

Favorite Study Guide

Favorite by Karen McQuestion

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Plot Summary

"Favorite" is a 2010 mystery/suspense novel by Young Adult author Karen McQuestion. The novel is narrated by Angie Favorite, a 16-year-old who is injured after being attacked by a stranger named Scott Bittner. After Bittner hangs himself while in jail, Angie accepts an invitation from the man's mother to visit her so that Mrs. Bittner can apologize for her son's actions, and soon finds herself forced to stay at the Bittner mansion after spraining her ankle. Angie quickly begins uncovering clues which lead her to believe that the attack on her and her mother's mysterious disappearance five years before are somehow connected.

One day in early June a man grabs Angie Favorite's arm in a parking lot and tells her that there is something she needs to see. Angie pulls away and runs but the man catches her and says there is something he needs to show her. Angie breaks free but falls, hits her head on a rock, and loses consciousness. She wakes up in the hospital; she has multiple bruises and a hairline skull fracture, but will make a full recovery. Her grandmother tells her that two girls saw her being attacked and called 911, and her attacker was arrested before he could do her any more harm.

Angie is released from the hospital, and goes home to where she lives with her grandmother and her older brother Jason. Five years earlier on Angie's eleventh birthday her mother, Laura Favorite, disappeared without a trace. Several months later Angie's father - a rock musician - was sent to prison on a false drug charge and Angie's grandmother was awarded custody of her and Jason. Angie's grandmother is leaving on a Caribbean cruise the day after Angie leaves the hospital and reluctantly allows her father - who she considers very irresponsible - to stay with Angie and Jason while she is gone.

Angie has a difficult time dealing with what has happened to her; she spends her first few days home sleeping and watching television, and never leaves the apartment. She receives a letter from Lillian Bittner, the mother of Scott Bittner - the mentally and emotionally disturbed man who attacked her - telling her that her son isn't really a bad person and asking Angie to call her. When she calls the number in the letter she is told that Mrs. Bittner is in shock; her son Scott has just hanged himself in his jail cell. Mrs. Bittner speaks with Angie's father a few days later and invites Angie, her brother, and her father to her home so that she can apologize to Angie personally. Angie does not want to go, but eventually gives in and agrees.

The Bittner house is an enormous mansion on a lakefront property that looks like a castle, complete with turrets and towers. Angie is uncomfortable the entire time she is there, and leaves after a short visit. A few days later her father leaves for the West Coast for three days, and Mrs. Bittner calls and invites Angie and Jason to dinner, saying that she might be able to arrange full college scholarships for both of them. Jason begs Angie to go, and she reluctantly agrees. Hank - who has worked for the Bittner's for 30 years - picks them up and brings them to the mansion, where Angie meets Mrs. Bittner's grandson, Mike. After dinner Mike takes Angie for a boat ride on the



lake. He tells her that his Uncle Scott had been obsessed with Angie's mother before she disappeared, and kept a scrapbook about her after she went missing. When they return to the dock Angie twists her ankle and after Jason lets it slip that their father is not at home, Mrs. Bittner insists that Angie and Jason stay with her at the mansion. Hank takes Jason home so he can get them both some clothes, and he brings Angie's cat Misty back with him to apologize for getting them stuck there.

The next day after Jason goes to work, Angie overhears part of a conversation between Hank and his wife Trudy - the cook - in which Hank says they could both go to prison and Trudy says that if they are patient a little longer they will get a huge payoff. Later Mike comes to the mansion and shows Angie a family album. One of the pictures shows a young Mrs. Bittner with three children; Mike's father, his Uncle Scott, and their sister Laura, who died when she was five. After Mike leaves, Angie asks Mrs. Bittner about her son Scott's obsession with her mother and the older woman says that her son was a gentle, kind man who loved her mother and would never have hurt her. She then shows Angie Scott's scrapbook, which is filled with photographs and drawings of Angie's mother. Angie suddenly feels ill and returns to her bedroom. Jason returns from work and tells Angie that he reached their father and that he would be back to get them in the morning. They join Mrs. Bittner for dinner where Jason drinks several glasses of champagne but Angie abstains, and then return to their rooms and go to bed.

Angie is awakened by the sound of her cat Misty wailing outside her room. She is unable to wake Jason and follows the sound of Misty's wailing up to the third floor, and then up another set of steps to one of the towers. Misty leads her to a door, and a moment later Angie hears a woman's voice. The woman says that she has been locked in and that her name is Laura Favorite. Angie gets her mother out of the room and then tries to get them both out of the house, but Mrs. Bittner traps them in the elevator on the second floor. Laura tells Angie that it was Mrs. Bittner who held her captive for the last five years and tried to convince her that she was her own dead daughter Laura, and that Scott Bittner had tried to help her escape by taking a note she wrote to Angie. Angie realizes that Scott had not been attacking her at all, but had been trying to take her to her mother and that she had misunderstood.

Angie is able to get out of the elevator through a hatch in the ceiling, and calls the police. She hears her mother cry out and rushes back to the elevator to help her. Mrs. Bittner is standing in front of the elevator doors and points a gun at Angie. Laura hits Mrs. Bittner with a crutch as she is firing and knocks her out, and the bullet misses Angie. The police arrive and arrest Mrs. Bittner as well as Hank and Trudy, who have helped keep Laura captive. The family is reunited, and a month later Angie's parents renew their wedding vows. For the first time in five years Angie believes that things will be alright now that her family is finally together again.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

"Favorite" is a Young Adult mystery/suspense novel by Karen McQuestion. The novel is narrated by 16-year-old Angie Favorite and follows events as she recovers from being attacked by a stranger in a strip mall parking lot. After the stranger who attacked her takes his own life while in jail the young man's mother contacts Angie, supposedly to try and make amends for what her son did. Soon, however, Angie realizes that things are not as they seem and begins to suspect that the attack on her is somehow related to her own mother's disappearance five years before.

Chapter 1. On the first Saturday of summer vacation, sixteen-year-old Angie Favorite stops at a local strip mall on her way to work to pick up a dress from the dry cleaners. After getting back to her car and realizing that the cashier has given her too much change Angie starts back across the parking lot to return the extra money, but a man grabs her by the arm and tells her to come with him, saying that there is something she needs to see. The man is much larger than Angie, but she manages to break free and run into the woods that border the strip mall and up a small hill. Although she tries to escape, he soon catches her. He tells her that he wants to show her something and starts pulling her with him but she breaks away again, loses her footing, and rolls down the hill. When she is finally able to get to her feet again she sees that the man is coming towards her and starts to run, but trips and hits her head on a rock. As she is passing out, the last thing she is aware of is the man cupping her face in his hands.

Chapter 2. When Angie regains consciousness she is in the hospital. She sees her grandmother sitting next to her bed reading and tries to say something, but cannot speak. When her grandmother notices that Angie's eyes are open she gets a nurse. The nurse asks how she is feeling and Angie is able to say "okay", but nothing more. Angie's grandmother asks her if she remembers what happened and although she tries to speak, Angie cannot manage to say anything. The nurse tells her to lie quietly and leaves to get a doctor. Angie's grandmother stays with her, and tells her that she has been in the hospital for two days.

Chapter 3. Angie undergoes a number of tests in the hospital over the next few days. She has multiple bruises and a hairline skull fracture, but the doctors tell her that she will be fine. Two police detectives come to the hospital to question Angie and she tells them what little she remembers. At first Angie's grandmother never leaves her side. Five years before, on Angie's eleventh birthday, her mother - her grandmother's daughter - disappeared without a trace, leaving a huge hole in both their lives. Several months after her mother's disappearance, Angie's father - a rock musician - was arrested on a bogus drug charge, and Angie and her older brother Jason went to live with her grandmother, who became their legal guardian. Angie and her grandmother became very close over the ensuing years. Her grandmother tells her that two girls saw Angie



being attacked by the man in the parking lot and called 911. The police responded quickly and caught the man before he could hurt Angie any more than he did.

Later, Angie's brother Jason visits her in the hospital and tells her that he has heard she will be released in a couple of days. Angie's grandmother and her fiancé, Arthur, are leaving on a Caribbean cruise soon and while Jason and Angie were going to stay with friends, that plan has changed as a result of the attack. Jason tells her that the plan is now for her to stay with their Uncle Bob and Aunt Carla. Angie is upset by this because she and Aunt Carla do not get along well, but she cannot see that she has any other choice.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The first three chapters in the novel introduce the narrating character, Angel (Angie) Favorite, who is attacked by a strange man in a parking lot for no apparent reason and subsequently ends up in the hospital with multiple injuries. Angie is a bright sixteen year old who lives with her grandmother and her brother Jason, who is one year older than she is, in her grandmother's apartment in a small rural town in central Wisconsin. Five years before the novel begins - on her eleventh birthday - Angie's mother, Laura Favorite, disappeared without a trace after dropping Angie and Jason off at school in the morning. Her car was found that night in the parking lot of the dentist's office where she worked, but no one in the office had seen her that day and the ensuing police investigation turned up nothing. Her mother's disappearance has left a huge hole in Angie's life, a hole that remains open and painful as the story begins.

Angie's father is a rock musician who is on the road much of the time, although he spends as much time as he can with Angie and Jason when he is in town and has remained very much a part of their lives. Angie's grandmother dislikes her father and considers him an irresponsible failure; she managed to get custody of both Angie and Jason after her father was sent to prison on a false drug charge just a few months after her mother disappeared, which further served to tear Angie's world to pieces at a young age. Over the years Angie has adjusted to her circumstances as well as she can and leads a relatively normal life. She is very close to her grandmother and her brother, loves her father deeply, and continues to believe that her mother is still alive and will come back to her someday.

Angie's grandmother is engaged to a man named Arthur; the wedding was to take place exactly one week after the Saturday on which Angie was attacked in the parking lot. Because of the attack the wedding has been postponed but the honeymoon - a two week Caribbean cruise - was booked well in advance and the tickets are non-refundable, which is why it appears that Angie will have to stay with her Uncle Bob and Aunt Carla, something she does not want to have to do. Angie is very fragile as a result of being attacked, and not at all happy with the fact that she seems to have no say in anything that is happening to her. For the second time in five years, her world has been turned completely upside down by events over which she has no control, and the reader understands that she is having a difficult time dealing with it all.



Chapters 4-7

Chapters 4-7 Summary

Chapter 4. Angie's father finally comes to see her in the hospital. He has been on the road with his band and didn't check his messages for a few days. He says that he spoke with Angie's grandmother and has arranged to stay with her and Jason for the two weeks she will be on her cruise, so Angie will not have to stay with Uncle Bob and Aunt Carla. He then tells her that his brother Dino used to hang out with Scott Bittner - the man who attacked Angie - back when they were both in high school. Dino told him that even then Bittner had mental problems and was often sent away to hospitals and special schools. Angie's father then says that if Bittner ever comes near her again he will kill him, mental problems or not.

Angie has tried to avoid thinking about her attacker, and is upset by what her father says. Suddenly she finds it hard to breath and says that she thinks she is having a heart attack. Her father goes to get help, and returns with a nurse who tells Angie to take deep, slow breaths. Soon, Angie's heart rate slows and the nurse tells her that she has had an anxiety attack and that she will need to concentrate on taking deep, slow breaths if it happens again.

Chapter 5. Angie is released from the hospital on Friday and the next day her grandmother leaves on her cruise. Angie spends her days sleeping, playing with her cat Misty, and occasionally talking on the phone and reading email. She avoids leaving home; she is very bored, but tires easily and occasionally has dizzy spells and feels much safer at home. On her fifth day at home Angie receives a letter from Lillian Bittner, the mother of the man who attacked her. The letter apologizes for her son's actions, says that Scott is not really a bad person, and ends with Mrs. Bittner telling Angie to call her anytime. The letter makes Angie angry - particularly the part about Scott not being a bad person - and she dials the number at the end of the letter. A man answers the phone and after identifying herself, Angie asks to speak with Mrs. Bittner. The man says that Mrs. Bittner has had a terrible shock and is lying down; her son Scott has killed himself.

Chapter 6. The man on the telephone tells Angie that Scott Bittner hanged himself in his cell the previous night, and that Mrs. Bittner has been in shock since she received the news. The man says that he will tell Mrs. Bittner that Angie called, and hangs up. Angie sits petting her cat Misty as the anger and sadness she is feeling overwhelms her, and she starts to sob. Her father hears her and asks what is wrong and when Angie tells him "everything", he hugs her as she cries.

Chapter 7. Angie's father and Jason become increasingly concerned about Angie and suggest that she go for counseling, but she refuses. Later Angie's father tells her that he has spoken to Mrs. Bittner, and that she has invited the three of them to her house so she can apologize to Angie in person. Angie is not sure she feels up to it, but Jason tells



her that it might bring her some closure. Her father says that it is completely her decision, but that he thinks it might be a life-changing experience for her.

Chapters 4-7 Analysis

Even though Angie's physical injuries are healing well, she is having a great deal of difficulty dealing with the emotional and psychological damage that has been done to her. The anxiety attack that Angie suffers in the hospital when her father is telling her about the man who attacked her is the most obvious outward manifestation of her emotional trauma - and something that the nurse who helps her through it tells Angie is very likely to happen again - but even after returning to the safety of her home Angie feels that her entire life has been changed. She becomes exhausted easily, finds it difficult to concentrate on anything, and is frustrated by the fact that she finds herself unable to function the way she wants to. Although she is bored almost all the time she will not leave her home even though she is able to, because her grandmother's apartment is the only place that she feels safe.

When she receives Mrs. Bittner's letter several days after returning home from the hospital, Angie's first reaction is anger when she reads a line that says, "Deep down, he's not a bad person," referring to her son Scott, the man who attacked her. Angie calls the phone number at the bottom of the letter intending to tell Mrs. Bittner how much damage her son has done to her. When the unidentified man who answers the phone at the Bittner residence tells her that her attacker has hanged himself while in jail, Angie is stunned and confused. She pulls even further away from the life she used to have, spending most of her time sleeping or watching mindless shows on television, unwilling to deal with much of anything.

Angie's father and her brother Jason see what is happening to her and want to help, but neither knows what to do. Jason believes that she should get some counseling, but when it is suggested to her Angie refuses; she doesn't think that she is ready to talk about what happened to her yet, and doubts talking to a stranger would help her deal with how she is feeling. When Mrs. Bittner talks to Angie's father and asks the three of them to come to her house so that she can apologize to Angie in person, both her father and Jason think it is a good idea, but again Angie resists. She doesn't see what possible good it would do because she knows that she will never forgive Scott Bittner for what he has done to her no matter what his mother says to her. However, she is beginning to feel guilty about how much worry she is causing her father and brother, and she decides that she will think about it.



Chapters 8-11

Chapters 8-11 Summary

Chapter 8. Angie decides to accept Mrs. Bittner's invitation so that she can tell her about the damage her son has done to her. The Bittner house is a mansion on a lakefront property in the wealthy section of town; the house looks like a castle to Angie, complete with a wrought iron gate and towers. Angie, her father, and Jason are let into the house by a man named Hank who says that he has been with the Bittner family for 30 years. Hank takes them to a formal sitting room and says that Mrs. Bittner will be there shortly. Angie starts to feel as though coming to the house is a mistake, and says that she wants to leave. Mrs. Bittner then enters the room and tells Angie that she looks exactly like her mother. When Angie asks how she knew her mother, Mrs. Bittner says that she didn't really know her but that she saw her around town occasionally, and that she was always struck by how beautiful she was and what a lovely singing voice she had. Angie changes her mind about leaving.

Angie tells Mrs. Bittner that she is sorry for her loss. Mrs. Bittner thanks her and asks if there is any way she can make up for what her son did, but Angie says that there isn't and that even after her physical injuries heal she will never be the same. After an awkward silence, Hank serves tea and cake and the four of them make small talk during which Angie learns that Mrs. Bittner lives in the house alone now that Scott is dead; Hank and his wife Trudy - the cook - live in a small guest house on the property. Angie says that she is feeling tired and should go home, but Mrs. Bittner insists on giving them a tour of the downstairs of the mansion, which ends at a huge library filled with books. Mrs. Bittner offers to let Angie borrow as many books as she wants, but Angie refuses and again says that she needs to go home. As they are driving home Angie has a nagging feeling about something, and remembers that at one point during their conversation Mrs. Bittner said that her mother had a lovely singing voice. Since Mrs. Bittner had also said that she didn't really know her mother, Angie wonders how the woman could have known that her mother could sing.

Chapter 9. Two days later, Jason wakes Angie up from a nap and tells her that their father just got a call from a record company executive who loved a demo he had sent him and wanted to meet the band. A few minutes later her father tells Angie that the executive is very interested in his songs and wants the band to fly out to L.A. that Thursday for a series of meetings. He tells Angie and Jason that he will be back on Sunday, and that he is sure the two of them are old enough to stay by themselves for three days. Angie and Jason are relieved that they will not be going to Uncle Bob's, and promise not to tell anyone that their father has left town.

Chapter 10. The Friday after their father leaves, Jason goes to his job mowing lawns in the morning and while Angie is alone Lillian Bittner calls and invites her to dinner that night. When Angie says that her father won't be able to make it, Mrs. Bittner offers to have Hank pick her and Jason up and bring them to the mansion. Mrs. Bittner also says



that she wants to talk to Angie and Jason about possibly arranging full college scholarships for both of them through the Bittner Foundation. Angie says that maybe they can talk about it another time, and hangs up. When Jason gets home he can't believe that Angie refused the dinner invitation, but she tells him that it felt like Mrs. Bittner was trying to bribe her with the scholarships, and she resented it. Jason says that maybe they should have dinner with Mrs. Bittner, and that it wouldn't hurt to at least hear what she had to say. Eventually Angie gives in and agrees after telling Jason that he will have to call Mrs. Bittner back and handle all of the conversation during dinner.

