

Ghost Girl: The True Story of a Child in Peril and the Teacher Who Saved Her Study Guide

Ghost Girl: The True Story of a Child in Peril and the Teacher Who Saved Her by Torey Hayden

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Plot Summary

The novel *Ghost Girl* by Torey Hayden tells the story of a special education teacher who helps to save her student, Jadie, and Jadie's two sisters from an abusive situation. Torey uses her experience working with elective mutes as well as troubled children in order to determine that Jadie is being abused. Although the stories this hunched over, closed up girl seem unbelievable, Torey refuses to believe that Jadie is making the stories up or imagining the actions that she talks about. Torey puts both her job and her reputation on the line when she pursues Jadie's case. In the end, Torey's instinct proves correct as Jadie and her sisters are permanently removed from their parents' home.

Torey first meets Jadie when she accepts a teaching position in a special education class in the small town of Pecking. Although Jadie is of normal intelligence, she has been placed in the special education class because she refuses to talk to anyone at school. Torey also notices that Jadie has a strange, bent over posture. With her experience working with elective mutes, Torey helps Jadie overcome her refusal to speak in school on the first day that she works with Jadie. When Jadie learns that Torey has worked with elective mutes in the past, she asks Torey if she listened to these children, believed what they said, and was able to help them.

Jadie's story deepens when she leaves what Torey believes to be a cry for help recorded on an old video recording machine that Torey has borrowed to use in class. In addition to the strange message that Jadie leaves Torey, another unusual aspect of this recording is that in the recording, Jadie is standing upright. Jadie generally stands or sits in a hunched over position. One day when Torey asks Jadie why she stands this way, Jadie tells her it is to keep her insides from falling out.

Jadie surprises Torey when she begins showing up in the classroom after classes have been dismissed. Torey allows Jadie to stay in the room with her. Her desk is located in a cloakroom, which has two doors but no windows. Jadie begins the practice of locking herself and Torey into this cloakroom. Once they are locked in, Jadie begins to reveal to Torey an almost unbelievable story of abuse, murder and horror.

Because Jadie can provide no firm details about her abuse, the authorities doubt the reality of Jadie's abuse when Torey brings their attention to the child's strange behavior. Jadie and her two sisters are removed from their parents' home, but because Jadie will not tell her story in person, the police are unable to press charges or even keep the children away from their home situation any longer than one week. Although she feels there is some abuse going on in Jadie's home, even Torey has spells where she questions if her actions in pursuing the case are the proper thing to do. Just as the children are about to be returned to their family, Jadie gathers her courage and talks to a police woman about what has happened to her. Just before Jadie is taken to her new foster home, she gives Torey a note on which she has written the words "thank you."



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Torey drives to the town of Pecking to interview for a job as a special education teacher. Although Torey has enjoyed the time she has spent working at the Sandry Clinic as a therapist and research coordinator, she wants to get back to the classroom.

Glen Tinbergen, the principal of Pecking School, meets Torey at the school's front door. He escorts her to the special education classroom. Torey is impressed with the space allowed for these students as well as the arrangement of the furniture in the room. The room includes a large cloakroom into which the prior teacher had pushed the teacher's desk. Although Torey wished the principal would leave, he stays to introduce Torey to her four students.

Reuben, who is diagnosed as being autistic, is the first child to enter the room. Reuben's parents were highly involved in getting the special education class that Torey now teaches organized. Jade Ekdahl is the next child to enter the room. Jade, who is most commonly referred to as Jadie in the book, is classified as an elective mute. This classification indicates Jade is able to speak, but chooses not to. Although Jade completes her school work well, she will not talk or even make audible sounds while at school. Philip, who suffers with the effects not only of a premature birth but was also addicted to drugs when he was born, is the third student in Torey's class. Jeremiah, who is of Indian descent, is the final student. Jeremiah is mean and uses dirty language. These two characteristics have caused him to be removed from the regular classrooms. Jeremiah is in Torey's class as a last resort to keep him out of custodial detention.

