same time, Ryan is a charming man who believes in having a good time. When Tempe's sister comes to visit, Ryan does not think twice about flirting with her, perhaps in the hopes that a little harmless flirting will cause Tempe some jealousy. When it comes to business, Ryan is all seriousness. When Tempe talks him into helping her locate her sister, Ryan is cautious, insisting on alerting the local authorities before charging the house where Tempe believes her sister is being held against her wishes. Unfortunately, an ice storm has made the roads impassable, so Ryan is unable to arrange backup. When they arrive, Ryan makes Tempe wait while he approaches the house. Ryan is immediately shot, leaving Tempe unprotected. However, Ryan is able to call for help and rescue Tempe in the end.

## Harriet

Harry is Tempe's sister. Unlike Tempe, Harry is a happy-go-lucky kind of person who has a new job and a new love interest frequently. Harry has recently ended her marriage to the latest husband and sold her hot air balloon business. Harry has decided to become a counselor and goes to Montreal to attend a seminar. Tempe is not happy to see her sister because Harry upsets Tempe's peace of mind. Harry makes the situation even more uncomfortable when she begins to flirt with Ryan, leaving Tempe convinced the two will be lovers before the night is out. Due to her jealousy, Tempe misses changes in Harry's behavior and affect. The happy woman quickly becomes dark and depressed, refusing to take time in her personal hygiene as she has always done before. When Harry disappears, Tempe is not concerned until Tempe begins to recall Harry's odd behavior. Eventually Tempe realizes that the seminar Harry was attending was a cult recruiting meeting and that Harry has been drawn into the cult that is behind the murders at St-Jovite.

## Kathryn and Carlie

Kathryn is a young woman who has lived with the cult at Beaufort all her life. Kathryn trusts and believes in the leader there, Dom Owens. However, when another woman comes into the group and begins talking about death and salvation, Kathryn becomes concerned for the safety of her infant, Carlie. Kathryn becomes more concerned when Tempe tells her that another young woman who lived at the commune has been murdered. Kathryn turns to Tempe and provides information that will eventually allow Tempe and Ryan to solve the murders in St-Jovite. Kathryn does not trust anyone, however, and she returns to the commune to retrieve her son. When the group leaves Beaufort, intending to go to Canada to participate in a mass suicide, Kathryn hides out with her son and a friend she can trust, deciding to leave the cult.



## Professor Daisy Jeannotte

Professor Daisy Jeannotte is a reserved woman who works at McGill University in Montreal. Tempe meets Jeannotte when she learns that Jeannotte may have information on Sister Elisabeth Nicolet, the nun Tempe has been investigating for the convent's application for sainthood. Jeannotte provides Tempe with materials that will prove crucial in her investigation. Jeannotte, however, will also become involved in Tempe's investigation into the St-Jovite murders. It turns out Jeannotte has a brother who has been involved in cults for many years. Jeannotte has always defended her brother and his actions, working to protect his right to create these groups and to teach what he believes in. However, when Jeannotte learns of the intentions of Elle, the leader of the current group her brother is involved in, she attempts to get him out of the cult. These attempts backfire, however, and Jeannotte is murdered and her body found when Tempe arrives at the compound to rescue her sister.

## Dom Owens and Elle

Dom Owens is a young man who has been the leader of various cults or communes most of his adult life. Owens becomes involved with a woman named Elle who has strong beliefs against government and the laws of most countries. Both Owens and Elle believe that government is poisoning the world and that the food and lifestyles of most people are poison. However, Elle's beliefs go deeper than Owens. Elle believes the Antichrist is coming and that it is their job to prevent this from happening. It is for this reason that Elle orders the infants Malachy and Mathias killed. Elle also believes that all her people should commit suicide in order to rise to a higher plane where they will receive eternal life. Owens deserts his people when Elle orders them to Canada, and Elle is stopped when Tempe arrives at her compound to rescue her sister.