Chapter 11. Mrs. Bittner is waiting for them when Hank drops Angie and Jason off at the front door to the Bittner mansion. After Jason asks if they can see more of the house she takes them to the second floor in an ancient, creaking elevator and shows them several huge, elegant bedrooms. She tells them that years ago the third floor was reserved for guests, but is now unused. When they return to the first floor there is a young man about Angie's age waiting, and Mrs. Bittner introduces him as her grandson Mike; he is the child of Mrs. Bittner's other son, Michael. They go to an enormous dining room, and Hank's wife Trudy serves dinner while Mrs. Bittner tells them about the history of the house. When dinner is over, Mrs. Bittner suggests they all go into the parlor to visit, but Mike asks Angie if she would like a tour of the lake in a pontoon boat. Angie likes Mike and agrees to the tour, but Jason decides to stay and talk with Mrs. Bittner about the scholarships. Mrs. Bittner isn't happy about the situation, but Mike promises that it will be a short tour and that they will all have a nice visit when he and Angie return.

Chapters 8-11 Analysis

Angie finally decides to go with her father and Jason to see Mrs. Bittner because she realizes that now that Scott Bittner is dead, she will never have the chance to tell him how much pain and harm he has caused her, but that telling his mother might make her feel better. She does manage to tell Mrs. Bittner that she will never be the same as a result of her son's attack, but that is as far as she goes. Angie is basically a good, caring person and she understands that no matter what he did to her Scott was still Mrs. Bittner's son and that the older woman is still mourning his loss.

Almost from the moment she sets foot in the Bittner mansion Angie feels everything is very wrong and wishes that she had never come, but something causes her to stay after Mrs. Bittner tells her how much she looks like her mother. She remains uncomfortable the entire time that she is there and finds nothing even approaching the closure that her father and brother hoped she would get from meeting and talking with Mrs. Bittner. When she finally leaves the mansion, Angie has more questions than she did when she arrived.

When Angie's father gets a call from a big record producer, there is never any doubt that he will take his band and head out to L.A. for the meetings that the executive has set up. Angie's father has always dreamed of making it big in the music industry, and has told Angie since she was a little girl that someday it was going to happen for him. His



faith that he is going to succeed (even though he is well past the age when most people get their first large rock and roll record contract) is one of the things that Angie loves most about him. Although it seems on the surface that his leaving Angie and Jason alone is irresponsible of him, the reader understands that he has complete faith in both of his children, and would never leave if he wasn't certain that they would be okay for three nights on their own.

Angie is even more reluctant about having dinner with Mrs. Bittner than she was about her first trip out to the Bittner home, but Jason is able to talk her into it. Although she feels as though Mrs. Bittner is attempting to bribe her with the possibility of full college scholarships for Jason and herself and resents it, she also understands that affording college for her and her brother is a major concern for both her grandmother and her father. Angie's grandmother spent most of her money hiring private detectives to search for Angie's mother after she disappeared, and most of the gigs Angie's father's band gets are in bars and hotel ballrooms, and don't pay much. Although she hates the idea of spending any more time with Mrs. Bittner, she reluctantly lets Jason make the arrangements and is pleasantly surprised when she seems to hit it off immediately with Mrs. Bittner's grandson, Mike. She still feels uneasy in the house and in the company of Mrs. Bittner, but Mike is attractive and funny and Angie finds herself thinking that the evening might not be a total nightmare after all.



Chapters 12-15

Chapters 12-15 Summary

Chapter 12. Mike takes Angie to a pontoon boat moored at the mansion's private dock. After they are out on the water he tells her that the boat belongs to his parents, and that they live on the other side of the lake. His family moved to the lake when he was little so that his father could keep an eye on his grandmother and Uncle Scott. As Mike guides the boat around the perimeter of the lake, he tells Angie stories about some of the mansions and the people who live in them. After a while they arrive at a brightly lit, gaudy looking place which Mike tells her is called Zaps Bar and Restaurant. He then tells Angie that he asked her to take a boat ride because there is something he wants to tell her without his grandmother being around. He asks her to come into Zaps with him so they can talk, and she agrees.

Chapter 13. Inside Zaps Mike tells Angie that he knows a secret that concerns her mother and that he thinks she has a right to know it considering what happened to her. He tells her that right after Angie's mother disappeared his Uncle Scott started keeping a scrapbook of newspaper articles related to the case. He also went to the local library's collection of high school yearbooks and cut all of her pictures out of them. Mike says that Scott was obsessed with Angie's mother even before she disappeared; he would drive by her house hoping to see her through a window and call the house pretending to be a telemarketer so that he could talk to her.

Angie asks if he thinks Scott killed her mother, and Mike says he doesn't know, but that his grandmother believed Scott when he told her that he didn't. Right after Angie's mother disappeared Scott was sent away to a treatment center, and had only been back for a month before he attacked Angie. The police had never been told about Scott's obsession with Angie's mother; Mrs. Bittner had kept it a secret even from Mike's parents until after Scott was arrested for attacking Angie, and Mike's mother had only told him a few days ago. Mike says that he thinks Scott picked Angie because of her mother, and that his grandmother now feels guilty and will try to worm her way into Angie's life in an attempt to make up for what her son did.

Angie suddenly feels her heart pounding like it did back in the hospital, and knows that she is having an anxiety attack. When Angie tells Mike what is happening he says that his mother has anxiety attacks occasionally and he talks her through it, telling her to look into his eyes and breathe slow and steady. After several minutes the worst is over, and Angie is able to walk back to the boat. Mike says that he is sorry if what he told her about Scott caused the anxiety attack, but Angie says she is glad he told her. As they head back Mike warns Angie to be careful and not let his grandmother into her life.

Chapter 14. Angie feels sick and dizzy during the ride back to the dock. As she is getting out of the pontoon boat she slips and feels something snap in her ankle. Mike helps her limp back up to the house. Although Angie tells her that she just needs to get home and



go to bed, Mrs. Bittner calls her doctor. The doctor arrives a short time later and tells Angie that her ankle is sprained and that she should avoid putting weight on it for a couple of days. After the doctor leaves Mrs. Bittner wants to call Angie's father, and without thinking Jason tells her that he is in California until Sunday. Mrs. Bittner then insists that Angie and Jason stay at the mansion until their father returns and although both of them - and Mike - protest that it isn't necessary, she remains adamant. Hank will take Jason home to get a few things, and then drive him back home early the next morning so his boss can pick him up for work. After Jason and Hank leave Mrs. Bittner tells Mike that he can go home. Mike slips Angie a piece of paper with his cell number on it, and tells her to call if she needs him.

Chapter 15. Mrs. Bittner takes Angie up to one of the bedrooms on the second floor, and then brings her an old pair of crutches and an ice pack for her ankle. An hour later Jason returns with a nightgown and some other clothes for Angie, and her cat Misty. Jason apologizes for getting them into the mess they are in and although she had been very angry at him, Angie is happy that Jason brought Misty to her and forgives him. She then tells him what Mike told her about Scott Bittner and their mother, and says that as soon as she leaves the Bittner home she intends to call the police. Jason says that he tried to call their father's cell phone to tell him what was happening, but got his voicemail. After promising that he will make more calls after work the next day and find them some place to stay that Mrs. Bittner will approve of, Jason heads to his room for the night.

Chapters 12-15 Analysis

Angie is very shaken by what Mike Bittner tells her about his Uncle Scott's obsession with her mother, and finds it hard to believe that Mrs. Bittner would have kept it a secret for all those years. Mike tells her that his grandmother is the absolute head of the family and controls the family money, and that because of this Mike and his parents do what she wants them to do. He also tells Angie that his grandmother hasn't set foot outside of her home for years but still manages to have a large amount of control over a number of people because of her great wealth. He warns Angie to be careful of Mrs. Bittner, and tells her that if she isn't his grandmother will manage to get at least some control over her as well. Angie understands that Mike has taken a huge risk by going against his parents' and grandmother's wishes and telling her about Scott; his father's business has not been doing well in recent years and Mike is counting on his grandmother to put him through college. Angie is grateful to Mike and promises that she won't tell anyone that she heard the story from him, but is determined to tell everything she has heard to the police as soon as she and Jason leave the mansion regardless of what the consequences for Mike might be.

When Mrs. Bittner insists that Angie and Jason stay with her after Angie sprains her ankle they both protest that it isn't necessary, but soon realize that they don't have any choice. They have no way of getting home on their own because Hank picked them up and brought them to the house; Angie is still not able to drive because of the injuries she suffered in the attack, and Jason has never gotten his driver's license. Additionally,



Angie can tell by Mrs. Bittner's tone of voice that she disapproves of the fact that her father has left her alone so soon after being released from the hospital and is afraid that the older woman might call social services and get her father in trouble. Although she is more reluctant than ever to spend time in the Bittner house, Angie realizes that she is trapped - at least for that night. She also realizes that, just as Mike told her might happen, Mrs. Bittner had somehow managed to gain some control over her life.



Chapters 16-19

Chapters 16-19 Summary

Chapter 16. Angie sleeps late the next day. Hank has already taken Jason to work and after getting dressed, Angie takes the elevator downstairs, determined to confront Mrs. Bittner with what Mike told her. She hears what sounds like an argument between Hank and Trudy coming from the kitchen, and stops outside the door to listen. She hears Hank say that if "this whole thing" comes out it will be them who go to jail while "she" gets off free as a bird. He says he is tempted to just walk away, but Trudy says that after all the years they have kept quiet they deserve something, and that "she" promised a big payoff at the end of the year if they just remain patient. Trudy then says that after the kids' father picks them up on Sunday things will return to normal, and that Hank should stop worrying. Hank says that he needs to check on the landscapers, and Angie hears a door slam shut.

After waiting a few moments Angie enters the kitchen and Trudy gets her a bowl of cereal. After asking her a few polite questions about her job, Angie asks Trudy if she knew that Scott Bittner had been obsessed with her mother. Trudy turns pale and says that she minds her own business, and tells Angie that she should do the same. Angie then asks if Scott Bittner killed her mother, and Trudy says that Scott was a sweet boy and would never have done anything like that. When Angie says that Scott tried to kill her, Trudy says that he would never have done that and she doesn't know what she was talking about. Trudy says that Angie has triggered one of her migraines and she leaves the kitchen to lie down.

Chapter 17. After limping through the downstairs looking for Mrs. Bittner, Angie takes the elevator back to the second floor and knocks on her bedroom door. Hank comes upstairs and tells Angie that Mrs. Bittner is busy in another part of the house and will not be available for a few hours. Angie goes to the library and tries to call a friend, but her cell phone dies as she is dialing. A short time later Mike comes into the library. He tells Angie that his father is away on business but he has brought his mother with him and that after she talks with his grandmother they will be able to take Angie back to her own home. Angie considers telling Mike what she overheard Hank and Trudy talking about in the kitchen, but decides against it. They talk about their jobs and their favorite music, and Angie finds herself feeling very comfortable with him and grateful that he is try to help her get out of Mrs. Bittner's house.

Mike goes to a bookshelf and takes down a family album after Angie asks to see one of his baby pictures. As she flips through the album she stops at an old picture which shows a much younger Mrs. Bittner with three children - two boys and a girl. When she asks Mike about the picture, he tells her that the two boys are his dad and Uncle Scott when they were kids, and the girl is their sister Laura, who died of leukemia when she was five. Laura had been his grandmother's favorite, and she'd had a nervous breakdown shortly after the child died. Angie tells Mike that her mother's name was also



Laura, and asks if he thinks that is why Scott became so obsessed with her. Mike thinks it is just a coincidence, but Angie wonders if perhaps there is more to it than that.

Chapter 18. Mrs. Bittner and Mike's mother come into the library an hour later, and Mike's mom tells Angie that Mrs. Bittner feels very strongly that she should stay at the house, and there is nothing she can do to change her mind. When Mike protests, his mother looks nervous and says that there is a great deal at stake financially and that it is time they left. After Mike's mother promises to try and get in touch with Angie's father and grandmother, she and Mike leave.

When the two of them are alone, Angie tells Mrs. Bittner that she wants to talk to her about her son Scott and his obsession with her mother. Mrs. Bittner is not surprised and suggests that they go to her room and chat. When they reach her room, Mrs. Bittner goes to her desk and gets a scrapbook. As Angie looks through it she sees a number of photographs and charcoal sketches of her mother. Mrs. Bittner tells Angie that Scott did the sketches. When Angie says that the scrapbook looks like something a stalker would have, Mrs. Bittner tells Angie that although Scott was mentally ill he wasn't violent and would never have harmed her mother. Angie isn't certain whether Mrs. Bittner believes what she is saying or not, but suddenly needs to get away from her. She says that she needs to lie down and rest, and Mrs. Bittner says she will see her at dinner.

Jason returns later that afternoon and tells Angie that he reached their father, but that he begged him not to call Uncle Bob or their grandmother because he didn't want anyone to know that he'd left them alone. Jason tells her that he said he would catch the next available flight and be there first thing in the morning to take them home. Angie then takes Jason's cell phone and tries to call a few of her friends, but only reaches two - neither of whom can come and get her - and leaves voicemails for the rest. When she finishes leaving messages she is upset and angry, but Jason promises that he will not leave her alone in the mansion again and she calms down, thinking that after all she has already been through she can last one more night.

Chapter 19. Angie keeps Jason's phone, and half an hour later her father calls. The connection is terrible, but he manages to apologize for having left her and says that he will be leaving for the airport in an hour to come home. He then tells her that a television network executive loved one of his songs and wants to use it in one of his shows, which could be the break he has been waiting for. Angie starts to tell him what she has found out about Scott Bittner and her mother, but they are disconnected. Angie calls him back but gets his voicemail.

Chapters 16-19 Analysis

When Angie overhears the conversation between Hank and Trudy in the kitchen, she immediately believes that whatever they are talking about has something to do with Scott Bittner's obsession with her mother, and wonders what it is that could possibly land them in jail. While she is unable to get any important information out of Trudy when she questions her after Hank leaves, she is struck by the fact that Trudy tells her what a



gentle person Scott Bittner was, and how he would never harm anyone even though Angie considers herself living proof that he would, indeed, harm someone. Both what she overheard and her own short conversation with Trudy have made it obvious to Angie that neither Hank nor his wife wants her and Jason in the mansion any more than they want to be there, but that they are both afraid to tell this to Mrs. Bittner. Later, when Mike's mother tells her that there was nothing she could do to change Mrs. Bittner's mind about letting her and Jason leave, Angie sees fear in the woman's eyes when Mike starts to protest, and relief when she and Mike finally leave the house.

Angie is grateful to Mike for trying to help her get away from his grandmother, and feels very comfortable with him. She wonders whether they could actually have a relationship somewhere down the line, and finds it very strange that she could even consider such a thing given that his uncle had attacked and almost killed her just two weeks before. When she learns that Scott's sister had been named Laura like her mother and had died when they were both children, Angie thinks that perhaps she has found an important clue to why Scott became obsessed with her mother. Mike tells her that he is certain it is just a coincidence and Angie is unable to pursue the matter, but it continues to trouble her just the same.

When Angie tells Mrs. Bittner that she wants to talk with her about her son Scott's obsession with her mother, the older woman is not at all surprised that Angie knows about that. For the second time that day Angie is told what a sweet and gentle man Scott was, and how although he was mentally ill he was never violent. Angie is not certain whether Mrs. Bittner believes what she is telling her or whether she is just trying to play some kind of elaborate mind game with her, but it doesn't matter. She can still see Scott Bittner leaning over her, and her injuries are still very real and painful. Although Mrs. Bittner believes that the scrapbook containing photographs and drawings of Angie's mother proves what a talented, misunderstood man her son really was, Angie finds it to be almost unbearably creepy and retreats to her room as quickly as possible. More than anything else she wants to get away from Mrs. Bittner, but yet again it seems as though she has no alternative but to spend another night in the mansion.



Chapters 20-23

Chapters 20-23 Summary

Chapter 20. Angie and Jason join Mrs. Bittner for dinner. Mrs. Bittner offers them both champagne which Jason accepts but Angie refuses. After dinner Mrs. Bittner asks them questions about their interests, and then asks what they remember about their mother. Angie feels uncomfortable and when Jason notices this he says that he is exhausted, and that he and Angie should get to bed. Mrs. Bittner is disappointed, but bids them goodnight. Jason talks with Angie for a while in her room and then goes to bed. After what seems like hours Angie finally falls into an uneasy sleep.

Angie is awakened at 2:00 AM by a wailing sound, and realizes that her cat Misty is not in her room. Her ankle is aching and after grabbing her house keys which have a small LED flashlight on them, she takes one of the crutches Mrs. Bittner gave her and goes to Jason's room, but he won't wake up. She hears Misty wail again and follows the sound to the stairway leading to the third floor. She calls the cat but it will not come down. Angie goes to the elevator and takes it to the third floor. Using the flashlight, she walks through the corridor to another staircase which leads up into one of the mansion's towers and sees Misty at the top of the steps. She climbs the steps and finds herself in a corridor with a door at the far end and a glass-enclosed curio cabinet holding a collection of old swords and battleaxes against one wall. Misty rubs up against her ankles, then runs down the corridor to the door at the far end and wails again. Angie follows her, telling the cat to keep quiet, and hears the handle of the door being turned. A moment later she hears a woman's voice asking if anyone is out there. Angie hesitates and then answers. The woman says that she has been locked in and when Angie offers to get Mrs. Bittner, the woman begs her not to do that. Angie then asks who the woman is and after a moment the voice says, "Laura Favorite."

Chapter 21. Angie tells her mother who she is and says that she is going to get Jason to help get her out of the room. When Laura begs Angie not to leave her, Angie remembers the curio cabinet she passed on the way to the door. She goes back to it, breaks the glass with her crutch, and gets a small hatchet. Returning to the door, she starts hammering away at the doorknob. After what seems like an eternity, the doorknob gives way and falls to the ground, and the door swings open slowly.

Chapter 22. Angie is shocked by how thin and frail her mother looks, but recognizes her immediately. Laura does not know how long she has been held prisoner and Angie tells her that it has been over five years. Laura says that Mrs. Bittner told her that her entire family had been killed in a car crash, but that she had never believed it. She then says that they have to get out of the house immediately before it is too late. Angie tells Laura that they need to get Jason, who is also in the house, and they go down the stairs to the third floor. They head towards the elevator and almost reach it when the lights come on and Angie sees Mrs. Bittner standing at the other end of the hallway, holding a ring of keys. Mrs. Bittner tells Laura that she needs to go back to her room because she isn't



well. She becomes angry and says that Laura is a Bittner and has always been her favorite, and that whatever Angie has told her is a lie. Angie pulls her mother into the elevator and pushes the button for the second floor. Mrs. Bittner watches as the elevator doors close.

Chapter 23. When the elevator stops at the second floor the doors do not open. Angie yells for Jason to wake up as loud as she can and a moment later Mrs. Bittner calls down from above and says that no one will hear her. She then says that she will come back in an hour to check on them. Laura says that Mrs. Bittner controls everything and everyone in the house, and that it would be best not to make her mad. Angie says that she will get them out somehow and that Jason will wake up soon, but Laura says that Mrs. Bittner may have drugged him, and Angie remembers the champagne that he'd drunk at dinner. Angie then says that when Hank and Trudy come in the morning they will help them, but Laura says that they have been in on things from the start. They then sit down on the floor and Angie asks her mother to tell her what happened to her.

Laura says that on the day she disappeared she'd gone to work after dropping Angie and Jason off at school, but felt ill and dizzy as she got out of her car. The last thing she remembered before passing out was Scott Bittner pulling into the parking lot and asking if she was okay. When she woke up she was on the sofa in the Bittner's living room. Angie asks if Scott kidnapped her, but Laura shakes her head and says that it was Mrs. Bittner who kept her a prisoner; Scott brought her home after she fainted because he was a "simple man", and didn't know what else to do. Later Laura heard Scott pleading with his mother to let her go and Mrs. Bittner telling him that Laura was part of their family now, and was going to stay. Mrs. Bittner sent Scott away to a hospital shortly after that and drugged Laura's food to keep her quiet. Sometimes she would let Laura downstairs to watch television or play the piano and sing, but most of the time she was kept locked in her room. Mrs. Bittner told her that she was her daughter and other lies over and over again to wear her down, but she never gave up hope that someone would find her. Eventually Scott came back and realized that Laura was still a prisoner; he spoke with her through the door and asked what he could do to help her, and she told him to find her family. A few days later he told her that he had seen Angie, and Laura slipped him a note to give her. Laura then smiles and says that Scott must have delivered the note, because Angie came for her.

Chapters 20-23 Analysis

When Angie finds her mother is being held prisoner in one of the towers in the Bittner mansion she is both overjoyed and frightened. She realizes immediately after getting her mother out of the locked room that even though Scott Bittner is dead something is still very, very wrong and that she and her mother - as well as Jason - are in grave danger. She recalls the conversation she overheard between Hank and Trudy in the kitchen, and remembers that one of them mentioned that Mrs. Bittner had a gun. The best plan Angie can come up with is to get her mother to the second floor as quickly as she can, use Jason's cell phone to call the police, and then get both of them out of the mansion.



When Mrs. Bittner is somehow able to trap them in the elevator, Angie is shocked and dismayed to see that her mother appears to be on the verge of giving up, but it soon becomes obvious that Mrs. Bittner has worn Laura Favorite down over the years with her lies and constant psychological abuse to the point where she thinks that the older woman is unstoppable. Although Laura has spent five long years praying that someone would find and rescue her and has never completely given up hope, she is deathly afraid of Mrs. Bittner and the power she wields over everyone and everything in the mansion.

As Laura tells Angie about her disappearance and what has happened over the last five years, the reader understands that Mrs. Bittner is very seriously mentally ill and that it is she and not her son Scott who is responsible for Laura being held prisoner. Angie recalls the nagging feeling she'd had when she found out that Mrs. Bittner's daughter had also been named Laura and had died when she was only a child, and realizes that the older woman kidnapped her mother to replace her dead daughter. Although it is obvious that Mrs. Bittner does not completely live in a fantasy world since she has gone to great lengths to ensure that no one other than Hank and Trudy - her accomplices - know that she is keeping Laura a prisoner in the house, Angie has no way of knowing exactly how crazy the woman might be or to what lengths she will go to stop their escape.

Angie also realizes that she has been wrong about Scott Bittner all along. She remembers that when he caught her in the woods next to the parking lot he'd told her to come with him, that there was something she needed to see. Her injuries had been a result of her falling and hitting her head on a rock trying to get away from him, not because of his striking her. Because he suffered from some form of personality disorder he was unable to just tell Angie about her mother, and Angie misinterpreted his attempt to do what her mother asked him to do as an attack. Although she had no way of knowing that he had been trying to help her mother at the time Angie still feels sad and guilty about Scott's death, but she knows she will need to deal with those feeling later. The only important thing now is to get her mother and brother out of the Bittner house, and she knows that she is running out of time.



Chapters 24-27

Chapters 24-27 Summary

Chapter 24. Angie searches the inside of the elevator and sees an escape hatch in the ceiling. Angie hits the hatch with the tip of her crutch until it finally comes loose. Although she says that it is a bad idea and will make Mrs. Bittner angry, Laura gives Angie a boost up through the escape hatch. The elevator doors to the third floor are waist high, and Angie manages to pry them open. Laura begs her not to leave her alone, but Angie promises that she will be back for her as quickly as she can, and that if Mrs. Bittner comes back Laura should hit her with Angie's crutch. Angie then pulls herself up into the third floor hallway.

Chapter 25. Angie makes her way down to the first floor and hears voices coming from the parlor; the voices belong to Mrs. Bittner and Jason. Jason says something and Angie can hear that he is slurring his words. She then hears Mrs. Bittner tell him to finish his tea and that she will have Hank search the house for Angie. She then tells Jason to go ahead and lay down right there on the sofa. Angie hides as Mrs. Bittner leaves the parlor, then goes in and tries to wake Jason. It is obvious that he has been drugged, but when she tells Jason to give her his phone, he manages to hand it to her before passing out completely. As she is about to dial 911 the phone rings. It is her father, and she quickly tells him that she has found her mother, and that they are being held prisoner by Mrs. Bittner. He is at the apartment and says he will come right away. Angie tells him to hurry, then hangs up and calls 911.

The 911 dispatcher takes her information and says she is sending officers immediately. When Angie asks if she should go back to her mother, the dispatcher tells her to stay where she is and wait for the police. A moment later Angie hears her mother cry out from upstairs; she drops the phone and hobbles up the steps to the second floor as quickly as she can. When she reaches the top she turns on the lights and sees Mrs. Bittner standing near the open elevator doors. Mrs. Bittner turns towards her, and Angie sees she is holding a gun. Angie tells her she has called the police and starts towards her, and Mrs. Bittner raises the gun and tells Angie that she is going to shoot her. She cocks the pistol and is about to pull the trigger when Laura comes out of the elevator and hits Mrs. Bittner with the crutch. The gun goes off but Angie isn't hit, and Mrs. Bittner falls to the ground unconscious.

The police arrive, and Angie and her mother go downstairs. A short time later her father arrives. Mrs. Bittner, Jason, and Laura are taken to the hospital and after making certain that Angie is okay, her father goes with Laura in the ambulance. Angie stays behind to answer questions for the police.

Chapter 26. Hank and Trudy are arrested, and soon there are investigators going through every corner of the mansion. Mike comes to the house when he sees the police cars, and after giving a statement to the police asks if he can speak with Angie privately.



When they are alone he tells Angie that he had no idea that her mother was being kept prisoner and swears that if he'd even suspected he would have called the police. When Angie says she believes him, he asks if they can keep in touch and get together sometime, but Angie knows that she will always think of his grandmother any time she is with him and tells him no.

Chapter 27. Over the next month, Angie and her family try to come to terms with everything that has happened. Mrs. Bittner, Hank, and Trudy will be tried in the fall, and the DA tells Angie that Mrs. Bittner will probably plead insanity. Angie's grandmother returns from her cruise early and at first rarely leaves her daughter's side. It is agreed that after her grandmother marries Arthur and moves out, Angie's father will move into the apartment and he, Laura, Jason and Angie will live together as a family.

Both Angie and her mother go for counseling. Since leaving the mansion Angie has had nightmares and some emotional issues, and much to her surprise she finds that counseling helps her. Her mother has more serious issues; she becomes nervous when she is left alone and afraid that her captors will come back for her, but her doctor says that it is only a matter of time before she is able to deal with what happened to her. A television network buys one of Angie's father's songs, and suddenly his music is very much in demand.

On the morning of her grandmother's wedding, Laura says that she and Angie's father are going to renew their vows after the wedding ceremony. Angie acts as the maid of honor, and Jason is their father's best man. Although she knows that there is still a lot that her family needs to work through, for the first time in over five years Angie believes that everything will be alright.

Chapters 24-27 Analysis

Although her mother is terrified that Mrs. Bittner will be angry and begs her not to leave her alone, Angie manages to get out of the elevator and go for help. She knows that she is not strong enough to pull Laura up through the escape hatch, and while she hates leaving her mother locked in the elevator, she doesn't dare risk trying to open the elevator doors on the second floor from the outside. Since Jason didn't seem to her hear when she yelled for him earlier, Angie decides that her best bet is to try and get out of the mansion and call the police from a neighbor's house, but she changes her plan when she hears Jason and Mrs. Bittner in the parlor. Angie can feel the first signs of an anxiety attack coming on, but forces herself to remain calm because she knows that it is up to her to get her mother and brother out of the mansion safely.

Even though the dispatcher tells her to stay where she is and wait for the police officers to arrive after she calls 911, Angie rushes back to the second floor when she hears her mother cry out. Instinctively she knows that it is the wrong thing to do and that with all of her injuries she will not be strong enough to stop Mrs. Bittner, but after so many years of being separated from her Angie simply cannot leave her mother alone when she is in danger. When it becomes apparent that Mrs. Bittner intends to shoot Angie and kill her,



Laura manages to momentarily conquer her fears and find the courage to knock the older woman out with Angie's crutch. Her instinct to protect her daughter proves to be stronger than her fear of the woman who has terrorized her for the past five years, and her action saves Angie's life.

Angie and her family work to rebuild their lives, but it will take a great deal of time for things to get back to anything even close to normal. It will take Angie's mother a long time to fully recover from the emotional and psychological abuse Mrs. Bittner inflicted on her over the five years she was held captive, and Angie has been emotionally damaged by what has happened to her as well. Angie visits Scott Bittner's grave to thank him for what he did and finds that it brings her some closure, but there are still times when she feels sad about how his life turned out, and guilty that she did not understand that he was trying to help her mother. However, as the novel concludes the reader understands that both Angie and her mother will heal over time, and that the most important thing is that the family is finally back together once again.



Characters

Angel (Angie) Favorite

Angie Favorite is an attractive and intelligent sixteen-year-old who lives with her grandmother and her brother Jason in a small town in Wisconsin. Five years before the start of the novel, Angie's mother, Laura Favorite, disappears without a trace on Angie's eleventh birthday. A few months later Angie's father is arrested on a bogus drug charge and she and her brother go to live with her grandmother, although her father remains very much a part of her life. In spite of everything that has happened to her, Angie is a normal and well adjusted kid who loves her family very much, and has never given up hope that her mother will come back someday.

Angie is 'attacked' by a man named Scott Bittner in a parking lot at the start of the novel and is hospitalized for several days. Scott later kills himself while in police custody and his mother, Lillian Bittner, contacts Angie soon after she is released from the hospital. Angie finally agrees to meet her and goes out to the Bittner mansion with her father and brother, but is very uncomfortable and only stays a short time. Although all Angie wants is to try and forget about the attack and get on with her life, she finds herself returning to the Bittner mansion with her brother Jason for dinner after Mrs. Bittner says that she wants to talk about arranging full college scholarships for both of them. Mrs. Bittner's grandson Mike is there and asks Angie to take a boat ride on the lake with him. When they are alone, Mike tells her that his Uncle Scott had been obsessed with Angie's mother before she disappeared, had followed her around, and after she disappeared started keeping a scrapbook about her.

After the boat ride Angie sprains her ankle and Mrs. Bittner learns that both her father and grandmother are out of town. Mrs. Bittner insists that she and Jason stay with her until her father returns from his trip to the West Coast and although Angie is upset by what Mike has told her and desperately wants to leave, she has no way out. During her second night there Angie finds her mother locked in a room in one of the mansion's towers and learns that Mrs. Bittner has held her prisoner for five years; Scott Bittner had not really attacked her, but had actually been trying to take her to her mother. Finding an inner courage that she did not realize she possessed, Angie manages to rescue her mother and reunite her family.

Mrs. Bittner (Lillian)

Mrs. Bittner is the mother of Scott Bittner - the man Angie believes attacked her. Mrs. Bittner lives in an enormous mansion on a lakefront property which looks like a castle to Angie, and has not set foot outside of her home in over five years. Mrs. Bittner seems to be a very proper and formal person, and controls a huge family fortune which she uses to get other people to do as she wishes, including her grandson Mike and his parents. Many years before the story opens, Mrs. Bittner lost her daughter Laura to leukemia,



and suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of the child's death. After Angie's mother disappeared, Mrs. Bittner covered up the fact that her son Scott had been obsessed with Laura Favorite, and sent him away to a rehabilitation facility. When Scott comes back and is arrested for attacking Angie, Mrs. Bittner contacts Angie and later gets her and her brother Jason to come out to the mansion by saying that she wants to talk to them about the possibility of arranging full college scholarships.

Angie is very uncomfortable around Mrs. Bittner from the first although she isn't completely certain why, and at one point Mike warns her not to let his grandmother get too close to her or she will find a way to get control of her life. Later, after she finds her mother locked in a room in one of the mansion's towers, Angie realizes that Mrs. Bittner is a very sick woman who has kept her mother prisoner for over five years to try and replace her own daughter Laura who she lost many years before. Mrs. Bittner is arrested, and later the District Attorney tells Angie that she will probably use an insanity defense.

Jason Favorite

Jason is Angie's older brother, and lives with Angie and their grandmother. Jason is very intelligent, an excellent student, and very good at computer games, but is somewhat absent minded and has never managed to get his driver's license. Jason is a caring and considerate brother, but has a habit of speaking and acting before fully thinking things through. It is Jason who talks Angie into going to the mansion for dinner after Mrs. Bittner tells her that she wants to talk about college scholarships, and it is also Jason who inadvertently lets it slip that he and his sister are staying by themselves for a few days after Angie twists her ankle, which causes Mrs. Bittner to insist they stay with her until their father returns. When Hank takes him home the first night to pick up some things they will need during their stay, Jason brings Angie's cat Misty back with him to apologize for getting them stuck there. Although she is still irritated with Jason, Angie can never stay angry at her brother for long and forgives him. Mrs. Bittner drugs Jason near the end of the novel, but he is still able to give Angie his cell phone so that she can call the police.

Laura Favorite

Laura Favorite is Angie and Jason's mother. Five years before the novel begins Laura disappeared without a trace from the parking lot of the building where she worked. On her second night in the mansion Angie finds Laura locked in a room in one of the towers. Five years earlier Laura had fainted in a parking lot, and Scott Bittner had taken her home so his mother could help her. Since then Mrs. Bittner has kept Laura a prisoner, drugging her food and rarely letting her out of her room. Over the years Mrs. Bittner tells Laura that her family has been killed in an accident, and tries to convince her that she is really her daughter, but Laura never gives up hope that she will be rescued. Laura has been psychologically and emotionally scarred by her years of captivity, and is deathly afraid of Lillian Bittner. She continually tells Angie that they



shouldn't make her angry, and is ready to give up when she and Angie are trapped in the elevator. In the end, however, she manages to find the courage to knock Mrs. Bittner out with a crutch when she is about to shoot Angie, and saves her daughter's life.

Elroy Favorite (Angie's Father)

Elroy Favorite is Angie and Jason's father. He is a rock musician who is arrested on a bogus drug charge shortly after Angie's mother disappears, and loses custody of his children to Angie's grandmother. He has remained very close to his children over the years, however, and spends as much time with them as he can when he is not on the road. Angie's father is a dreamer, and continues to believe that he will make it big in the music business. After Angie is released from the hospital, her father stays with her and Jason when Angie's grandmother leaves on a cruise with her fiancée. When a record company executive calls and says that he wants to meet him and his band out in LA, Angie's father leaves her and Jason alone for three days. After he learns that Mrs. Bittner will not let Angie and Jason leave her home, he cuts his trip short and arrives at the mansion just after the police. At the end of the book, he renews his wedding vows with Angie's mother.

Mike Bittner

Mike is Mrs. Bittner's grandson, and lives with his parents across the lake from her. Mike is Angie's age, and the two of them hit it off immediately. After asking Angie if she would like a tour of the lake in a pontoon boat, Mike risks having his grandmother pay for his college education when he tells her that his Uncle Scott had been obsessed with Angie's mother before she disappeared and that his grandmother had covered it up after Laura Favorite went missing. Later Mike tries to help Angie get out of the mansion by having his mother talk Mrs. Bittner into letting her leave, but is unsuccessful. After Angie finds her mother and the police come to the mansion, Mike asks Angie if they can keep in touch but Angie says no - she wants to have nothing else to do with the Bittner family.

Scott Bittner

Scott Bittner is Lillian Bittner's son, and the man who Angie believes tried to attack her; shortly after he is arrested for the attack, he hangs himself in his cell. Scott has suffered from mental and emotional illness his entire life, and is in reality a kind and gentle man who tried to help Laura Favorite when she passed out in a parking lot five years before the story opens. He tries to help Laura again five years later when he discovers that his mother has been keeping her prisoner by contacting Angie, but Angie misinterprets his intentions and thinks he is attacking her. Scott Bittner is a tragic figure who only appears briefly in the first chapter of the novel, but is discussed at length by several other characters throughout the course of the story.



Angie's Grandmother (unnamed)

Angie's grandmother - who is also Laura Favorite's mother - is a kind and compassionate woman who gets custody of Angie and Jason after Angie's father goes to prison, and has given them a stable home for five years. Angie's grandmother is supposed to get married the week after Angie is 'attacked', but postpones the wedding; however, she cannot postpone the honeymoon cruise since the tickets are non-refundable. Although she dislikes Angie's father, she allows him to stay with Angie and Jason in her apartment while she is away.

Hank and Trudy

Hank and Trudy are a middle-aged married couple who have worked for Lillian Bittner for over thirty years. Angie overhears part of a conversation between them in which Hank is worried about something that could land them both in jail, and Trudy tells him to be patient just a little longer and they will be paid off. Later, Angie finds out that Hank and Trudy have helped Mrs. Bittner keep her mother Laura a prisoner for over five years. They are arrested shortly after Lillian Bittner is taken into custody.

Mike's Mother

Mike brings his mother to the mansion to try and talk his grandmother into allowing Jason and Angie to go home. She is unsuccessful and when Mike protests, she becomes nervous and says that there is a great deal at stake financially and insists that Mike leave with her.

Misty

Misty is Angie's cat. Jason brings Misty to the mansion to apologize to Angie for getting them stuck there. Misty awakens Angie with her wailing, and leads her to the room in the tower where Laura Favorite has been held captive for five years.

Uncle Bob and Aunt Carla

Uncle Bob is Angie's grandmother's son (Laura's brother), and Carla is his wife. Angie does not get along with her Aunt Carla, and is upset when it appears that she will have to stay with them while her grandmother is on her cruise. Angie is relieved when she learns her father will be staying with her and Jason instead.



Objects/Places

Dry Cleaning

Angie is picking up dry cleaning when she is 'attacked' by Scott Bittner in the parking lot of the strip mall.

Pistachio Nuts

Angie's father brings her pistachio nuts, which are her favorite food, while she is in the hospital.

Cell Phones

All of the main characters with the exception of Mrs. Bittner use cell phones. Angie uses her brother's cell phone to call the police after she finds her mother in the Bittner mansion.

Books

Angie's grandmother is reading a book when Angie wakes up in the hospital. The Bittner mansion has a huge library that contains thousands of books.

Crutches

Mrs. Bittner gives Angie a pair of crutches after she twists her ankle getting out of the pontoon boat. Angie's mother knocks Mrs. Bittner out with a crutch as the older woman is about to shoot Angie, saving her daughter's life.

Flashlight

Angie has a small LED flashlight which she uses when she searches for Misty after she hears the cat wailing.

Scrapbook

Mrs. Bittner shows Angie a scrapbook containing photos and sketches of Laura Favorite that had been kept by her son Scott.



Key Ring

Mrs. Bittner is holding a large key ring when Angie sees her as she and her mother are getting into the elevator; a moment later the elevator stops and the lights go out.

Gun

Mrs. Bittner tries to kill Angie by shooting her with a gun.

Hatchet

Angie uses a hatchet to break the doorknob on the door to the room where her mother is held captive.

Champagne

Mrs. Bittner serves champagne at dinner. Jason drinks some, but Angie does not, and later Angie suspects that it may have been drugged.

Elevator

Angie and her mother are trapped in an old elevator in the mansion by Mrs. Bittner.

Pontoon Boat

Mike takes Angie on a tour of the lake in a pontoon boat that his family owns.

The Bittner Mansion

The Bittner mansion sits on a lakefront property in the wealthiest section of town. It looks like a castle to Angie, and has wrought iron gates and two towers with rounded windows. After Angie twists her ankle she is forced to stay at the mansion, and finds her mother locked in a room in one of the towers.

Hospital

Angie wakes up in the hospital after she regains consciousness following the 'attack' by Scott Bittner.



Grandmother's Apartment

When she is released from the hospital, Angie returns to her grandmother's apartment, where she lives with her grandmother and her brother Jason.

Lake

The Bittner mansion has a private dock on a lake. Mike takes Angie out onto the lake in a pontoon boat to get away from his grandmother.

Zaps Bar and Restaurant

Zaps is a gaudy looking restaurant next to the lake which Mike calls "the neighborhood eyesore." Mike tells Angie about his Uncle Scott's obsession with her mother while they are in Zaps.



Themes

Psychological and Emotional Issues

Psychological and emotional issues affect several of the central characters in the novel, and play a large part in the story. After the 'attack' in the parking lot, Angie has a difficult time dealing with things and finds that she is more comfortable sleeping and watching television than doing the things she enjoyed doing before. On two occasions when something upsets her, she suffers anxiety attacks during which she cannot breathe, and she is fragile and unsure of herself throughout much of the novel. It is only by forcing herself to conquer her emotional issues that she is able to find the courage to rescue her mother. Laura Favorite is profoundly afraid of Mrs. Bittner due to the psychological and emotional abuse she has suffered at her hands during the five years she has been held captive, and appears to Angie to be ready to give up in the elevator rather than risk making Mrs. Bittner angry. It is only by finding the courage to overcome her fear that she is able to knock Mrs. Bittner out with the crutch and save her daughter's life.

Although the reader is never completely certain what is wrong with him, Scott Bittner has suffered from some form psychological illness his entire life, and has been sent away to mental hospitals and special schools since he was a child. It is these issues that keep him from simply being able to tell Angie that he knows where her mother is, causes Angie to misinterpret his actions in the parking lot, and ultimately lead to his death. Mrs. Bittner suffers from some form of mental illness as well which dates back many years to when her five-year-old daughter Laura died of Leukemia. Although outwardly she appears to be able to function normally most of the time, she believes that Laura Favorite is actually her dead daughter (at least some of the time) and this is why she imprisons her and is willing to shoot Angie to keep Laura with her.

Hope

Hope is a theme that runs through the entire novel. Although she is devastated when her mother disappears without a trace on her eleventh birthday, Angie refuses to believe that she is dead and never gives up hope that someday she will come back. This hope is something that she shares with her grandmother, who spent all of her money hiring private investigators to search for her daughter even after the police had given up and told her that it was probably hopeless. It is this hope that is at the heart of the close bond that Angie forms with her grandmother over the years since her mother's disappearance, and is a very important part of who she is.

Although she suffers years psychological abuse at the hands of Mrs. Bittner who tells her repeatedly that her family has been killed and tries to brainwash her into believing that she is really her daughter, Laura Favorite never stops hoping that someone will find her and that she will eventually be reunited with her family. It is this hope that allows her to survive her five years of captivity, and helps her resist giving in completely to Mrs.



Bittner's lies. Angie's father has never given up the hope that he will succeed in the rock and roll music industry, and his faith that he will make it big some day is one of the things Angie loves most about him. Finally, it is the hope that Mrs. Bittner will provide both he and Angie with full college scholarships that causes Jason to talk Angie into going to the Bittner mansion for dinner, even though that is the last thing that she wants to do. The importance of hope to so many of the book's main characters makes it a central theme in the novel.

The Power of Wealth

Lillian Bittner is a very wealthy woman, and is in charge of a huge family fortune which she uses to control a number of people in the novel and ensure that they do what she wants them to do. Without the power that her huge wealth gives her, it would be impossible for Mrs. Bittner to keep Angie's mother prisoner for over five years. When Angie overhears Hank and Trudy arguing in the kitchen, she hears Trudy say that Mrs. Bittner has promised them a big payout, and that they simply have to be patient for a little longer to get it. It is the promise of this large amount of money that persuades Hank and Trudy to help Mrs. Bittner hold Laura Favorite prisoner. When Mike tells Angie that his Uncle Scott was obsessed with her mother and cut all the pictures of her out of the local library's collection of yearbooks, he also tells her that Mrs. Bittner made a huge donation to the library to hush the matter up.

Mrs. Bittner also uses the power that her money gives her to control her family. When Scott Bittner insists that his mother let Laura go shortly after he brings her to the mansion, Mrs. Bittner uses her wealth to send him away to a private institution for five years to keep him from telling anyone what she is doing. She also uses her money as a way to keep Mike's father and mother from telling anyone what they learn about Scott's obsession with Angie's mother; Mike disobeys his parents when he tells Angie about his Uncle Scott, and by doing so risks his grandmother paying for his college tuition. Mike's mother becomes visibly upset when Mike protests after she is unable to convince Mrs. Bittner to let Angie and Jason go home, and says that there is a great deal at stake financially. It becomes clear during the course of the novel that Angie is the first person in many years who has stood up to Mrs. Bittner and resisted doing what she wants them to do.



Style

Point of View

"Favorite" is written in the first person, and the narrator is a sixteen-year-old girl named Angie Favorite. All of the action is presented as it is seen and experienced by her, and all of the information is presented as Angie understands and interprets it. While there are several important "flashback" scenes in the first few chapters, the majority of the novel is written as though the events have taken place just a short time before. There is no significant foreshadowing of events that are to come and, although the reader accepts Angie's interpretation of information as being reliable, her understanding of some crucial events is shown to be incorrect at the end of the novel.

The novel is written using a mixture of descriptive prose and dialogue, and Angie is present in every scene in the book. The author presents Angie's thoughts and feelings about events throughout the course of the narrative, as well as presenting her reactions to the information she uncovers and the other characters she interacts with. The intimate point of view used in the narrative is extremely important as it gives the reader an insight into the changes and inner struggles Angie goes through during the course of the novel, which are crucial to the storyline. It also helps the reader to understand who Angie is and care about what happens to her.

Setting

The novel is set in a small, unnamed town in rural Wisconsin. All of the action in the novel occurs in this small town, and takes place in the present day. In the early part of the story, the action takes place in a number of different locations including: the parking lot and wooded area behind it where Angie is 'attacked'; the hospital where she recuperates from her injuries; and her grandmother's apartment where she and Jason live and where she continues her recovery.

Over half of the story - and the majority of the significant scenes in the novel - takes place in the huge mansion owned by Mrs. Lillian Bittner. The mansion sits on a lakefront property in the wealthiest section of town and looks like a castle to Angie from the outside, complete with a massive wrought iron gate, turrets, and two towers with rounded windows. The inside of the mansion is very formal and luxurious, but Angie finds herself feeling very uncomfortable within its walls and hates being there. The oppressive and somewhat gloomy nature of the mansion, as well as its massive size and Angie's lack of familiarity with the interior, works well with the plot and serves to help establish a foreboding and frightening atmosphere for the second half of the story.



Language and Meaning

The narrator of "Favorite" is an intelligent sixteen-year-old girl living in the present day, and for the most part the language used in the book is quite informal and what one would expect from the narrating character. The descriptive prose serves to move the action along quickly and in most cases the author does not spend a great deal of time on minor or insignificant details that are not germane to the plot. The dialogue is crisp, natural sounding, and to the point, and the only exceptions to this are a few scenes with Mrs. Bittner in which the older woman tends to speak very formally. This formality is very much in keeping with Lillian's Bittner's character, and helps give the reader an insight into her personality.

There is almost no profanity used in the narrative, and there are no sexually explicit scenes of any kind. There are two quite violent scenes in the novel, but these are crucial to the storyline; both of these scenes are handled tastefully and should not be disturbing to any readers. The language used in the novel is easily understandable and appropriate for the young adult market. The author uses words economically in both the descriptive prose and dialogue sections of the novel, and this serves to keep the story moving forward at a fast, entertaining pace.

Structure

The novel is 162 pages long, and is divided into 27 numbered chapters of varying lengths. The longest chapter is twelve pages in length, and the shortest chapter is just under a page and a half long. The shorter chapters detail one specific event or conversation, while the longer chapters usually present multiple events and/or conversations. The longer chapters are sometimes divided into separate sections. With the exception of the last chapter, the entire novel takes place over the course of just over two weeks in early June, and starts on the first Saturday of summer vacation. The reader is made aware of how much time has passed at various points in the novel.

The novel has one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Angie Favorite as she attempts to come to terms with the physical injuries and emotional damage she suffers as the result of what she believes to have been an attack by a man named Scott Bittner. The most important of the subplots involves Angie coming to suspect that the 'attack' on her may be in some way connected to the disappearance of her mother five years before the novel opens and her attempt to help her mother escape after discovering that she has been held in the Bittner mansion since her disappearance. One of the minor subplots involves Angie's father going to LA after a record company executive expresses interest in his songs. All plots and subplots are brought to a reasonable conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

"'Hey,' she said as she hung the dress on the rod in front of me, 'your last name is Favorite. That's kinda cool.'" Chapter 1, p. 2

"On my eleventh birthday, my mother disappeared." Chapter 3, p.12

"A person doesn't go through what Angie did and just go on with their life. There's usually some sort of aftermath. The nurses have been watching for it." Chapter 4, p.29

"For the rest of my life people would think of me as the girl who got attacked and nearly killed the summer before junior year. Life would never be the same again." Chapter 5, p. 35

"I wasn't sorry he was dead. The only regret I had about his death was the timing. If it had happened a month earlier, I'd still be a whole person living my old life." Chapter 6, p. 38

"I liked reading about anyone who had an interesting life, from women who dressed up as men to fight in the Civil War, to the guy who invented Q-tips." Chapter 8, p. 51

"I wanted to stay in my dream world, but reality intruded and it all melted away." Chapter 9, p. 54

"She had swans, we had crayfish. The social gap got wider the longer this evening went on." Chapter 11, p. 65

"I knew I was having another panic attack, but knowing it didn't make it stop." Chapter 13, p. 75

"In only a few hours time, Mrs. Bittner had managed to worm her way into our lives, just like he predicted." Chapter 14, p. 83

"I felt that click you get when you hit it off with someone you don't know very well but would like to know better." Chapter 17, p. 100

"She shook her head. 'I believe in locking up my treasures. It's important to keep what is precious close to you, Angie. Remember that.'" Chapter 18, p. 105

"Every room was beautiful, filled with dark wood and marble floors and crystal chandeliers, but instead of being lovely it was oppressive." Chapter 20, p. 121

"I was running on pure adrenaline. After five years apart, all I could think of was how to get to her." Chapter 21, p. 129



"I would have pulled my mother out and taken her with me that minute if I'd had the strength, but I didn't. The best I could offer was my word." Chapter 24, p. 147

"For the first time in a long time I wasn't dwelling on the past; I was enjoying the present, where all of the people I loved were reunited at last." Chapter 27, p. 162



Topics for Discussion

Who is Angie Favorite? What is she like before she is 'attacked' in the parking lot? How does the 'attack' affect Angie? Does it change who she is as a person, or how she deals with the world around her and, if so, in what ways? Why does Angie have anxiety attacks? How does she deal with them?

What is Angie's home life like? How has Angie dealt with the disappearance of her mother, Laura Favorite? How has her mother not being there for five years affected how she looks at the world? Does she think that her mother is still alive? How has her mother's disappearance impacted her relationship with her grandmother?

Discuss Angie's relationship with her brother Jason. Why does she let him talk her into going to the Bittner mansion for dinner? Why does Angie forgive her brother after he gets them stuck at the Bittner mansion? How does Angie feel about Jason? Does she like her brother? How does Jason feel about Angie?

Discuss Angie's relationship with her father. How has the bogus drug arrest and the months he spent in prison affected his relationship with his son and daughter? Why does her father go to the West Coast when he is supposed to be staying with Angie and Jason? Is Angie angry at him for going? Is it irresponsible of him? Does her father love Angie and Jason? Does Angie love her father?

Who is Lillian Bittner? Why does she contact Angie? Why does she invite Angie and her brother out to the mansion for dinner? Why does she keep them at the mansion? Why does Mike Bittner tell Angie to be careful of letting his grandmother into her life? What kind of control does Lillian Bittner have over the rest of her family? What kind of control does she gain over Angie?

Why does Angie first suspect that Scott Bittner may have been responsible for her mother's disappearance? What connection does she think there is between her mother and Mrs. Bittner's daughter Laura, who died when she was five? What does Mrs. Bittner tell Angie the pictures in Scott's scrapbook prove about him? What does Angie think it shows about him?

Discuss Scott Bittner. Why does he bring Laura Favorite to the Bittner mansion after she faints? Why doesn't he call the police after he finds that his mother has been holding Laura Favorite prisoner for five years? Why does he try to get Angie to go with him in the parking lot? Why doesn't he simply tell her about her mother? Is it Angie's fault that she misunderstands his intentions? Was Scott a hero?

Why does Lillian Bittner take Laura Favorite captive? What does she do to Laura during the five years she keeps her prisoner? How does it affect her? Why is Laura so frightened of Mrs. Bittner after Angie gets her out of the room in the tower? What is it that makes her conquer that fear?



How do Laura and Angie deal with what has happened to them after they are finally safe and back together with the rest of their family? How does Angie deal with the guilt she feels about Scott Bittner's death? Does visiting his grave bring Angie any closure?