In Chapter 2, Jeremiah runs from Torey's classroom and wreaks havoc in the school every chance that he gets. Philip sits in his chair and rocks, refusing to participate in class activities. Reuben spends his time roaming the room. He relieves himself by peeing in the trash can. Jadie, meanwhile, finds the school work she needs to do and completes it. She ignores the chaos going on around her. When the lunch bell rings, Jeremiah runs again. This time the teacher in the room next door to Torey offers to take Torey's children to lunch with hers. This teacher introduces herself as Lucy McLaren. Once she is back in her room, Torey relaxes in one of the student chairs. She hears a noise in the cloakroom and realizes Jadie is still in the room. Torey tells Jadie that she had worked with children like Jadie before and had helped them to be able to talk. Although Jadie does not speak during the conversation, she does nod slightly in response to Torey's questions. As Torey talks, Jadie's eyes fill with tears before she runs from the room.

After lunch, Jeremiah upsets Philip by painting his lunch box. Despite this snag, the afternoon goes better than the morning did. Even Philip joins in the painting. Reuben, however, cannot concentrate on any activity. Torey blames his lack of concentration on the fact that he'd had so many substitute teachers in the previous weeks. Jeremiah



torments Philip by painting Philip's hands black. Torey is forced to put Jeremiah in a quiet chair, then stand over him until he calms down to assure that he stays there. Jadie, meanwhile, goes about her activities silently. After Jadie finishes her painting, however, Torey again attempts to get the girl to speak. Torey feels this is her best chance to get the girl talking and continues to press her about whose picture she has painted. Jadie finally tells Torey the girl in the picture is Tashee, a girl whom Jadie considered a friend.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

In this section, Torey sets up her background and describes her experience working with special education children. Interestingly, her research specialty was in elective mutism. In her new classroom in Pecking, she has a child who is an elective mute. Because Torey is able to get Jadie speaking so quickly, the reader can determine that the basis of the story will not be Jadie's unwillingness to speak, but instead a different issue.

Torey tells her reader that she was not looking for a job at the time she applied for the Pecking job. She indicates only that she saw the advertisement for the job and decided that she wanted it. Torey does write, however, that she looked forward to the open country located around Pecking. She disliked being in the city and was ready to have more freedom.

One of the aspects of Torey's personality that is striking is her ability to work with the children and read their personalities quickly. Although she has studied the children's files extensively and knows the disorders with which they have been diagnosed, Torey sees her students as children instead of just disorders. It would have been easy for Torey to ignore Jadie on her first day of class. Jadie was quiet, well-mannered and did her work even without instruction. Even though Jadie did not demand Torey's attention, Torey knew this first day was the best one on which to get Jadie speaking. By choosing to ignore the child and using her energy only on those who were outwardly rowdy, Torey would have missed an opportunity. Because she knows it is best for Jadie, Torey turns her attention to the quiet child and gently insists that she speak. She does not allow Jadie to stay in her shell as other teachers have done.

One idea that begins to develop in this section is how well Torey likes the Pecking school and its treatment of the special education students. Instead of giving these kids a cramped, unwanted room, the special education children are housed in a large room with many windows. Torey admires the way the room is outfitted and set up. She is pleased that she is provided with the supplies she needs to teach the students in an efficient manner.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Alice Havers, Jadie's former kindergarten teacher, embarrasses Torey with her praise when Torey tells the other teachers Jadie has spoken to her. Feeling self-conscious about her success, Torey goes back to her classroom. Lucy joins her to discuss Jadie and the former special education teacher, June Harriman. Lucy tells Torey that June had committed suicide. With the knowledge of June's death, Torey decides the best thing for her to do is to go ahead and change the room to fit her needs. She believes this action will give the students the feeling that they are having a fresh start with a new teacher. Torey decides to be strict with her rules, especially with troublemaker Jeremiah. In her effort to adhere the group into a working class, Torey also includes fun activities into the class schedule.

Torey is surprised when a strange woman who attempts to discuss the children's progress appears at her classroom door one day. Finally realizing that Torey does not know her, the woman introduces herself as Arkie Peterson, the school psychologist. Arkie had also tried to get Jadie to talk, but admits that their relationship had turned into a power struggle. As a result, Arkie had suggested Jadie be placed in the special education class. Arkie tells Torey that Jadie's family seems normal. She also tells Torey that Jadie's posture is not caused by a physical problem, but seemed to be a result of her emotional issues. One day during class, Torey tries to get Jadie to stand upright. Jadie tells Torey she needs to bend over in order to keep her insides from falling out.

In chapter four, Torey goes to Jadie's home to meet her parents. Torey notes the parents seem uncomfortable around her and have very little to say. When Jadie's parents do finally speak, they tell Torey they don't see a problem with Jadie's inability to speak at school. The report she often talks too much at home. The parents also believe Jadie's posture is a result of the way she was born. They tell Torey that Jadie's delivery was long. The doctor told them she was deprived of oxygen for a short time, and might have problems as a result. Torey wonders if Jadie might have some type of brain damage as a result of her delivery.

During a two-day break, Torey goes back to the Sandry Clinic with the intention of borrowing a video recorder. Torey plans to use this machine to record her students during class to see if there are any clues the students give that she misses while teaching. When Jadie sees the machine, she immediately knows what the machine is and for what it is used. She mentions to Torey that Bobby and J.R. Ewing have a video recorder that they use to put her on television. Torey is baffled by this statement and files it into her memory for later reference.

Torey uses the recorder to tape her students during that morning's class. When Torey watches the video, she notices that Jadie has taped a short clip at the end of the morning session. In this clip Jadie makes a ghost noise as she moves closer to and



then further away from the camera. As Jadie comes closer to the camera one time, Torey realizes she is chanting the words, "help me." Torey also realizes that during this taped session that Jadie is standing upright.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

During this section, Torey tries to learn more about Jadie's background. Torey's visit to Jadie's parents is not very productive. The only useful information that Torey comes away with is the mention that Jadie's mother had a hard time with Jadie's delivery and that Jadie was deprived of oxygen for a short time during the delivery. Torey also has a conversation with Jadie that leaves her baffled. In this conversation, Jade mentions that Bobby and J.R. Ewing have a video recorder that they use to record her and put her on television. This is unusual since Bobby and J.R. Ewing are the names of two of the stars of a television soap opera that aired throughout the eighties.

At the conclusion of chapter four, however, Jadie uses the video recorder to perhaps send a message to Torey. In a clip that Jadie makes of herself, she first makes ghost noises. Torey then hears Jadie repeating the words "help me" as she moves closer to the recorder. The fuzzy quality of the video adds to its eerie quality. At this point it is uncertain if Jadie is trying to send a message, or if she is only playing with the machine. This portion of the book, however, sparks an eerie, mysterious tone that will continue through the rest of the book.

Torey also learns in chapter three that the prior special education teacher had committed suicide. This new knowledge causes Torey to suddenly feel as if her position has been somehow tainted. Lucy, the teacher who worked in the room next to the special education room, remarks to Torey that she was aware that June was having troubles, but didn't really think much about her complaints. However, this recent tragedy may have caused the other faculty at the school to be more considerate of Torey and the big job that she had ahead of her.

Also in this section, Torey talks to the school psychologist about Jadie. Arkie, the psychologist, admits that she also tried to get Jadie to talk but their relationship soon turned into a power struggle. Arkie lost this struggle. It was because no one at the school was able to get Jadie talking that Arkie placed Jadie into the special education class. Arkie believes the majority of Jadie's problems are caused because she is emotionally closed off to other people.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

As Torey tries to make some sense out of Jadie's movie clip, she mostly wonders if Jadie had intended her to see the clip. Torey decides to wait and see if Jadie will mention the clip, or leave Torey another message. More than two weeks later, Jadie appears in Torey's classroom one day after school. Torey tells the girl the principal might get mad if her were to find her in the school after hours. She also mentions she is busy with lesson plans. Jadie gives no response to any remark that Torey makes. When Torey offers to let Jadie to stay if she plays quietly, Jadie slides into the room.

As Jadie puts together a puzzle, Torey finds herself asking Jadie to show her how she stands up. Torey tells the girl she has seen the video clip and knows Jadie can stand up straight. At this comment, Jadie asks Torey four separate times who she is. Torey struggles to give her an answer. Finally, Jadie comments that she believes Torey might be God. The next afternoon, Jadie comes to Torey's room again after school is dismissed. Jadie seems intrigued by the cloakroom. Jadie draws a picture depicting two bell shaped figures that Jadie identifies as herself and Amber. When Torey questions her about the drawing, she tells Torey the girls are ghosts. Jadie explains she is able to slip out of her body and float above things. Although she tells Torey she wants to stay out of her body, she always goes to sleep. When she wakes up, she is back in her body. Jadie then tells Torey that it was Tashee who taught her and Amber how to become ghosts. Tashee did this, Jadie says, so that the girls could see the now deceased Tashee.

