

End of Watch Study Guide

End of Watch by Stephen King

(c)2016 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

End of Watch Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
April 10, 2009 — Martine Stover.....	6
Z January 2016 — 1-6.....	9
Z January 2016 — 7-11.....	13
Z January 2016 — 12-23.....	17
Z January — Brady.....	22
Blackish — 1-13.....	25
Blackish — 14-27.....	31
Blackish — Library Al.....	35
badconcert.com — 1-6.....	38
badconcert.com — 7-14.....	43
badconcert.com — 15-21.....	47
badconcert.com — The Suicide Prince.....	52
Heads and Skins — 1-14.....	55
Heads and Skins — 15-26.....	59
Heads and Skins — 27-36.....	63
Heads and Skins — After.....	67
Characters.....	69
Symbols and Symbolism.....	78
Settings.....	80
Themes and Motifs.....	81
Styles.....	85
Quotes.....	87

Plot Summary

NOTE: All citations in this Study Guide refer to the Kindle edition of *End of Watch*, published June 2016.

In this final novel in the Bill Hodges Trilogy, *End of Watch* by Stephen King, Bill Hodges and his friends are in a battle against death and disbelief. With the aid of an experimental drug, Mercedes Killer Brady Hartsfield has gained the ability to inhabit the minds and bodies of his doctor and the hospital librarian. Using these two as both vehicles and slaves, Brady sets off a suicide epidemic among those who attended the 'Round Here concert at which he had intended to detonate a bomb, killing himself and other attendees. Hodges hurries to solve the case as he tries to come to grips with his own diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

End of Watch begins with a flashback to the April 2009 Mercedes Killings at the City Center. The memories are those of Rob Martin and Jason Raspis, the ambulance crew first on the scene of the tragedy. They were in charge of transporting Martine Stover, one of the most severely injured of the victims, to the hospital. Martine survived but was paralyzed from the chest down.

In the next section, the story picks up nearly seven years later. Hodges and his friend Holly Gibney are called in to consult on a case that appears to be a murder/suicide. It appears that Janice Ellerton gave her daughter, Martine Stover, an overdose of pain medicine and then suffocated herself. Pete Huntley, Hodges' old partner calls Hodges in because the case is related to the Mercedes Killings. It is obvious that Pete's new partner, Izzy Jaynes, does not want Hodges and Holly involved. Holly believes it is because Izzy knows that Holly and Hodges will look further into the strange deaths than Izzy wants to do.

Hodges and Holly not only discover a large "Z" written on the counter in the bathroom where Janice killed herself, but they also find a Zappit, an obsolete game console, tucked in Janice's chair. Janice's housekeeper gives them a strange story about a man who gave Janice the console as a gift. Hodges also finds evidence that a house for sale across the street from the Ellerton-Stover house was being used as a place to spy on the two women. A "Z" is found on a door post in the garage, which had been broken into.

Meanwhile, the reader learns that Brady Hartsfield has learned he not only can move things with the power of his mind, but he can also enter the minds of people once they are in a state of hypnosis. This mind control allows him to use a person like a vehicle in which his own mind and consciousness can drive. Brady first takes over the mind of Library AI, the hospital worker who gave him a Zappit, a game console donated to the hospital because the company went bankrupt. In order to take control of other people, Brady comes up with a way to amp up the already hypnotic effect of the Fishin' Hole demo that is loaded on each of these devices.



Brady next blackmails and manipulates his neurosurgeon, Dr. Felix Babineau, into becoming one of his minions. It is Dr. Babineau, in his alter ego as Dr. Z, who not only hands out Zappits, but also arranges for Brady to purchase Zappits in bulk so he can use them to control the minds of those who had attended the 'Round Here concert he had intended to disrupt with a bomb years before. Brady hopes to set off a suicide epidemic.

Freddie Linklatter, Brady's former co-worker at Discount Electronix, becomes Brady's unwitting partner in crime after she visits Brady one day. Knowing she needs money, Brady hires her through Dr. Z to reprogram the Zappits and set up a repeater that can send out messages and reprogramming information to all of the Zappits. He has arranged to give out these Zappits as fake consolation gifts for those who were not able to enjoy the concert.

Hodges and his partner Holly are reunited with Jerome, working as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, to stop Brady before he can persuade unwitting teens to end their lives by suicide. Just as Hodges is about to fall prey to Brady's mind control, a text alert startles both men and helps to turn the tables on Brady.



April 10, 2009 — Martine Stover

Summary

Rob Martin and Jason Raspis had just pulled their ambulance into the drive thru at McDonalds for breakfast when they received a call of a mass casualty incident. Since they were told to proceed with caution they assumed it was an act of terrorism to which they would be responding. As they headed for the scene, they were almost hit head-on by a gray Mercedes that swerved back into its lane of traffic just in time to avoid a collision. Rob drove the ambulance up the hill of the driveway to the City Center and had to stop sharply because people were running toward them through the fog. Jason asked one of the men what happened and was told a car drove through the crowd of people waiting for the job fair to start. When the man told Jason it was a gray car, both ambulance workers knew it was the one they had passed.

Rob and Jason drove slowly until they reached a cop who was waving them over. He was standing over a sleeping bag that he said had a dead woman and baby inside. A man, presumed to be her husband, was lying over the bag. He was dead as well. The cop pointed out a badly injured woman whom he thought might still be alive. The woman had been run over by the car. Her legs twisted away from her body and part of her nose and upper lip was missing. The ambulance crew got the woman breathing and strapped onto a back board. They were the first to the hospital. Even though Rob was afraid the lady would die en route she did not. They learned later that the woman, named Martine Stover, survived but would be a quadriplegic.

Analysis

This novel is the third installment of the Bill Hodges Trilogy, a set of novels about a retired police detective who seems to keep getting involved in helping to solve crimes even though he technically no longer works for the police. For Hodges this final story about Brady Hartsfield, also known as the Mercedes Killer, wraps up his career. The massacre at the City Center is one of the final cases that Hodges worked as active duty police. He retired before Brady was caught but was involved in stopping Brady from detonating a bomb during a rock concert at the MAC. The novel provides closure for Hodges because he had always sensed that even though he was told Brady was basically brain dead, that Brady was faking.

Just as each of the novels in the trilogy has begun with the City Center massacre, this novel is no different. This time the viewpoint is that of two of the ambulance drivers who were first to arrive on the scene of the tragedy. They add to the story of the massacre that has been told in previous books because they give the reader a glimpse into the massacre from the angle of the emergency responders going to help the victims. The first two novels told the story from the viewpoints of two different victims, one who was killed and another who was badly injured.



This novel deals with another victim who was badly injured. The extent of her injuries and the life she will lead because of what Brady did to her is dramatized as the two ambulance drivers watch a television beer commercial in which everyone is pictured as having a good time. The party atmosphere of the commercial starkly contrasts the setting of the ICU at the hospital where Martine is fighting for her life because of another person's cruelty. Notice King makes sure to have the man who talks to the ambulance crew point out that the man driving the car plowed into the crowd on purpose. It was no accident. Remember that Brady intentionally drove a large, heavy car into this crowd of innocent people. It will be significant later in the novel.

Much of the drama of King's novels is built on irony and near misses. In this opening section the ambulance drivers barely miss getting hit by the same car that plowed through the crowd at the City Center. Once they learn the description of the car the ambulance drivers know they passed the car that had caused so much trauma. King may include this near miss with the Mercedes as proof of how close people come to death every day. Even though they have seen the murder weapon, the ambulance drivers are unaware how close they were to the killer until they are at the scene.

In his usual style, King's work is brought to life with the quirky metaphors and descriptions that he uses. For instance, when the ambulance drivers discuss how full a life Christopher Reeves lived even though he was a quadriplegic, a comment is made about him keeping his chin up, a figurative way of indicating Reeves kept his attitude positive. The other ambulance driver chooses to take the saying literally by indicating Reeves had no choice in keeping his chin up because he had to wear a cervical collar that forced his chin up.

A description used as the ambulance workers speed to the scene of what they believe might be a terrorist attack with, perhaps, terrorists still attacking: "if Al-Qaeda was shooting the place up with Kalashnikovs, the only thing they had to fire back with was their trusty external defibrillator" (4). The quote makes a statement that perhaps ambulance workers should be allowed to carry guns for protection and also that the dedicated workers are willing to proceed to the scene despite danger to themselves. The image of the paramedics holding up a defibrillator to ward off gun fire is both humorous and disturbing.

In other notable descriptions, the morning of the massacre is described as being "darker than a woodchuck's asshole" (1) while the delayed light from the sun because of the heavy fog is compared to "dawn with a hangover" (1). The dispatcher's announcement over the ambulance radio about the mass casualty incident sounds "like a radio shock jock after too many Red Bulls" (3). One can imagine the screaming dispatcher talking as fast as she can to get emergency response going. As they drive to the City Center the ambulance drivers try to figure what sort of scene they might be responding to since as Rob says it is so early "God isn't even up yet" (4). Notice also as the ambulance encounters the death car, its appearance is described in this way: "a gray car knitted itself out of the gray fog" (4). This description personifies the car by indicating it "knitted" itself out of the fog.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the impact of the opening section of the novel being told by the ambulance workers on duty the day of the City Center Massacre.

Discussion Question 2

How does King use descriptions to develop the tone of the story? How does that tone change from the time the paramedics first pull into the restaurant drive thru to the time they hear the call of the mass casualty incident?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that the ambulance drivers pass the Mercedes used as the murder weapon on their way to the crime scene but do not recognize it?

Vocabulary

intermittent, unflappable, competent, spiel, converge, projectiles, abating, nubile, imminent



Z January 2016 — 1-6

Summary

In Section 1, Hodges gets a text message from his old partner Pete Huntley. The alert, the noise of a window breaking and children screaming in joy over a home run, scares Hodges as well as the other patients in the lobby of the doctor's office. In his message, Pete requests Hodges to call him as soon as possible. Hodges thinks Pete will want to talk about his coming retirement party and steps outside the waiting room to return Pete's call.

In Section 2, Pete tells Hodges he is investigating a murder/suicide. He wants Hodges and Holly to come to the scene for a consultation. Pete invites Hodges and Holly because the murder victim, Martine Stover, is one of the people who were badly injured during the City Center massacre. Hodges skips his doctor's appointment in favor of picking up Holly and heading to the crime scene.

In Section 3, Marlee, the receptionist at the doctor's office, sees Hodges still talking on his phone when the patient scheduled before him leaves. She checks with Dr. Stamos to see if he is ready for Hodges and notices the doctor is looking at Hodges' file. The doctor tells Marlee "I love my job, but I hate this part" (21) before asking her to send Hodges in the office. The elevator doors close behind Hodges just as Marlee steps into the hall to call for him.

In Section 4, Hodges lies and tells Holly his test results were not back yet when she asks about his doctor's appointment. She has been nagging him to go to the doctor because he has been having stomach pain. On the way to Ridgedale, where Martine lived with her mother, Janice Ellerton, Holly shares with Hodges some information about Martine she has found on the Internet.

In Section 5, Pete and Isabel "Izzy" Jaynes fill Hodges and Holly in on what they have determined about the victims so far in their investigation. Hodges notices how Holly is on high alert as she listens to the detectives and observes the house. Hodges knows Holly is afraid of people but also knows that she can be brave if she has to be. He remembers how she was the one who hit Brady in the head with a sock filled with ball bearings just before he was able to detonate explosives at a 'Round Here concert. Because of Holly's actions, Brady Hartsfield, the man who was also the Mercedes Killer, was not allowed to kill more people at the sold-out concert. The hit also put Brady in a vegetative state.

In Section 6, Izzy shows pictures of the crimes on her iPad. When Holly makes a comment about one of Izzy's statements, Hodges is reminded of the dislike he senses between Holly and Izzy. Izzy tells them that Martine was killed with vodka and crushed painkillers that were put into her feeding tube. Her mother, Janice Ellerton, suffocated



herself using helium and a plastic bag tied over her head. Pete indicates Janice had probably researched the internet to learn how to kill both her daughter and herself.

Holly asks to see the picture of the whole bathroom where Janice killed herself. Hodges squints to see what might have caught Holly's attention. There is a charger plugged into the wall next to a marker which had been used to write the letter "Z" on the bathroom counter. Holly asks if she can look at the bathroom in person. Izzy gives her permission as if she is relieved Holly will be out of the way.

After Holly has left, Hodges asks Pete exactly why he and Holly were called. Pete indicates there may be some connection to Brady but Izzy tells both of them quite plainly that she knows Brady is not capable of being connected with that day's murder/suicide and they should forget their fascination with him. Izzy does allow Pete to tell Hodges about Keith Frias and Krista Countryman, a couple who were badly injured in the City Center massacre. They had met and fallen in love during therapy and appeared to be getting better but had chosen to take overdoses of pills. They died in each other's arms.

In that same line of thinking Hodges, Holly, and Pete remember how Olivia Trelawney, the woman whose car was used in the City Center Massacre, was pushed by Brady to kill herself. Brady had also tried to convince Hodges to kill himself during a low point in his life when he had just retired from the police department. Holly asks if there was a "Z" found at the scene of the couples' suicide. Izzy declares the conversation is stupid and gets up to leave.

Analysis

Notice that nearly seven years have passed since the introductory section about the Mercedes Killings. The tense also changes from past tense to present tense but the point of view remains that of a third person narrator. A good deal of exposition is included in these opening sections, particularly Section 6. For those who have not read the first two novels in the series, this background information catches them up on what they need to know from those first two novels. For those who did read the first two novels, this section may drag a bit with the exposition.

In addition to giving the reader background information about why Hodges and Holly might be interested in this case, the author also introduces the main conflicts in the novel. First, Pete suspects the murder/suicide with which he is dealing has something to do with Brady. Second, Pete's partner is not interested in investigating the murder/suicide with respect to Brady and thinks Pete, Hodges, and Holly are silly to even be considering Brady. Third, Hodges thinks there might be something seriously wrong with his health-wise. This fear is backed up by the doctor's comment to his nurse that while he loves his job he hates the part where he has to talk to patients like Hodges.



Introduced at the very beginning of the novel is Hodges' irritating cell phone text alert. It is the sound of a pane of glass breaking and boys cheering a home run. The alert scares not only Hodges but also the people who are around him when it sounds. This alert will play a significant role later in the novel.

The author plays up Hodges' fear that he is suffering from a serious disease as he waits in the doctor's office. "He's always afraid they're going to find not just something wrong but something really wrong" (16). The doctor is also running late which makes Hodges more nervous. Even though the reader senses there really is something wrong with Hodges, particularly because of the nurse's interaction with the doctor, Hodges' fear and his pain is not enough to keep him in the office when Pete calls about a crime. Hodges' stomach may be hurting but his heart is still that of an investigator.

King tailors his writing so the reader understands relationships between characters without having to be told point blank. For instance, the reader senses the close relationship between Holly and Hodges when King describes Holly's smile and writes "It's a thing Holly does more often than she used to, but still not enough to suit Hodges" (20). Hodges wants to see Holly happy, which is a sign of his love and respect for her. Notice Hodges is also irritated by the way Izzy treats Holly. This is also a sign that Hodges cares for Holly and does not want to see her hurt. At the crime scene, Hodges watches Holly and can tell from her body language how she is feeling. "But Hodges knows her well — as well as anyone can, at least — and he can tell she's on high alert" (26).

It is because Martine and Janice's deaths look almost as if they could have been a pair of suicides, planned in advance, instead of a murder/suicide that Pete, Hodges, and Holly's thoughts go to Brady. Holly calls Brady an "architect of suicide" (37) in response to Izzy's description of him as a "connoisseur of suicide" (37). Holly's description is more spot on because Brady did devise ways to make his victims commit suicide. For both Olivia Trelawney, who did kill herself, and Hodges, who did not give in to Brady's persuasions, Brady attacked them where they were most vulnerable as if he were building a case for them being dead. A connoisseur is a term that indicates a person has a good deal of knowledge about a particular topic, in this case suicide. Brady certainly did have a good deal of knowledge about suicide but he also put this knowledge into action building cases for people to kill themselves.

The representations of Brady thus far show that he has no regard for human life. He goaded Olivia Trelawney into suicide. He killed and injured dozens of people when he crashed a car into a crowd of people waiting for a job fair to open. He intended to detonate a bomb at a rock concert. He was kept from doing so because Holly and Hodges stopped him. A comment he made about Martine in a letter to Brady indicates his lack of respect for her and his lack of guilt about the condition into which he put her. "Hartsfield had written Hodges an anonymous letter. In it he referred to her as 'your basic head on a stick.' What made that especially cruel was the radioactive nugget of truth inside the ugly joke" (19). Hodges knows how clever Brady is because he almost succeeded in getting Hodges to hurt himself. "It was as if Hartsfield had sniffed out Hodges's thoughts of suicide and tried to push him over the edge" (36).



Notice in this section also the many references to Hodges' age and his old school beliefs. He has a cell phone but does not know how to mute the text alert that is so loud and irritating. When the lady in the waiting room chides Hodges for his startling alert Hodges believes he is being treated "like a kid" (15) even though he is nearly 70. A final indication of Hodges' advanced age comes when he repeats a line from the song "Monday, Monday" released by the group The Mamas and The Papas in 1966. The young receptionist does not recognize the song.

One symbol of importance introduced in this section of the novel is the letter "Z" written on the bathroom counter. Izzy believes this single letter, the final letter of the alphabet, is some sort of cryptic suicide note. As the novel progresses the reader will learn that "Z" is not a suicide note and has a meaning that is much more sinister.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the relationships defined so far between Pete, Izzy, Hodges and Holly. What do you sense about the way they interact with one another?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that Pete called Hodges and Holly to consult on the Stover/Ellerton murder/suicide even though there appears to be really no chance Brady was involved?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Izzy might not want Hodges to know about the suicide of the young couple who were injured in the City Center Massacre? Why does Pete decide to share this information with his old partner?

Vocabulary

jubilant, phenomenon, prevaricate, waifs, excrement, exorcised, malady, expounded, connoisseur, filched



Z January 2016 — 7-11

Summary

In Section 7, Brady tries to console Holly once they get in the car by telling her that he believes Pete will check out the pictures of the double suicide of the City Center victims to see if there was a “Z” in any of the pictures as she requested. She changes the subject as she wonders how she will go about getting in touch with Nancy Alderson, the housekeeper for Janice and Martine. Holly indicates someone should call Nancy and let her know her employers are dead. She does not expect Pete and Izzy will do it since she thinks they did very little at the crime scene. While they were talking downstairs Holly had gone in search of the handheld device that went with the charger in the bathroom. She had also checked the search history on Janice’s computer. No searches for suicide had been made on the computer. Instead Janice had apparently researched stem cell procedures.

When Hodges pushes her, Holly unwraps the copy of Inside Edition that she brought from the house. She pulls from it a Zappit, a game console she found tucked beside the cushion of Janice’s chair. Because Martine was paralyzed and Janice, her mother, was nearly 80, Holly wonders how Janice came to have the console. At first Hodges thinks there is some connection he vaguely remembers between Brady and the Zappit but then he reminds himself that Brady is in a persistent vegetative state in a brain trauma clinic. He could have had nothing to do with what happened to Janice and Martine.

In Section 8, Holly gets in touch with Nancy’s sister-in-law and passes the phone to Hodges. When Nancy learns what Hodges has to say, she at first does not believe him because Janice and Martine were so happy. They enjoyed watching television, did daily devotions and Martine was even thinking about taking an accounting class. In reference to the game console, Nancy explains that a man gave it to Janice telling her it was free as long as she filled out and returned a questionnaire. Nancy said she had noticed Janice seemed like she had something weighing on her mind after she received the Zappit but had not really connected the Zappit and the change in mood. Just as Hodges is about the end the call, Nancy remembers an elderly man she saw looking at the house across the street from them that is for sale. She describes him as wearing a parka repaired with masking tape and driving an old car with primer spots on it.

In Section 9, Hodges and Holly discuss the Zappit over lunch. They do not believe the man in the parka was the one who gave it to Janice. As Holly encourages Hodges to eat, he thinks about the pain in his gut and wonders if he has an ulcer. Going back to the Zappit Hodges tells Holly he found out that the company that manufactured those devices has gone bankrupt. It is likely that the man giving out the consoles was running a scam.

Hodges takes the opportunity to ask Holly why she does not like Izzy. First, Holly tells Hodges she does not like Izzy because Izzy thinks Holly is crazy. She also does not like



her because Izzy does not see more than what is in front of her, and does not like people who are able to see more than the obvious. When Holly presses Hodges, he tells her that he does not plan to tell Pete or Izzy about the Zappit yet because he has something he wants to check out.

In Section 10, Hodges, as well as the staff members at the brain injury clinic where Brady is a patient, do not like Ruth Scapelli, the new head nurse. The nurses say she is competent but lacking in mercy for the patients as well as the other staff members. Scapelli hates Brady because she thinks he is faking his catatonic state. She does not go in his room very often because she does not trust herself with him. That morning she had to go to his room to accompany Dr. Babineau on his rounds. While the doctor was not looking, Brady gave Scapelli a rude hand gesture by raising the middle finger of one of his hands. As he looked at her, two buttons popped off the front of her blouse causing her bra to show. Brady grinned at her after the buttons were gone.

Scapelli returns to Brady's room later that same day. Even though she gets no response from Brady, she tells him she does not like him any more than he likes her. She makes fun of him, telling him she does not think he is capable of telekinesis like some of the other nurses say he is. When she still does not get any response, she twists one of his nipples. He shows no signs that he feels anything from her pinching and twisting. She continues to goad Brady by telling him she knows Babineau is experimenting on Brady with new drugs. When she finally stops pinching and twisting, the blinds behind her rattle and Brady looks directly at her. Scapelli is startled. Before she leaves the room, Scapelli tells Brady that if he ever flips her off again she will twist his testicles. He raises his middle finger to her.

In Section 11, Tom Saubers, whom Hodges helped by saving the lives of his son and daughter, shows Hodges the empty house across the street from the house where Janice and Martine had lived. Nothing inside is out of place but the lock has been broken off the garage. There is a chair in the garage from where a person could watch the house across the street. Underneath is the cap from a set of high powered binoculars. When Hodges stands from picking up the cap he notices the letter "Z" carved into the post between the two garage doors.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that the reader gets a first look at Brady in person. The fact that he is capable of some brain activity and probably also telekinesis is proven when he is being examined by Dr. Babineau. Nurse Scapelli is in the room observing. She does not like Brady and does not go to check on him often because she thinks he is faking his disease. Brady uses his powers to degrade and embarrass Scapelli by flipping her off and making the two buttons come off her uniform. Brady's grin indicates to Scapelli that he knows exactly what he is doing and none of his movements have been mere muscle contractions, phenomena she suspects the doctor might use to excuse Brady's actions.



In addition to not liking Brady, Scapelli is characterized as being unsympathetic in general. She believes Brady is faking his illness and tries to stay away from him because she is afraid of what she might do to him. Scapelli is equally frustrated by the way that Dr. Babineau glows over the progress that Brady has made even though Scapelli does not think he is showing nearly the progress he could. "He's also prone to poking himself in the eye with his fork... and his verbal responses all sound like wah-wah and gub-gub to her," (59) Scapelli thinks when Babineau brags about all the things Brady has learned to do. Remember this is Scapelli's central belief about all the patients at the clinic: "It is as if Scapelli feels that, no matter what is wrong with them, the patients of the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic must bear part of the responsibility for their current condition, and if they only tried harder, they would surely regain at least some of their faculties" (58). Although it appears Scapelli would respect Brady because he has overcome some of his difficulties, she instead believes he has improved more than he is showing and is manipulating the system. Note also that the nurses who work for Scapelli say that she is lacking in mercy not only for the patients but also her fellow staff. She has fired nurses for minor infractions. This is an aspect of her personality that will be important later.

Even as Hodges tries to concentrate on the case and his discussion with Holly, he is constantly bothered by his stomach pain. The reader is made aware of this constant pain because the author continues to mention it. As he and Holly eat, Hodges does not order his favorite meal because he knows his stomach "won't put up with" (55) the spices in the meat. He also eats slowly because he knows there is less chance of him having a "post-lunch bonfire in his guts" (55) if he slows down. Hodges has apparently also been suffering with this pain for a while. At one point it is personified and described as a living being that is "putting out tentacles that curl around to his lower back" (66). Significant also is the idea that the pain is personified as being "almost an old friend by now" (66) a phrase that signifies Hodges had been hurting long enough he has almost grown accustomed to the discomfort.

The symbol the letter "Z" takes on a different meaning as a signature of the person who is instigating the suicides, in this section of the novel. In the prior section Izzy had suggested it was perhaps a cryptic suicide letter left by Janice. In fact, Izzy and her partner had really paid no attention to the letter written on the counter in the dead woman's bathroom. It seems it is hardly a coincidence when Hodges and Tom find a "Z" carved into a post inside the garage across the street where it appears a man was watching Janice and Martine. From this viewpoint the "Z" does not appear to be as much a suicide note as a signature.

Another object of significance is the Zappit that Holly found in Janice's chair. Holly noticed the charger was plugged into the bathroom where Janice died indicating that she was actively using the game console. Hodges and Holly also think the circumstances under which Janice got the game are strange. Even though the company that made the game consoles is out of business a man offered to give Janice one of them for free in exchange for filling out a survey. Hodges believes this is indicative of some sort of scam.



Notice Holly's continued frustration with the way Pete and Izzy investigated the crime scene. She not only found the Zappit in Janice's chair, she also discovered it was the device that plugged into the charger in the bathroom where Janice died. Holly's belief that the "whole thing was wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong" (41) is furthered when she does a history search on Janice's computer and discovers that Janice has never researched any sites on how to commit suicide. In fact, most of her research has been focused on stem cell procedures, experimental processes that might improve her daughter's quality of life. Interesting also in the above quote is Holly's habit of repeating herself three times, a habit that will appear several more times as the novel progresses.

Even though Pete and Izzy want to sweep the case under the rug as a murder/suicide there is significant evidence that neither Martine nor Janice were considering killing themselves. First is the housekeeper's information that both women were happy and loved to laugh. Second is the research on Janice's computer about stem cell research and the lack of research about suicide. Third is the information given by the housekeeper that Martine was preparing to take an accounting class online. This shows that she was making plans for the future, something a person considering suicide usually does not do.

Discussion Question 1

Was Scapelli justified in going back to Brady and physically hurting him after he degraded her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

At this point do you believe Martine and Janice wanted to die? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that someone was watching the house in which Martine and Janice lived from across the street? Why do you think a "Z," like the one found in the bathroom where Janice killed herself, was carved into the inside of the garage?

Vocabulary

resilience, discomfited, voracious, gregarious, cache, conduit, bequest, surrogate, verisimilitude, credulous, aberration, spiel, obligatory



Z January 2016 — 12-23

Summary

In Section 12, Hodges has a cramp in his knee as he walks back to the car. Tom bends to help him and neither of them notices a Chevy car drive pass the house. The Chevrolet turns around and cruises back past while Tom is massaging Hodges' leg. They do not notice the car either time but the driver gets a good look at the two of them.

In Section 13 when he gets home, Hodges has a text from Holly as well as one from his doctor's office. He calls to reschedule his doctor's appointment and the nurse tells him it is "imperative" (70) that he attend the appointment. Next he returns Holly's call. She asks him to find out from Pete if Janice was working on buying a new computer for Martine's class because it would indicate there was no sign of premeditated suicide. Hodges also tells Holly what he found in the garage. The two decide there are probably two men working together, one who gave Janice the Zappit and another who watched the house. Before going to bed, Hodges arranges a morning meeting with Holly, Pete, and Izzy. He tries to eat a can of soup but throws the soup up. At this point he becomes really scared because he tastes blood in his mouth and throat.

In Section 14, Scapelli's doorbell rings at 8 p.m. It is Dr. Babineau. She worries he might have learned what she did to Brady, but calms herself by remembering the door was shut. She notices the usually neat doctor needs a shave and that he has bags under his eyes. He seems disjointed. Once they are in the living room, he mutes the television. Scapelli notices a blank look in his eyes. He sits and opens his briefcase as he tells Scapelli that he knows she assaulted a patient earlier that day. She begs with the doctor but he does not even answer her request for compassion.

In Section 15, Selma Valdez goes to Brady's room to help him get ready for bed. Because Dr. Babineau had added to Brady's chart a note instructing nurses not to disturb Brady if he is in a "semiconscious state," (77) she does not speak to him. She does look over his shoulder at the Zappit game console he is using to watch the Fishin' Hole demo. She becomes fascinated with the hypnotic movements of the fish and has stood there almost twenty minutes when Brady tells her clearly to go away. Selma has trouble pulling her eyes away from the game, which she notices is also giving off blue flashes periodically.

In Section 16, Dr. Babineau gives Scapelli a Zappit and tells her there is a nine-digit number he wants her to find in the program. She wonders briefly if he is crazy. He tells her to watch for the pink fish. While she is looking for pink fish, Dr. Babineau slips out the door. She looks up from the game to find a ghostly version of Brady sitting in her living room watching her. He has fish swimming in his eyes. Brady tells Scapelli that Dr. Babineau knows what she did to Brady and will tell others about it. He explains the doctor had a nanny cam set up in Brady's room and had recorded the incident. He threatens her with the suggestion the video clip might go viral. Brady makes her say that



she is awful and that she will be arrested for what she did. He also makes her repeat to him that no one will stand up for her.

In Section 17 in Room 217, Brady is awake and alert, staring at the game console. Dr. Babineau, who matters no longer because he barely exists, is the only one who has seen him like this. He tells Scapelli they need to go to the kitchen.

In Section 18, Hodges wakes at 2 a.m., the time he considers the suicide hour. He goes to his computer thinking he will research what might be wrong with him. He discovers he has a message from Z-boy on the website Under Debbie's Blue Umbrella. The message indicates that "he's not done with you yet" (86). Hodges asks who is writing to him and gets no answer.

In Section 19, Holly and Hodges hand over the Zappit and lens cover to Pete and Izzy. Izzy berates Holly for having taken the Zappit. Hodges, and even Pete, tell Izzy to calm down on her accusations. After Izzy learns that Holly also checked out Janice's computer, she accuses Holly and Hodges of being trouble. She insists the two men — the one who gave Janice the Zappit and the one spying on the house — were not connected and had nothing to do with what happened to Janice and Martine. Hodges chooses not to say anything about the message he got on the Blue Umbrella site. Pete requests they disregard their suspicions and allow the case to be closed because he is retiring and he does not want to leave Izzy with an overly heavy case load. Hodges asks Pete only that he have someone check out the functions of the Zappit since he could not get it to turn on.

In Section 20, Holly is angry to the point of tears when they reach the sidewalk. She tells Hodges she is sure there is something more to the clues they have collected. Hodges assures her they are not done with the case. He tells her that he has gotten new information that he will tell her about after his appointment. As he heads for the doctor's office he prays he is suffering nothing worse than an ulcer.

In Section 21, the doctor informs Hodges he has pancreatic cancer and that his liver is involved. Even though he tells Hodges he wants him to see a gastroenterologist that day Hodges balks. He asks what his chances of surviving the cancer are. Dr. Stamos says it may be as long as a year or two. Hodges tells the doctor he needs some time to think before making an appointment.

In Section 22, Scapelli's daughter gets an email from her mother. The message indicates Scapelli believes she is worthless and that she does not have any choice except what she is about to do. After she calls her mother's work and discovers her mother is not there and has not called in sick, she calls the police telling them Scapelli might have killed herself.

In Section 23, the officers who respond to the Scapelli house are surprised to find the door is open. They smell blood and find Scapelli in her kitchen where she has slit her wrists. They find a "Z" or a "2" written in blood next to her.



Analysis

Scapelli's death is an example of poetic justice. Poetic justice is a literary technique in which a character gets what he deserves based on his actions. For example, a cruel character may die a horrible death or a good character may win the lottery. In this particular example, Scapelli's death is also ironic as well as an example of poetic justice because it is Brady's lack of mercy that causes him to ignore Scapelli's pleas to forgive her and let her live. The nurses with whom Scapelli worked said Scapelli lacked mercy both for patients and fellow workers. Scapelli would fire her subordinates for minor misdoings. In Scapelli's case she is killed for an action that is certainly cruel but probably not worthy of death. The irony and poetic justice of Scapelli's death is that before she died she begged for mercy from Brady, something she was never able to give.

King builds his plot by letting the readers know information that the main characters do not yet know. For instance, the readers know that the primer spotted car passes Hodges and Tom twice while the two men are distracted by Hodges' leg cramps. They just miss seeing the car twice but the driver of the car is able to get a good look at them. When the police officers on the scene at Scapelli's suicide see what they describe as a "Z" or a "2" in blood next to the body the readers realize for sure that Brady is somehow responsible for the deaths of Martine and Janice because the same signature was found in their home.

While the reader knows all of the strange details associated with Scapelli's death; Hodges and Holly are not aware of any of that background information. Brady appears to be able to use the Zappit in some way to be able to transport himself to different places, at least in a ghostly form. It is through this ghostly form that Brady convinces Scapelli to kill herself. Dr. Babineau, the neurologist, appears to be connected in some way to Brady's scheme. The Dr. Babineau who is at Scapelli's door, however, does not seem to be the one she is used to seeing on a day to day basis. She notes he is unshaven and seems disjointed. He also has a blank look in his eyes. The author goes so far as describing these eye as having nothing in them, "no human expression at all" (79).

After building up Hodges' illness, King lets the reader know that Hodges is really sick. He has pancreatic cancer, a disease that will probably kill him within a year or two.

Despite his prognosis, Hodges tells his doctor he needs to wait to begin treatments. Hodges' decision to put off treatments indicates how seriously he takes his work as a detective and how much he believes he is needed to continue the investigation.

Hodges' decision to put off his treatments is perhaps because of Izzy's insistence that there is nothing to the deaths of Martine and Janice other than a murder/suicide. Holly is so frustrated with Izzy that she is in tears by the time she and Hodges leave the coffee shop where they have met to hand over the evidence they collected to Pete and Izzy. Notice that it is Pete who directly tells Hodges and Holly that he does not want to keep the case open because he feels it will put too much work on Izzy when he retires. Izzy's



reasons for not wanting to keep the case open are entirely different. As King writes: “And Izzy? She doesn’t want to open a can of worms filled with a lot of pulp-novel stuff about cryptic letters and mystery men” (91). As Holly describes Izzy “Isabelle only sees what she sees, and she doesn’t like people who see more, or at least look for more. She feels the same way about you, Bill.” Holly indicates that Izzy is short-sighted and not very creative. She is offended by people who are able to see beyond the obvious and put clues together. Holly also touches on Izzy’s jealousy that even though she is Pete’s partner, Pete still calls on Hodges for advice and insight.

Meanwhile, what King reveals about Brady in this section of the novel is just disturbing. First, it appears that he really is faking his mental issues. Proof of this comes when he speaks clearly to Selma Valdez, the nurse who looks over his shoulder at the game Brady is watching. In Section 17, as Brady looks at the Fishin’ Hole demo in his room, his “ghost” directs Scapelli into the kitchen of her home. It is noted that his face is “fully awake and aware” (83). Also significant is that this awake version of himself is one he “hides from everyone except Felix Babineau, and Dr. Babineau no longer matters” (83). The reader can surmise that somehow Brady has taken control of his neurosurgeon, the one who once experimented on him with shots to improve his brain power.

Note also that there are constant reminders of what Brady has done to the people he injured during the City Center massacre. In this particular section it is Tom Saubers’ pain that is noted in comparison with the pain Brady feels from his leg cramp. “He limps the first two or three steps, but then the pain behind his knee lets go entirely and he’s able to walk normally. More normally than Tom. Thanks to his encounter with Brady Hartsfield in April of 2009, Tom Saubers will limp for the rest of his life” (68-69). These constant reminders of what Brady did keep the fact that he is such a cruel person in the forefront of the readers’ minds.

Note the irony of the decision by the nurse, Selma, to leave Brady alone while he is playing with his Zappit. She thinks to herself “After all, he’s not hurting anybody” (78-79). This statement is highly ironic since at that very moment Brady is preparing to convince Scapelli that she should kill herself. Notice the alliteration that King uses when describing the game, which Selma describes as hypnotic, especially since she stands watching it for nearly twenty minutes without realizing how much time has passed. The fish on the screen are “Flicking their flippy tails and sending up burbles of bubbles” (80). Finally, notice the baseball metaphor used when Hodges tries to remember how an icon got removed from his computer dock. “Memory has a way of slipping a few gears after sixty-five, when people round the third turn start down the home stretch” (85). Hodges, of course, is referring to his age with the start down the home stretch being the final years before death.

King often alternates between calling a person by his first name or last name perhaps as a way to help determine relationships between characters as well as the relationship between the character and the reader. For instance, in King’s narration Hodges is always referred to by his last name. In quotations, other characters, like Holly and Pete, refer to him by Bill, his given name. This use of the first name indicates closeness between these characters. Since King calls Hodges by his last name in narration is



indicates a distance between the reader and the main character. The reader cannot help but get involved with Hodges, his health issues, and his desire to find out if Brady is really up to something, but there is something about the use of his last name in narration that keeps the reader from getting too close.

Significant objects that appear in this section include the letter “Z” since it is found at the scene of Scapelli’s suicide. It connects her death with those of Martine and Janice. Also significant is that Brady describes Dr. Babineau as not really existing any longer. He is mostly Dr. Z, perhaps a connection to the “Z’s” left at the suicide scenes. Also continuing to be significant are the game consoles called Zappits. Brady is looking at the Fishin’ Hole demo on one of these consoles when he appears to Scapelli in her living room. She also has been playing on a Zappit, as instructed by Dr. Babineau, when she is able to see Brady. Scapelli sees fish swimming in Brady’s eyes, just like in the game. The vitamins are an object that is first discussed in this section of the novel. When Scapelli is torturing Brady she tells him that if Babineau finds out what she is doing to Brady and tries to fire her, she will make public what she knows about the vitamins Dr. Babineau has been giving Brady. These vitamins are really doses of an experimental medicine intended to increase brain function.

Discussion Question 1

Why does King refer to some characters by their first names and some by their last names? For instance Selma Valdez is Selma but Ruth Scapelli is Scapelli.

Discussion Question 2

King has described twice that Dr. Babineau’s eyes are vacant. Why do you think this is significant?

Discussion Question 3

Why does it seem to anger Holly so much that Izzy belittles her investigation and makes fun of her?

Vocabulary

imperative, sartorial, perversely, perfunctory, obliterates, converse, cryptic, obsolete, mandatory, voluble, fractious, bumptious, inoperable, debilitating, arduous, formidable, recriminations, terse, mantra



Z January — Brady

Summary

Brady's mother once called her son a genius. She thought he would invent something that would make them rich but it never happened. He had invented Thing One and Thing Two, which had helped him at the City Center massacre where he had killed eight people. He tried to kill thousands at a rock concert where he had planned to detonate a bomb complete with ball bearing shrapnel but he had been hit in the head. He suspected it was Hodges.

Jason Raspis was the paramedic who worked on Brady after he was hit in the head. He had doubted Brady would survive. A student had diagnosed Brady had an irreparable brain injury and that he would be dead by morning. Brady survived and even lived through a surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain. It was at this point that Babineau began giving Brady the experimental medicine Cerebellin. Because Babineau saw no change in Brady, he finally stopped giving him the medicine.

It was sixteen months before Brady remembered his name—three weeks before he ever asked the nurse for his mother. Brady remembered the words “control,” “chaos,” and “darkness.” These words transported him to his computer/control room. The five computers showed pictures from Brady's life. These included his little brother whom he had helped to kill; his mother, who had a strange sexual relationship with him; his inventions Thing One and Thing Two were on the third screen; the Mercedes he had driven into the crowd was on the fourth, while the fifth picture was of a wheelchair. Jerome was on the sixth screen while Hodges was on the seventh screen. From these pictures, Brady began to put together his life. He knew enough to know if he showed anyone he was competent he would have to stand trial.

It was a week before he talked to the nurse for the first time that Brady discovered he had telekinetic abilities. He could swing his IV bag by just thinking about it. He sometimes moved things in his room just to startle the nurses. A few days later he realized he had the ability to take over people's minds when Sadie MacDonald was briefly hypnotized by the lights flashing off the windshields of the cars in the parking garage next door. He could not only look through Sadie's eyes, he could even discern her thoughts, which he refers to as “thoughtfish.” He tried to get into other people's minds in the next few days but was only able to do so with a boy who had Down Syndrome for a few minutes. He decided to go ahead and talk to Nurse Wilmer and let them know he was awake. He planned to continue practicing the act of getting into people's minds.



Analysis

This section completely dedicated to Brady gives the reader a good deal of background information about Brady's condition and the point at which he began to think for himself. It appears he was awake and already planning his revenge even before he allowed the nurses to know that he was conscious. The section is told in the past tense since much of the information given took place before Brady became a patient at the brain trauma clinic.

It is at this point that the reader begins to learn the true power of Brady's mind. It is suggested that perhaps it was the shots given to him by Babineau or perhaps the knock in the head that gave him special powers. Regardless, Brady uses these powers to torment the nurses, and in his spare time to try to come up with some way to get revenge on Hodges. He discovers through an accidental encounter with a nurse who has epilepsy that he is able to slip into the minds of some people when they are in a hypnotic state.

A moral question arises when the reader learns that Dr. Babineau is experimenting on Brady. Brady has not given consent for the drugs to be used on him and Dr. Babineau has gotten permission from no one to administer this experimental drug to Brady. Dr. Babineau is treating Brady as a guinea pig or lab rat instead of a person. Even though Brady is evil, one has to wonder if it is morally responsible to experiment on him in this way. Babineau justifies his actions by reasoning that Brady is a "murderous degenerate who was never going to wake up" (107-108). He believes the drug will have little effect on Brady but that what he learns by using it on Brady may help others. "You may be helping someone farther down the line, Mr. Hartsfield, he told his comatose patient. Doing a spoonful of good instead of a shovelful of evil" (108). Even this justification does not seem to make unauthorized testing acceptable.

Another idea repeated throughout this section is that because Brady is believed to be a vegetable he is not worth proper care. For instance, the intern in the emergency room asks his overseeing doctor why they are giving Brady a CAT scan when he probably will not live. One of the doctors who helped Dr. Babineau operate on Brady says of the patient: "He may live for awhile, but he will never be tried for his crime, and he will be no great loss to the world when he goes" (107). Similarly, Dr. Babineau thinks to himself that even if Brady were to die because of a reaction to the drug, his death would be no great loss. "No great loss. Not to you, and certainly not to your family, because you have none. Nor to the world; the world would be delighted to see you go" (108).

The first mention of another significant object, "thoughtfish" as Brady calls them, occurs in this section of the novel. When Brady first makes his way into Selma's brain he is able to perceive her thoughts. He describes these as being like fish, swimming around so he dubs them "thoughtfish." He calls the ideas that he plants in Selma's brain thoughtfish as well.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Brady knows not to let on to the nurses he is conscious again even before he knows who he is and what he has done?

Discussion Question 2

Consider the way Brady is treated by his doctors because he is both in a vegetative state and is a known terrorist. Do you think this sort of treatment is justified? Is Brady's life worth as much as any one else's?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think it would be possible for a person to slip into another person's mind and take over? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

maimed, decapitating, prepubescent, overindulgent, protocol, deprecating, constitution, inchoate, rakishly, armature, redoubt, atrophy, vertigo, herculean, beatnik

Blackish — 1-13

Summary

In Section 1, while Hodges is learning he has cancer Holly has been researching the background of the Zappit. She has learned there were thousands of Zappits that were not sold when the company that made them filed bankruptcy. Hodges has filled a prescription for pain killers and feels better. When Holly asks his diagnosis he lies and tells her he has an ulcer. She indicates she is glad because she is afraid she would have to go back to live with her mother if anything happened to him. Hodges remembers in what bad shape Holly was when she lived with her parents. When Hodges goes into his office and closes his door, something he rarely does, Holly knows there is something wrong other than just an ulcer.

In Section 2, Holly thinks over a strange message that Z-Boy sent to Hodges through an Internet website. It indicated that “he,” whom they assume is Brady, is not finished with Hodges yet. Hodges tells Holly he has not been to visit Brady for several months, since he was ordered by her and Jerome to stop paying visits to him. During the last visit, Hodges says Brady was the same but the nurses were telling stories about him having telekinetic powers. He explained how the picture in Brady’s room had fallen over during his last visit. Holly reminds him that Brady communicated with Hodges through the Blue Umbrella site, the same site through which he received his message from Z-Boy. Hodges describes the way Brady had looked at him during that final visit, how he had sensed the evil still in Brady. Hodges has also remembered that Brady had a Zappit in his room, given to him by Library AI.

About the same time as his last visit to Brady there was also a nurse who worked in the clinic who committed suicide. Holly gets the feeling that Brady was somehow responsible for the nurse’s death. She also senses Hodges wants to go back to see Brady. Hodges has begun thinking of Brady as a spider who sits in his room spinning a web. She warns him that if he must go he should guard his thoughts, and that he should call her if he feels like hurting himself. She wishes Jerome were there but he is in Arizona building houses with Habitat for Humanity. Before Hodges leaves, he asks Holly to find out how to contact the trustee of the Sunrise Solutions bankruptcy. Sunrise Solutions is the company that bought out Zappit. This company went defunct just a few years after Zappit, Inc. did.

In Section 3, Hodges tries to think of some way to make Brady respond to him so he will know for sure the status of Brady’s mind. He is distracted by thoughts of his diagnosis and his fears. The person he worries about most is Holly. Lost in his thoughts, Hodges does not see the primer-dotted Chevrolet parked across from their office. A man in a parka repaired with masking tape sees Hodges and uses a cell phone to make a call.

In Section 4, as Hodges walks away Holly is concerned and does not completely believe he only has an ulcer. She decides to check his computer. There is a new file



containing Hodges' will. In his email she finds information from Dr. Stamos. Before she is finished reading the email she is crying.

In Section 5, on the bus Hodges gets a text from Pete. Others on the bus give him dirty looks because they are startled by his text alert. When Hodges calls Pete he learns that the Zappit Holly found at Janice's house only gave a few flashes and then died when batteries were plugged in. Pete believes this means that Janice could not have used the game at all. Because Hodges has talked to Janice's housekeeper, he knows she did use the game at one time. Hodges pretends the case is over in his mind but really wants to separate from Pete and investigate on his own.

In Section 6, Barbara watches the Fishin' Hole game on her Zappit as she walks through the bad part of town. Barbara is black but she feels stupid and worthless because she has never been in this part of town, which is predominately black. Someone yells at her from across the street calling her "blackish" (137) and telling her she should not be there. A voice, which she describes as the voice of her friend tells her she should end her life in that area of town and let that be her statement. A huge black truck rolls toward her. She smiles as she thinks she has made her decision and steps toward the curb.

In Section 7, Dr. Babineau is in disarray as he walks down the hallway at the brain trauma center. A nurse tries to ask him if he has heard the news, what the reader assumes to be Scapelli's suicide, but he walks past without acknowledging her, headed to Brady's room. Brady does not look up from his game when Babineau enters. He is busy communicating with Barbara, the last person he remembers seeing before he was hit in the head at the concert at the MAC. Dr. Babineau tries to tell Brady the information Z-Boy has given him about Hodges snooping around the house in which Janie and Martine had lived.

In Section 8, as Barbara begins to step off the curb a boy grabs her from behind. He tells her she's good looking but warns her not to jaywalk. He notices she is angry when she shakes him off. Barbara glances down at her game console knowing that the fish will calm her. Intending to be funny, the boy jerks the console away from her. She notices how cute he is for the first time and that only makes her madder. She kicks him in the shin and grabs the game console. Without even looking she runs into the street. A white panel truck slams on its brakes. She suddenly realizes she no longer wants to die.

In Section 9, Brady turns off his Zappit because he believes he has successfully killed Barbara. Babineau wonders at what point he got involved in Brady's plan and stopped having a choice about his own behavior. Babineau warns Brady that Hodges is on his way. Because Brady is flushed Babineau tells him he does not need to be seen. Brady tells Babineau he does not want to be seen by Hodges until after he has found out about Barbara. Babineau is relieved to leave the room as himself. He feels as if he is disappearing.

In Section 10, Tanya has been trying to get in touch with Barbara to confirm that she is okay. It is the first time that Barbara has ever skipped school. As she waits for her



daughter to return her call, Tanya gets a call from the main branch of the police department. The reader is privy only to Tanya's side of the conversation. She questions if it is really her daughter. No indication is given of what has happened to Barbara. The only indication of the officer's response is that they are sure it is Barbara because they found her ID in the street. The narrator indicates the officer does not tell Tanya blood had to be wiped off the ID to read the name.

In Section 11, Hodges learns from talking to two interns that Scapelli has killed herself. Hodges senses that Brady had something to do with the nurse's death. Walking to the desk he tells Nurse Norma Wilmer that he needs to see Brady. Babineau, who is also standing at the desk, tells Hodges he will not be allowed to see Brady. He adds that the patients are upset about the tragedy they have had, a statement that makes Norma widen her eyes in surprise. Babineau orders Hodges to leave. Before he leaves, Hodges gives one of the interns \$50 to give Norma a note requesting that she call him.

In Section 12, Holly calls Jerome, telling him that she needs him to come home. He senses fear in her voice. She tells him that Hodges has cancer. Holly reasons that he lied to her and told her it was just an ulcer because of his obsession with Brady. Jerome cuts the call with her because he has been left in charge of the volunteers. As he stops a cement truck about to back into a drainage ditch, his phone rings again. It is his mother telling him he needs to come home for Barbara.

In Section 13, Norma calls Hodges and agrees to meet him later for a drink. When he finishes talking to her the phone lights up again. It is Tanya. She says that Barbara was in Lowtown and that she was hit by a truck. They believe a boy pushed her into the street. An ambulance is taking Barbara to Kiner Memorial. Hodges tells Tanya he is at the hospital and will meet the ambulance.

Analysis

In this section the reader understands the connection between Brady and Babineau even though Hodges and Holly have not yet put the two together. Z-Boy, or Library Al, is being used as a lookout for Brady. He is apparently the one who contacted Babineau to tell him that Hodges was on his way to visit Brady. Even though Hodges cannot leave his room, he has both Babineau and Library Al to be lookouts for him in the real world. "Dr. Z is just another version of Brady, after all — a projection — and today Brady is too busy to project" (140).

Brady makes Barbara susceptible to the idea of suicide by immersing her in a situation in which she feels vulnerable. He makes her feel as if she is not worthy of the lifestyle she enjoys because so many black people in the city live in poverty. The thoughts that Brady is feeding Barbara through the Zappit are backed up by the remarks of the people on the street. "'Hey, blackish!' It's a yell from the other side of the street. 'What you doin down here? You got no bi'nness down here!'" (137) someone says to Barbara. The words and the setting make Barbara ashamed that she does not fit the stereotype for a black person. She did not realize that so many people like her were so poor and is ashamed



of herself for never doing anything about it. Brady tells her that if she commits suicide in the black part of town, she will be making a statement about her unhappiness in life.

When Hodges thinks of the way that Brady might be able to manipulate others even though he is physically stuck in his room at the clinic, he brings to mind the image of a spider. This metaphor is more correct than Hodges probably realizes because Brady really is sitting, like a spider, in wait for his victims that will fall prey to the web he is spinning with the help of Babineau and Library Al. Hodges continues the spider metaphor when he tries to come up with a way to get Brady to respond to him so that Hodges will know Brady is mentally active. His idea is to “poke the spider” (129).

King also uses a technique to increase tension and suspense where he gives the reader only part of the story and then leaves them hanging. He does this three times with Barbara. The first time comes in Section 8 where Barbara runs into the street into the path of a truck after she had the encounter with Dereece. Even though she had intended at first to kill herself, the shock of being broken from her communication with Brady and the sight of the truck bearing down on her make Barbara realize she really does not want to die at all. Her thoughts “My ride is here” (143) echo the last words Brady said before he turned off the Zappit believing she had successfully stepped into the street before she was interrupted by Dereece. In Section 10, Barbara’s story is continued from her mother’s point of view. The only new information the reader gets is that something did happen to someone to cause them to lose blood, some of which got on Barbara’s ID. The narrator does not tell if Barbara is dead or alive, or the extent of her injuries. An indication that something serious happened to Barbara is also given in Section 12 when Tanya calls her son, Jerome, telling him that he needed to come home for Barbara. Still, King does not fill the reader in on what is wrong with Barbara or if she is dead or alive. It is not until Section 13 that the reader learns that Barbara is in an ambulance on the way to Kiner Memorial, the same hospital that Hodges is visiting. Still the reader does not know the extent of Barbara’s injuries.

Apparently the mind control tool that Brady has created through the Zappit is very successful. Notice that although she is a good student and has never missed a day of school, the voice from the Zappit convinces Barbara to skip school to visit the bad part of town. The fish on the screen are almost like a drug that calms her. “To think she almost threw the game console away after that man gave it to her! Before she found the fish! The fish always take her away, and sometimes they bring her friend” (142). It is assumed that Dr. Babineau, working as Myron Zakim gave Barbara a Zappit just like he gave Janice one. Because Barbara was the last person he saw at the 'Round Here concert before he was hit in the head, Brady was obsessed with the idea of goading Barbara into suicide as well. His intentions are both personal—he wants to see if his plan will work—and of revenge. He believed he would be getting revenge on Jerome, Barbara’s brother, and Hodges, the man whom he believes hit him in the head, for stopping his attack at the MAC.

Despite his condition, Hodges still wants to investigate Brady’s case on his own. He is not giving up on himself because he is sick with a disease that will kill him. He still believes he has a purpose in life. “I may have terminal cancer, but I still remember how



the job is done, and that's something" (129) Hodges thinks to himself after Holly compliments him on coming up with a good lead to further their investigation. In a different part of this section Hodges thinks to himself that both Pete and Izzy, although they are able bodied, are dragging along working on the case. "Also, he discovers, he wants to separate himself from Pete and Izzy and go his own way on this thing. Pete plods, and Izzy actually drags her feet. Hodges wants to run with it, bad pancreas and all" (135). Even though he is terribly sick, unable to eat and often in great pain, Hodges still tackles the job in front of him.

King continues to repeat phrases and ideas as he builds his plot. One of the things that continues to happen is that people in Hodges' general vicinity are annoyed when Hodges' text message alert sounds. On the bus, a businessman tells Hodges he should make changing his text message alert "a priority" (133), a statement that gives the reader an idea of how irritating the alert must be. Notice also that for the third time Hodges passes the car dotted with primer but does not notice it because he is distracted by his own thoughts. This is one of those near-misses that could open Hodges up to a good deal of new information about the case if he were to notice the car and see that its driver is Library Al. Another thing that happens repeatedly, to the point the reader understands the significance, is that of people's eye flicking up and to the left. This involuntary eye movement is known to many investigators to be a sign that the person is lying. At the end of Section 6, Hodges' eyes flick up and to the left when he tells Pete his interest in the case is finishing. The reader knows Hodges is not telling the truth.

A final repeated phrase that first appears in this section is the line "All the lonely people" (131 and 153). The use of this phrase is particularly interesting because it can be heard in two different popular songs; remember Holly's mention of the phrase resonating with her "ever since she first heard the song on the radio" (131). The phrase is in the song "Eleanor Rigby" by the Beatles which is a very depressing song about people who have no one in their lives and do not seem to belong anywhere. It fits the novel because Brady is trying to single out lonely people, magnify their loneliness, and make them end their lives. The phrase is also found in the song "Lonely People" recorded by America. Compared to "Eleanor Rigby," this song is much more upbeat. It suggests that even lonely people have a place in the world and they should not give up on life.

Discussion Question 1

As Brady discusses suicide with Barbara he tells he she will be making a statement if she kills herself in the poor, predominately black area of town. What statement do you think this death would make?



Discussion Question 2

The phrase “All the lonely people” is found in two songs. To which song do you think the author refers when he uses it in the book? How does the meaning of the phrase change based on the context of the song in which it is used?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Hodges lies and does not tell Holly that he has been diagnosed with cancer?

Vocabulary

credible, moue, filched, resonated, bequests, demure, glassine, sadistic, cunt, divert, lout, indulgent, sated, marooned, rapport, malevolently, brandished, laceration



Blackish — 14-27

Summary

In Section 14, Barbara is conscious when Hodges meets the ambulance. When he asks her if she knew the boy who pushed her in front of the truck she becomes hysterical and tells Hodges that was not what happened. She says that he pushed her out of the way, probably saving her life. Even though she had wanted to kill herself at one point she does not understand why now. Hodges calls a friend of his at the police department and tells her that the boy being held for hurting Barbara did nothing wrong but that he wants the boy held so he can talk to him.

In Section 15, Holly is standing in front of the 7-Eleven holding a pack of cigarettes when Hodges calls. She tells him what she found on his computer and begs him to allow the doctors to treat him. He tells her that he will get treatment but that he needs a few days before he checks into the hospital. When he tells her that he needs her to come pick him up, she decides that one of the greatest feelings is that of being needed. She throws the cigarettes away unopened.

In Section 16, Hodges tells Holly what he learned at the bucket. They both believe Scapelli's suicide had something to do with Brady. As they drive, Holly tells him she will give him two days to investigate Brady before he goes for treatments. She also tells him she has called Jerome and that he will be back to help, just like in old days.

In Section 17, Hodges and Holly stop at the Strike Avenue station where Hodges talks to Dereece Neville.

In Section 18, Dereece admits that what happened to Barbara was partially his fault because he was picking on her. He tells Hodges he suspects she was on some type of drug as well. He explains she was in a daze and about to walk out into traffic before he started talking to her. After he took her game she was mad, but also seemed scared, like she had just realized where she was. He told Hodges the game console she had with her was old school, bright yellow with fish swimming around on the screen.

In Section 19, Hodges believes Barbara's strange behavior is somehow connected to what happened to Janice and Martine. Holly believes they could save time if they could sit down and talk the case out with Jerome right then. She continues to insist that Hodges only has limited time to work on the case. She tells him that if Brady is as alert as Hodges thinks he is, Brady would be happy to learn that Hodges delayed cancer treatments and died because of him.

In Section 20, as Hodges listens to the radio he does not pay attention to a warning about a coming snow storm because he is busy remembering the first time he ever saw a Zappit. It was when Library AI was handing them out at the hospital. At the bar, Norma is sitting near the back of the room. She tells Hodges she thinks Dr. Babineau had been



experimenting on Brady. She adds that Brady does not have a list of allowed visitors. If there was one it would be one set up by Babineau. She agrees to continue to look for such a list and then changes the subject by telling Hodges that Brady can move things without touching them. He scares the nurses.

In Section 21 as the elevator doors open on Barbara's floor at the hospital, Holly is face to face with Barbara's parents. They are surprised because they were about to call Holly. Barbara will not talk to them about what happened but will talk to Holly because she thinks Holly might understand her.

In Section 22, Holly bumps into Library AI on her way to Barbara's room. She does not notice he looks back at her. Once they begin talking, Barbara asks Holly if she ever tried to kill herself. Barbara tells Holly she went to Lowtown with the intention of killing herself and that her friend with the fish in the game had suggested that she do so. Even though Barbara refers to the man as her friend, she realizes that if he had really been her friend he would not have wanted her to kill herself.

In Section 23, Library AI walks into Brady's room where he becomes Z-Boy. Z-Boy looks at his own Zappit. He and Brady seem to communicate through the game consoles. Brady's body goes loose and Z-Boy straightens. Library AI takes a phone out of his pocket and makes a call to a person with the initials F.L. He tells the person on the other end of the line that they are ready to move on with their work. When Library AI walks out of Brady's room, he walks like a younger person.

In Section 24, Barbara explains to Holly how the voice coming from the game console made her feel ashamed of living in a nice section of town while other blacks lived in poverty. Although the voice is gone, she describes "a trail of slime inside my head" (183) that it left behind. Barbara tells Holly she fears the voice that convinced her she was worthless will not ever go completely away. In order to make it go away, Holly tells Barbara she has to choke the voice until it is gone.

As for the game console, Barbara tells Holly that the truck ran over it. She hums the tune it played and describes the pink number fish. Barbara explained she had been given the game by Myron Zakim, a man she met in the mall. He worked for Sunrise Solutions and said Barbara and Hilda could each have one if they filled out a questionnaire and sent it back. Hilda's Zappit did not work but Barbara's did. She described the man who gave them the games as being an old white man with white hair wearing an expensive suit. As Holly is buttoning her coat to leave, Barbara tells her that Dinah also has a Zappit but she had ordered it off a website.

In Section 25, Holly calls Hodges and tells him he needs to go see Dinah. She explains the girl has a Zappit and that Holly believes the consoles are dangerous.

In Section 26, two orderlies put Brady to bed while a nurse supervises. One of the orderlies, Norm, stares at the fish swimming on the screen of Brady's Zappit until the nurse takes it away from him.



In Section 27, Library Al, as Z-Boy, goes to Dr. Babineau's home in Sugar Heights. He has a .32-caliber revolver and a homemade silencer with him.

Analysis

Brady's plans seem to be moving along more quickly than Holly and Hodges are putting together information. Hodges and Holly are realizing that the Zappits are dangerous and somehow involved in the suicides. They do not realize the extent to which these Zappits are being used to help Brady carry out his plans.

Despite his physical limitations, it appears that Brady has found a way to leave his hospital room without anyone realizing he is gone. His habit of pretending he is still semi-catatonic helps him be able to leave his room. It appears Brady is using Library Al as a vehicle in which his mind can ride around. Notice that after Brady and Al seem to communicate through their Zappits, Brady leaves his own body: "Brady's hands loosen and let go of the game console" (179) and his body becomes only a living shell. At the same time Library Al's stance changes and he walks "with a spring in his step, like a much younger man" (180), an indication that the younger Brady is in control of Al's body.

The conversation between Holly and Barbara about suicide speaks to the sanctity of human life. Because Holly has suffered emotional instability all of her life, Barbara believes Holly might understand her earlier attempt to commit suicide better than her parents. Holly shares her experiences with Barbara. During her life she has tried to commit suicide twice but admits that even when she was in the middle of an attempt she still fought with the desire to live. She explains that in her second try, "I took stronger pills, but still not enough to do the job and part of me knew that. I was very unstable back then, but I wasn't stupid, and the part that wasn't stupid wanted to live" (178). Holly also reasons that suicide is insane, regardless of the reason. "The reasons never matter, because suicide goes against every human instinct, and that makes it insane" (178). Barbara tells Holly that even though she realizes after the fact how disturbed her thinking was when she thought she wanted to die, she still feels a residue left over in her mind of thoughts her "friend" fed into her. Her fear is that the voice that was able to convince her to attempt suicide will never go away.

Also bending the rules that indicate all human life is sacred is the way Brady is treated by his doctors and nurses. When she talks to Hodges, for instance, Norma tells him that Babineau is experimenting on Brady. Her attitude is dismissive as she says "But he (Babineau) wouldn't be the first doc to experiment on someone the world doesn't give shit one about" (171). Also treating Brady badly, perhaps denying him treatment, are the orderlies and nurses who put him to bed after Brady has inhabited Library Al's body. Even though it appears that Brady's oxygen level is low, the nurse leaves without checking his blood pressure or oxygen levels. In fact, she even curses Brady before leaving. Even though Brady has done terrible things and continues to torment the nurses, the reader must ask himself if this treatment is justified.



Even while Holly tries to help Barbara fight the voice inside her, Holly struggles with her own emotional instability brought on by Hodges' cancer diagnosis. She is unsure what will happen to her if Hodges dies. "Bill Hodges is her touchstone, the way she measures her ability to interact with the world. Which is only another way of saying that he is the way she measures her sanity" (159). The pack of cigarettes that Holly buys when she learns that Hodges is sick is representative of her inability to keep herself stable. Before she had met Hodges she was a smoker. It was one of the ways she quieted her nerves. Since she has been working with Hodges she has been trying hard to give up the habit of smoking and has made good progress. Her act of buying a pack of cigarettes shows how deeply the news of Hodges' illness has upset her. By throwing the pack away unopened, Holly indicates she is strong enough to try to handle the stress without turning to her crutch.

Notice in this section King begins to work in mentions of a coming snowstorm. For instance, as Hodges is thinking about the case he does not hear the weatherman on the radio mention "a big storm moving east out of the Rockies" (170). This storm, along with Hodges' and Holly's investigation, will soon brew into something threatening.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Holly's statement to Barbara that suicide is insane because it goes against human instinct. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think the Zappit is dangerous? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the relationship between Holly and Hodges as it is presented in this section of the novel. Why does Holly insist that Hodges only has a certain amount of time to investigate Brady before he goes to the hospital for treatment?

Vocabulary

surmised, conspiracy, acquiescence, anarchy, corroborate, levity, collateral, brigade, retrospective, lavatory, apparition, vivacity, imperceptible, indignant



Blackish — Library AI

Summary

Brady understood rather quickly that his body was no longer good for much of anything. He continued to experiment with Sadie MacDonald. The next time he caught her in a seizure, he took control of her brain entirely. He dug into her thoughts and found out that her father had sexually molested her. He had been sent to jail for the molestation, but got out on bail. He had killed himself while out of jail. Brady began to feed thoughts into Sadie's mind that it was her fault her father was dead. He noticed she began to lose weight and was not as particular about her appearance as she had been at one time.

It was Library AI who had discovered the Zappits on a shelf in the hospital library. He had taken one for himself and enjoyed most the demo screen for the Fishin' Hole game. The tune and swimming fish calmed him down. AI decided to give Brady one of the Zappits, believing he might like it as well. He first showed Brady the console after Brady had a visit from Hodges. AI knew these visits from Hodges upset Brady. AI had watched the game for just a moment and had then found himself on the other side of the hospital. He did not remember having shown Brady the console. He felt like his thoughts were scattered but was otherwise happy. He had also drawn a "Z" on the back of his left hand. He thought it was for Z-Boy.

The novel returns to the moment when AI turned on and looked at the game console. This time the story is told from Brady's point of view instead of AI's. Brady had not made a decision to try to infiltrate AI's brain; he had just suddenly been there. Brady walked AI's body to the men's room where he examined the Zappit. He realized the game brought on a hypnotic effect. Back in his room, Brady left AI. When he tried to return his to AI, Brady discovered that AI's mind was still open to him, but there seemed to be less of AI's core self there.

Brady had hoped to be able to get into Hodges' mind through the Zappit but had been unable on his first try. Hodges had just glanced at the Zappit that AI had shown him and handed it back. Brady also tried to get into a therapist's mind by having AI show her the game but she was resistant to him, even though she watched the game longer than Hodges had. Brady realized it was because AI had already accustomed himself to the game that Brady was able to get into him so easily.

Using his past computer knowledge, Brady decided to try to embed a message into a strobe flash that he could load onto each Zappit. Brady was not sure how his plan could be carried out especially since he could not use a computer. Even though he has use of AI's body, the man was getting more and more forgetful and peculiar the more Brady used him. It was as if he were running out of brain cells.

Because he could not find any way to do the computer work needed to make his plan work, Brady was in a funk until he had a visitor one day. It was Freddi Linklatter, a



homosexual girl with whom he had worked with on Discount Electronix's Cyber Patrol. He believed her appearance opened up new possibilities for him.

Analysis

In keeping with the Fishin' Hole game, the author uses an analogy of fish when he describes how Al manipulated Sadie and her mind. "Mostly to amuse himself, Brady began to release his own fish into the aquarium of Sadie MacDonald's mind: tiny poisonous blowfish that were little more than exaggerations of thoughts she herself harbored in the twilight area that exists between the conscious mind and the subconscious" (194). Sadie's mind is described as an aquarium with fish, or thoughts, swimming around in it. The fish, thoughts that Brady embeds in Sadie's mind, are the lethal kind which are described as "poisonous blowfish." Remember that Sadie is the nurse who killed herself. Holly and Hodges are correct in their assumption that Brady was responsible.

One of the things about Brady that makes him so dangerous is his intelligence. Even though he was not able to do anything the carry out the plan he had in mind he still used his time to think through what he wanted to do. Even though he appears only semi-conscious, Brady's mind is actively planning how to best manipulate the minds of others. For instance, he remembered from a computer programming class "how computers could be programmed to transmit messages so rapidly that the brain recognized them not as messages per se, but as original thoughts" (202). It is through the Zappits that he hopes to send these messages to those whom he wants to kill themselves.

So far, Library Al is the only person who seems to see any value in Brady's life. While this makes him a more accepting person who treats Brady in a more humane way than the other staff members, it also leaves him open to abuse by Brady. "Al knew Hartsfield was a bad guy who had murdered innocent people, but what the hell did that matter when the man who had done those things no longer existed?" (196-197). Al is attempting to be kind to Brady when Brady takes over Al.

When King describes the first time that Brady took over Al's body he describes it both from Al's point of view and Brady's point of view. Al and Brady are both surprised by the encounter they have with one another. Brady is happy he is able to get into the old man's body so quickly. He remains conscious the entire time. Al, however, remembers nothing of the experience with the exception of a happy feeling. He also notices the letter "Z" is written on the back of his hand. He assumes it is for his new nickname Z-Boy. Brady, meanwhile, reasons that Al's mind must have been easier to invade because he was already familiar with the Fishin' Hole game and had watched it quite a bit in order to calm himself.



Discussion Question 1

What was Library AI's intention when he gave Brady the Zappit? What were the unintended consequences?

Discussion Question 2

Consider Brady's intention to use messages sent through computers to manipulate other peoples' minds. Do you think it is really possible to mold a person's thoughts based on subliminal messages?

Discussion Question 3

Why was Library AI more susceptible to the hypnotic aspect of the Fishin' Hole game? Why is it so easy for Brady to get into and out of AI's mind?

Vocabulary

decreed, exhort, manifestations, interloper, deluged, fugue, instantaneous, senility, malice



badconcert.com — 1-6

Summary

In Section 1, Cora Babineau is in the middle of her treadmill workout when the old man in the parka mended with masking tape rings the doorbell. Because her husband does not answer the door, Cora goes herself. She asks the man who he is and what is in the jar he is carrying. The man, who identifies himself as Brady, tells her it is the end to all of her troubles and shoots her. She falls and breaks a vase. The noise alerts Babineau who comes running. Brady stomps on Cora's throat.

Babineau stoops to his wife but Brady stops him. Because Barbara is not dead they have to change plans. Brady tells Babineau to look at his fish. Babineau tries to refuse but Brady warns Babineau that he will appear guilty for his wife's death. He also warns him that Barbara will recognize him as the man who gave her the Zappit. When Babineau accuses Brady of being a monster, Brady reminds Babineau that he created him.

Brady tells Babineau they are going to visit Freddi. Babineau tries again to resist but Brady holds him at gunpoint. He orders Babineau to look at the fish. Even though he does not want to, Babineau follows orders. After several minutes Babineau gets dressed and gets money out of the safe and medicine out of his medicine cabinet. He leaves Library Al sleeping on the couch.

In Section 2, Hodges is talking to Dinah and her parents at the same time Cora is being shot. Dinah brings her Zappit down as soon as she is asked about it. Hodges lies and tells them that Barbara got an electric shock from her game. Dinah tells him she got the Zappit from the website badconcert.com. She learned that the company was giving away the game consoles to people who had attended the 'Round Here concert interrupted by Brady's attempt to detonate a bomb. The console had come from Sunrise Solutions in New York but had a local post mark. She added she only looked at the Fishin' Hole game to see if the pink fish were showing numbers so she could win a prize.

Even though he is hurting badly when he gets in his car, Hodges is determined to wait out the two days Holly has allowed him to keep investigating. He does not like what is coming together in his mind. He wants to get Holly to find who sponsored the 'Round Here concert. Because he is so curious about the Zappit, he stops before he even gets home to examine it. Brady turns on the Fishin' Hole demo and watches the fish. He feels himself getting woozy and slaps his cheeks. A pink fish appears and he tries to tap it but misses. He gets the next one. The game does have a hypnotic effect on him. When he turns it off, he is surprised to see that ten minutes has passed.

In Section 3, Freddi waits for Dr. Babineau, whom she knows as Dr. Z , to come. She is spinning a flask while she thinks how Babineau reminds her of Brady. She wishes she



had refused when Babineau first offered her work. At the time the money was a Godsend because she had lost her job when Discount Electronix closed. Dr. Z had even arranged for her to be given a bigger apartment where she could accept shipments.

The intercom buzzes. It is Dr. Z. While Freddi waits for him to come up, she remembers how the mess she is in started. She took Brady the picture of him and his mother that she had found in the junk room of the store. She had kept going back to see Brady because the head nurse said it was unusual for Brady to try to smile at anyone who came to see him. She tried not to think about what was happening with the boxes that arrived at her apartment or why the hacks she was being asked to perform were needed. She also tried not to think about who was asking her to do the hacks. When she opened the door, however, she asked the man standing there if he were Brady.

In Section 4, Holly calls Hodges to check on him. She tells him that Jerome should get into town before the storm comes, which is supposed to be bad. He will meet with them the following morning. As Holly talks about the Zappit and tries to put together what he learned from Dinah with what they already knew, Hodges comes to believe that the number fish are only on the Zappits handed out by the man with the briefcase. He thinks the man who is playing the games has a morbid interest in suicide, just like Brady; he just cannot figure how Brady might be controlling the operation since he is supposedly still brain dead. Hodges asks Holly to find out about the sponsor for the 'Round Here concert. She calls back almost immediately. It was not sponsored by Sunrise Solutions.

In Section 5, even when the man tells Freddi that Brady is in a semi-catatonic state at the hospital and that she should not worry about who he is, Freddi recognizes Brady's speech patterns in the old man. She also recognizes Brady's handwriting when she sees her initials on the envelope he hands her. She leads him into her workstation where she connects her computer to a repeater. The repeater shows the word "searching" in yellow dots. After several minutes the word changes to "found" in green. Dr. Z gets excited. The repeater switches to "loading" and then begins to search again.

Freddi has already decided that once Dr. Z is gone she will unhook the repeater and delete the program. Then she plans to run away to some place where she cannot be found. As he leaves, Dr. Z comments that her view, although bad, is better than his view of a parking garage. She is suddenly angry and asks him to get out of her apartment. He turns to her with a gun which she imagines kicking out of his hands. Instead she does not move as he shoots her. She falls backward and the world goes black.

In Section 6, after he gets back in Babineau's car after shooting Freddi, Brady destroys what is left of Babineau's core consciousness leaving the doctor with no ability to refuse Brady's commands or take back control from him.

Analysis

Brady's treatment of Dr. Babineau is an example of poetic justice. Just like Dr. Babineau used Brady's body without his consent, Brady uses Babineau's body. Babineau feels the



frustration of being used and accuses Brady of being a monster. “Don’t confuse the monster with the creator,” (213) Brady tells Babineau. Brady shifts the responsibility for his own actions to Babineau. Even though Brady believes he was responsible for his own mental regeneration and that Babineau’s shots had nothing to do with his recovery, he still uses Babineau’s actions against him.

Notice continued references to Hodges stomach pain as King continues to remind the reader that Hodges is dealing with his own health issues even as he tries to solve the crime in front of him. He takes painkillers before he sees Dinah but still is uncomfortable during their discussion. In fact, the narrative about how Dinah got her Zappit is interrupted with a portion of a chapter dedicated to Hodges’ thoughts about the research he has done earlier in the day about the survival rate for pancreatic cancer. The conversation continues to be interrupted as Hodges tries not to let on how badly he is hurting.

Dinah and the way she got her Zappit demonstrate some basic facts about teens. First, they do not always think their actions all the way through. Second, they are bombarded with an immense amount of information through social media. When Dinah’s parents point out to her the discrepancies in the Tweet she received about getting a free Zappit, Dinah acknowledges the offer was fishy. She also admits she had never thought that it was unusual that she would be offered a consolation gift six years after the canceled concert. Dinah also tells Hodges she learned about the Zappit give-a-way through social media. “There was a tweet, okay? Someone at school told me about it. It got picked up on lots of social media sites. Facebook . . . Pinterest . . . Google Plus . . . you know the ones I’m talking about” (217). This tweet reached not only Dinah but also many other kids who attended the ‘Round Here concert. The tweet directed them to a website from which they could sign up for their free game console.

Dinah’s tech savvy is contrasted with Hodges’ inability to work even the simplest devices. “So far I haven’t even managed to re-program my iPhone’s text message alert so it doesn’t scare innocent bystanders” (217), Hodges tells Dinah when she tries to explain to him what a tweet is. Notice that she offers to reprogram his text message alert but that Hodges wants to talk about the Zappit first; the reprogramming of the iPhone is not mentioned again.

As Brady uses Babineau’s body for his own purposes, that man becomes a muted shell of himself. Brady has already noticed that he appears to be burning through Library Al’s brain cells quickly, leaving the man unfocused and forgetful. Now that he is depending on Babineau more and more, Babineau’s brain is similarly degrading. For instance when they go to visit Freddi, Babineau cannot bring to mind the word for a homosexual. “There’s a word for that, Babineau used to know it, but now it’s gone. Like the name that goes with it. Or what he ate for dinner. Each time Brady comes into his head, he takes a little more when he leaves. Babineau’s memory. His knowledge. His self” (213). Brady actually regrets what he is doing to Babineau’s mind. He compares his act of trashing it to terrorists destroying artifacts in the Mosul Museum: “Destroying that mind is too much like those dumb and superstitious ISIS fucks hammering irreplaceable treasures of art



and culture to rubble” (240). Even though Brady compares himself to a member of ISIS for what he is doing to Babineau’s brain, he continues to destroy his doctor.

Freddi picks the perfect analogy when she compares Brady and his sidekicks to a set of Russian nesting dolls. She knows that Dr. Z and Dr. Babineau are the same person. Her suspicion is that somehow Brady has infiltrated his doctor because there are so many connections she is making between the two. The doctor and Brady have the same handwriting. They write computer code the same way. The doctor uses the same sayings that Brady used when he was frustrated. When Freddi gets the repeater online she knows for sure the person with whom she is dealing is Brady. “Her final doubts are swept away and she knows for sure. All it takes is that shout of triumph. It’s Brady, all right. He’s become a living Russian nesting doll, which goes perfectly with his furry Russian hat” (238). She believes Brady is at the core of Dr. Z and Dr. Babineau even though she is not exactly sure how it is possible.

A couple more things to notice in this section include the way that King turns the tables on his reader in the scene in which Dr. Z shoots Freddi. The narration indicates that Freddi reacts to seeing the gun and is able to escape. Because Freddi is such a smart mouth and prides herself in her tough girl persona it is not impossible to think things might have happened this way. Just as the reader is about to think Freddi has escaped King lets his reader know that Freddi thinking about what she should have done while she was “rooted to the spot” (239). Notice also a second reference to the coming storm. Holly tells Hodges Jerome will get into town before the coming storm hits. An object that will become important, the zeetheend website is also introduced in this section of the novel.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Brady intended to kill Freddi all along or was this a rash decision? Give reasons to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

How does Brady’s use of Babineau change that man’s brain and personality? How is Freddi right in describing Babineau as a Russian nesting doll?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think that the repeater in Freddi’s apartment is doing? Why do you think she plans to turn it off after Dr. Z. leaves?

Vocabulary

oblivion, incipient, arrogance, divot, incredulous, petulant, psychosomatic, angular, irrefutable, trilby



badconcert.com — 7-14

Summary

In Section 7, Pete calls Hodges later that evening. He tells Hodges that Scapelli also had a Zappit. Even though Pete brought up the coincidences to both the captain and the commissioner, he was told to drop the investigation. Hodges considers the decision he faces. He can either tell Pete that Barbara also had a Zappit when she tried to commit suicide and know that Pete will have to take the case back to the captain or keep the information to himself. Before Hodges comes to a decision, Pete tells Hodges he also talked to Nancy Alderson and learned that Janice had already bought her daughter a new computer—a sign she was not thinking about committing suicide. Before he hangs up the phone, Pete tells Hodges the ball is in his court.

In Section 8, Brady parks Babineau's car in the employee lot at the hospital and lets his mind work through Babineau's memories. A childhood memory of Babineau's father slapping him wakes Brady.

In Section 9, Brady, in Babineau's body, goes into the hospital and puts on the clothes of a maintenance worker. He takes a laundry cart and heads for the brain injury clinic. Inside his room Brady, using Babineau's body, puts a half dozen pills in his hand. Brady enters his own body one last time to make himself take the pills. Before that body dies, Brady returns to Babineau's body.

In Section 10, on the way back to Babineau's house Brady stops at an empty parking lot and shoots the revolver through the windshield of the Babineau's car. At Babineau's house he uses a laminated card to break his skin and drop some blood on the steering wheel. Inside the house, he wakes Al and tells the man that he killed his wife. Al denies it. Brady, as Babineau, tells Al it is okay because he was hypnotized. He tells Al to put the gun in his pocket and give him his car keys. Al does as he is asked. In Babineau's office, Brady connects Babineau's computer to the repeater at Freddi's apartment. He takes the laptop with him. Before he leaves he gives Al a marker and tells him to leave his mark on the crime scene. Wearing Babineau's body, Brady walks out the front door and drives off in Al's car. He believes that he is finally free.

In Section 11, Freddi wakes to a crashing headache and sore chest. She smells scotch and at first thinks she was drinking but then remembers her visit by Dr. Z. She tries to stand up but cannot. Something is sticking her in the chest keeping her from being able to breathe. Remembering that Dr. Z shot her, she makes her way to the bathroom and pulls her pack of cigarettes out of her pocket. There is a hole through them. The bullet also went through her flask and tin of mints. She can see the bullet protruding from her breast and pulls it out. Freddi considers turning off the repeater but realizes if she does so, Brady will know she is not dead.



In Section 12, Hodges is dreaming of a dog he had as a child when he is woken by the phone ringing. Pete is calling to tell him that Brady is dead. The doctors think he committed suicide. Because Brady is dead, Pete believes it means he had nothing to do with the deaths of Scapelli, Janice, or Martine. Hodges calls Holly and gives her the news. He is not sure, however, that Brady committed suicide and also does not believe that things are finished. He asks Holly if she can be at the hospital before Barbara goes home. He wants to show her pictures of six men, including Babineau, to see if Barbara recognizes any of them.

In Section 13, Hodges sits in his quiet office and tries to think about the connections between the Zappits, Brady, and the concert but he struggles to put the pieces together. He calls Todd Schneider who handled the Sunrise Solutions bankruptcy. The man knows nothing about a Zappit Club, Sunrise Readers Club or website zeetheend.com. He does learn that the last production of Zappits was about 30 percent defective, probably a cause of the company's bankruptcy. Before the game consoles could be destroyed a man called from Gamez Unlimited, located in the same city where Hodges lives, wanting to purchase 800 of the consoles. The man claiming to be the CEO of the Gamez Unlimited is Myron Zakim.

In Section 14, Hodges checks out the zeetheend site and learns it is still under construction. Norma returns his call. She mentions to Hodges the only person who visited Brady besides Hodges was a "ratty chick with tattoos and a Marine haircut" (272). Norma also thought it was unlikely that Brady had committed suicide since he took nothing stronger than over the counter pain relievers. Even if he had swallowed enough of the pills to kill himself she does not know where he would have hidden them.

Analysis

Although it appears Brady has killed his body through suicide, it is unrealistic for several reasons. As Norma tells Hodges, "It's also possible I could land a 767 jumbo jet if the whole flight crew died of food poisoning, but both things are very fucking unlikely" (272). As a nurse on the wing of the hospital where Brady lives, Norma knows that Brady does not get medicine strong enough to use to kill himself. Even if he did have enough of the medicine he had on file stockpiled in his room, she believes someone would have found the stockpile. Brady and Holly also have their doubts not only about Brady killing himself by suicide but about him being really dead. They do not voice their concerns but it is clear both of them are wondering the same thing. At this point, of course, the reader knows that Brady is not really dead. His body is dead but his core self is not.

King seems to be giving the reader so much information about Brady that is still unknown to Hodges and Holly because he wants to bulk of the story to be about how they solve the crime instead of being about allowing the reader to solve the crime himself along with Hodges and Holly.

Notice that as Hodges tries to convince himself that Brady is dead he returns to the imagery of the spider. The spider lying in wait for innocent victims to get caught in his



web. “Hodges is again picturing a web with a big old spider at the center of it, one full of poison. Only the spider is dead” (263). Hodges imagines this spider, Brady, has spun this elaborate web that Hodges cannot yet completely visualize because he has not put together all the clues. The idea is that this spider, still full of poison, killed himself before he began to catch his victims as planned.

Hodges learns from Pete that even though there are similarities between the deaths of Janice, Martine, and Scapelli, the police department is not interested in investigating. A Zappit was found at the locations of both suicides. A “Z” was also found at the site of both suicides. Pete suggests to Hodges that he knows there is something amiss with the similarities between the two cases, but he tells Hodges the ball is in his court, meaning that Hodges can choose to investigate or not.

Meanwhile King continues to feed the reader bits of information to help him understand past deaths, in particular the deaths of Janice and Martine. From the conversation between Z-Boy and Brady in Section 10, the reader learns that Z-Boy was posted as a lookout to see when Janice and Martine killed themselves. He was sent into the house after the suicides were finished to get the Zappit and make the “Z” mark on the counter.

Notice Brady’s fascination with “Z’s” in the reality he has set up for himself. Brady may choose “Z” as his defining letter because it is the last letter of the alphabet. When the letter is found in the bathroom of Janice and Martine, Holly suggests its connection to the fictional character Zorro. While Zorro did leave his mark, a “Z,” and was considered an outlaw, he fought for the rights of the people. In the context of this book, Brady and his other Z-Men are trying to get people to kill themselves. They do not fight in favor of the people or those in authority but instead, Brady’s own warped cause. Many of the clues Hodges had collected up to this point include a word with the letter “Z.” The Zappits are central to Brady’s plan. These Zappits were ordered for a company called Gamez Unlimited by the CEO who is named Myron Zakim. “Z’s” have been found written at the death scenes of Janice and Martine, and Scapelli, and will later be discovered at the house where Babineau’s wife was killed. The website referenced in the letter that Dinah got with her Zappit is called zeetheend.

Notice Brady’s pleasure that his Zappits are being located and are loading information, even early in the morning. He seems particularly pleased that people are using their Zappits at that hour. As he says: “Four in the morning is usually an unhappy time to be awake. It’s when unpleasant thoughts and pessimistic ideas come to the fore, and the demo screen is soothing. It’s also addictive” (253).

Discussion Question 1

What does the reader learn about Library AI and his role in Brady’s plan up to this point? Why do you think Brady stresses to AI that Cora’s death was not his fault since he was hypnotized?



Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Brady chooses the letter “Z” as his signature? Give reasons to support your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the reasons why the police chief and commissioner might not want to investigate the deaths involving the Zappit even though there are several similarities. Why does Brady choose not to tell Pete Barbara had a Zappit and had almost committed suicide?

Vocabulary

banter, pilgrimages, irrevocable, malware, pervasive, potent, kaput, implements, credenza, pessimistic, filigree, incipient, phalanges, perchance, excruciating, jovial, gild, profanity, coherent, defunct, bemused, iteration, recoupment, contradicts



badconcert.com — 15-21

Summary

In Section 15, after an emotional reunion with Jerome, Hodges learns that Barbara did pick Babineau out of the group of six pictures. He was the one who gave her the Zappit. Jerome mentions to Hodges that Barbara had been talking about a voice coming from the game console. Hodges tells Jerome to get Dinah's console out of his coat and try it himself. While Jerome looks at the game, Hodges says he believes Babineau, along with another man, is involved in whatever Brady has planned with the Zappits. Hodges believes Brady somehow found some way to amp up the hypnotic effect of the Fishin' Hole game. They all agree that if Brady is involved in the suicides it is strange that he killed himself before he knew how many people killed themselves because of him. Meanwhile, Holly discovers that there is a whole website dedicated to the hypnotic effect of the Fishin' Hole game. Jerome turns on Dinah's Zappit. At Freddi's apartment, the number on the repeater clicks from 44 to 45 successful loadings of its program.

In Section 16, Hodges answers the phone and is surprised when Pete greets him with a strange message telling him to "Take it, Kerm. Take it and beat it until the truth falls out" (280). Hodges finally learns that Pete is at Babineau's house where he says Izzy called the chief behind his back. The chief involved the State Criminal Investigation Detectives. Pete fears they believe they have the man who committed the crime but things are not adding up for Pete.

Hodges finally gets Pete to tell him that the Babineau's housekeeper arrived to find Babineau's car with a bullet hole in the windshield and blood inside. She called the police. The police found Cora Babineau dead inside. The letter "Z" was written on her forehead and in multiple locations in the house. Library Al Brooks was upstairs asleep. Hodges inserts that he first saw a Zappit while talking to Al.

Pete returns to his story saying that Al told them he killed Cora while he was hypnotized by the fish. It was also Al who had drawn all the "Z's." He told Pete that Dr. Z had told him to make these marks. When Pete asked who Dr. Z was, Al said it was Brady. Izzy, meanwhile, would not talk to Pete about all the "Z's" they could see around the crime scene. Pete also tells Hodges that the swab the doctor on call took of the residue in Brady's mouth was found to be Vicodin and Ambien, neither of which was prescribed to Brady. Pete tried to ask Al if he had killed Brady but Izzy had ordered Al not to answer the question.

Pete figures the state crime people will blame everything on Al. Anything that does not fit will be chalked up to Al being crazy. Pete tells Hodges he knows there is more to the story than what will come out in the press. Before he gets off the phone he begs Hodges to find out what is really going on. Hodges turns to talk to Holly but she is no longer by his side. She calls him into the room where Jerome is. Jerome is staring at the Zappit. His eyes are vacant and fixed. His mouth hangs open. Hodges thinks the



console is playing a different song than the one he heard. Holly warns Hodges not to startle Jerome. She begins talking to him. He tells her he is at his own funeral.

In Section 17, the narrator relates that when Brady read about the mass suicides in Jonestown, Guyana when he was only twelve, he became fascinated with suicide. He was amazed by the way Jim Jones was able to manipulate the people into killing themselves by first making them paranoid and then glamorizing death. Brady wants to be a modern day Jim Jones.

In Section 18, Brady stops at a rest stop and checks Babineau's computer. He is happy to see that the website zeetheend has gone active. He believes the website will encourage the fad of suicide started by the Zappits. He uses his own Zappit to settle in on one of the teens to whom a free Zappit had been given. He begins to exert his control over the girl playing with the Zappit, a girl named Ellen. He learns she is worried about the SAT and builds on her worry that she will not do well on math. Once he has her scared and paranoid, Brady suggests to her that she jump out her bedroom window and end it all. He has her post her intentions on Facebook and Twitter beforehand. She jumps, but because of a soft snow bank she only breaks several bones. Brady is angered.

In Section 19, Ellen wonders what she was thinking as she tries to walk back into her house. She still senses the voice inside her.

In Section 20, Holly tells Jerome to turn off the game. Just from looking at it for a moment Hodges has become relaxed. He is disappointed when Jerome does as Holly says. When Holly counts backwards from ten and wakes Jerome he looks surprised and asks what happened. Hodges explains. He also tells both Jerome and Holly that when he looked at the game the night before, there were no blue flashes and the pink fish did not turn into numbers. He also pointed out that the tune was different. Holly and Hodges take this for proof that the Fishin' Hole demo has in some way been changed by someone. Hodges believes Brady is responsible. The three of them go through the information they have collected so far.

Meanwhile, Holly checks her computer and discovers that the zeetheend site is now active. It encourages visitors to kill themselves. Holly and Jerome try to explain to Hodges how vulnerable teens are to the suggestion of suicide and how likely it is an epidemic will start just by the website and info on social media. They decide to call Pete to find out if the repeater controlling the Zappits is at Babineau's house. If it is, they can begin to control the damage by having it turned off. Pete is upset because he has learned Izzy is interested in power, not good police work. He tells Hodges he will help in any way he can but that Babineau's laptop is not there. There is no other computer equipment with the exception of an iPad with a dead battery.

In Section 21, Brady tries to reassure himself after his bad luck with Ellen.



Analysis

Section 17 is a pivotal section in the novel. Although the reader knew Brady wanted to push people to suicide, it is not until this section that it is indicated what a large scale Brady wanted to work on. His new goal is to be a modern day Jim Jones. Instead of poisoned Kool-Aid, Brady plans to use the power of the Internet to bring about a rash of suicides. Notice what Brady seems to like most is the idea of control. He likes the way that Jones got people to do something that went against human nature by finding a way to invade their thoughts and control their minds. The particular emphasis on the idea that nurses, people trained to save lives, had been mind washed by Jones to give infants doses of medicine that would kill them demonstrates the kind of control Brady wants to have over other people.

Brady uses the metaphor of a forest fire to describe what he hopes to bring about. The Zappits are matches that will spark the flame. Those who believe they can win prizes using their Zappits will visit his zeetheend site. He believes this site will act as both a “backstop and accelerant” (291) for the fire started by the matches. He is focusing on the young people who attended the 'Round Here concert who were preteens at the time and are now teenagers or young adults. His plan relies on their habits of going with the crowd to spread his suicide bug. “He thinks (and not for the first time) that a touch of telekinesis is nothing compared to the power of the Internet. He’s sure thousands of suicides have incubated in the potent soup of its social media sites, where the trolls run free and the bullying goes on endlessly” (289).

Another telling tidbit that can be drawn from Section 17 about Brady is the way he manipulates even the quotes he used in the paper he wrote about suicide to manipulate the information. He chooses a quote by the psychiatrist Raymond Katz but includes only half of that man’s thought. He uses the quote in which Katz states that “Every human being is born with the suicide gene” (288). The part that Brady chooses not to include is the last half of this statement that indicates “In most of us, it remains dormant” (288-289). This manipulation of the quote by Brady is significant because it makes it appear that humans are more suicidal than they actually are. Even though all of us may have that self-destruct button hardwired into us, most people never even consider suicide unless something happens to activate that gene. In Brady’s case, he wants to be the thing that activates that gene.

Even while King describes what has motivated Brady to become obsessed with suicide, he also gives statistics about the problem of suicide. He tells his reader how serious a problem suicide is: it is the tenth leading cause of death, and of the different ways people choose to end their lives, guns and pills are the top two choices. King add the information that if one took into account deaths deemed unknown or accidental that were actually suicide, this form of death would rank “right up there with heart disease, cancer, and car crashes” (288).

The tone of the novel becomes more desperate and intense as even Hodges and Jerome realize how strong the hold of the Zappits can be. Even though Hodges,



Jerome, and Holly are not aware of what has happened, the reader knows that Dinah's Zappit has downloaded the upgrade when Jerome turned it on. Holly finds Jerome in a trance staring at the game console. He says he is imagining he is at his own funeral. Even as Holly works to calmly get the game away from Jerome and bring him back to reality Hodges gets caught in the game's power even though he looks at it for only a moment. He is disappointed when Jerome turns off the game as Holly asks him. Jerome is especially angered about Brady's plan because it came so close to hurting his sister. For instance, when Holly does not turn off the zeetheend site quickly enough for Jerome, he turns off her computer in a way that makes it crash. Holly criticizes him for potentially damaging her computer and making her lose data on her computer but Jerome counters by telling her: "'That's exactly what the fucking website is for,' Jerome says. To make you lose data. To make you lose your shit. I could read the last one, Bill. In the blue flash. It said do it now'" (302). He uses a metaphor to compare one's brain power to computer data. While turning off a computer incorrectly can make it lose data, looking at Brady's website too long can make one lose his grasp on reality.

Adding to the atmosphere of losing control is Pete's phone call to Hodges about Izzy's insubordination. Pete is now certain that Izzy just does not want to investigate what is now clearly a series of crimes. "They've got their perp, but the shit's not right. I know it, and Izzy does, too. She just doesn't give a rat's ass." (281) Pete tells Hodges when he calls on the phone from the house where Cora Babineau has been murdered. Pete does give Hodges some information useful for his case. First, he says that AI told him that Dr. Z was Brady Hartsfield. Second, Hodges learns that Library AI has acted under the name Z-Boy, the person who sent Hodges a message on Debbie's Blue Umbrella, and that he claims to have been hypnotized when he killed Cora.

Notice in this section that after Ellen survives her suicide attempt she has the same response to life that Barbara did. She wonders what she was thinking and why she tried to end her life. Like Barbara, Ellen also senses the vestiges of the voice still inside her, "the slimy taste of something awful that she swallowed while it was still alive" (296). Notice also the way the Brady bets on being able to monopolize on the fears that teens and young adults struggle with every day. "This is the great gift bestowed by a combination of Zappit-induced hypnosis and Brady's own ability to invade minds once they are in that open and suggestible state. Ordinary fears, the ones kids like this live with as a kind of unpleasant background noise, can be turned into ravaging monsters. Small balloons of paranoia can be inflated until they are as big as floats in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade" (293-294). This is a long quote but most properly gives the reader an idea of the way Brady plans to personalize his attack on each of his individual victims. For Barbara, he focused on lack of knowledge about the poorer blacks. For Ellen, he focused on her fears about the SAT. His plan is to use the teen's own thoughts to turn these normal fears and issues into "ravaging monsters" (293). Notice the imagery of turning the problems, generally the size of small balloons, into issues the size of the balloon seen in the Macy's parade. In other words, he plans to use the teens' already susceptible states to blow their problems out of proportion.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way suicide is presented in this section. Why does it appeal to Brady as it does?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the changing tone in this section of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think King chooses to make Izzy insubordinate to Pete? What point do you think he is trying to make?

Vocabulary

tangents, apotheosis, disseminate, stoking, subliminal, susceptible, avatar, auspicious, subliminal, echelon, commiserate



badconcert.com — The Suicide Prince

Summary

Brady felt real power over Sadie MacDonald when he pushed her to kill herself. He wanted to push someone else to suicide but was not sure how to do it until Freddi came to visit him. When Brady had first sent Al, as Z-Boy, to Freddi's apartment she was suspicious. He offered her money just to answer some questions—money Freddi desperately needed. Brady needed a way to get people to look at the Fishin' Hole demo screen longer so they would be more receptive to its hypnotic powers. Freddie made the suggestion that it could be turned into a game of its own. Before Al left, he told Freddi that Brady wanted her to come and see him again. She was offered fifty dollars per visit.

Brady hated Dr. Babineau because the man had treated him like a lab rat and experimented on him with his shots. Brady remembered Babineau telling him he was the "Eighth Wonder of the World" (313) because he was growing new brain cells. Brady worried if the district attorney's office found out about the brain regeneration that he would have to stand trial.

Freddi's visits seemed to balance Brady. He spent his time trying to figure how to create a game with the Fishin' Hole demo and how to take control of Babineau. Brady got his inspiration for his game when watching a game show called "Prize Surprise." As he watched a woman touching red dots that turned into numbers, he realized he could have the pink fish in the Fishin' Hole game turn into numbers which the player could collect to win a prize. Library Al sometimes joined Freddi and Brady when she visited. One day he gave Freddi a recipe for the changes to the game. Freddi asked if the work was Brady's, because it looked like his. Brady denied ownership by shaking his head slightly.

Not long after this visit, Z-Boy visited Dr. Babineau. Z-Boy gave Dr. Babineau Zappit Zero and told him to look at it and do as instructed. Dr. Babineau threatened to call security but Z-Boy told him if he did not do as ordered he would make it public that Dr. Babineau had experimented on Brady. Z-Boy said he had pictures of the files and brain scans on his phone that he could use as proof of the experimentation.

Dr. Babineau took the game and began tapping pink fish as instructed. He began to lose his alarm about what the old man knew about him as he got interested in the game. Meanwhile, Brady was looking at his own Zappit and waiting for a red dot that would symbolize that Dr. Babineau had become focused on the game. When it finally appeared, Brady was able to take control of Dr. Babineau's mind. He learned from this experiment that he could take possession of other people remotely. Brady planted in Dr. Babineau's mind the suggestion that he stop the experimental shots and the brain scans because they were not doing any good and it would be bad if he got caught.



It was in February of 2015 that Brady learned that Countryman and Frias, survivors of the City Center Massacre, had killed themselves. Brady wondered if he could take credit for those deaths and also wondered how many more he could get. It was while watching a news story about the suicides that Brady learned it had actually been a woman named Holly Gibney who had smashed him in the head during the concert. He was briefly upset he never knew the real identity of his attacker but brushed his feelings aside.

Knowing that Sunrise Solutions had gone bankrupt, he told Dr. Babineau, who had come under his complete control, to open a new account under the name Gamez Unlimited. He ordered Babineau to set Freddi up in a better apartment and then buy her the computer equipment that she would need, including a repeater.

Analysis

In this section of the novel King returns to his expository style. He returns to the use of the past tense as he gives the reader information about how Brady got control of Babineau and how he convinced Freddi to do the computer work for him.

Even though Babineau gave Brady the drug that perhaps helped him to return to consciousness, Brady hates his doctor. “Babineau had used him as a guinea pig, which was bad. He had lost interest in Brady when his experimental drug didn’t seem to be working, which was worse” (312). Not only did Babineau experiment on Brady, Babineau has evidence that Brady is growing new brain cells. This is bad for Brady because if the district attorney were to find out about Brady’s increased mental abilities he would have to go to trial for the Mercedes killings.

Brady is adept at manipulation and knows the best way to get Babineau to cooperate with him. He uses his knowledge of the experimentation his doctor did on him to get Babineau to play the Zappit game. Although the game seemed innocent to Babineau, it allowed Brady to begin the process of taking over his doctor’s mind. The reader should also note that even though Babineau was seeing progress on Brady’s brain scans, Brady never made any indications that would show his doctor he was making progress. This refusal to show any progress was another of Brady’s carefully planned manipulation schemes.

Mentioned also in this section is the idea that suicide is an ethical matter. The newscaster who comments on the deaths of the two City Center victims who kill themselves suggests that their deaths had “reignited the debate on the ethics of suicide” (325). The newscaster seems to be asking if there is a point at which it is morally acceptable to kill oneself. Frias and Countryman lived in “unending and unmitigated pain” (325). Was that an acceptable reason for suicide?

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the ethics of suicide. At what point do you think suicide is morally right? Is it ever morally right?



Discussion Question 2

How does Freddi's need for money figure into her willingness to help Brady?

Discussion Question 3

Since Babineau treated Brady like a lab rat do you feel badly for him that Brady, in turn, experiments on Babineau? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

inhabiting, persona, indulgent, assiduously, proprietary, monotonous, drivel, habituated, inducement, pilfered, opined, fallow, terminate, unmitigated, heinous, caveat, vacuous



Heads and Skins — 1-14

Summary

In Section 1, Freddi wakes because she has to use the bathroom. She chides herself for allowing herself to get into the situation she is in by pretending not to notice what Brady was asking her to do. In her computer room she sees the website zeetheend is up and running. She looks at the comments the site has generated so far. She realizes how quickly the suicide spot she has helped to set up will spread. Additionally, the repeater shows that 172 devices have been found thus far. Freddi decides to try to kill the website but discovers she is unable to access control. She decides the best thing for her to do is to clear out her bank account and leave. As she tries to begin packing, her cell phone rings.

In Section 2, Brady is alerted that someone has tried to make changes to the zeetheend site. He calls Freddi.

In Section 3, when Hodges leaves Holly and Jerome alone, Jerome asks Holly how bad Hodges is and if she thinks he can make it through the day. Holly says she thinks he can if they all work together.

In Section 4, Brady threatens Freddi not to try to turn off the repeater again.

In Section 5 in the bathroom, Hodges has been struck with the worst pain yet as he tried to move his bowels. He takes medicine and waits for the pain to ease. Before he leaves his phone rings. It is Norma. She tells him the only reference she has found to Brady's visitors is that Freddi should be allowed to visit whenever she would like. Hodges remembers the girl that Brady used to work with at Discount Electronix. He wonders if Freddi is doing Brady's leg work for him.

In Section 6, Anthony Frobisher, who was the third worker on the Cyber Patrol, has no address for Freddi.

In Section 7, Hodges contacts Todd Schneider, the man who handled the Sunrise Solutions bankruptcy. He gives Hodges the address to which the Zappits were delivered. He says they were sent there in care of Freddi.

In Section 8, Brady begins to relax as he enters the drive for Heads and Skins, knowing he has almost reached his destination.

In Section 9, Hodges knocks on Freddi's door. She refuses to open the door until he tells her that he is Bill Hodges. She is smoking a marijuana joint and wearing a bloodstained shirt. Freddi tells Hodges she should have thought to have called him because he stopped "him" (347) before. Jerome asks what happened and Freddi says "fucker shot me" (347). She had started bleeding again when she tried lifting her suitcases. She will not let Hodges look at her wound but Holly takes her into the



bathroom. As she leads Holly to the bathroom, Freddie points out the room to Hodges where the computer equipment is located.

In Section 10, Brady reaches Heads and Skins, a hunting camp owned by Dr. Babineau and some other doctors. Brady checks the lap top and learns 243 devices have been located. There have been more than 7,000 visitors to the zeetheend website. He finds a gun, a FN SCAR 17S, that can shoot 650 rounds a minute. He searches for news of suicides. When he does not find any he searches for a red dot on his Zappit and begins working.

In Section 11, Freddi and Holly join the others. Hodges asks Freddi who the “he” is who shot her. She tells him that Z-Boy, Dr. Z, and Brady are all the same person. Holly tells Freddi that Brady is dead but Freddi denies it is true. Meanwhile Jerome asks about the repeater. She can turn it off but asks for the promise of protection in return. It is searching for connected Zappits and downloading the changes to the demo. She cannot do anything about the website. When Freddi tries to bargain in exchange for turning off the repeater, Jerome gets out his knife and slices the cable. Jerome is angry as he explains to Freddi that his sister was almost killed because of a Zappit. She begins to cry and tells him she did not see what was happening because she did not want to see.

In Section 12, Jamie Winters had attended the 'Round Here concert before he knew for sure he was gay. At sixteen he has accepted his sexual identity even though his father calls him a freak. Jamie, dressed in his mother's dress and wearing makeup, interrupts his father, who is working in his office. Jamie tells his father this is how he wants to be buried. He then shoots himself in the head.

In Section 13, when Brady comes back from Jamie's head he hears chiming from Babineau's computer. A message reads that the repeater has been taken offline. He is angry for a moment and then wonders if perhaps it was Hodges who took the repeater offline. He calls Freddi.

In Section 14, Freddi's phone rings and Hodges goes in search for it. The screen says Z-Boy is calling but Hodges knows that character, played by Library AI, is in police custody. Hodges answers and hears breathing. The person on the other end hangs up.

Analysis

Freddi is finally hit by realization of what she helped Brady do. She closed her eyes to most of it knowing she needed the money. “He's set up an elaborate Jonestown protocol of which the rigged Zappits are only a part, and she helped him do it” (334). It is ironic that Freddi describes what Brady has set up as being a “Jonestown protocol” since Brady has patterned his attempt to start a suicide epidemic after Jim Jones. Even though her reference to Jonestown indicates Freddi is aware that Jim Jones was able to persuade nearly a thousand people to die, she doubts that Brady's Zappits and website will have the same outcome. “Will people obey a hypnotic command to off themselves? Surely not, right? Right?” (333) Freddi tries to convince herself that her work will not



lead to deaths. Even though the only thing she can think about is saving herself, she does try to take the website offline, an act that shows she does have some concern for others. After she realizes the site is being controlled from another location, she is thoroughly frightened and decides just to worry about herself.

Even though Freddi is self-serving she turns out to be the one who gives pivotal information to help Holly, Hodges, and Jerome go after Brady. Although she has just put together what Brady is planning to do herself, Freddi leads Hodges and his two “amateur detectives,” (362) as she calls them, through what Brady’s computer work is capable of. Conflict arises when Freddi tries to bargain for protection in exchange for disconnecting the router. Jerome cuts the cable destroying a possession in which Freddi places worth. He brings home the reality of what she is doing by telling her that his sister, worth more than a computer cable, was one of the young people targeted by Brady.

The tone in the section also changes in respect to Hodges as he realizes the monstrosity of what he is up against and to consider what the future holds for him. He is in the bathroom when he is doubled over by a bout of pain. It made “his previous pain seem like a bunch of warm-up notes before the full concert begins, and if it’s this bad now, he dreads to think what may lie ahead” (339). King uses the metaphor of the volume of the noise an orchestra makes while warming up compared to the volumes it can reach during a concert to describe the intensity of this new pain. As Hodges realizes how bad his situation might get, he wonders if there will come a time in his sickness where he would “see everything that I am or ever was first submerged, then erased” (339) by pain and pain killers. This is the point at which some people who suffer terminal diseases consider suicide because they believe they no longer exist apart from the pain.

When Hodges considers his illness he makes a very poignant statement about the disease. The final section in *badconcert.com* referred to Brady as the suicide prince. Hodges thinks better of this title and considers cancer the real suicide prince. “Maybe it’s self-hating, born with a desire not to murder the host but to kill itself. Which makes cancer the real suicide prince” (339).

Discussion Question 1

Consider Freddi’s role in the novel. Is she a villain or just another of Brady’s pawns? Compare her for instance to Library AI. The reader feels a certain pity for Library AI because he did not seem to have any control over what Brady did to him or what Brady made him do. Do you have this same pity for Freddi?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Brady does not talk to Hodges when they are on the phone together? What does this mean to Brady that Hodges is aware of his newest stunt?



Discussion Question 3

If you were Holly, Jerome, and Brady, how easily would you believe Freddi's story about Brady being Z-Boy and Dr. Z? Do you think in a way they already knew what they were dealing with?

Vocabulary

importing, preclude, rectifying, moot, surveillance, defunct, rapacity, affable, ominous, emaciation, compensatory, prosaic, fractal, matryoshka, paramount, nemesis



Heads and Skins — 15-26

Summary

In Section 15, Holly tries to convince Hodges that Brady could really still be alive but Hodges wants to deny that it is possible. Holly warns him not to ignore evidence just because it isn't leading the way he wants to go. Hodges believes it was Freddi who set up the repeater and the website. Freddi contradicts him by saying that if she had set the website up she would also have the ability to take it down. Freddi also remembers the double dots in the computer recipes that Z-Boy gave her, another unique aspect of Brady's work. On top of that, Freddi says she knew it was Brady who was interacting with her through Al and Babineau's bodies because she knew Brady.

In Section 16, after considering what it means to him that Hodges is in Freddi's apartment, Brady chooses another red dot on his Zappit on which to work.

In Section 17, Holly begs Hodges to get police help to take the suicide website down. She requests he call Pete and have one of the computer workers to call her. Hodges does not get an answer from Pete so he calls Izzy. Izzy tells him that Pete has quit and gone into early retirement. As she rants at Hodges, blaming him for Pete's decision, Hodges tells her she needs to listen. She grudgingly checks on suicides and learns there has been one. Hodges orders her to have the police on the scene look for a Zappit. He warns they will have more Zappit suicides by the end of the day. She seems unbelieving and tries not to take his warning about the zeetheend site seriously. Hodges warns her it is loaded with subliminal messages and has to come down. When she tries to refuse to have a computer worker call Holly, he warns her that when suicides start escalating that he will tell that she refused his information and tied him up in red tape. Izzy sounds hurt and asks Hodges why he is acting as he is. Hodges wants to tell her it is because he has finally realized Holly was right about her but instead tells her they are running out of time.

In Section 18 meanwhile, Jerome talks to Freddi about his sister. He tells her about the voice that Barbara heard from her Zappit. Freddi tells Jerome that she believes Brady did have the ability to get in touch with Barbara telepathically through the Zappit. He realizes that even if they do get the website down, there are still nearly 250 Zappits through which Brady can speak to teens. Hodges breaks in and tells Jerome they have to stop the voice. He asks Freddi if marijuana is as good for pain as he has always heard. When she says it is, he asks her to bring it along.

In Section 19, a computer forensics worker calls Holly as she, Jerome, Freddi, and Hodges head back to their office. Hodges finds Becky Helmington's number and learns from her that Babineau might have gone to a hunting camp he and some other doctors own. Hodges packs his two guns and ammunition. He hears applause from the other room and learns the zeetheend website is down. The forensics guy added the number of a suicide hotline to the screen announcing the site is having technical difficulties.



Hodges has Holly call for a rental vehicle equipped to drive in the snow. They will drive Jerome's Jeep to the airport to pick up the vehicle. Freddi, Hodges promises, will be put in witness protection.

In Section 20, Brady Goads Jane Ellsbury, a badly overweight twenty-year-old, into killing herself by taking her father's pain medicine.

In Section 21, Hodges leaves Freddi at the airport Hilton. After paying for her room, Hodges asks Jerome to take Freddi upstairs so he can talk to Holly alone.

In Section 22, Brady's good mood from talking Jane into killing herself dies when he sees that the zeetheend website is down. He believes that Hodges will come to the hunting camp and they will have their final showdown. He tries to think like Hodges and determine what the det.-ret. will do.

In Section 23, Jerome is unhappy because Hodges and Holly are planning on leaving him behind on the mission to stop Brady. They tell him it is not only because the mission is dangerous but also because they need him to tell the police what is happening if they do not come back. Hodges tells Jerome that he may have to kill Brady and that people will see that he has killed Babineau, not Brady. He does not want Jerome caught up in any murder charges. Jerome finally agrees.

In Section 24, as Jerome watches Holly and Hodges leave he knows they are right about their decision to leave him behind but he does not like it. On his way home, he gets a feeling he might never see Hodges and Holly again.

In Section 25, Hodges drives as fast as he can despite the snow. Holly asks if he brought guns. He tells her that he did and that the .38 caliber is hers. He walks her through how to shoot it. Hodges' phone rings. It is Izzy. She reports there have been three suicides so far. Zappits have been found on two scenes.

In Section 26, as they stop at Thurston's Garage, Holly's phone rings. Inside the garage Hodges asks for directions to Heads and Skins. Even though the old man does not remember seeing a Chevy with primer on its way to the hunting lodge his son does. Hodges tells the two men he has to go out to the lodge to serve a subpoena. Thurston hands Hodges a card with a number on it he can call if he needs help getting out of the hunting lodge road once he has served the subpoena.

Analysis

Holly gets tough with Hodges when he tries to deny that Brady is still living. She first quotes statistics: "Personality projection is well documented. In fact, it's the second-most-common cause of so-called demonic possession" (359). When Hodges still doubts, she tells him his refusal to follow the evidence is making him like Miss Pretty Gray Eyes, as she calls Izzy. Holly reminds Hodges of his own advice: "you shouldn't turn away from the evidence just because it points in a direction you don't want to go" (359). Jerome backs her up when she reminds Hodges that Brady had other special



abilities, like telekinesis, after he was hit in the head. Hodges tries to duck the truth but Jerome reminds him that even though he did not see Brady move anything, there were nurses who did see things. One of these nurses in particular Hodges trusted to tell the truth.

The tone of the novel becomes even more intense and desperate as the reports of suicides begin coming in to the police department. Even Izzy begins to realize that Hodges might have made the right call when he threatened to overrule her judgment. There is foreshadowing as Jerome drives home after Hodges tells the boy he cannot go with him to put an end to Brady. "As he merges onto the Crosstown, a strong premonition comes to him: he's never going to see either one of his friends again" (380). This idea that pops into Jerome's head gives the reader the idea that things will turn out badly when Hodges and Holly confront Brady. Additionally, the storm that has been forecast through the last several sections of the book has hit. It makes driving difficult and adds to the stress that Hodges feels.

Hodges fights not only against time and Brady's power but also against his own disease. The pain is becoming worse and worse as time passes. Hugs hurt. Laughter hurts. Hodges thinks to himself that unlike the last time he went face to face with Brady, he is not suffering a heart attack. "No heart attack to stop me this time, Brady, he thinks. This time it's just cancer, and I can live with that" (371). The statement is ironic since it is Hodges' cancer that will kill him. He describes his pain with the metaphor "the pain in his side is a hot jellyfish with long tentacles that now seem to reach everywhere, even up into his throat" (382). A final sign that Hodges' pain is becoming unbearable is his decision to have Freddi bring her marijuana stash with her when they leave her apartment. He believes he may need the drug to help control his pain.

The sense of immediacy as the novel reaches its climax is heightened by stats about suicides as well as the unique aspects of Brady's quest for a suicide epidemic. When Jerome tries to get Freddi to understand the severity of the problem she might have helped to spark, he quotes to her statistics from a sociology class. "Every teen suicide that makes it onto social media spawns seven attempts, five that are show and two that are go" (367). This quote stresses the reality of the number of lives that are in danger because of what Freddie has helped Brady do.

One victory that Hodges and his friends do score comes in the form of getting the zeetheend website down. Izzy had made the comment that one suicide website was no different from another. Hodges tried to convince Izzy how much potential this website had to cause trouble. "This one is different. It could start an avalanche. It's loaded with subliminal messages" (366). Hodges tries to convince Izzy how cleverly Brady has set up the website in order to invade the minds and thoughts of the teens. Brady has used his knowledge of computers and human nature to achieve maximum manipulation. When the computer tech at the police department adds the number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to the site zeetheend it angers Brady not only because the spread of his website has been stopped but because people are instead directed to the number for a suicide helpline.



Brady's obnoxious personality comes to the forefront in this section. He is a person who is full of hate for anyone who is different from him. This shows in his thoughts about the overweight woman he goaded into suicide. He calmly calls her names and tells her that her family would be better off without her. After he knows she is dead he laughs about what was a very serious situation. He wonders how many men it will take to get her body out of her house, and thinks to himself that her coffin will be jumbo sized.

Notice allusions made to literature in this section of the novel. When Brady considers choosing another person to goad into suicide, he repeats to himself a line from T.S. Elliot's poem *The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock* "Oh do not ask what is it, let us go and make our visit." (363). Hodges also compares his coming showdown with Brady to *Trent's Last Case*, a detective novel written by E.C. Bentley.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that King points out that Jane went "with relief" (374) when she died of her overdose? How might this affect a reader's opinion of suicide?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Freddi's attitude in this section of the novel. Do you like her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Hodges is right in his decision to make Jerome stay behind when he and Holly go after Brady? What does Hodges mean when he tell Holly that Brady is their case?

Vocabulary

fabrications, protocol, telepathically, conduit, insatiable, culpable, negligence, premonition, vehemently, quarry



Heads and Skins — 27-36

Summary

In Section 27, when Hodges is back in the truck, Holly tells him it was Izzy who called earlier. There has been one more suicide reported and one attempt reported. Holly tells Hodges they have to kill Brady because if they leave Brady alive he could leave Babineau's body and jump to someone else.

Once they reach the drive to the hunting camp, Hodges turns off the headlights. Even though they do not notice the video camera when they reach the fork in the road and head toward Big Bob's place, Brady sees them.

In Section 28, Brady sees the truck but cannot tell how many people are in the cab. Brady gears up with a black ski mask and the Scar, another unidentified item, and heads out for revenge.

In Section 29, Hodges stops the truck when he is even with the lights from Heads and Skins. He tells Holly he is going to cut through the woods and get Brady. Before he gets out of the truck he leans over and kisses Holly on the lips. She does not pull away. She watches as he gets out of the truck and merges with the trees. When she cannot see him any longer she follows his footsteps.

In Section 30, Hodges falls over a log covered in snow and experiences a burst of pain that makes him wet his pants. When he tries to get up a hand hooks him and helps. It is Holly. She tells him he cannot get through the woods without her help and besides she believes the task is one they have to face together. She gives him one of her gloves to keep his gun hand warm. When they reach the edge of the woods they begin crawling.

Hodges notices the woodpile and tracks leading to it too late. He tries to get his gun as Brady rises from behind the woodpile. Brady hits Holly in the head with the Scar and then uses the gun to break Hodges' wrist. He is wearing night vision goggles. Even though he is not really able, Hodges carries Holly to keep Brady from leaving her outside in the snow.

In Section 31, inside the house Hodges realizes that it is Brady who is in control of Babineau's body. Brady finds the revolver in Holly's coat pocket and tucks it into the waistband of his pants, a move that amuses Brady because it only works with flat guns. Brady asks Hodges to take off his coat and notices his grimace of pain. He asks what is wrong. Hodges tells him he has pancreatic cancer. He asks only that Brady leave his assistant, whom he calls Kara Winston, alone. Brady examines Holly's coat and notices her name printed inside. He kicks Holly. He orders Hodges to take a pink Zappit out of the drawer next to him and turn it on. When Hodges refuses Brady threatens to shoot Holly. Hodges turns on the game and goes to the Fishin' Hole demo. As he begins to tap the fish he feels something like fingers in his brain. Hodges wonders why Brady would



want to be inside him since he is dying from cancer. When he realizes Brady plans to use Hodges' body to kill Holly, Hodges tries to fight against Brady's invading personality. It is almost impossible.

When Hodges' text alert sounds, Brady is so startled that the bond between him and Hodges is broken. At the moment that the bond breaks, Hodges throws the Zappit into the fire and throws a ceramic pen holder at Brady. When Brady recovers enough to grab the Scar, Hodges kicks him in the chest with both feet. Brady falls backward but is up again before Hodges can get up. Brady aims the Scar at Hodges. Holly, who has gotten the .38 that fell out of the waistband of Brady's pants, shoots Brady but she only manages to hit him in the shoulder. He runs outside because she continues to shoot at him even though she does not hit him again.

In Section 32, Brady scolds himself for not having killed Holly while he had the chance. He realizes the only way out of his predicament is to kill Holly and Hodges to get their keys since theirs is the only vehicle that he believes will reliably get him off Heads and Skins as deep as the snow has gotten. He aims the Scar at the house and begins to shoot on full auto. As he shoots, Brady does not hear the clatter of an approaching vehicle.

In Section 33, Hodges covers Holly when the shooting begins. When the gunfire stops, Hodges wonders if Brady is reloading. Holly asks him if he can hear a strange sound. Hodges at first thinks it is a snowmobile but then realizes it sounds too heavy for that. Spot beams flood into the living room.

In Section 34, while he is reloading, Brady finally hears the sound of the approaching vehicle. It is coming right at Brady. He shoots at it. The driver dives for safety but the machine keeps coming. The slippers he is wearing do not get traction in the snow causing Brady to fall. He tries to use telekinesis to push the machine away but cannot do so. One of the treads rolls over his body.

In Section 35, Holly calls out to Jerome as she runs toward the Sno-Cat. He tells them that it was Barbara who insisted that he come. She believed that if he did not kill Brady, whom Barbara called "the voice," (414), he would kill them. They hear a groan and Hodges walks to the spot where Brady is lying. Brady tries to invade Hodges' mind but Hodges is able to easily eject him. Brady begs Hodges to either help him or shoot him. Holly hands Hodges the .38. He puts it in Brady's hand. Brady cannot even raise the gun to shoot himself in the head. Holly raises his hand and aims to muzzle at Brady's head. Noticing that Brady's finger is not on the trigger Holly is afraid one of them will have to shoot him but at the last minute Brady fires the weapon telekinetically.

In Section 36, Jerome gets Hodges into the cab of the Sno-Cat as they drive away from the hunting lodge. Holly asks Hodges if Brady is really dead. Hodges cannot answer that for certain until the slime he left in Hodges' brain is completely gone. Hodges thanks Holly for the text alert that distracted Brady and got him out of Hodges' mind. Holly asks who sent the text. Hodges looks at it to discover a birthday message from his daughter. It is his seventieth birthday.



Analysis

The novel reaches its climax in this section when Hodges, Holly, and Brady finally face off for the final time. Since Brady is using night vision goggles, it appears that he has the upper hand over Hodges and Holly from the beginning. Notice the way that King introduces Brady's secret weapon that he plans to use against Hodges and Holly. It is described as "a perfectly legal item when used the right way" (392). The indication is that Brady does not intend to use whatever it is he has in the in the right way.

Adding to the sense of impending doom are the repeated images of skulls. The name of the camp, Heads and Skins, refers to the trophies taken from animals while hunting. One of the items of focus is a ceramic pen holder in the shape of a skull. Brady is playing with this pen holder as he watches for Hodges' vehicle to pass the camera. As Hodges talks to Holly before he gets out of the truck to go for Brady, Holly has the "fleeting impression that his head has been replaced by a skull" (393). This imagery of skulls is a foreshadowing of death.

The ultimate end to which Brady comes is an example of poetic justice. Brady's painful death is earned because he hurt so many people when he ran through a crowd with a Mercedes years prior. After the Sno-Cat Jerome was driving hits and runs over Brady, Hodges points out to Brady what has happened to him. "You were run down, Brady. Run down by an extremely heavy vehicle. Now you know what that feels like. Don't you?" (415). Hodges and Holly are almost too kind to Brady when they give him a gun to use to finish the job of killing himself.

Brady's Zappit Zero, an important symbol in the novel, meets its demise in this section of the novel. It was this device that Brady used to talk to teens that were playing with the Zappits they received as concert gifts. When Hodges throws Zappit Zero into the fire it means that Brady has no way to communicate with anyone on the other Zappits any longer. Hodges has ultimately shut down the voice that Barbara and the others heard coming from their Zappits.

Jerome is the savior of the day when he comes to the hunting camp on the Sno-Cat. In a way, Brady causes his own death because Jerome jumps from the Sno-Cat when Brady begins firing at him. There is no one in control of the machine when it barrels over Brady. Remember earlier in the novel when Brady decided not to hone his telepathic skills because he did not think they were really useful. He probably wishes at the point he was trying to stop the Sno-Cat that he had worked on those skills a little harder.

Also important in this section of the novel is the text alert on Hodges' cell phone. There have been multiple times when the shock value of this text alert have been mentioned. Hodges has gotten dirty looks and snide comments because of the alert. Although he intended to change the alert and even had a teenager offer to change it for him at one point, Hodges never gets a chance to change his alert. At the hunting lodge, it is the noise of the text alert that perhaps saves Hodges and Holly's lives because it breaks the bond between Brady and Hodges' minds.



Notice when Hodges tries to pull on the glove Holly gives him to keep his gun hand warm, he has an image of O.J. Simpson's trial and the lawyer saying "If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit" (396). He is perhaps thinking ahead if there is a trial, he might be unable to put on the glove, if it is included in evidence, just as O.J. was not. It may also be a reference to the reason the glove did not fit O.J.'s hand; it was given to him by someone else.

Notice in this section also the literary devices used to enliven the writing. For instance when Hodges sees Brady put the revolver in his belt, he "feels a certain sour amusement" (400), because he knows that trick only works with flat guns. This "sour amusement" is an example of an oxymoron, the use of two opposites to indicate Hodges is at a point where he feels conflicting emotions. Another example of an oxymoron is the "expression of joyful hate" (412) on Babineau's face as Brady shoots up the house. Personification is used in the phrase "his shadow leaps out long" (413). The shadow is given the ability to leap. Similes, comparisons that use like or as, are used in the phrases "guts are spread out around him like the wings of a red dragon" (415) and "he spits Brady out like a watermelon seed," (415) describing the way Hodges is easily able to get Brady out of his mind after Brady has been run over by the Sno-Cat. Another phrase used often in this final section is the catchphrase "Live or Memorex?" (412). This refers to a brand of audio cassettes popular in the '80s that claimed to capture recordings that could not be discerned from the recorded sound. The paradox those who look at Babineau face is similar. Is he Babineau, or is he Brady?

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Hodges kisses Holly on the lips? What does this say about their relationship? Why is it important that she does not pull away?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way that Brady dies. How is his death a form of poetic justice?

Discussion Question 3

Does it seem to you wrong that Babineau will be accused of all the crimes Brady committed even though he is not really the guilty party? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

literalist, stuporous, locution, indelible, meticulous, recourse, recede, pistons, monstrosity



Heads and Skins — After

Summary

Four days after Brady is killed, Pete visits Hodges at Kiner Memorial. Hodges' room is empty and a nurse points Pete toward the solarium. Hodges, Jerome, Barbara, and Holly are eating cake together in honor of Hodges' birthday. Hodges invites Pete over for cake. He tells Pete he is not feeling bad and that the first series of tests looked good. Pete lets Hodges know that he and Izzy worked out their differences. He still wants Hodges to give the first toast at his retirement party. Holly is relieved when Pete assures her that she and Hodges are not in any trouble.

Pete tells the group that Babineau was seen on footage at the hospital the day that his wife was killed. Pete also tells them that Al Brooks killed himself even though he was on suicide watch. He used a ballpoint pen to draw "Z's" all over his cell, and then used the pen barrel to kill himself. Sadly, there have been 14 successful suicides reported, nine of which had the Zappits. There have been forty attempts.

Holly hurries to talk to Pete at the elevator. She tells him Hodges' prognosis is not as good as he puts on but that he is honored that Pete still wants him to do the toast at the retirement party. Holly returns to help Jerome clean up after the party. She hopes it is not Hodges' last birthday party.

Eight months after Brady is killed, Jerome and Holly meet at Hodges' grave the day after his funeral. Holly is planting a chrysanthemum when Jerome arrives. Holly remembers that she met Hodges at a funeral. She believes that Hodges found her. Jerome tells Holly that Hodges would not want her to go backwards in her recovery. She promises she will not, mainly because Hodges left her the business. She has asked Pete to work with her. Even so, she knows it will not be the same as working with Hodges. She considers those days as the best of her life. Holly asks Jerome if he will go and watch a movie with her. Holly suggests they see a comedy: "Something that will make us laugh and laugh" (429).

Analysis

The plot is drawn to a close in this section of the novel. All the loose ends are tucked in as Hodges and Holly learn they are not in any trouble because of their involvement with Babineau's death. They also learn about Library Al's suicide and his final act of drawing "Z's" all over his cell walls.

Now that Hodges is getting treatment for his cancer, he is trying to put on a good face for Pete, Holly, and the others. When Pete asks how he is feeling Hodges lies and says he does not feel bad. The reader knows it is a lie because Hodges' eyes "flick up and to the left" (420) when he says he does not feel bad.



Pete makes an allusion to the character of Yoda from the Star Wars movies when he replies to Jerome's assertion that Babineau will be blamed for all of the crimes: "Truth you speak, young Jedi warrior." (421). Another allusion made to the movies is Holly's repeating of "'We'll always have Paris, kid,' Holly says in a Bogart drawl." (425) This is a quote from the movie Casablanca.

In this section, suicide is presented as a fact of life but as one that is avoidable if a person can hang on through bad times. Even though Hodges and the others are sad about the young people who did fall prey to Brady, Pete tells them that the trend Brady started will come to an end. Hodges reminds them: "But with social media or without it, with Brady or without him, suicide is a fact of life." (423). As Hodges thinks of his own approaching death, he considers how both angry and sad he is at people who "carelessly squander what others would sell their souls to have: a healthy, pain-free body. And why? Because they're too blind, too emotionally scarred, or too self-involved to see past the earth's dark curve to the next sunrise. Which always comes, if one continues to draw breath" (424). Hodges' thoughts stress that life will always get better. Just like Barbara and Ellen wondered what they had been thinking when they thought they needed to kill themselves, Hodges knows that even the most depressed person can come to the point where they can find a reason to live. It is this reason that Hodges fights to continue to live even though he has terminal cancer. He thinks to himself "Where there's life, there's hope" (425).

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Holly will continue her forward progression even though Hodges is gone? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the idea that one should always live with assumption that life will get better. Do you understand Hodges' anger with those who kill themselves just because they are unhappy?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Library AI killed himself? Why is his death significant?

Vocabulary

solarium, scenario, cadaverous, swain



Characters

Brady Hartsfield

Brady Hartsfield is the man who killed several people and injured more when he ran a car into a crowd of people waiting for a job fair to open. He later tried to detonate a bomb during a sold out pop concert but was stopped by Holly, Jerome, and Hodges. His doctors describe him as being in a persistent vegetative state after Holly clobbered him in the head with Hodges' Happy Slapper, a sock loaded with ball bearings.

Brady is the major villain or antagonist of the novel. Even though he is believed to be semi-catatonic, Brady's mind has actually returned to the same level of function or perhaps even higher function than he had before his brain injury. His doctor gave Brady experimental drugs believed to increase brain activity but Brady does not believe these drugs had anything to do with his recovery. He believes his recovery was the result of his own efforts.

Not only does Brady have telekinetic powers but he also discovers by accident that he is able to infiltrate other peoples' minds and bodies when they are in a hypnotic state. Brady makes minions out of Library AI, Freddi, and Dr. Babineau to do the legwork on setting up and distributing Zappits that have been modified to put people in a hypnotic state when they watch the demo of the Fishin' Hole game. After Brady has put all of the pieces of his plan together, he kills his own body making it appear that he committed suicide. Brady takes complete charge of Babineau's body as his new "residence."

Brady travels to Babineau's hunting camp intending to enjoy spending his time goading people he discovers using their Zappits into committing suicide. Before he can get started on his project, he is discovered by Holly and Hodges. Although it seems Brady has the upper hand on Hodges and Holly because he has better fire power, Brady is not expecting Jerome to come to the aid of his friends on a Sno-Cat. Jerome runs over Brady with the tank-like machine.

Brady does not immediately die from his injuries and begs to be shot. Holly puts the gun in his hand but refuses to pull the trigger. For a minute it appears Brady will not be able to pull the trigger but finally does so telepathically. Brady's death is an example of poetic justice. Brady's troubles began when he ran a car into a crowd of people at a job fair. From this killing spree he earned the nickname the Mercedes Killer. Brady gets what he deserves because he is badly injured when he is run over by the Sno-Cat.

Holly Gibney

Holly Gibney is Hodges' friend and partner at his company Finders Keepers. She provides a sounding board for Hodges and does his computer research for him. It is because Holly nags Hodges that he goes to the doctor to find out what is causing his stomach pain. When he is told he has cancer, Hodges lies to Holly and tells her he only



has an ulcer. Because Holly thinks Hodges is lying, she looks at his computer in secret and learns he has cancer. She insists that he spend only two days working on the newest Brady case before he check himself into the hospital for treatment.

Holly is a “peculiar” (425), according to Pete Huntley. She met Hodges when she came to town for a relative’s funeral. At that time she was in the custody of her mother. Even though she was an adult then, she was unable to function on her own because of fear and neurosis. She has been hospitalized for a nervous breakdown twice before she met Hodges and also considered suicide. At one point Holly tells Jerome that she believes her time with Hodges was the best time of her life. Hodges made her feel valuable and needed.

Holly loves movies and often quotes from her favorites. She and Hodges have a relationship that is similar to that of a married couple except they are not married. Holly nags and bosses Hodges. She also loves him more than she has probably loved anyone else in her life. Just before they are going to get Brady, Hodges kisses Holly full on the lips. She generally shies away from even hugs but does not pull away from Hodges’ kiss.

After Hodges’ death, Holly is bequeathed Finders Keepers, the company she ran with Hodges. She asks Pete to work with her even though she knows that the partnership will not be the same as the one with Hodges.

Kermit William “Bill” Hodges

Kermit William “Bill” Hodges is the hero of this story. He is a retired police detective seeking closure on one of his last cases, that of the City Center massacre. Although it is believed that Brady Hartsfield, the perpetrator of the massacre, is in a semi-catatonic state in a brain injury clinic, more and more clues point to Brady being involved in the murder-suicide of a survivor of the massacre and her mother.

As a retired policeman, Hodges and his friend Holly run a skip tracing company called Finders Keepers. The two are drawn into investigating the strange death of one of the most badly injured of the City Center victims. Martine Stover was paralyzed from the chest down because of Brady but had lived nearly six years with her injuries. Pete, Hodges’ old partner from the police department, calls Hodges because of the connection to the City Center.

Hodges and Holly suspect there is more to the case than Pete and his new partner, Izzy, want to acknowledge. For this reason the two set out investigating the case on their own. At the same time that he learns about this case with its connection to the City Center massacre, Hodges also learns that he has pancreatic cancer. He has been having stomach pains and Holly allows Hodges only two days to investigate before he checks into the hospital for treatment. Even though Hodges’ stomach pain becomes almost unbearable, he continues investigating because he wants to finally get closure on the last case that he investigated as a police detective.



Hodges dies from his pancreatic cancer about eight months after Brady, in the body of Babineau, is killed. He leaves his skip-tracing company to Holly.

Frederica “Freddi” Linklatter

Frederica “Freddi” Linklatter is a lesbian who worked with Brady on the Cyber Patrol before Discount Electronix closed. She pays a visit to Brady to give him the picture of himself and his mother that she found while cleaning out the junk room in the business. After her first visit, Brady has Dr. Babineau put a note in his chart allowing Freddi to visit whenever she wants.

Because Freddi needs money so badly, she agrees to work for Dr. Babineau, who always contacts her under the alias of Dr. Z even though she knows his real identity. As part of her job, Freddi engineers the changes on the Zappits that Brady plans to use as suicide machines. She also loads the website zeetheend onto the web and sets up the repeater to load the updates to the Zappits. Freddi suspects that what she is doing is wrong but does not refuse to do the work requested by Dr. Z. She also suspects that Dr. Z is somehow working under the influence of Brady and recognizes the computer work she is being asked to complete has been created by Brady.

On the day that Freddi is to receive her last payment from Dr. Z, she gets up the nerve to ask if he is working for Brady. He does not answer the question and instead shoots her after she sets up the repeater and it begins working. Because the bullet strikes the alcohol flask that Freddi has in her pocket it does not kill her. She is about to try to run away when Hodges and Holly show up at her apartment. She tells them what Brady has been having her do and assures them it is Brady behind the Zappits.

Barbara “Barbie” Robinson

Barbara “Barbie” Robinson is Jerome’s younger sister. She is a black girl who has grown up in a relatively affluent family. Barbara is one of the first people whom Brady tries to push to suicide through a Zappit because she was the last person that he saw at the MAC before he was hit in the head.

Brady speaks to Barbara through the Zappit telling her that she should be ashamed of herself because she had never been to the poor, black area of town before. Once she is there, Brady tells her she will be making a statement by killing herself in the black part of town. She is in a form of hypnotism when she almost steps of the curb in front of a black box truck.

Because a boy, Dereece Neville, distracts Barbara by taking her game console away from her she snaps out of her hypnotized state. She grabs her game and runs away from him into the path of another truck. Dereece pushes her from in front of the truck, keeping her from being killed. She suffers only a broken leg and makes sure that Hodges and the other police officers know that Dereece did not try to hurt her.



Barbara asks to talk to Holly in the hospital the day of her accident. She tells Holly she does not understand why she thought it would be better to be dead. She additionally indicates that she still feels the slime of the voice in her head that told her she should hurt herself.

Jerome Robinson

Jerome Robinson is Barbara Robinson's older brother. He is a college student but is taking a semester off to build houses with Habitat for Humanity. Jerome comes home from his volunteer work after Holly calls him to tell him Hodges has cancer and that he is delaying treatment because he is investigating crimes in which he believes Brady is involved. Jerome's mother also calls him to tell him that Barbara has been hurt in an accident. Jerome later learns that his sister was almost a victim of Brady's suicide plan.

While he is helping Holly and Hodges put together the clues about the strange suicides, Jerome is hypnotized by a Zappit. While still under the influence of the game Jerome tells Hodges and Holly he is at his own funeral. Holly is able to bring him out of his trance without him hurting himself.

After he helps Hodges and Holly find Freddi and learns the information she has about Brady's actions, Hodges tells Jerome he does not want to go with them to find Brady. He does not want Jerome to be hurt or to have his future damaged because of any charges that might be involved in putting an end to Brady.

Ultimately, it is Jerome who does fatally wound Brady. Brady caught Hodges and Holly by surprise and has the advantage because he has a better, stronger gun. As Brady is shooting at Hodges and Holly from outside the house, Jerome runs over Brady with a Sno-Cat.

Felix Babineau aka Myron Zakim aka Dr. Z

Felix Babineau is the neurosurgeon who operates to remove a blood clot from Brady's brain after Holly hit Brady in the head, keeping him from detonating a bomb at the 'Round Here concert. Dr. Babineau gives Brady an experimental drug, which he calls vitamins, to help improve Brady's cognitive functioning. Based on the tests the doctor runs, he does not believe the drug is working so he stops giving it to Brady for a short while. He resumes dosing Brady after Brady regains consciousness.

Dr. Babineau falls under Brady's control when Brady, through Library AI, threatens to blackmail him by leaking information about the testing being done on Brady by Babineau. It is Dr. Babineau, acting as Myron Zykim, who hands out the Zappits to Janie and Barbara. He also uses the pseudonym Myron Zykim when he orders the Zappits for the fictional company Gamez Unlimited. Babineau uses the pseudonym Dr. Z when he deals with Freddi.



Babineau's consciousness is slowly killed by Brady as Brady inhabits and uses up the doctor's brain cells. Babineau is intelligent enough to realize that he is losing his mental dexterity because of Brady's use of his brain and body. After Brady, as Dr. Z., kills Freddi, he more or less kills Babineau by destroying the doctor's core consciousness. Babineau's body is killed when Jerome runs over it with the Sno-Cat.

Pete Huntley

Pete Huntley is Hodges' partner from his days with the police department. Pete and Hodges worked the City Center massacre case together. When Martine Stover, a woman who was injured during the City Center massacre, is killed by her mother who then commits suicide, Pete calls Hodges and Holly to consult on the case.

Pete believes there is more to Martine and her mother's deaths than just a murder-suicide. He does not want to make more of the case than what is there because he is about to retire and leave his partner, Izzy, working alone. As the case progresses and Pete realizes there really is more to it, he goes against his partner and tells Hodges to investigate and try to find out what is happening.

Pete tries to talk to Izzy, who wants to sweep the mounting clues under the rug, to convince her they need to put more work into case. When she tells him that she wants to progress in the department more than she wants to solve the case, Pete decides to retire early. After Izzy realizes how serious the case is she apologizes to Pete and he continues his time at the police department.

Library Al Brooks aka Z-Boy

Library Al Brooks is an elderly man who works as the librarian at the hospital where Brady lives. He gives Brady a Zappit believing that the Fishin' Hole demo will calm him. The first time that Brady looks at the Zappit he is automatically transferred to Al's body. It is through Al's body that Brady first dares to leave his hospital room.

Al's alter ego is Z-Boy. He is described as an elderly man who wears green Dickies and an Army surplus parka mended with masking tape. His car is a primer spotted Chevy Malibu. Al's job as Z-Boy includes spying on Janice and Martine from the house across the street and keeping track of Hodges. He also makes his mark, the letter "Z," at sites where a person has died. Because Al is found at the Babineau home with the gun in his pocket that killed Cora the police believe he murdered her. Al confesses to the murder but says it was not his fault because he was hypnotized at the time. In jail, Al gets a pen. He writes "Z's" all over his jail cell and then uses the pen to kill himself.



Isabelle “Izzy” Jaynes aka Miss Pretty Gray Eyes

Isabelle “Izzy” Jaynes is Pete’s partner at the police department. Pete becomes frustrated with Izzy when he realizes that she values her desire for a promotion in the department more than she wants to do good police work.

Even before Izzy began stonewalling Pete, the reader develops a dislike for her because of the way she treats Holly. Because Holly has neurological issues Izzy makes fun of her and accuses her of being a thief, particularly when it comes to Holly’s act of taking the Zappit from Janice and Martine’s house. It is possible that Izzy is jealous of Holly because she knows Holly has a knack for investigating that Izzy does not have.

After Hodges confronts Izzy and threatens to blame her for the suicides, she consents to work with him. After reports of suicides begin to flow into the department, most of which involve a Zappit, Izzy realizes she has messed up. She apologizes to Pete for the way she treated him and encourages him to go ahead with his retirement party.

Ruth Scapelli

Ruth Scapelli is the head nurse at the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic. She does not like Brady, who is a patient there, because she senses he is faking. One day after he flips her off she goes into his room alone, something she does not let herself do because she does not trust herself. While she faces off against Brady she pinches and twists his nipple hoping for a reaction. She does not get the reaction she was hoping for but before she leaves she tells him that if he flips her off again she will twist his testicles. He flips her off again.

Later that day, Dr. Babineau visits Scapelli at her home. He tells her that he knows what she did to Brady. By telling her that she is worthless, Dr. Babineau gets Scapelli to the point of depression that she is willing to kill herself. She slits her wrists with a kitchen knife. A “Z” is written in blood next to her body.

Nancy Alderson

Nancy Alderson is the woman who worked as housekeeper for Janice Ellerton and Martine Stover. Nancy tells Hodges that she does not think that Janice would have done anything to hurt her daughter. She also says that Janice and Martine were happy.

Alderson is the one who tells Hodges about the Zappit that Janice was given while shopping at a store. She also tells Hodges that Janice had already bought her daughter a new computer that she intended to give her for her birthday. This gift is evidence because it indicates that Janice and her daughter were both making plans for the future, a sign that they were not intending to end their lives.



Norma Wilmer

Norma Wilmer is a nurse who works at the traumatic brain injury clinic. She agrees to talk to Hodges away from the clinic about Brady. She is the one who tells Hodges that Dr. Babineau has been using an experimental drug on Brady intended to improve his brain function. Norma also shares with Hodges that Brady has the ability to move things with his mind and uses his ability to scare the nurses.

Hodges asks Norma to check around for a visitors list for Brady. Norma is not able to find one but does find a memo indicating that Freddi Linklatter is allowed to visit Brady at any time, even after visiting hours.

Martine “Marty” Stover

Martine “Marty” Stover is one of the people who was most badly injured at the City Center massacre. She was hit directly by the car. As a result, her face was disfigured and she was paralyzed from the chest down. Nearly seven years later Marty died, her mother put a combination of pain medications and vodka in her feeding tube.

Even though Brady did not kill Martine when he hit her with the car at City Center, he was ultimately responsible for her death. Martine and her mother were the first victims of Brady’s plan to use Zappits to induce suicidal thoughts.

Janice “Jan” Ellerton

Janice “Jan” Ellerton is Martine Stover’s mother. The police believe that Jan gave her daughter vodka and pain medication leading to her death. After killing her daughter, Janice committed suicide by suffocating herself. It is believed that Janice and her daughter were killed by Brady who used a Zappit to goad Janice into killing her daughter and then killing herself.

Sadie MacDonald

Sadie MacDonald is the nurse who has a seizure in Brady’s room while she is looking at the lights flashing off the windshields of the cars in the parking garage next door. It is while Sadie is having one of these seizures that Brady first realizes that he can inhabit the mind of another person while they are in a hypnotized state. Brady manipulates Sadie to the point that she kills herself.

Jamie Winters

Jamie Winters is one of the people who attended the ‘Round Here concert as a preteen. Since that time he has realized he is gay. His father resents him and is critical of his



identity. Under the influence of Brady and the Zappit, Jamie dresses in his mother's makeup and clothes. He tells his father that is what he wants to wear to his funeral just before he shoots himself in the head.

Jason Rapsis

Jason Rapsis, and his partner Rob Martin, make up the team of paramedics who were first on the scene of the City Center massacre. Jason Rapsis is also the paramedic charged with keeping Brady alive while he was transferred to the hospital from the MAC after Holly bashed Brady in the head with Hodges' Happy Slapper.

Tom Saubers

Tom Saubers is another person who was badly injured during the City Center massacre. He is the real estate agent in charge of the property for sale across the street from the Ellerton-Stover house. Because Hodges helped Tom and his family during another case, Tom rearranges his schedule to show Hodges the house.

Selma Valdez

Selma Valdez is one of the nurses who looks after Brady. Babineau has ordered the nurses not to bother Brady while he is in a semiconscious state. Selma does not bother Brady; she only looks over his shoulder while he is watching the Fishin' Hole game on a Zappit. She is surprised when Brady tells her in a clear voice to stop looking at his game.

Jane Ellsbury

Jane Ellsbury is one of Brady's suicide victims. She is an overweight woman who had attended the 'Round Here concert as a teen. She gets one of the free Zappits. Brady tells her through this Zappit that she is fat and would be better off dead. At the promptings of the voice, Jane takes an overdose of her father's pain medication.

Rob Martin

Rob Martin was a paramedic who was driving the ambulance the day of the City Center massacre. He and his partner, Jason Rapsis, were the first paramedics on the scene of the tragedy.



Dinah Scott

Dinah Scott is one of the preteens who attended the 'Round Here concert. She gets a free Zappit from the website badconcert.com but hers is not one that is loaded with the blue flashes and numbered pink fish. Hodges borrows this Zappit from Dinah.

Tanya Robinson

Tanya Robinson is Barbara and Jerome's mother. She is the one who calls Hodges to tell him that Barbara has been hit by a car and is on her way to the hospital.

Dereece Neville

Dereece Neville is the boy who pushes Barbara out from in front of a truck when she tries to kill herself while under the influence of the Zappit. The two later begin dating.

Cora Babineau

Cora Babineau is Felix Babineau's wife. She is shot by Library AI while he is under the influence of Brady.

Wendell Stamos

Wendell Stamos is Hodges' doctor. He is the one who tells Hodges that he has pancreatic cancer.

Ellen Murphy

Ellen Murphy is a girl whom Brady tries to get to commit suicide by jumping out her bedroom window. She succeeds only in breaking some ribs and her collarbone.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Letter "Z"

The letter "Z" is a symbol of Z-Boy, who is Library Al's alter-ego and a signature for the people who commit suicide with the assistance of Z-Boy. After Library Al is involved in a killing he leaves the symbol of the letter "Z." The letter "Z" is found on the bathroom cabinet in the house where Martine and Janice died, etched into the garage at the house across from Martine and Janice's house, near Scapelli's dead body, and in ten different places in the Babineau house after Cora was murdered.

Zappit Zero

Zappit Zero is the name that Brady gives to the original Zappit that Library Al gave him. It is a symbol of the beginning of Brady's realization that the Zappit can be used as a tool to enter other people's minds. It is this Zappit that he uses to communicate with the teens to whom he sent Zappits. He also gives this same Zappit to Babineau to begin his act of taking over Babineau's body. Brady tries to use the Zappit to infiltrate Hodges' brain but Hodges gets a text on his cell phone and the alert startles both Hodges and Brady. Hodges throws Zappit Zero into the fire.

Vitamins (Cerebellin)

These vitamins, which are actually experimental drugs called Cerebellin, symbolize Dr. Babineau's villainous nature. Because he is willing to experiment on Brady, regardless of what Brady did to other people, the reader does not feel sorry for Babineau when Brady hijacks Babineau's body.

Primer Spotted Chevy

The primer spotted Chevy is a symbol of Hodges distraction while he tries to investigate. Even though Nancy told Hodges about the Chevy car she had seen across the street, he and Tom do not notice it when it passes them twice because they are busy rubbing out a cramp in Brady's leg. The third time Hodges misses the Chevy happens when he is trying to think of some way to get Brady to respond to him during his visit.

Unopened Pack of Cigarettes

The pack of cigarettes that Holly buys to help her deal with the emotions and stress she feels when she learns that Hodges has cancer is a symbol of her life before she knew Hodges. At that point in her life she was addicted to cigarettes but has since not smoked



for several months. Her decision to buy a pack of cigarettes shows how disturbed she is by Hodges' cancer diagnosis. Her act of throwing them away unopened indicates her victory over her old self and old habits despite this new stress in her life.

A Picture of Brady and His Mother

The picture of Brady and his mother is a symbol of the friendship between Brady and Freddi and also of the way that Freddi got involved with working for Brady on the Zappits. Freddi took the picture to Brady after she found it in the junk room at Discount Electronix when she was helping to clean out the store.

Freddi's Flask

Freddi's flask that she put in her pocket before Dr. Z shoots her symbolizes her close brush with death. This flask keeps the bullet from killing Freddi.

zeetheend.com

zeetheend.com is a symbol of Brady's desire to start a suicide epidemic. He hopes that news of the website will spread and trigger a rash of suicides.

Pink Fish

The pink fish are representative of the goal of the game that Freddi and Brady set up on the amped up Zappits. Brady chooses the pink fish to be the fish that give the player points if the player successfully taps them because there are fewer pink fish and also because the pink fish are faster.

Thoughtfish

Thoughtfish are the thoughts that Brady sets free in the minds of the people whom he inhabits through the Zappits. These thoughtfish are slight variations of the thoughts already in the person's mind. Brady just manipulates the thoughts to make the person feel bad about himself.



Settings

City Center

It is before a job fair at the City Center in 2009 that Brady Hartsfield drives a Mercedes through the line of people waiting there. Martine Stover is among the people who are injured.

The Ellerton-Stover House

It is at the Ellerton-Stover house where Martine Stover and her mother, Janice Ellerton, are murdered by Brady. The murder is set up to appear to be a murder/suicide.

Room 217 Brain Injury Clinic

Room 217 is Brady's room at the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic. It is in this room that he thinks through and devises his plan to start a suicide epidemic.

The Bucket

The Bucket is the nickname by which some call the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic at Kliner Memorial.

442 Maritime Drive

442 Maritime Drive is the address of the condo that Brady rents for Freddi. It is at this apartment that the control computer for the Zappits is set up.

Heads and Skins

Heads and Skins is the hunting lodge that Dr. Babineau and several other doctors own. It is located near Lake Charles. Brady goes to this hunting lodge after Freddi gets his website zeetheend.com as well as the downloading repeater for the Zappits running. It is at this hunting lodge that Hodges, Holly, and Jerome face off against Brady for the last time.

Fairlawn

Fairlawn is the cemetery in which Hodges is buried after he dies from pancreatic cancer. Holly and Jerome meet here at the end of the novel, the day after Hodges' funeral, to reminisce about him.



Themes and Motifs

One's Ability to put Mind over Matter

Human beings have an amazing ability to triumph even in the most unlikely of situations. There are examples of two people in this novel who overcome physical ailments to meet their goals. One of these is Brady, who overcomes his brain injury to come up with a way to start a suicide epidemic. The other is Hodges who investigates and overcomes Brady and his suicide epidemic plan despite the pain of pancreatic cancer.

After the head injury that Brady suffers, it is believed that he will never regain consciousness again. When he does awake from his coma it is not believed Brady will ever be more than a vegetable. Unknown to his doctor and nurses, Brady has been alert for weeks before he lets them know. He has been working on remembering his life and putting together the reasons why he is in the traumatic brain injury clinic. Babineau credits the experimental drugs he gave Brady for helping the man regain consciousness while other believed the hit to Brady's head might have somehow given him special powers. Brady, however, believes that he was entirely responsible for his own recovery.

Even though Brady is stuck in what he describes as a basically useless body, he finds ways to move around and put together a plan to start a suicide epidemic. Brady's story is one that shows people can use the power of their mind to do cruel things as well as good things. Brady takes control of the minds of Library AI and even his neurosurgeon, Felix Babineau. He is even able to hijack their bodies to take short trips out of his hospital room for research. Using AI and Babineau, Brady convinces Freddi to help him with his computer website and Zappit modifications.

Hodges meanwhile is suffering with pancreatic cancer. His pain is becoming intense and his doctor wants him to start treatment on the day he is told of his diagnosis. Hodges, however, wants to power through his pain and continue investigating Brady until he is able to stop his cruel plan. Hodges doubts his ability to continue his work even though Holly has given him only two days to investigate before he goes for treatment because his pain becomes so severe. Hodges uses to power of his mind to power through unremitting pain and to bring Brady to justice.

Life as a Gift

An important point made in this novel that deals with suicide and disability as well as approaching death is that life in any form is a gift. As Hodges comes to grips with his coming death, he begins to realize how precious life is. Similarly, two of the girls who tried to kill themselves at Brady's goading wondered why they had ever wanted to be dead when they realized they had survived. The life of Martine Stover, one of the people



badly injured by Brady in the City Center massacre is also a tribute to the gift of life because she enjoyed life despite her disability.

As Hodges thinks about his coming death and the ease with which Brady convinced people to kill themselves, he is both angry and sad. He thinks “about how some people carelessly squander what others would sell their souls to have: a healthy, pain-free body” (424). Now that he is at the end of his life, Hodges realizes how much he enjoys living and how much he wants to go on living. Remember that when Hodges first retired from the police department he was at the point of considering suicide. Hodges takes his own advice and gives things a chance to get better.

Brady had Ellen so determined that she wanted to kill herself that she jumped out her bedroom window. Similarly Barbara was so determined she would be better off dead that she was willing to step in front of a truck. While Brady manipulated their minds they believed suicide was reasonable. Once his voice was gone, they realized they really wanted to live. They wondered why they had ever thought they wanted to be dead.

Hodges particularly is amazed by the lives of the people who survived the City Center massacre. “Hodges is always amazed by the resilience of which some men and women are capable” (40). One of these people is Tom Saubers. Even though Tom is working again and basically able to walk normally, Hodges knows that Tom will always have pain and will always limp.

Martine Stover is another person who deserves respect for her life after the injury Brady gave her. She was paralyzed from the chest down after she was hit by the car Brady drove through the crowd at the City Center. In a letter to Hodges, Brady wrote that Martine was “your basic head on a stick” (19). When Hodges talks to Martine’s housekeeper he learns that even though Martine was paralyzed, she had a full life and had no interest in dying. It was instead Brady who decided to take Martine’s life from her.

Giving of Poetic Justice

There are three instances in which poetic justice is given to characters in this novel. Poetic justice is a literary technique in which a cruel character suddenly has a turn of bad luck or dies a terrible death while a good character gets good news or has good luck. In the examples of poetic justice in this novel there is a certain amount of irony because they generally have the same cruel thing done to them that they did to others.

Nurse Scapelli is the first character who falls prey to poetic justice. One of her most defining personality characteristics is her inability to give anyone mercy. Any one of her subordinates who commits even the tiniest infraction is fired with no second chances. Her inability to give mercy is turned on her when Brady visits her house to goad her into suicide. Even though Scapelli begs Brady for mercy for assaulting him in his hospital room, Brady refuses to give Scapelli a second chance, just like she never gave her employees a second chance.



Another character who falls prey to poetic justice is Babineau. He is the doctor who experiments on Brady by giving him doses of an unapproved medicine. Brady is angry because his doctor experimented on him even though it was perhaps these experimental drugs that helped his brain return to normal function. In order to get revenge, Brady turns the tables on Babineau and experiments on the doctor. He uses Babineau as his minion to do his leg work for his plan with the Zappits and also hijacks Babineau's body near the end of the story.

A final example of poetic justice is given to Brady himself. Brady became a wanted man after he drove a Mercedes Benz through a crowd of people waiting for a job fair to open. Because he pretended to be semi-catatonic Brady never had to stand trial for his crimes. Justice comes when Brady is run over by the Sno-Cat that Jerome drives to the hunting camp where Brady is shooting at Hodges and Holly. As Brady lays dying, Hodges points out to him that he was just run over by a large vehicle. Brady begs for Hodges to help him or shoot him. It almost seems too kind that Hodges gives Brady his gun so he can shoot himself.

Suicide as a Disease

The text of the novel points out the sad reality that suicide can spread like a disease. Brady counts on this disease-like characteristic of suicide to keep the suicides he started rolling. One modern invention that Brady counts on to spread the news of suicides is the social media. Timing of the beginning of Brady's suicide plan is also significant to help it become an epidemic.

Even though she tried to ignore what she was doing for Brady, even Freddi recognized the danger that the suicides Brady would encourage using the Zappits and the website zeetheend could spread. "This is going to spread like the flu, Freddi thinks. No, more like ebola" (333). This spread is what Brady is counting on. He believes the suicides will spread because teens are herd creatures. They tend to follow the cues given to them by their friends and heroes.

Brady depends on social media to spread the word of his suicide site. "He thinks (and not for the first time) that a touch of telekinesis is nothing compared to the power of the Internet. He's sure thousands of suicides have incubated in the potent soup of its social media sites, where the trolls run free and the bullying goes on endlessly" (289). Brady is right. Teens are constantly hooked into social media. Anything that is posted on sites like Facebook or Twitter is instantly transmitted to thousands of other teens.

To make matters worse, Brady starts spreading the seeds for his suicide epidemic during the early months of the year, the time best known for suicides. "That interest peaks in January and February, when dark comes early and it seems spring will never arrive" (362-363). Like other diseases, even suicide spreads more easily during the dark, cold months of the year.



Presentation of Hypnosis/Manipulation/Mind Control

Stephen King writes his novel *End of Watch* based on the idea that mind control and the taking over of another person's mind is possible. There are aspects of what Brady does that are possible, and others that probably are not really possible, but give the reader pause for thought. He uses hypnosis to control and manipulate the minds of other people. Brady goes so far as to be able to take over and destroy other people's minds so he can hijack their bodies.

Brady decides he wants to manipulate and control other people because one of his heroes, Jim Jones, forced nearly a thousand people to commit suicide by controlling their minds. Brady wants this same kind of control. His first idea about how to go about this comes to him when he realizes he can access a nurse's thoughts when she has a seizure in his room. During this seizure she is hypnotized, in a way, by the lights flashing off the windshields of the vehicles in the parking garage next door. Hypnosis is used to access other people's minds but it is unlikely that a person would actually be able to enter another person's brain and look through his eyes like Brady does with this nurse.

Brady reasons from this experience that if he is able to put people in a hypnotized state he can alter their thought patterns. This is done every day in hypnosis therapy. Generally hypnosis is used to help patients improve their emotional states or overcome bad habits; it is not usually used to encourage a person to kill himself. Brady has even done enough research to know that the Zappits he had modified work as an inducement device (319) to bring about the hypnotic state.

Brady also uses the manipulative powers of the internet to further his goal. He recognizes the powers of social media along with the herd nature of teens and believes each of these characteristics will further his ability to start a suicide epidemic. Once teens begin hearing that others are killing themselves, Brady believes others will follow the trend. When Freddi asks the question: "Will people obey a hypnotic command to off themselves?" (333). The answer is apparently yes. During Pete's meeting with Hodges, Pete reports fourteen deaths by suicide and forty attempts.



Styles

Point of View

This novel is told from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. Main characters of focus are Brady and Hodges but the author often focuses on no character in particular, allowing the reader to know the thoughts and actions of all characters involved. By using the third person point of view, King is able to tell his story from all angles. The reader gets input from Brady as well as from Hodges. If the story were told from a first person point of view not only would the reader not know what was going on in all of the characters minds, he would also get attached to one character. By letting an omniscient narrator tell the story, it remains plot driven instead of having the reader get too attached to any one character.

Language and Meaning

Police jargon, medical terminology, and computer speak are all among the specialized language used in this novel. Police jargon is found not only in the opening section of the novel dealing with the ambulance drivers but throughout the novel as Hodges thinks about how this case with Brady will be his last case. For instance, Hodges thinks briefly he may retire with his “last case left hanging fire” (264), as if he is afraid he will not get the case solved before his death. The phrase “end of watch” is also used several times in the book, not only as the title but also as the epitaph on Hodges’ tombstone. End of watch, as is explained in the novel, usually comes when an officer retires. Hodges, however, remained active in the investigation of Brady almost until he died, nearly ten years after his retirement.

Medical terminology can be found in the opening section of the novel as well as the section that describes Brady’s condition after he was hit in the head by Holly. Although the reader may not be familiar with a good deal of medical terminology, the terms are used in context so that the reader can get an idea of what the author means easily. “Ambo” for ambulance, “First In Bag,” and “external defibrillator” are all examples of medical terminology.

Computer jargon is also used a good deal as Freddi tells Al what his boss needs to make the Fishin’ Hole demo into a game. Root kits, repeaters, and sources codes are all things that Freddi believes will be needed to run the game. More computer jargon is introduced when Holly works with the computer tech at the police department to get the zeetheend site taken off line. She refers to “dossing” the site in order to get it shut down.

Structure

This novel is divided into five main sections. The first section takes place seven years before the bulk of the novel and is told from the point of view of one of the ambulance



drivers who responded to the City Center the day Brady drove his car through the crowd. This section contains a good deal of exposition and gives fictional “historical” background for the story. This section is told in the past tense.

The next three sections follow a different pattern. “Z: January 2016,” “Blackish,” and “badconcert.com” are all told in the present tense. These three sections all detail the rising action as Holly, Hodges and Jerome get involved with a case involving Brady. Exposition is scattered throughout the sections but the main purpose of these sections is not expository. There is a good deal of dialogue in these sections.

Smaller sections at the end of these three large sections are expository in nature. These sections “Brady,” “Library AI,” and “The Suicide Prince” are all written in past tense. There is not much dialogue in any of these sections. This could be because they are narrated mainly with Brady as the central character and Brady is unable to talk. In the section “Brady,” the reader is given a short wrap up of Brady’s life from the time he was a child through the time he decided to let the nurses and his doctors know he had regained consciousness. The section “Library AI” continues the story of Brady’s recovery and tells the reader how he got AI to come under his command as Z-Boy. The final section like this, “The Suicide Prince,” describes how Brady worked out getting the Zappits modified and how he took control of Babineau.

The climax comes in the last long section of the novel entitled “Heads and Skins.” The short section included in “Heads and Skins” contains both the falling action as Pete tells Hodges and his friends the outcome of the Babineau case during Hodges’ birthday party. The denouement occurs also in this final section where Hodges dies of his cancer eight months after he began treatment.



Quotes

She was wearing her best clothes,' Jason said. 'Good slacks, expensive sweater, nice coat. Trying to get back on her feet. And some bastard comes along and takes it all.'"

-- Jason Rapsis (April 10, 2009 — Martine Stover)

Importance: The ambulance worker's statement that Martine and the others waiting for the job fair to open were honestly trying to improve their lives after a recession stresses how cruel Brady was to purposefully injure them.

End of watch is what they call it, but Hodges himself has found it impossible to give up watching."

-- Narrator (Z January 2016 — 1)

Importance: Hodges thinks about his old partner's upcoming retirement and considers that even though he retired years before he has not been able to completely sever himself from police work.

Someone — Ellerton, he presumes, because her daughter's writing days were long over — drew a single large letter on the counter: Z."

-- Narrator (Z January 2016 — 6)

Importance: Hodges notices the letter "Z" written on the counter in Ellerton's bathroom after Holly asks to look at the picture of the woman's bathroom again. He believes the single letter is some sort of suicide note but does not realize until much later how important the letter is and how often he will see it.

Isabelle only sees what she sees, and she doesn't like people who see more, or at least look for more. She feels the same way about you, Bill. She's jealous of you. Over Pete."

-- Holly (Z January 2016 — 9)

Importance: When Hodges asks why Holly has such a dislike for Izzy, Pete's new partner, Holly points out the woman does not want to look deeply into what is going on around her and does not like people who choose to do so.

There is, however, one long-term patient in the Bucket whom she hates. That patient is Brady Hartsfield. It isn't because she had a friend or relative who was hurt or killed at City Center; it's because she thinks he's shamming. Avoiding the punishment he so richly deserves."

-- Narrator (Z January 2016 — 10)

Importance: Scapelli, the new head nurse at the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic, hates Brady because she thinks he is faking his brain injury so that he does not have to go to trial for the City Center deaths. This, combined with her lack of mercy, makes her afraid of what she might do to him if she is left alone with him too long.



It's the face he hides from everyone except Felix Babineau, and Dr. Babineau no longer matters. Dr. Babineau hardly exists. These days he's mostly Dr. Z."

-- Narrator (Z January 2016 — 17)

Importance: Brady appears to be controlling Dr. Babineau through the Fishin' Hole game on his Zappit. Scapelli is right, Brady is faking his mental incompetence because he is fully alert as he manipulates Dr. Babineau, who has become Brady's puppet, acting under the name Dr. Z.

Laverty leans down for a close look, hands on his knees. 'Hard to tell,' he says. 'Either a 2 or a Z.'"

-- Officer Jason Laverty (Z January 2016 — 23)

Importance: Officers who response to the call to check on Scapelli notice that she has written what looks like a 2 or a "Z" next to herself on the tile. If it is a "Z" it connects Scapelli's death with that of Martine and Janice. When looking at a picture of the room in which Janice killed herself she noticed a "Z" written on the countertop in magic marker.

He went a little deeper and realized he could see her thoughts. It was amazing. He could actually watch them flashing back and forth, hither and thither, high and low, sometimes crossing paths in a dark green medium that was — perhaps, he'd have to think about this, and very carefully to be sure — her core consciousness."

-- Narrator (Z January 2016 — Brady)

Importance: When Sadie MacDonald had a seizure brought on by the lights flashing off the windshields of the cars in the parking garage next door Brady realized he could inhabit her mind.

The first time I met you, in town for your aunt Elizabeth's funeral, your mom was practically leading you around like a mutt on a leash. Do this, Holly, do that, Holly, and for Christ's sake don't do anything embarrassing."

-- Hodges (Blackish — 1)

Importance: As Hodges considers how far Holly has come since he first met her he worries what will happen to her if he were to die. She echoes his thoughts that if he were to die she would go home, a move she felt would be bad for her.

I arrested some bad doers when I was on the cops, some very bad doers — one was a mother who killed her three-year-old for insurance that didn't amount to a hill of beans — but I never felt the presence of evil in any of them once they were caught. It's like evil's some kind of vulture that flies away once these mokes are locked up. But I felt it that day, Holly. I really did."

-- Hodges (Blackish — 2)

Importance: Hodges explains to Holly the unusual presence of evil that he felt from Brady even after Brady was supposedly mentally incapacitated. The day in particular he



speaks of is the day that Brady made direct eye contact with Hodges when Hodges visited him at the Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic.

Maybe he's a spider, and Room 217 at the Bucket is the center of his web, where he sits spinning."

-- Hodges (Blackish — 2)

Importance: Hodges compares Brady to a spider who is spinning a web from the center which might stretch out to hurt others.

The idiots who had created this particular game had also created, certainly by accident, a hypnotic effect."

-- Narrator (Blackish — Library AI)

Importance: As Brady studies the Zappit Fishin' Hole game he notices that it has a hypnotic effect, the effect that must have allowed him to get inside Library AI's brain so easily.

It's early to generalize, but he's starting to think the number-fish only show up on the Zappits that were handed out by the man with the briefcase, Myron Zakim."

-- Narrator (badconcert.com — 4)

Importance: Hodges believes that the only Zappits that actually have fish that turn into numbers are the ones personally handed out by Myron Zakim. This indicates these people, which include Janice Ellerton and Barbara Robinson were hand picked to receive these Zappits.

Destroying that mind is too much like those dumb and superstitious ISIS fucks hammering irreplaceable treasures of art and culture to rubble."

-- Narrator (badconcert.com — 6)

Importance: It is interesting that even though Brady would probably not believe that anything he has done in his life is terrorism, he compares the act of destroying Dr. Babineau's brain by inhabiting it to the acts of terrorism and vandalism done by ISIS to priceless artwork.

Then he's Brady again, wearing a Babineau skin-suit."

-- Narrator (badconcert.com — 8)

Importance: After Brady destroys Babineau's core consciousness he sleeps and waits for Babineau's memories to die. He wakes after the final memory plays itself. At this point it is Brady's core consciousness inhabiting Babineau's body.

I don't understand how Brady Hartsfield could have had anything to do with them, but so many of the connections go back to him. And to the concert he tried to blow up."

-- Holly (badconcert.com — 12)



Importance: After they hear that Brady has killed himself Holly and Hodges discuss their disbelief that Brady had anything to do with the deaths and suicides that have been reported even though they recognize that many of the leads and connections seem to lead back to Brady.

They've got their perp, but the shit's not right. I know it, and Izzy does, too. She just doesn't give a rat's ass."

-- Pete (badconcert.com — 16)

Importance: In his anger because Izzy is trying to pass off a case Pete tells Hodges that he knows even though it makes sense to arrest Library AI, he knows that Library AI is not the one responsible for Cora Babineau's death. Pete is angry because Izzy is more interested in getting a promotion instead of doing good police work.

Sometimes they just hear a voice coming from the game console, but the ones who are most susceptible actually see him, like some kind of avatar in a video game."

-- Narrator (badconcert.com — 18)

Importance: When Brady talks to his victims through the Zappits some of them only hear his voice but some, like Scapelli and Barbara, can actually see a ghostly version of Brady.

Look at the game and it stays between us. Refuse, and your career is over."

-- Brady in the body of Library AI (badconcert.com — The Suicide Prince)

Importance: Brady speaks to Dr. Babineau through the body of Library AI. This is the first time that Brady attempts to break into Dr. Babineau's mind. He uses blackmail in order to get Babineau to look at the Zappit game and make himself susceptible to invasion by Brady.

Little by little, Brady Hartsfield — who could barely walk — took possession of the doctor who had presumed to take possession of him, and put him in a guilt-trap that had many teeth."

-- Narrator (badconcert.com — The Suicide Prince)

Importance: Despite his disability Brady is able to take over the mind and body of the man who was his neurosurgeon. The turn of events is ironic because Babineau had once thought he could use Brady as lab rat. Babineau's lab rat turned on him and began his own process of taking possession of Babineau.

Turns the pink fish into number-fish and adds the blue flashes,' Jerome amplifies."

-- Jerome (Heads and Skins — 11)

Importance: Jerome explains to Hodges how the upgrade to the Fishin' Hole demo changes that demo screen into a game. These changes make the demo screen into a game so that people will look at it longer and be more likely to be affected by the hypnotic effect.



When they were awake, it was Brady inside. Believe what you want, but it was him. It's not just the double dots or the backslanted printing, it's everything. I worked with that skeevy motherfucker. I know."

-- Freddi (Heads and Skins — 15)

Importance: Freddi shares with Hodges, Holly and Jerome how she knew that it was Brady who was working through Library AI and Dr. Babineau's bodies when those men dealt with her. She says that when these men were awake and alert it was Brady who was pulling their strings. She bases this not only on the signatures of his writing, like double dots in his computer programming and backslanting words, but also his attitude and speech in general.

But to the cops and the world at large, the man I killed would be a respected neurosurgeon named Felix Babineau."

-- Hodges (Heads and Skins — 23)

Importance: Hodges explains to Jerome that he does not want Jerome to go with him to search for Brady because he does not want to take the chance that Jerome will get charged in the murder of Babineau.

Not until the trails of slime he's left in the heads of God knows how many people are washed away by the brain's remarkable ability to heal itself."

-- Narrator (Heads and Skins — 36)

Importance: Hodges will not really accept that Brady is dead until all of the people he has influenced with the Zappits and the website have cleared their brains of the false thoughts that Brady planted there.

Eventually,' Hodges says. 'But with social media or without it, with Brady or without him, suicide is a fact of life.'"

-- Hodges (Heads and Skins — After)

Importance: Hodges tells Pete, Holly, Jerome and Barbara that the rash of suicides will eventually end but that suicide is a reality of life and will always exist.

He opened a door for me. One into the world. He gave me something to do that made a difference."

-- Holly (Heads and Skins — After)

Importance: Holly and Jerome meet at Hodges' grave the day after his funeral. Holly explains to Jerome why Hodges was such an influence in her life. He changed her for the better.