## Anna Goyette

Anna Goyette is Professor Jeannotte's teaching assistant. When Tempe first meets Anna, Tempe is struck by how frightened of Jeannotte Anna appears to be. Later, when Tempe learns Anna's name, Tempe discovers that Anna is the niece of Sister Julianne and that Anna has been missing for several days. When Tempe speaks to Jeannotte about Anna, they get into a discussion about Satanic cults that makes Jeannotte visibly upset. Later, Tempe is attacked by a young man who believes he is protecting Jeannotte. When Tempe finds the bodies on Murtry Island, she comes to believe one of them is Anna; however, Tempe encounters Anna at McGill and learns Anna has a mood disorder that causes her to act erratically. Tempe is able to assist Anna to get help and receive treatment for her disorder.





## Malachy and Mathias

Malachy and Mathias are the infant children of a young woman who lived at the commune in Beaufort. The young woman was scheduled to procreate with a man at the commune but instead became pregnant with a young man she knew before coming to the commune. For this reason, Elle is convinced that the child the woman is carrying is the Antichrist. The young woman and her boyfriend run away and deliver healthy twin boys. Eventually they make their way to Canada where they believe they are safe. However, the family is found and murdered. Malachy and Mathias are not only murdered, but their hearts are removed while they are still alive. It is the deaths of these infants that sticks with Tempe and makes her determined to find the people who killed them.

## Sister Julienne

Sister Julienne is a nun at Lac Memphremagog. Sister Julienne is the nun who has done most of the research on Sister Elisabeth and who is spearheading the attempts to get Sister Elisabeth declared a saint. Tempe speaks to Sister Julienne often while she is working on the case. One afternoon, Sister Julienne calls Tempe and asks for her help. Sister Julienne has a niece who has gone missing. Tempe works to help Sister Julienne find her niece, eventually discovering the young woman's whereabouts by accident. Tempe is also forced to tell Sister Julienne that Sister Elisabeth most likely was forced to become a nun to hide the fact that her birth is the result of an affair her mother had with a black activist.

## Sister Elisabeth Nicolet

Sister Elisabeth Nicolet is a nun who lived at the turn of the century. When a smallpox epidemic broke out in Montreal, Sister Elisabeth fought with the city government to open the smallpox hospitals in order to provide care for the thousands of people dying in their homes and on the streets. Sister Elisabeth also worked tirelessly to nurse these dying people. As a result, the nuns at the convent where Sister Elisabeth spent the majority of her life want to ask the Vatican to make her a saint. As part of the application, Tempe is asked to exhume Sister Elisabeth's body and to verify that it is she.

When Tempe does this, she notices in the skull that Sister Elisabeth has characteristics of a child born of mixed race. Because Elisabeth is said to be the daughter of a prominent Montreal resident and his singer wife, who are both Caucasian, Tempe begins researching the records of Elisabeth's birth. Unable to find any indication that Elisabeth is born in Canada, Tempe eventually finds record that Elisabeth's mother took a trip to Europe in the year before Elisabeth's birth and does not return until the baby would have been several months old. Tempe also finds record of a black activist who sailed on the same ship with Elisabeth's mother. As a result, Tempe believes she has found record of who Elisabeth's father was. This fact changes what had been believed about Elisabeth, that she chose to be a nun. In fact, it is more likely Elisabeth was

forced into the convent to hide her paternity. However, this does little to change her application for sainthood, but instead makes her work seem more selfless than before.



# Objects/Places

## Bugs

Tempe uses bugs to determine the length of time the bodies on Murtry Island have been dead.

## Cinderblocks

Someone throws several cinderblocks through the glass of Tempe's kitchen door in order to frighten her away from the group living in Beaufort. The same people also throw a dead cat into the house, causing Tempe to believe her beloved cat has been murdered.

## Autopsy Report

Tempe is reading the autopsy report on one of the Murtry Island victims when Kathryn comes to see her. When Kathryn leaves unexpectedly, Tempe suspects Kathryn is using Tempe to get information on what the police know about the murders.

## Answering Machine Tape

Harry's son has an old answering machine with tapes instead of a digital recorder. The son changed out the tape without listening to all his messages because it was malfunctioning only to learn later that Harry called to ask for help to extricate herself from a frightening situation.

## Louis-Philippe Belanger's Journals

Tempe uses journals written by Louis-Philippe Belanger to establish Sister Elisabeth Nicolet's paternity because the skull proves Elisabeth was of mixed race, even though both her parents are reported to be Caucasian. Tempe eventually proves Elisabeth is the product of an affair her mother had with a famous black activist.

## Newspapers

In her attempt to prove Elisabeth Nicolet's paternity, Tempe looks through newspapers published in the year before and year after her birth, looking for birth notices. Rather than finding a birth notice, Tempe finds short articles referring to a trip to Europe both Elisabeth's mother and a famous black activist took in the year before Elisabeth's birth.



## **The Annex**

Tempe lives in a unique apartment in Charlotte, North Carolina referred to as the annex because of the previous use of the building.

## **Ange Gardien**

Ange Gardien is a compound in the country outside Montreal where Elle and her people plan a mass suicide. Ange Gardien means Guardian Angel.

## **Lac Memphremagog**

Lac Memphremagog is the convent where Tempe excavates the body of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet to aid in the application to have Elisabeth declared a saint.

## **McGill University**

McGill is a university in Montreal and Professor Jeanotte works at this university. Tempe also uses the library at McGill to do research on Sister Elisabeth Nicolet.

## **University of North Carolina**

Tempe is a professor with the anthropology department at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte.

## **Beaufort**

Beaufort is a resort area in southern North Carolina that Tempe often visited as a child. Ryan makes a connection between a group of people living in a commune in Beaufort and a group of murders in St-Jovite.

## **Murtry Island**

Murtry Island is a protected island where monkeys are allowed to roam free and are cared for by a friend of Tempe's. Tempe and her daughter, Kate, visit Murtry Island. While there, two corpses are discovered on the island, ruining Tempe's sense of security and forcing her to work while taking a weekend off.

## St-Jovite

St-Jovite is a small community in the foothills of the Laurentian Mountains. Tempe is called to the scene of a fire in St-Jovite to assist in the excavation of the bodies. Later these murders are traced to a doomsday group at work in both Canada and the United States.



# Themes

## Family

Tempe's sister comes to see her in Montreal when Harry begins taking classes with a seminar on counseling. It is clear to the reader from the first moments that Tempe and her sister are not close because they are so different. Tempe is a professional woman, calm and sophisticated, while Harry is impetuous and flighty. Despite this, however, Tempe loves her sister and is happy to share her home with her. When Harry begins to show signs of depression, Tempe misses it out of anger with her sister for flirting with Ryan, a man about whom Tempe is trying hard not to care. Eventually Tempe becomes aware that Harry has disappeared, about to become a victim of a doomsday cult she and Ryan are investigating. Suddenly Tempe is willing to do almost anything to save her sister, even when it means putting herself at risk.

The doomsday cult Tempe and Ryan are investigating comes to their attention after someone set fire to a home in St-Jovite where a young couple with small babies were said to live. Eventually this family is found murdered in a basement of an outbuilding. This family was once a part of the doomsday cult, but they ran away when the leader of the cult claimed that one of their precious twins was the Antichrist. The young couple did all they could to protect their children, but in the end were not able to fight off the assassins the cult sent to kill them.

While investigating this case, Tempe is also working on another case. The second case is that of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet. Sister Nicolet was a nun who worked tirelessly during a smallpox epidemic that hit Montreal shortly before the turn of the century. Tempe is helping the nun's convent with an application for sainthood. However, during her examination of the skull, Tempe notices that the woman has features of a person of mixed race. Tempe begins investigating the possibility that Elisabeth's father was someone other than the man history believes fathered her. In the end, Tempe learns that Elisabeth was the product of an affair her mother had with a black activist and became a nun not by choice but to be hidden from society by her cuckolded father.

In the course of the investigation into Elisabeth Nicolet, Tempe meets Professor Jeannotte. Professor Jeannotte is a strange woman who seems to inspire fear in her assistants. When Tempe asks Jeannotte about satanic cults, she gets an impassioned speech that distracts from the original question. Later, Tempe is not surprised to learn that Jeannotte's brother has been a leader of many cults for years and that she has been trying to support his choices. When Jeannotte learns of the intentions of Elle, the leader of her brother's current cult, Jeannotte tries to do all she can to protect him, but is murdered when Elle decides Jeannotte is in the way.



## Doomsday Conspiracies and Cults

As Tempe investigates the murders in St-Jovite with Ryan and the murders on Murtry Island, she comes into contact with a group at a commune in Beaufort. This commune seems innocent on the surface, but Tempe and Ryan make connections between them and a young couple found murdered with their infant sons in St-Jovite. Before long, Tempe and Ryan learn that the leader of this cult is connected to a group that is similar to another cult who committed mass suicide several years before in Canada.

Tempe speaks to a colleague who tells her that cults are more common than people think. This man says that not all cults are harmful or intend violence, but that once provoked, many of these cults can become violent. Often, he says, it takes very little to set off this violence. However, rather than believing in Satan, many of these groups believe in a higher power that instructs them to end the lives of their followers in order to assure their ascension to a higher plane of existence. While the group behind the murders at St-Jovite believes the babies were Satan reincarnated, their reason for mass suicide had more to do with rising from this world to a higher plane before the end of the world came.

## Trust

As a professional woman, Tempe is trustworthy. Students and colleagues alike trust in Tempe's ability to teach them and to find evidence of murder or manner of death in the skeletons she examines. However, in her personal life Tempe is a little more of a mess. Tempe and her husband have separated. Tempe has dated a few times, but she is not ready to move beyond the years-long relationship she had with her husband, especially after he cheated on her. As a result, Tempe has trouble being alone with Detective Ryan. Tempe finds Ryan attractive and can believe that they could have a future. Unfortunately, Ryan has a reputation as a lady's man which frightens Tempe, especially when it appears Ryan is interested in Tempe's sister, Harry.

Kathryn has lived with the people at the commune in Beaufort since she was a small child. Kathryn knows no other life than the one lived on the commune. However, when she learns that everyone is to die, including her infant son, Kathryn begins to question her blind faith in the leaders of her commune. Later, when Tempe and Ryan begin coming around, Kathryn realizes that her trusted leaders are most likely behind the deaths of a young couple who once lived at the commune. Kathryn turns to Tempe for help but still cannot trust her completely and ends up turning to friends for support when she must make her choice between joining the commune on a higher plane through suicide or remaining alive with her young son.



# Style

## Point of View

This novel is written in the first person point of view. The narrator is Tempe Brennan, an anthropologist who works with the coroner's office in Montreal and professor at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, North Carolina. When in Montreal, Tempe works on a case involving a house fire that requires her assistance in excavating a badly burned corpse. Back in Charlotte, Tempe helps track down a connection to this house fire in Beaufort, North Carolina. The point of view remains with Tempe throughout the novel, never straying into the mind of another character, allowing a tight narration that adds to the suspense of the novel.

The point of view of the novel works well because it keeps the narration tight, removing all confusion that might occur in a novel written through the point of view of multiple characters. This point of view also allows the reader to get to know Tempe Brennan in an intimate way that might not take place should the point of view have been different. Finally, the point of view of this novel works because it allows the reader to follow the case through the eyes of a woman who both has the knowledge to explain the complicated aspects of the forensic work but who has little knowledge of general police work and must learn the procedures along with the reader. The point of view of this novel is perfect for the writer's intentions and works well in establishing an intimate relationship between the reader and the characters in peril throughout the story.

## Setting

The novel begins in the Province of Quebec in Canada. It is the middle of winter and Tempe Brennan is excavating a corpse in a frozen church. The novel then moves to a burned home in St-Jovite where Tempe assists in the recovery of the burned bodies, including one that is so badly burned it is no more than bones. After the bodies are processed, Tempe returns to Charlotte, North Carolina where she is a professor at the University of North Carolina. The weather in Charlotte is warm and pleasant, a stark contrast to Canada's winter. While in North Carolina, Tempe visits Murtry Island and Beaufort, a resort town she has visited every summer since she was a child. Finally, Tempe returns to Montreal where she searches for her sister during one of the worst ice storms in recent history.

The settings of the novel are a stark contrast to one another, with one being a winter wonderland while the other a college student's dream for spring break. This contrast is a metaphor for the relationship between Tempe and Ryan. Tempe likes Ryan but cannot make herself trust this man who has a reputation for being a lady's man. The contrast also seems to be a metaphor for Tempe's emotional state, warm and happy one moment, cold and frightened the next, due to the upheaval in her life and the stress of her work. The settings in this novel are fascinating, working together to show the two





sides to Tempe Brennan, the sophisticated, professional woman with a big heart. It is for this reason that the settings in this novel work well.

## Language and Meaning

The language in this novel is educated English. Due to the setting of Montreal in more than half the novel, French is often spoken within the dialogue. Most of this dialogue is translated into English for the reader and at other times the French words that do appear are explained through the dialogue or exposition that follows. The language includes some words a reader unfamiliar with anthropology or forensics might not know due to the nature of Tempe's work. These words, like the French words, are often explained either through dialogue or exposition when they appear.

The language of this novel works because it reflects both the intelligence of the characters and the setting. The French is appropriate because this is the language that is spoken in Montreal, which adds an authentic feel to the story. The same goes for the forensic and anthropology words throughout the novel that Tempe uses when she is working with skeletons. The language is simple enough for the youngest reader to understand, but intelligent enough to remind the reader that these characters are highly educated.

## Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-five chapters. Each chapter is fairly short, none more than twenty pages or so. The story is told in linear fashion, divided between scenes and sections of internal monologue as the main character, Tempe, works out the events taking place in the plot. There are equal amounts of dialogue and exposition as the novel is presented in scenes rather than told by a narrator who is outside the story. However, the story is told in the past tense, as though many of the scenes have already taken place and Tempe is telling about them at a later date, explaining many episodes of authorial voice in which Tempe makes comments about the events in the story.

The novel contains several plots. The main plot follows Tempe as she investigates two separate cases. The first and most prominent investigation is that of the fire and murder in St-Jovite. This investigation leads to a group of people in Beaufort, North Carolina, therefore following Tempe home after she leaves Montreal. The second investigation is one into the paternity of Sister Elisabeth Nicolet. Sister Nicolet lived at the turn of the century, and the women in her convent have made an application to have her made a saint in the Catholic Church. When Tempe exhumes the body and looks at the skull, she realizes that Sister Elisabeth is not Caucasian but of mixed race, causing her to research Sister Elisabeth's family history to find out who her father really was. Mixed in with these investigations are several subplots, including one that revolves around the relationship between Tempe and her sister, and another that involves the budding romance between Tempe and Detective Andrew Ryan. All these plots and subplots reach a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.

## Quotes

"If the bodies were there, I couldn't find them." Chapter 1, pg. 11

"Fear has a redeeming quality. It drives away fatigue." Chapter 1, pg. 23

"I have lived in the south all of my adult life. It can never be too hot for me. I love the beach in August, sundresses, ceiling fans, the smell of children's sweaty hair, the sound of bugs at window screens. Yet I spend my summers and school breaks in Quebec. Most months during the academic year, I fly from Charlotte, North Carolina, where I am on the anthropology faculty at the university to work at the medicolegal lab in Montreal. This is a distance of approximately twelve hundred miles. Due north." Chapter 2, pg. 25

"I felt relief, but some confusion. This was a single, fully grown victim. Or was it? Infant bones are tiny and extremely fragile. They could easily be hidden below. I prayed I'd find none when I sifted through the ash and sediment." Chapter 3, pg. 39

"As I was turning away, I felt tremendous sadness, and couldn't resist lifting the tiny hand. It felt soft and cold in my fingers. I rotated the blocks circling the wrist. M-A-T-H-I-A-S.

I'm so sorry, Mathias." Chapter 7, pg. 87

"I wanted to be somewhere else. To be someone else. Someone who had not spent years smelling death and seeing its final degradation. Someone who did not work day after day reassembling the human carnage left by macho pimps, enraged partners, wired cokeheads, and psychopaths. I had come to the island to escape the brutality of my life's work. But even here, death had found me. I felt overwhelmed. Another day. Another death. Death du jour. My God, how many such days would there be?" Chapter 16, pg. 187

"When the answering machine clicked on the voice was soft and hard to hear, as though its owner were speaking from the end of a long tunnel." Chapter 19, pg. 232

"I stared at the page. Ten. Ten people dead. Again the odd phrase ricocheted through my brain. Death du jour. Death of the day. We'd found them day by day, but they'd all died around the same time. Who would be next? Into what circle of hell had we stumbled?"

Chapter 27, pg. 301

"I had to stop the madness that was rolling in like Piedmont thunder." Chapter 28, pg. 314



"I backpedaled through history. Eighteen forty-five. Slavery was in full swing in the United States, but had been banned in France and England. Canada was still a British colony. Church and missionary groups were begging Africans to stop exporting their brothers and sisters, and encouraging Europeans to engage in legal commerce with West Africa as an alternative. What did they call it? The 'legitimate trade.'" Chapter 30, pg. 330

"Ryan had taken a half dozen steps when I heard a pop and his bodily jerked. His hands flew up and he started to turn. Another pop and another spasm, then he dropped to the ground and lay still." Chapter 33, pg. 358

"Ryan's form was black against the night sky. I couldn't see his eyes, but I knew they were looking straight toward mine.  
I reached over and took his hand." Chapter 35, pg. 379

## Topics for Discussion

Discuss Tempe Brennan. Who is Tempe? What is her job? Why does this job bring her to Montreal? Where does Tempe live the rest of the time? Why does Tempe live here? What does Tempe do, as in her career, when not in Montreal? Is Tempe married? What is Tempe relationship like with her immediate family?

Discuss Detective Andrew Ryan. Where is Ryan from? Why does Ryan chose to speak English with Tempe? Why does Ryan disturb Tempe so much? What does Ryan do for a living? Is he good at his job? What is it about Ryan's reputation that bothers Tempe? Why does this bother Tempe? Why does Tempe continue to work with Ryan?

Discuss Professor Jeannotte. Who is Professor Jeannotte? How does Tempe meet Jeannotte? Why is Jeannotte's assistant afraid of her? Why is Tempe wary around Jeannotte? How does Jeannotte help Tempe's investigation into Sister Elisabeth's paternity? How does Jeannotte become involved in the investigation into the St-Jovite murders? What is Jeannotte's relationship to the cult leaders? Why is Jeannotte killed?

Discuss the murders at St-Jovite. What is particularly tragic about these murders? Who is the young family found in the out building? Why are they killed? Who is the old woman in the basement? Why is she killed? Who are the couple in the house? Why are they killed? Who set the fire? Why did they choose fire? What is the significance of the injuries to the children? Why are the children particularly targeted?

Discuss the exhumation at Lac Memphremagog. For whose body is Tempe looking? For what reason does Tempe wish to exhume this body? What does Tempe find when the exhumation is over? What is significant about the skull that belongs to this body? What does the finding on the skull lead Tempe to discover? How does this change the story the sisters at Lac Memphremagog believed about this person?

Discuss Tempe's relationship to Harry. Who is Harry? How does Tempe feel about Harry in general? How does Tempe feel about Harry showing up in Montreal? How does Tempe feel when Harry tells her about her plans for the immediate future? When Harry disappears, how come it takes time for Tempe to become worried? How does Tempe feel when she finally realizes what has happened to Harry? How might this change their relationship?

Discuss Tempe's budding relationship with Ryan. Why does Tempe fight Ryan's advances? Why does Tempe become jealous when Harry flirts with Ryan? Is Tempe in love with Ryan? Why does Tempe allow Ryan to kiss her? Why does Tempe then try to pretend that nothing happened? Why does Tempe invite Ryan to recuperate from his injuries at her home in Charlotte? What is significant about Tempe taking Ryan's hand in the final sentence of the novel?