In chapter six, Torey watches as Jadie inspects the door of the cloakroom. She asks Torey if she can lock the door, in effect locking them into the cloakroom. Jadie also locks to cloakroom door leading to the hallway and even goes so far as to block the keyholes. Jadie then searches the room for spiders. After Jadie checks the door to be sure they are securely locked, she laughs, and tells Torey she is safe. Jadie then asks Torey if she wants to see her stand up. Jadie then tells Torey that she feels safe with her, just as a church sign she saw said that one was "Safe with God." The next day, Jadie locks the doors of the cloakroom again. This routine becomes a habit for the two of them. One day Jadie begins screaming, a sound that draws attention from Lucy. Jadie seems pleased that Lucy heard her voice. Jadie ends the visit by climbing on the pipes in the cloakroom, an exercise that Torey discourages. While not locked in the cloakroom with Torey, however, Jadie continues with her hunched up posture and quiet ways. Torey wonders if it was because of Jadie and her strange behavior that June killed herself.

One day Torey decides to allow her class to make collages. Jadie has trouble getting started on her collage until Torey instructs her to search deep inside herself and make a picture that represents what she is feeling. Jadie creates a mosaic made of red magazine paper that depicts a quartered circle. Although the other students and Torey



as well complement Jadie on her work, Jadie wants the picture thrown away. When Torey asks Jadie for an explanation, she simply responds that, "X marks the spot."

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

During her time with Torey, Jadie identifies the locked cloakroom as a place that she feels safe. Jadie shows Torey that she feels safe in this room first by telling her that she now understands the meaning of a sign stating "Safe with God." Jadie relates Torey to God and feels she is safe when she is with Torey. Jadie also allows herself to stand up straight while the two of them are locked in the cloakroom. If one considers Jadie's bent over posture as an attempt to protect the most vulnerable areas of her body, then by standing up, Jadie shows Torey that she feels she doesn't have to protect herself when she is around Torey.

As Jadie spends more time with Torey, she begins to reveal baffling information about herself. For instance, she tells Torey that she and her sister Amber, have the ability to become ghosts. This ability that Jadie refers to might be an out of body experience caused by a frightening or traumatic situation. Note also that Jadie also speaks of drinking Coke to try to stay awake and stay out of her body. It is strange that Jadie says that instead of the soda making her stay awake, it instead makes her sleepy. Jadie tells Torey when she sleeps, she returns to her body.

Although Jadie becomes confident and animated when locked in the cloakroom with Torey, she remains closed up and hunched over when she is out of her safe place. Torey wonders briefly if it were not the result of Jadie's odd behavior that June Harriman killed herself. Torey can understand how the older woman might have felt it was she who was crazy when confronted with Jadie's odd antics. Although Torey notes in the book that June's suicide probably had nothing to do with Jadie, it is mentioned enough times in reference to Jadie that the readers begins to get the feeling that the two might be connected.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Torey brings her box of Sascha dolls to the classroom with her. Although Torey is excited to bring the dolls to class, Jeremiah squashes her excitement by refusing to play with the dolls and encouraging the others to follow suit. The next time Jadie locks herself in the cloakroom with Torey, however, she suggests they bring the dolls in the cloakroom so she will have something to do. Once they have brought the dolls to the cloakroom, Jadie questions Torey about the dolls. Jadie asks questions about the other children that Torey has helped. She specifically asks Torey if she believed the things these children told her. Torey notices that Jadie is more tense than usual. Jadie panics when Torey tells her it is time to go home. Jadie begins to cry, saying she needs time to find a safe place to hide her doll. When Torey helps Jadie hide the doll, Jadie seems more relaxed. When Torey attempts to put the top on the box where the doll is stowed, however, Jadie tells her not to do so as it will make Tashee feel she is being buried alive.

In chapter eight, when Jadie next visits with Torey, she again plays with the dolls. Instead of being protective, this time Jadie is angry with the dolls for having poopy pants. Jadie forms Play-Doh "feces" which she puts in each dolls' underwear. As she screams at the dolls for having poopy pants, Jadie collects the "poop" in a doll's dish. Jadie undresses all the dolls and makes them eat the poop. She smears the Play-Doh over the dolls' faces. When Torey asks why Jadie is making them eat the poop, Jadie begins running around the room screaming at Torey and threatening to kill her. Jadie takes Torey's pen from her hand and begins to draw encircled crosses on the wall. When Torey holds her to make her stop, Jadie tries to draw the symbol on Torey's skin. Torey takes the pen away and holds Jadie so that she cannot move. Jadie cries first from frustration, then out of sorrow and fear. Jadie apologizes to Torey for her behavior, and then begs Torey not to die.

Torey is disturbed by Jadie's play that day. Instead of going home she goes shopping, then stops by Lucy's house. After eating, the two talk. Their talk leads them to the issue of child abuse present in big cities as opposed to small towns. Torey finds herself unable to talk to the innocent seeming younger woman about Jadie's unusual behavior. The next time that Jadie visits Torey in the cloakroom, she tells Torey that her cat is gone. This cat, named Jenny, was in a box in the shed next to Jadie's house. Jadie tells Torey that a woman named Miss Ellie had taken the cat. Although Torey tries to comfort Jadie by insisting that Miss Ellie wouldn't hurt the cat, Jadie tells her that Miss Ellie will kill the cat and eat it.



Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Torey is confused by Jadie's behavior with the dolls. Her play ranges from a fearful over-protection to angry abuse. Torey tries to talk to Lucy about Jadie's behavior but finds this young lady is so innocent she would be shocked by the things that Jadie has done while in Torey's presence. It is in this experience with Lucy that Torey first introduces the idea that small towns are supposed to be exempt from child abuse just because they are small towns. Lucy's innocence about the reality of child abuse indicates how easy it is to close one's eyes to an unpleasant situation.

Consider, however, Jadie's behavior with the dolls. Generally in their play a child will mimic something that they have seen done or have had done to them. Although it might be common for a parent to be angry at a child old enough to be toilet trained for pooping in their pants, it is not an accepted practice to make the child eat his own feces. When Torey brings Jadie's attention to the fact that she is still in the room and is watching what Jadie is doing, Jadie becomes angry. It is possible that this anger is sparked by fear. Jadie may be afraid that Torey isn't as trustworthy as she once thought and might tell someone about her odd behavior. This may be why Jadie tells Torey she wants her to die. When Torey does finally get Jadie calmed, Jadie cries in sorrow about the things she has said to her teacher. She seems truly distressed that she had ever even mentioned that she wanted her teacher to die.

In this section, Jadie again refers to the Dallas characters. She tells Torey that she had been feeding a cat that she found in a box in a shed. More than likely, this cat was in a cage, being held for some purpose. Jadie is determined that a woman named Miss Ellie has taken the cat with plans to kill and eat her. Jadie is unable to tell Torey who this Miss Ellie person is or where it is that Jadie sees her. Note that Miss Ellie was also the name of a character from the television program Dallas.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Torey admits that she feels separated from other professionals in the small town of Pecking. She is not happy with the inability to ask advice from those more skilled than she. Because school psychologist Arkie juggles a full schedule, the only time she is able to see Torey is over dinner. During dinner, Torey asks Arkie if there has ever been any evidence of sexual abuse in the Ekdahl family. Arkie assures her nothing out of the ordinary has ever been noticed in the family. With only three weeks left in the school year, Torey tries to convince Jadie's parents to allow her to go to a camp sponsored by the Methodist church. Mr. Ekdahl discourages the camp, arguing that the family isn't Methodist. Mrs. Ekdahl interjects that none of the girls has ever been away from their parents before.

In chapter ten, on the last day of classes, Torey's group joins the rest of the school for the school picnic. As Jadie is helping Torey clean up, Reuben runs to Torey, needing to use the bathroom. Torey ushers Reuben inside; then she later hears Reuben crying in the bathroom. Torey finds Jadie sitting on the toilet with her underwear down, gripping Reuben's penis. