

Everlost Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Nick and Allie are traveling with their families when the car Nick's father is driving strikes a piece of metal in the road, causing Nick's father to lose control. Nick is in the middle in the back seat and does not have a seat belt. They collide head-on with the car Allie is riding in. Allie has just unbuckled her seat belt to adjust her blouse. The two children fly through the windshields of their cars and are headed down a tunnel toward a light but bump into each other, effectively stopping their journey. A young boy finds them and waits nine months for them to wake. He doesn't remember his name and Allie calls him Leif. Leif slowly helps Nick and Allie realize they are dead. Leif himself died in a flood.

Allie is determined to go to her home. She realizes her father might have died in the wreck but believes the rest of her family will be there, waiting for her. Leif tries to convince them it's not safe outside the forest. The forest is a dead spot and they are able to walk about without any problem in any dead spot. But in the world of the living, the dead are pulled all the way to the center of the earth. Leif also warns them about "the McGill," a monster who is a danger to those who have died.

Allie is determined to go anyway and sets out with Nick. They are soon set upon by a group of rogue boys who threaten to throw Nick and Allie to the center of the earth. Allie bluffs, saying she knows the McGill and can summon him. The boys hesitate but then call Allie's bluff. Just then, Leif comes running from the woods, frightening the boys away and cementing his friendship with Allie and Nick. Leif follows them as they arrive in New York city and discover the Twin Towers is home to a girl who is an expert on dead children, Mary Hightower. Though the Twin Towers is not real, it exists on its former site and is filled with children.

Allie soon discovers the children who live in the towers are caught in a rut, repeating a routine day after day. Nick, meanwhile, is enamored with Mary while Leif spends all his time playing a video game. Eventually, Allie convinces Leif and Nick to leave with her but they're captured, first by the Haunter and then by the McGill. By the time Allie and the others escape from the McGill, Nick has come to realize there's a way for children to cross over. All children arrive with a coin in their pockets, even if they didn't have it when they died. By holding a coin, they can make the journey that was interrupted. Once Nick realizes this, he helps more than a thousand children cross over, including those who had lived in the Twin Towers with Mary. Mary vows to rebuild her city and Nick holds onto his coin but finds it cold, indicating he isn't yet ready to cross over himself. He realizes that he still has work to do.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary

As the story opens, there was a hairpin curve with a piece of metal in the road. Several cars missed it but the car driven by Nick's father doesn't miss it and the car careens out of control, striking another car head-on. Nick is one of three children in the back seat and he isn't wearing a seat belt because there isn't one available. He is on his way to a wedding and is eating a chocolate bar. In the other car, Allie has just taken off her seat belt to adjust her blouse. When the cars strike, Allie and Nick each fly out of their seats and through the windshields. Allie is aware of her body traveling down a tunnel toward light, then she bumps into someone who has the distinct smell of chocolate - Nick. They both fall asleep, exhausted from their flight.

In chapter two, there is a boy jumping from limb to limb, playing among the trees, when he hears the wreck. The boy has seen wrecks before. The people in the cars are always gone by the time the boy arrives. This wreck is "very messy" and it's dark by the time the scene is cleared. The boy is leaving the site when he sees Nick and Allie on the floor of the forest. The boy settles in to wait.

When Allie wakes, she knows she isn't at home and comes to realize she's outdoors. She begins to search for a "rational explanation," wondering if her family has gone camping. She sees a boy nearby and remembers flying through the air into a tunnel before bumping into the boy she'll later learn is Nick. She then sees another boy. His clothes are odd and Allie asks his name but he doesn't answer. Allie soon realizes that Nick doesn't know anything about their whereabouts. The other boy informs them they are in "a great place" and are welcome to stay.

Allie remembers the collision and Nick says he thought he'd dreamed that. Nick keeps trying to wipe the chocolate from his face but can't. Allie says they must have been thrown clear of the wreck and predicts their parents will be looking for them. They consider why no one is looking for them and wonder if they could be the only survivors. Allie believes there's something "off about the whole situation" and believes the younger boy hold the key. They ask his name and the boy says he can't remember. The boy does remember that he was eleven "when he got here" and Nick notes that he still looks eleven. Allie decides to call him "Leif" in honor of his forest home.

Nick and Allie climb back up to the road, expecting to see the scene of the crash. There are no signs of the accident. They try to flag down a passing car but no one stops or even seems to see them. Allie steps into the path of an oncoming bus, expecting to be able to run if it seems the bus won't stop. However, when she realizes the bus isn't going to stop, she discovers her feet have sunk into the asphalt and she's unable to run. She passes through the bus.



In chapter three, Leif has learned that dead spots - "places only the dead can see" - are solid to the dead but other places and things pass right through the dead. The dead don't breathe except when they're talking or simply mimicking what they remember. They don't feel pain except emotional pain. He has also learned by watching Allie and Nick that they remained asleep for nine months after the crash. Leif tries to teach them things, such as the fact that they can't change their clothes and that falling can be fun. He shoved Allie and Nick out of a tree, terrifying Allie in the process.

Allie tries to reassure herself that there are rules to be learned and that all she has to do for her new situation to make sense is to learn them, but she bursts into tears. She says she misses her parents and Leif is disappointed to realize that Allie and Nick aren't going to stay with him. Leif shouts that they are "just like the others," and Allie is immediately alert, wanting to know what "others" he's talking about. Leif believes that even if Allie and Nick leave, they'll return. Nick considers the situation and realizes that Leif had adjusted, meaning he and Allie could adjust as well. His bigger question is whether he wants to remain in the forest. Leif gives in and explains that he's seen other children over the years, always passing through the forest and always on the run from "the McGill." Leif says the McGill is a monster. When Allie says there is no such thing as a monster, Leif says there is in Everlost.

Chapters 1 through 3 Analysis

At the end of several of the chapters there are pieces of books written by Mary Hightower. Mary is a fifteen-year-old girl who operates the equivalent of an orphanage in the ghostly Twin Towers in New York City. Mary isn't her real name but she adopted the name when she took on the role of caregiver to the children. On the surface, Mary's writings seem aimed at making life better for the children who arrive in Everlost. Mary points out in chapter two that a child who finds himself in Everlost suffers quite a shock but soon overcomes it. She compares it to jumping into a pool of cold water. "It's a shock at first, but once you're in, the water is fine." Some readers may read a hint of foreboding in that sentence and they'd be right to do so. Readers will soon learn many things about Everlost, including that Mary isn't the benevolent caregiver she seems to be.

An interesting thing about Everlost is that all the children are dressed as they were when they died. Since Nick is eating chocolate at the moment of his death, he's destined to spend eternity with chocolate on his face. Because he was on his way to a wedding, he'll wear the suit and tie for as long as he's in Everlost. There are some changes that occur as will be seen in a crew of misfits who soon take on ominous appearances because they are expected to do so.

Chapter three is followed by another excerpt from a book by Mary Hightower in which she says there are only children in Everlost because adults are so certain of their destinations that they are never sidetracked. There is a note at the end of that section that says Mary is "strangely silent on the subject of monsters."



Chapters 4 through 6

Chapters 4 through 6 Summary

In chapter four, there is discussion about being ghosts and Allie hates the terms. Nick says they are "USDs," Undefined Spectral Doochickies, but none of them laugh about it. Leif says the other children who pass through refer to themselves as "Afterlights." The conversation turns to the McGill and Allie asks why kids are afraid if nothing can hurt them. Leif says the McGill "knows how to make you suffer till the end of time." Leif says most kids believe the McGill is "the devil's own pet hound" that escaped, unable to make it all the way to the living world.

Nick suggests that their current situation could be like a coin standing on its edge in that they might be able to find the tunnel and the light at the end of it, or they might even be able to find a path back to life. Nick says he's from Baltimore and Allie is from New Jersey. Allie wants to go home. Nick intuitively believes that's a bad idea but admits he wants to. Allie is uncomfortable with the "metaphysical" aspect but latches onto the idea of a goal - going home.

Nick comes up with the idea of making something similar to snowshoes to keep them from sinking so quickly into the earth. Leif begs them to stay, saying he'd prayed for them and believes God hears his prayers.

In chapter five, the reader learns that Mary Hightower is not Mary's real name. She no longer remembers her real name. Mary was chosen because she wanted a motherly name and Hightower came because of her position. She has hundreds of children living with her in the Twin Towers and knows that number will continue to grow. Places and things sometimes cross over into the land of the dead if they are beloved. Mary enjoys the respect but has no desire to be considered a god. She has been writing for more than a hundred years. At fifteen, she is one of the oldest in Everlost.

On a particular day, Mary is watching the busy people of New York but knows the living world is not her business. Just then, a boy with curly blond hair, Stradivarius, walks in with news a Finder has arrived. The Finder's name is Speedo. He is wearing a wet bathing suit and has a birthday cake with butter cream icing and the words "Happy 5th Birthday Suzie" written on top. Mary often trades for items Finders bring her and she gives Speedo the keys to a Jaguar. He accepts the trade.

In chapter six, Nick and Allie discover they don't need to rest or eat but want to. They occasionally find dead spots along the road and stop there to rest or sleep though Nick says it bothers him not to dream. They are resting by a sign that says, "Welcome to Rockland County" when they are attacked by a group of rogue boys. One of the boys is called "Johnnie-O," and he has huge hands though he is no older than Allie. Johnnie-O demands that Nick become his servant and says Allie isn't welcome. It becomes obvious they plan to shove her into the earth and she makes them hesitate by saying



she knows the McGill and can summon him. The boys decide she's really a "Greensoul," or newly crossed over, and call her bluff. Suddenly, a figure comes from the woods and the boys run away, believing it's the McGill. Nick and Allie discover it's Leif who has been following them.

The three continue walking, arriving in New York City. It takes only awhile before Nick says he knows where they should be headed. Allie says it's out of the way but eventually agrees. Leif is amazed when he sees the Twin Towers and says he hadn't known buildings like that exist. Allie responds that they no longer do exist.

Chapters 4 through 6 Analysis

The story of the McGill is typical of monster stories. There are rumors surrounding the appearance of the creature including that he was the devil's pet but managed to chew through his leash and escaped. Leif says no one who has ever seen the McGill has lived to tell about it, which Allie says is "convenient."

There's an interesting aspect of Allie's personality seen when she's trying to convince Leif that the McGill isn't real. Allie is making reasonable arguments against the existence of the monster and Leif argues that Allie doesn't know everything. This is true, especially considering Allie's current situation and the amount of information she doesn't yet have about Everlost. However, Allie counters, saying that she has all the time in the world now and so will make it a priority to learn everything. This need for information and knowledge will drive Allie to save herself, Leif, and Nick from a life of repetition once they reach New York.

In another excerpt from Mary Hightower's books, she writes that "gravity fatigue" is the term for a dead child's tendency to sink into the earth. She says that no child leaves Everlost and anyone who is missing has succumbed to gravity fatigue. She admits there's no way to know whether children actually sink to the center of the earth but believes it "must be a crowded place by now."

Speedo's presentation of the birthday cake is followed by an explanation of how things cross over into Everlost. Food that is lovingly prepared sometimes makes the trip but Mary notes those are usually tiny scraps of items. In this case, Speedo says he was at a birthday party and the cake was knocked off the table before it could be eaten. Mary realizes it was clever of Speedo to spend his time at birthday parties because there is often love involved. Mary, however, has another explanation for how some things cross over into Everlost. She says sunspots are sometimes responsible. She uses this explanation with regard to the Jaguar she gives Speedo in exchange for the birthday cake. There's an interesting note during the exchange. Mary thinks the birthday cake is very valuable and that Speedo "deserves a fair trade." She trades him the car for the cake and he accepts. However, he later says that Mary failed to point out that the car can only be driven on roads that are dead spots, meaning it can't be driven in many places.



As Speedo is preparing to leave, Mary points out that children have thirty-two teeth. She has written about the ability to change appearance based on what a child remembers himself looking like. She says Speedo has obviously been focusing a great deal on how his smile looks because his mouth is completely out of proportion to his head. This is seen later when Nick becomes self-conscious of the chocolate on his face to that point that it becomes even more pronounced. It is also seen when Nick and Allie learn that the McGill is actually a boy who clawed his way back to the surface from the center of the earth and has forgotten what he looks like.



Chapters 7 through 9

Chapters 7 through 9 Summary

In chapter seven, Leif had found one of the places on earth that "can never truly be lost" when he found his forest. Another is the Twin Towers. Allie, Nick, and Leif approach the Twin Towers to find there are dozens of "Afterlight kids" playing games on the plaza. They are greeted by several children, including a girl throwing a jump rope who doesn't stop her activity as she talks to them. A girl dressed in tie-dye and bell-bottoms offers to take them to Mary. Meadow tells the three they are to make a wish by tossing a coin into the fountain, a requirement of every Greensoul who arrives. Allie says she doesn't have a coin but Meadow insists she look and Allie finds one in her back pocket. She tosses it in and, like many, wishes she were alive.

The children make their way up the Twin Towers and Allie discovers there is a hodge-podge of furniture that has crossed over. Allie notes that Mary is wearing an emerald green dress with lacy cuffs and asks if Mary crossed over on her way to a wedding. Nick is upset that Allie continues to be rude to people they meet and Mary says it's rude to remark on how one crossed. Allie blushes and Mary says she was only pointing out a fact that Allie couldn't possibly know yet, being so new to Everlost. Mary points out the children of Everlost become tired and are "refreshed" by being with other children. This is echoed by Stradivarius, otherwise known as Vari, a young boy who serves as Mary's assistant and named for his musical ability.

Allie is immediately defensive, saying there's no guarantee they're staying. Nick says they weren't going anywhere anyway but Allie says she's going home. Mary says there are consequences. Vari produces three books he calls "a crash course" in the afterlife. Mary says that everyone has to do something and that she writes.

In chapter eight, it's noted that Mary, at fifteen, is among the oldest children in Everlost. She likes everyone but knows that Allie is headstrong and will probably pose a problem. Vari offers to play his violin and Mary agrees. She notes that Vari is always with her and she depends on him so much that she sometimes forgets he's only nine.

Allie, Nick, and Leif are given a place to stay and Leif is soon engrossed in a Game Boy. Nick asks Mary what they are supposed to do now and Mary says they can do whatever they like. Nick asks what they will do when they grow bored and Mary says he'll find something to keep himself content. Allie has been reading Mary's books and she has questions. She points out that Mary says "haunting is forbidden" but also that "we're free spirits and can do anything we want." Mary tries to explain then goes on to other questions Allie poses, including that it's not a good idea to go home, without giving concrete reasons why. Allie realizes there's something wrong with the community Mary has established but can't exactly figure out what. They begin to find their way around and Mary takes them to a floor where dozens of children are copying Mary's books. She says the routing is comforting and Nick accepts that but Allie is bothered by it. One day



Allie insists that Nick go with her. They watch a ballgame and Allie predicts which team will win and gives the score. She's right. She then takes him to a card game and says one kid is going to ask for threes, which he does, then an argument breaks out with one kid accusing another of cheating. Nick asks how Allie knows and she says the games and the outcomes are the same every day. Nick suddenly remembers Mary saying the children find comfort in routine and realizes the children seldom vary from their routines.

Chapters 7 through 9 Analysis

Allie is torn about the fact that children are playing on the grounds of the Twin Towers. She cites the violent act that caused the end of the buildings and the number of people who'd died, especially brutal when one considers they shouldn't have died at all. Allie equates the children playing to "dancing on a grave" but Meadow recites Mary's statement on the subject, that it's like putting flowers on a grave. Mary has told the children that having fun brings honor to the towers. Allie doesn't argue the point but is still unsure if she agrees with Mary's thoughts on the subject.

One excerpt from Mary's writings indicates that Greensouls can't know the many dangers and should be treated patiently. She says this is the only way to "mold" them. Her use of the word "mold" is interesting and is a clue that Mary is self-serving in forming the community of children at the Twin Towers.

One of Allie's questions revolves around the fact that there are no children older than sixteen in Everlost. She wonders about this, saying that everyone knows a child is considered an adult at eighteen, meaning there should be some seventeen-year-olds. Nick says the age of adulthood varies, pointing out that a person can vote at eighteen but can't legally drink until twenty-one. He then says the Jewish religion recognizes a child as an adult at thirteen and that he has seen fourteen-year-old Jewish children. Allie counters, saying that still doesn't explain why there are no children over sixteen "admitted to Everlost." Nick is captured by that phrase and says that it sounds better than "lost on the way to heaven."

In one of Mary's books, she writes about simplicity. She says the great artists of the ages learned "the value of simplicity" and that it's the same for Afterlights. She says the Afterlights learns to simplify their lives, finding comfort in a single routine, and that there's no need for "a thousand meaningless activities." Allie figures out that the children in the Twin Towers are actually stuck in a rut. They are able to vary their routines but are unwilling to do so. This soon becomes a major problem for Allie as she watches Leif slip into a routine so deep he can barely acknowledge her.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Nick becomes more concerned about the endless repetition. He wants to talk to Mary about it but knows she'll have "a wonderful, positive spin" to explain it. Nick knows that Mary does different things each day and is relieved to know the repetition can be resisted.

There is animosity growing between Nick and Vari because of the increased amount of time Nick is spending with Mary. Both are jealous though Vari is much more childish about his actions. Nick tries to reassure himself that Vari is only nine years old and, as such, is just a little kid. Mary holds this same opinion and often reminds herself that Nick is only nine. However, neither stops to think that Vari has been nine for 146 years and his emotions have naturally matured even if his body hasn't.

Meanwhile, Leif has become a "Pac-Man junkie." He is compulsive in his continuous playing of the game. When Mary announces he's been playing for five days without a break, Leif is unimpressed and refuses to stop playing.

Mary feels only motherly concern for Leif. She could spend a great deal of time Nick and worries about her feelings for him. Even more troubling is Allie and the emotions Allie's constant questions and her hope have evoked in Mary. One day Mary slips away to the fifty-eighth floor where she often goes to be alone. The floor is empty and Mary is never interrupted here but Nick finds her. Mary says there are new Afterlives arriving all the time and they might someday need this space.

Mary asks if Allie is leaving and Nick says Allie's insistence on finding out if her father survived the crash doesn't seem that wrong. Mary says she died on a Wednesday. She and her brother walked the same route home from school each day, crossing two train tracks. A train was stopped on the tracks one day. While they knew they shouldn't cross under the train, they'd crossed through a box car and had stepped directly into the path of an oncoming train on the second tracks. Mary says her brother, Mikey, had been tugging on her as they traveled toward the light at the end of the tunnel. She says they'd veered off course and woke in the middle of winter. Mary says they knew there was something wrong but headed home. Mary says her mother died in childbirth with Mikey and when they arrived home they discovered their father had remarried and there were two kids in the house. Mary says the weight of their absence in the house was so heavy that Mikey quickly sank out of sight and she never saw him again. Mary, however, reached out and grabbed hold of the bed which had crossed to Everlost because her mother died giving birth to Mikey. Mary says she rushed out of the house when her father and his wife came to bed and never saw Mikey again. Nick is sorry for Mary's pain and kisses her. Mary has never allowed this kind of contact before but doesn't want to stop him. She doesn't respond and Nick takes that as a rejection. When Nick returns to his apartment, he is chanting Mary's name then realizes he's forgotten his own.



Mary has 320 children and realizes there are probably other children who would welcome the chance to join them. She contemplates sending Nick out to find them and shares that with Vari. Vari objects, saying he can go. Mary declines his offer.

Allie, meanwhile, is looking for information and she notes she doesn't want the information Mary so freely distributes. Allie notices most of the children are younger and she wonders if there are few older children in Everlost or if most don't remain with Mary. Allie disrupts the routine of some kids playing games by asking questions. Meadow says the kid is talking about the Criminal Arts. Meadow refers to "talents" associated with the Criminal Arts and Allie asks for an explanation. Meadow says Allie would be better off to never know the details. Just then Vari steps into the room and the other children distance themselves from Allie. Vari announces that Mary has a bucket of fried chicken and that everyone can have a bite.

In chapter ten, Allie is alone in an elevator the day after her discussion with Meadow when a boy joins her. Allie immediately mistakes him for a skeleton but then recognizes him as one of two kids who had crossed on Halloween. This boy is named Skully and he says he's heard Allie asking about Criminal Arts. Skully offers to share information as long as Allie doesn't reveal her source and she agrees. He says there is a boy who lives in an old pickle factory that crossed. The kid is called The Haunter and he is capable of several paranormal activities, including how to move things in the living world and be heard by the living. He can also pluck things out of the land of the living into Everlost.

Meanwhile, Nick works for hours trying to remember his name. When he finally does, he takes scraps of paper and writes his name on them, scattering them around the room in case he forgets again. When Allie knocks on his door, Nick initially ignores her but gives in when she won't go away. He suddenly realizes he's created hundreds of the notes with his name on it and has been doing it all night.

Allie says she's going to leave and Nick says he's promised Mary he won't leave. Allie tells him about The Haunter and Nick, realizing he could become very useful to Mary, agrees to go. Allie and Nick then try to convince Leif to go with them. He is adamant that he won't leave the game. Allie tells Leif that he'd saved her life and that she was now going to return the favor. She pleads with him not to "lose your soul to a Pac-Man machine." They agree to leave in the night when the fewest children are around to see their departure. They don't look back but, if they had, they'd have found Vari and Skully watching, and would have seen Vari give Skully a jellybean "for a job well done."

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

The animosity between Nick and Vari is interesting in that they are both desperate for Mary's attention and each sees the other as a threat to that. Equally interesting is Nick's continued focus on Mary though he's already admitted that she isn't as selfless and caring as it seems. As Nick and Vari argue, each suggests the other go away. Then Vari says that eventually Mary won't even remember Nick's name. Nick argues but then Vari asks Nick what his name is. Nick has to think hard for a moment before he comes up



with his first name and he can't remember his last name. He's upset with that and realizes there will probably come a time when no one knows him as Nick, but will refer to him with a nickname, probably "Hersey" because of the chocolate on his face. The fact that the children tend to forget details about their own lives but don't forget things like the name of a candy bar seems inconsistent but it might not be. It could be that the personal things that mean a great deal to a person are the things that are first forgotten.

Most of the children fall into some fun activity and that's how they spend their eternities under Mary's care. The activities are repetitious but the children seem to hold to those routines. When Allie joins a card game, the children are thrown off for that day but the next day they return to their same game in the same order with the same outcome, as if Allie's playing had never happened. What's interesting about this is that Nick spends hours writing his name on scraps of paper. He tears up Mary's books and writes on those pieces of paper as well. His repetition isn't soothing but is frantic in an effort to ensure he doesn't forget his name. Nick fears forgetting his identity more than anything, which seems to prompt this activity.



Chapters 11 through 14

Chapters 11 through 14 Summary

In chapter eleven, Allie, Leif, and Nick arrive at the pickle factory and find the door open. The Haunter is inside and says he's been waiting for them. He's about six and says he can't teach anyone to haunt, that they either have the skill or they don't. The Haunter tells Nick to pick up a stone. He tries and fails and is overrun by "a dozen figures wrapped from head to toe in black robes." Nick is picked up and shoved into a pickle barrel that had crossed with the building. Leif is next and he also fails and is shoved into another barrel. The Haunter tells Allie he'll release Nick and Leif if she brings him the stone. She concentrates fully and does pick up the stone, dropping it in his hand. The Haunter then says he'll free Leif and Nick if Allie studies with him for five years. She is furious but he points out he'd never said when he would free them, only that he would. Allie discovers the figures she'd previously assumed were Afterlights serving the Haunter are really empty shells, a trick by The Haunter. Allie is tossed out of the warehouse and told to come back when she's ready to study.

Allie tries to get back in the pickle factory but the door she'd entered earlier is now closed and she can't find an entrance. She eventually decides she'll have to go to Mary for help. Allie finds Mary and reluctantly says The Haunter has taken both Nick and Leif prisoner. Mary lectures Allie and Allie is furious, saying Mary can punish her anyway she wants but they have to rescue Nick and Leif. Mary says she can't risk the children and refuses. Allie and Mary argue but Allie realizes Mary's decision is final. Allie slaps Mary and leaves.

In chapter twelve, Allie is in the world of the living which hurts because she's completely outside that world. She's walking around the city when one day she discovers she's been walking the same path, over and over. She realizes she has to get out of this rut or risk never being able to free Leif and Nick. She's panicked as she breaks free but is soon moving forward again. Allie discovers she can read people's thoughts if she allows them to pass through her. Allie then steps into a girl about her own age and stays with her for a period of time. Allie looks for other places children might gather and discovers the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, but finds there's no one there.

In chapter thirteen, Leif settles in, finding peace in being completely quiet and alone. Nick, however, is miserable.

In chapter fourteen, Allie returns to the Rockland County sign in search of Johnnie-O and his friends. Allie tells them she knows where they can get real food, knowing they crave it because they are willing to take used gum from any dead kid who comes into their territory. She tells them she knows where to find The Haunter and that she needs someone strong to help rescue Nick and Leif. They agree to go. During the journey, Allie hears for the first time about the "Sky Witch" who lives high above Manhattan and steals the souls of children. When they finally gain entrance into the warehouse, they discover



everything in disarray. The barrels are gone and a turkey has a huge bite taken from it. They discover The Haunter locked in one of the barrels and he says The McGill put him there. The Haunter says The McGill is on a ship in the bay and offers to help fight if he's set free. Johnnie-O and his crew look to Allie and she decides to leave The Haunter in the barrel.

Chapters 11 through 14 Analysis

Mary's intentions and methods aren't acceptable but her actions aren't entirely selfish. When she has a birthday cake, she shares it with the kids. She does the same when she has fried chicken and Allie notes that she might not be willing to be so sharing. When Mary refuses to go get Leif and Nick, she's torn but realizes she can't put all the little kids in danger. When Allie slaps her, Mary feels nothing physically because she can't feel pain. However, the slap hurts Mary emotionally and she's upset about it. Vari is elated that Nick is out of his way and rushes to point out that Nick, Allie, and Leif brought it on themselves.

At the end of chapter ten, "Allie the Outcast" writes a book titled "Everything Mary Says Is Wrong." This is the first look at "Allie the Outcast, which is how she'll eventually become known. Interestingly, in this book Allie writes that she doesn't know everything there is to know about Everlost. She'd been determined early on to learn everything she could but it's a sign of her emerging maturity that she's not willing to mislead others in an effort to make herself appear smarter than she is.

The power of legends remains a recurring theme throughout the story and an important aspect of it is seen in chapter fourteen. As Allie is preparing to find The McGill, Johnnie-O asks for her name. He says he's going to need to know it for the stories they'll tell about the day she sought out The McGill.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, the Marine Sulphur Queen, the ship currently manned by The McGill and his crew, disappeared on February 7, 1963. The disappearance was shrouded in mystery but the ship crossed over, though without a single soul on board. McGill has learned that being powerful in Everlost is dependent on being willful and he has become very willful. One of the McGill's crew members, a boy with an extremely small head called Pinhead, suggests the boys in the barrels will be forever loyal to the person who releases them. McGill takes the suggestion and Leif and Nick are released from the barrels. Leif has come to a peaceful place, simply content to accept whatever happens next. Nick has thought about his life and has undergone a dramatic personality change so that he is now fearless. A third barrel is opened and a boy emerges, screaming. The McGill orders him "chimed." The McGill has a secret stash that includes a bucket filled with coins and a fortune from a cookie that reads, "A brave man's life is worth a thousand cowardly souls." When The McGill and Nick clash with Nick refusing to submit to The McGill's demands to be his servant, Nick and Leif are taken to the Chiming Chamber.

In chapter sixteen, Allie boards the ferry in an attempt to encounter the Sulphur Queen. Dead children cannot swim and the weight of the water pushes them down even faster, so she hopes the ferry will simply encounter the Sulphur Queen. When it becomes evident the two won't cross near enough for Allie to jump from one to the other, she inhabits the captain's body and finds she is able to urge him to change course so the encounter will occur. She is grabbed by The McGill's pirates the minute she's on board. The McGill demands to know how she got on board and she reveals that she'd "skinjacked" the pilot. This captures The McGill's attention and he orders Allie taken to the guest quarters. He is intrigued with her power to skinjack.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

The McGill's crew is filled with misfits. All have some peculiarity about their bodies and it's unclear whether they looked like this when they joined The McGill or began to look strange after being with him for awhile. The McGill is a monstrosity and it will soon be revealed that he became this way as he fought his way out from the center of the earth. There are hints beginning in chapter fifteen that help the reader discover The McGill is really Michael, Mary's brother.

As chapter sixteen comes to a close, there is a section of another of Mary's books. She writes about The McGill's tendency to set traps for Greensouls though she admits she has no real proof these traps actually exist. She warns that finding a valuable item that seems to have simply crossed over is probably a trap set by The McGill.



Chapters 17 through 19

Chapters 17 through 19 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Allie begins exploring the ship and finds hundreds of kids hanging upside down in the Chiming Chamber. McGill has come up with this as a torture, creating abject hopelessness in his victims. Most accept they are trapped but Nick continues to seek a way to escape. Leif asks if Allie wants to join them and offers to make room for her to hang next to him. Nick advises Allie to ignore him but is angry when Allie says she won't release them immediately, saying she'll return for them later.

In chapter eighteen, The McGill insists Allie teach him to skinjack. Allie knows she doesn't want him to know this so comes up with a plan to keep him occupied for a long time while she tries to figure out how to rescue Nick and Leif. She tells him they have to go to a place that's already haunted and he takes her to a house in Amityville. Allie keeps him there for hours and tells him it's the first of twelve steps toward skinjacking.

In chapter nineteen, Allie convinces The McGill he's supposed to spend time looking at humans in an effort to see who can be possessed. He sees no difference between any of them but pretends. Allie tells him the next step is a selfless act, hoping he'll release her friends. Allie is grossed out by the appearance of The McGill but tries to hide it. One day she is looking over the side of the ship and The McGill joins her. She expects that he wants something but he says he'd only wanted to see if she was alright. He reaches out to touch her cheek and she can't help but pull away. He says he might need "a softer touch." The McGill says some crew members have jumped rather than serve him and Allie says she might be better off. The McGill says he knows what it's like down there, talking about the dirt and rocks that turn hot and liquid. He says the sinking goes on for years though you occasionally encounter others. He says there's nothing to do at the center of the earth except wait for the world to end. Allie says she isn't that patient and The McGill says he wasn't either, which is why he clawed his way back to the surface.

Pinhead realizes Allie's presence is a positive thing because The McGill has something to focus on, lessening his constant anger and is therefore nicer to Allie than the rest of the crew. Pinhead reveals that all fortune cookies cross over. Pinhead says it's "a very big deal because in Everlost all fortunes are true." Soon after, Allie discovers the big spittoon filled with The McGill's fortune cookies and she comes up with an idea. Allie opens one of the cookies and finds a fortune referring to "friends in a pickle." She is caught up in opening the cookies and doesn't realize The McGill is behind her until the fourth cookie. The fortune reads, "Look behind you."



Chapters 17 through 19 Analysis

Allie comes to realize that Mary is wrong about many things in her books but she also comes to realize something equally important - Mary knows better about many things and writes what she wants to "distort" information to suit herself.

There is an excerpt from one of Mary's books that warns that fortune cookies are poison and will rot off the hand of anyone who dares touch it. The McGill is hopelessly dependent on fortune cookies. He believes any of the fortunes he finds and it's a fortune that's prompted him to begin holding children hostage in the Chiming Chamber. The McGill believes he's going to be able to trade one thousand kids for his own life back. He won't realize this isn't true until it's too late.

The reader is now realizing that the children have the ability to change their appearances though it has to be a very conscious act. In the case of The McGill, he reveals to Allie that he'd been at the center of the earth but was unable to simply wait for his fate, so had clawed his way back to the surface. He has one eye dangling out of its socket and one huge claw where his hand should be. Part of this could be the result of his injuries - he was hit by a train - but it seems more likely he's adopted this look as he set out to establish himself as a monster. When Leif is first removed from the pickle barrel, The McGill notes that Leif isn't exactly formed correctly and that it's because he's forgotten what he looks like. Leif is "ordered" to return to his normal self and concentrates on doing so. After being with The McGill and his misfit crew for awhile, Allie begins noticing that her features are becoming distorted.



Chapters 20 through 23

Chapters 20 through 23 Summary

In chapter twenty, The McGill watches as Allie realizes she's been caught and he suddenly doesn't want her to be afraid of him. Allie is obviously afraid of what he'll do but The McGill takes a cookie, places it in her hand, and squeezes so the cookie breaks. The fortune inside reads, "Forgiveness keeps destiny on track" and he feels his anger melt away.

Allie continues trying to work out a plan to save Leif and Nick. She learns that The McGill has been beaten one time, by a gang at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Pinhead reveals that he was among the gang but he turned traitor and set The McGill free. Pinhead reveals that he's seen people who'd been skinjacked in insane asylums when he was alive. He says if he were alive he wouldn't want The McGill inside him.

In chapter twenty-one, Nick becomes more determined to escape and begins to swing though it means he's bumping into other kids. Leif decides it looks like fun and joins in. Nick soon realizes he is tangling his ropes with the other ropes and that it's pulling him higher toward the beams. He continues to tangle and another kid gets the idea. They are soon extremely tangled and Nick calls on one of the boy who has developed teeth like a shark to chew through his rope.

In chapter twenty-two, Nick is out of the chamber but unable to escape the ship. Allie finds a hoard of treasure and knows there's a typewriter among the items. Allie finds a slip of paper and types a message. She's just finished when The McGill joins her. Allie discovers The McGill's hand is no longer a horrible claw but is now covered in "soft, minklike fur." The McGill warns Allie not to steal anything then asks if she'd like to wear a wedding dress over her clothes. He opens a wardrobe and Allie sees Nick's feet. The McGill doesn't see him and Allie is able to distract him. She waits a long time after The McGill leaves before returning to the cabinet. She asks Nick why he hasn't waited for her to rescue him and Nick says he's been waiting for weeks.

Allie knows the McGill is sending a group ashore and they set out to find a way to smuggle Nick on board. Allie tells Nick there's a group at Steel Pier that can help fight The McGill. Nick actually holds to a rope tied to the lifeboat and makes it ashore.

In chapter twenty-three, The McGill calls for Allie. When she arrives, he has a barrel opened to reveal The Haunter who says Allie has been lying about how to skinjack. The McGill orders The Haunter thrown overboard, saying there's only room for one monster. The McGill then paints the number 1,000 on Allie's shirt and orders her chimed. The McGill then returns to the deck and opens a fortune cookie. The fortune reads, "The victory waits at the Piers of Defeat." Without another thought The McGill turns the ship toward Atlantic City.



Chapters 20 through 23 Analysis

There's something of a beauty and the beast situation going on with Allie and The McGill. The McGill says he's working on a softer look and has transformed his hand from scaly claws to a soft fur covering. Allie says it's still repulsive and The McGill responds that he's glad it's repulsive. When Nick manages to escape, he accuses Allie of enjoying her time with The McGill. Allie is outraged, but mostly because she realizes Nick is right, at least to some degree. When she discovers weeks have passed, she's upset but hides it. She seems to have fallen into the same trap that threatens those in the Twin Towers. Allie has found her niche here and though it's not a repetitive routine, she's found a goal and can't seem to get away from it.

The fortune cookie The McGill opens just before ordering the ship toward Atlantic City was planted by Allie. She'd had the idea to plant a fortune in order to get The McGill to go there with the hope the gang there would help fight him.



Chapters 24 through 26`

Chapters 24 through 26` Summary

In chapter twenty-four, Nick begins the trek to the Twin Towers in the hope that Mary will help him. When Nick arrives, Vari announces his presence to Mary and there's no doubt Vari is completely dejected by Nick's return. Mary is elated and kisses him, admitting that she loves him as she hasn't loved anyone else since her time in Everlost began. Nick explains the situation and Mary is skeptical that Allie can have a plan that will actually defeat The McGill. She says she can't put any of the other children in danger but agrees she'll accompany Nick back to the ship.

Mary arranges for a ghost train to take them out of Penn Station and Vari accompanies them. The operator of the train, a nine-year-old named Choo-Choo Charlie, says he can get them as far as Lakehurst and Mary says she has a friend who'll pick them up there. They arrive and are met by Speedo in the Jaguar Mary had given him in return for the birthday cake. She says the Jag is nice but she's more interested in "your other sweet ride."

In chapter twenty-five, The McGill takes the ship in right to the piers in Atlantic City. The children in the Chiming Chamber, including Allie and Leif, are removed and taken onto the pier by The McGill's crew. Allie is hoping the gang will appear any moment but a lone boy comes out and demands they leave. When The McGill calls him, the boy runs away. Mary has written about the gang in one of her books and says they were "lured away" and are now in casinos of the living world, often becoming so distracted that they sink into the carpet and disappear.

In chapter twenty-six, the pier is alive with music just as it was when it was destroyed by fire. There is a horse that climbs onto a deck and jumps into a pool of water, repeating the process again and again. The McGill is crying out, pointing out that he has the one thousand souls as indicated in his fortune cookie, and is waiting to make the exchange. Just then there's a huge blimp arriving overhead - the Hindenburg which arrived in Everlost in 1937 when its voyage ended in a fiery crash. The craft was originally piloted by a German boy, the only child on board at the time of the crash, but he eventually traded it to Speedo. The McGill believes the blimp holds the answer to his trade and he waits while it lands.

When Mary disembarks, The McGill takes one look and calls her Megan. Mary nods, says that was her name but that it's now Mary Hightower. She then says The McGill is really Michael Edward McGill, and that he's not a monster but is her little brother. The McGill's emotions are torn between disappointment that his plan hasn't worked and excitement at seeing Mary again. She presents him a locket that has a picture of Michael as a little boy. After one look, Michael loses his monstrous appearance and becomes that boy. Suddenly all the children who had been chimed rush toward The McGill and begin beating him. Though he can't be hurt or killed, he's humiliated and



realizes he misunderstood the fortune. Allie and Pinhead quickly compare notes. Allie admits to writing the fortune about The McGill finding his destiny at the pier and Pinhead says he wrote the fortune about the swap for a thousand souls. He says it was simply an effort to keep The McGill busy.

Allie then announces that she's going home. Mary says there is lots to be done and asks Allie if she'd like to stay but Allie declines the offer. Just then The McGill, now becoming known as Mikey, remembers another fortune that said his salvation will come "out of the water." He rushes to where Shiloh, the Famous Diving Horse, is about to make his way again up the ramp to make yet another dive.

Allie leaves but can't figure out how to get home. Just then, Mikey is bearing down on her, still riding the horse. Allie hops into the body of a passerby.

Chapters 24 through 26` Analysis

Nick does some thinking as he's headed to get Mary. Her attitude is that the living world is insignificant and without the brilliance of Everlost. Nick can remain separate from the living world but sees a "spark" that isn't present in Everlost. He wonders if Mary's stand on this point is at least partly prompted by envy of the life she lost at such an early age.

There are several references to paranormal activities in the story. When Allie and The McGill go to the house that's supposed to be haunted, they are in Amityville, home of the famed "Amityville Horror." The house really is haunted but Allie takes control of the house's occupant and writes on the wall to convince The McGill she is capable of that. It's also noted that the Hindenburg had a single child passenger on board, a German boy who spent years flying the blimp back and forth between New York and Roswell, New Mexico. It's noted that whenever sunspots briefly made the blimp visible, people were captivated and the sightings prompted a great many rumors. The book says, "But that's another story."



Chapters 27 through Epilogue

Chapters 27 through Epilogue Summary

In chapter twenty-seven, Mikey realizes he has another chance to make whatever he wants of his life. Mary tells all the children rescued from the Chiming Chamber they can come home with her to the Twin Towers. Leif arrives with Mikey's treasure. They are aboard the Hindenburg and headed home when Mary realizes Vari isn't with them. Vari had actually become sidetracked and wasn't on the pier when Mary and the children boarded. Vari encounters Pinhead and they set out together in the Sulphur Queen. When Pinhead asks his name, Vari says, "I am The McGill."

In chapter twenty-eight, Allie retains possession of the jogger though the live person battles for control. The battle continues and Allie is kicked out in the middle of a bridge. She's suddenly falling and, as predicted, the weight of the water pushes her down more quickly. She believes she's lost but then hears a horse.

In chapter twenty-nine, Mary takes a bit of time alone and goes to sleep. Nick, however, is struggling to make sense of some things. He knows that both The McGill and Mary have lots of coins. He is holding the bucket of coins Leif got from McGill's ship and realizes when he picks up a single coin it becomes electrified. As an experiment, Nick has Leif hold one of the coins. Suddenly, in Leif's eyes, Nick can see a dot of light growing larger. He calls Leif's name but Leif corrects him, saying his name is Travis, and then he completes his journey. Nick thinks for a moment and knows that Mary has figured this out by now. He can't imagine why she's kept it hidden.

They arrive at the airport and the Hindenburg lands. Mary begins planning how she'll help each of the new children "find their niche" at the Twin Towers. She exits the craft and discovers that Nick is there, alone. Nick and Mary argue and she feels betrayed. There are two coins left and Mary picks up one. She says it's cold and Nick says it's sad that she's been here "all these years" but still hasn't readied herself to move on. Nick then says he's going to tell all the kids at the Twin Towers how to move on and it becomes a race to see whether Nick or Mary can reach them first.

In chapter thirty, Mikey is driven to save Allie because he admires her. Allie still doesn't trust him even after he makes his way back to the surface, still astride of the horse. Allie has plans of how she might reach her family. Mikey tosses her a coin and says she'll need it. "to get where you're going." Mikey says he's in no hurry to leave because he believes he'll have to make up for the misdeeds of the previous years.

Meanwhile, Nick arrives at the towers and announces he has a message from Mary. He has all the children pick up a coin from the fountain and make their wishes while holding the coins. One by one, the children disappear. Meadow takes her coin as well, notes that Mary "is going to have a fit," and disappears. Nick takes his own coin from his



pocket again but knows that as long as Mary is keeping children in Everlost, he'll be seeking to free them.

In the Epilogue, a little girl is on a playground. She knows something is horribly wrong but can't figure out exactly what. Then a huge blimp arrives and a girl who looks like an angel appears. She invites the child for a ride and says it only costs a nickel. The little girl checks her pockets and finds a coin but seems reluctant to hand it over. The girl from the blimp warns the child that the Chocolate Ogre might find her if she remains alone on the playground, which prompts the child to hand over her coin.

Chapters 27 through Epilogue Analysis

There is an old superstition about coins and the dead. It was believed that the person who dies has to pay a mythical creature called "the Ferryman" in order to have a ride to the other side. Without coins, the dead were destined to wander for eternity without having a means to reach the other side. Nick remembers this legend and, coupled with the fact that the coin feels strange in his hand, comes to the conclusion there's something important about the coins. Nick hands a coin to Leif and sees Leif as he is summoned to the light.



Characters

Allie

Allie is a fourteen-year-old girl who is traveling with her father when the accident occurs. She has removed her seatbelt in order to adjust her blouse when the wreck occurs. Without the seatbelt, she flies through the windshield which prompts the interruption of crossing over. Allie is a strong-willed character who initially blames Nick for their predicament. She is determined to go home despite warnings that it's not a good idea and that there might not be anyone there. Allie is somewhat skeptical of Mary Hightower's teachings, perhaps because she's a little older than many of the kids in Mary's group but more likely because she's so determined to move on to her home. Allie is extremely loyal to her friends and spends a lot of time trying to figure out how to rescue them after she causes them to be trapped in pickle barrels. Allie is also cunning, discovering important things along the way that helps her adjust to her new situation. Another important aspect of Allie's personality is that she's goal-oriented. She needs to have something to do and she sets out to do it with determination. The fact that Allie wants to go home occupies her mind when most of the other children, including Leif and Nick, get caught up in Mary's life in the Twin Towers. Allie is never able to become completely caught up in the life, meaning she is able to see the repetition for what it is.

Nick

Nick is a fourteen-year-old boy who is on his way to a wedding when his father loses control of their car and crashes. Nick is eating a chocolate bar when the wreck occurs and he is destined to spend eternity with chocolate on his face. Mary points out that he can learn to lessen the chocolate on his face until he makes it go away completely but Nick is soon walking around with more chocolate on his face, indicating that he's self-conscious about his appearance. Nick is enamored with Mary Hightower and is soon in competition with a younger boy for Mary's attention. Ironically, Nick finds satisfaction in the competition. Nick is a strong character though he's not as strong-willed as Allie and is initially willing to go along with her on almost every point. When they reach New York City and Nick realizes the Twin Towers probably exist in Everlost, he insists on going there. Though Allie doesn't want to be sidetracked from her mission of going home, she gives in to Nick's insistence. Nick will later become much more self-confident. He eventually battles with Mary, fighting to allow the children to go on to the light though Mary is furious about it. Nick himself has a coin and could probably find the will to leave as well, but he doesn't, preferring to remain and help others reach their destinations.

Leif

The young boy who is living in the forest where Nick and Allie die in a car wreck, he has forgotten his name until the final moments of the story. Leif wants Allie and Nick to



remain with him in the forest but follows them when they leave. He is starved for attention and companionship to the point that he waits nine months for Allie and Nick to wake after the accident. Just as he's about to cross over, he remembers that his name is really Travis.

Mary Hightower

One of the older girls who has not crossed over, Mary doesn't remember her real name is Megan and adopts the name Mary Hightower, obviously a reference to the fact that she lives in the Twin Towers. Mary knows how to allow the children to cross over but chooses not to share that, keeping them basically imprisoned in her world.

Stradivarius

Better known as Vari, he is a young boy who spends a great deal of time with Mary and is basically known as her right-hand helper. He's young but has a talent with a violin, which he plays for Mary any time she makes the request. Vari is eaten up with jealousy when Nick begins spending time with Mary. When Mary loads all the children on the blimp, she inadvertently leaves Vari behind. He takes command of the McGill's abandoned ship.

Meadow

This is the girl who is dressed like a hippie in bell-bottoms and tie dye who greets Allie, Nick, and Leif upon their arrival at the Twin Towers. Meadow is among those to take their coins when Nick discovers a way to where they're going.

The McGill

He is rumored to be the Devil's pet who chewed through his leash and escaped, but he is actually a boy who changed his appearance after clawing his way up from the center of the earth. His real name is Michael and he's actually Mary's brother.

The Haunter

A boy who has learned to take things from the world of the living, a gift few have accomplished. He traps Nick and Leif in pickle barrels but is later trapped in a barrel by The McGill.



Pinhead

The boy who was a member of the gang at the Steel Pier when The McGill fought and was captured. Pinhead turned traitor on his gang, setting The McGill free and joining him on his voyage. Pinhead has a tiny head in comparison to his body and is nice to Allie when she comes aboard.

Johnnie-O

A boy who attacks Allie and Nick when they meet for the first time near the Rockland County sign. He goes with Allie to the warehouse in hope of finding food for themselves and to help Allie rescue Nick and Leif. When Allie leaves on her quest to find The McGill, Johnnie-O asks for her name, saying he'll need to know it when he's telling people about the girl who went to fight The McGill.



Objects/Places

A piece of metal

This is the item that causes the accident that kills Nick and Allie.

The Twin Towers

This is where Mary Hightower lives with children who have not crossed over.

Greensouls

This is the name given the newly dead children who have not yet learned to cope.

Skinjack

This is the ability of some dead children to step into the bodies of others, controlling their movements and acts.

Finders

These are children who roam the world in search of physical items that have crossed over, making them available to the dead.

Baltimore

This is where Nick is from.

New Jersey

This is where Allie is from.

The Pickle Factory

This is where The Haunter is when Allie, Nick, and Leif find him.

The Sulphur Queen

This is the ship manned by McGill and his crew.

The Steel Pier

This is where The McGill was beaten by a band of boys and where the final showdown with Mary, Nick, Allie, and The McGill occurs.



Themes

Coming of Age

The idea of a coming of age theme in a story in which most of the characters are dead seems impossible but it isn't. Nick is a prime example of this theme though his maturity and self-confidence arrive as Nick is trapped in a pickle barrel. Nick is a natural complainer. When he and Allie are first awakened they believe they might have been thrown clear of the crash. Allie wants to climb back up the embankment and Nick agrees but is upset during the entire climb. He worries and complains about many things throughout the story but this changes dramatically after The Haunter traps him in the pickle barrel. While Nick is trapped he recites everything he can remember about his life and by the time he's released, he has developed a new confidence that makes him fearless. This prompts Nick to find a way to escape from The McGill's Chiming Chamber when most of the other children are content to simply hang there until something else happens. Another example of this is seen in Leif who is younger than Allie and Nick when he dies. He has spent years in Everlost and spends all this time racing through the forest, playing games of his own imagination. Leif is distracted by the video game and spends days playing it. He seems happy but is actually obsessed with the need to play. When Leif is locked up in the pickle barrel, he finds an inner peace that would make the waiting easier to bear. Finally, Mikey McGill is an example of this theme. In Mikey's case, the ability to overcome adversity has been his strength but he comes to realize that came with a price.

The Importance of Appearances

The McGill is arguably the most prevalent example of this theme. The McGill is really Michael McGill, or Mikey, and he dies with his sister, Megan, who becomes known as Mary Hightower. Mikey and Megan return home and fall through the floor of their house, weighted down by the pain of their absence. Mikey is unable to save himself and falls through the floor and to the center of the earth. However, he is unwilling to simply remain there, waiting for the end of the world. Instead, he begins to claw his way to the top and this action causes him to change his appearance so that he actually develops a huge claw covered in scales. Mikey remains with this appearance until he is reminded by Megan what he really looks like. While Mikey has the appearance of the monster known as "The McGill," members of his crew take on misfit appearances as well. A crew member known as Pinhead has a head that is smaller than his body dictates. After a period of time with Mikey and the crew, Allie comes to realize her own appearance is changing. Leif is another example of this theme. While he is locked in the pickle barrel, Leif becomes more in tune with an inner peace and loses sight of his appearance. When he is removed from the pickle barrel, his face is like putty without a solid form and it takes an order from Mikey for him to regain his normal appearance. Nick is another example of this. Nick has chocolate on his face when he dies and he frantically tries to wipe it off though he is not able to do so. Mary says that over time he might be able to



adjust his appearance and Nick wishes he could forget about the chocolate, believing that might make it disappear. As he focuses on that, he comes to realize the chocolate smear is even larger.

Finding One's Place

When the children first arrive at the Twin Towers, Mary asks what they like to do. She says they'll find something they like and they'll be free to do that all the time. What she doesn't say is these activities become obsessions that the children find virtually impossible to escape. Allie first realizes the situation when she discovers a ball game and a card game that repeat themselves daily, right down to one child accusing another of cheating and walking away from the game. Allie says she inserts herself into the game one day and changes the routine but that the children resume their normal routine the following day. A prime example of this is seen in Leif's actions upon their arrival at the Twin Towers. Leif is quickly absorbed in a video game. Though the recently dead children recognize the game as "old," it's a marvelous thing to Leif and he is soon spending every minute of his time wrapped up in his game. It may seem he's having fun but the reader sees that it's a compulsion Leif can't escape on his own. Another example of this compulsion is seen when Allie is walking the streets of New York City. She is soon walking the same streets in the same order, repeating the route without varying. She realizes it and makes herself take a step away though she admits it's frightening and difficult. Yet another example is Nick when he sets out to make sure he doesn't forget his name. Nick tears up every piece of paper he can find, writing his name on both sides and doesn't realize he's spent hours doing this until Allie interrupts. An interesting example of this is seen in Mary Hightower. Mary seems to be moving about at random but she's actually obsessed with adding children to her community.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in the third person from an omniscient perspective. The perspective moves from one character to another, putting the reader in touch with the thoughts and emotions of various characters throughout the story. This is vital to the full understanding because the main characters are introduced individually and not necessarily when they are with other characters. For example, the reader is introduced to Leif when he is alone in the forest, headed to the site of the wreck that kills Allie and Nick. Leif isn't given a name until Allie awakes but he is present. An interesting variation to the traditional perspective is the author's use of excerpts from books that are, for the purposes of this story, real. There are references to Mary Hightower long before she's formally introduced. Mary's books are another perspective though most of the excerpts from her books are used to drive the story line forward. The fact that the author chooses an omniscient perspective means the reader learns things as they happen in most cases. For example, Nick and Leif are taken hostage by The Haunter and the reader learns this as the action is taken. However, Nick helps all the children aboard the Hindenburg cross over. The reader sees Leif take that step but doesn't see any others actually take the step and doesn't know what happens until Mary wakes. Leif's crossing was presented from Nick's perspective but the reader learns the rest crossed from Mary's perspective.

Setting

The majority of the action takes place in about a half dozen specific settings in and around New York City. Most notably is Mary's home in the Twin Towers. The Twin Towers no longer exist in the living world but do in Everlost. The building is different from how it appeared in the living world with some of the areas being remodeled by Mary to form suites of apartments, game rooms, and other rooms for the children. Some entire floors are virtually vacant. Another important setting is Leif's forest. The exact location is never outlined but it is noted the forest appears dead to the living but is a lush paradise to the dead. Other settings are a destroyed pickle factory and a pier at Atlantic City. Both have been destroyed in the land of the living but are used by individuals or groups in Everlost. Two other important settings are the Sulphur Queen, a ship that sank and left no survivors, and the Hindenburg, a famous Zeppelin that exploded and burned. The ship is described in a fair amount of detail. The Hindenburg is described only briefly, leaving the majority of that particular setting to the imagination of the reader. The majority of the settings are real insofar as they existed and were the sites of various tragedies. Their existence in Everlost - and Everlost itself - is fictional. The story is set in fairly modern times though the exact year is not revealed and not really important. It is known that the story is set after the collapse of the Twin Towers.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward style and the action moves very quickly. In the second chapter, Mary and Nick wake to find themselves dead, meet Leif, and come to terms with the idea they really are dead. The action moves this quickly in other chapters as well which means the book can be read in a fairly short amount of time. There are many words and phrases made up by the author strictly for this book. For example, "Skinjacking" refers to the ability of a dead child to take over the body of a living person. An "Afterlight" is the name used for a child who has died and ended up in "Everlost," the name given the place inhabited by these children. "Greensouls" is the term used for the newly dead, obviously making a play on the slang word "green" which means untried or new. The use of these terms can be somewhat distracting and readers may find themselves struggling to remember what some of the words mean. Other than these terms, a reader with an average vocabulary will encounter few words that are unfamiliar. Only a few of the characters have real names. The majority of the characters have forgotten their names and are known by a nickname, such as Speedo, Stradivarius, and Skully. Leif is one of those and the reader doesn't know until near the end of the book that his real name is Travis. For the sake of clarity in this guide, he is referred to as "Leif" throughout, just as is the case in the book. The story is divided into dialogue and narrative and both are acceptable and believable to the time and situation.

Structure

The book is divided into four parts. Part one is titled Afterlights, part two is titled Mary, Queen of Snots, part three is titled The McGill, and part four is titled A Thousand Souls. The book is divided into chapters of varying lengths. The titles include: On the Way to the Light; Arrival in Everlost; Dreamless; A Coin on its Edge; Friends in High Places; Scavengers; The Forever Places; Dominant Reality; Endless Loop; An Elevator Down; The Haunter; Learning to Surf; Time in a Bottle; The Alter Boys; The Brimstone Ship; A Dangerous Crossing; The Day the McGill Got Chimed; Nick's Journey; All Souls Day; Skinjacker; and Leaving Everlost. The chapter titles offer a clue of what's included in that chapter. For example, Allie compares her ability to listen to the words of people who pass through her as "surfing," prompting the chapter titled "Learning to Surf." In the first chapter, Allie and Nick die and meet Leif for the first time. They travel to New York City over the next few chapters and arrive in New York in "The Forever Places." In this chapter they meet Mary Hightower for the first time and also learn about the places that cross over. In "Endless Loop" Allie comes to realize the repetitious lives the children are living and questions other aspects of Everlost and of Mary's philosophy. The final chapter, "Leaving Everlost," includes the final showdown between Mary and The McGill, who are actually siblings, and Nick's realization of how children can cross over.



Quotes

"But on the way to the light, she hit something that sent her flying off course. She grabbed at it, it grunted, and for an instant she was aware that it was someone else she had bumped - someone about her size, and who smelled distinctly of chocolate" (Chapter 1).

"You see, adults, being the way they are, never get lost on the way to the light no matter how hard they get bumped, simply because adults always think they know exactly where they're going, even if they don't, and so they all wind up going somewhere. If you don't believe me, ask yourself this: Have you ever seen a grown-up get into a car so they could go 'nowhere in particular?'" (Chapter 3).

"Nick instinctively sensed that going home wouldn't be a good idea - but just like Allie, he wanted to go home" (Chapter 4).

"He wouldn't be going with them, because for Leif, being alone in his safe haven was better than having company in the big bad world of the living" (Chapter 4).

"Remember, we look the way we look only because we remember looking like that. If you forget that your eyes are blue, they may just turn purple" (Chapter 5).

"Only the things and places that are worthy of eternity cross into Everlost. We're blessed to be here - don't taint it by thoughts of going home" (Chapter 8).

"It only lasted for a second, but a second was way too long to not remember your own name. It was a profoundly frightening moment" (Chapter 9).

"Being out in the living world left her infinitely lonely. Mary could act like the living world didn't matter anymore, but for Allie it was an ever-present reminder that she could witness, but not participate, in life" (Chapter 12).

"Now that she was accepted by the leader, the other kids kept stealing glimpses at her, like she was some sort of exotic creature. Great, she thought, I'm playing Wendy to a delinquent Peter Pan and the lost boys of Juvie Hall" (Chapter 14).

"It's a very big deal, he said, and then he leaned in close. Because in Everlost, all fortunes are true" (Chapter 19).

"Then, in the blink of an eye, and in a rainbow of twinkling light, Travis, also known as Leif of the Dead Forest, finally got where he was going. Mary called the coins worthless, but Nick now knew the truth" (Chapter 29).

"It was now that Allie figured out something she should have figured out a long time ago: Home was no longer home" (Chapter 30).



Topics for Discussion

Describe Allie. What kind of character is she? What are her strengths? What are her weaknesses?

Describe Nick. What kind of character is he? What are his strengths? What are his weaknesses?

Who is Mary Hightower? What is her role in the story? What has she created? What do the children think of her? What does Allie think of her? Why does Allie's opinion differ from those of most of the other children?

Who is Vari? Who is The McGill? How are these characters similar? How are they different? What is it that makes Vari decide to remain on the ship? What makes The McGill leave?

Describe the importance of the coins. What does Mary do to ensure that no child has a coin? How does Nick figure out the importance of the coins?

Describe the community Mary has established. Where is it? Why is this significant? What is her role in this community? How has she created it? How does Nick destroy it?

Who is Leif? Skully? Who is Johnnie-O? Who is Meadow? Who is The Haunter? Who is Pinhead? What is the role of each person in the story?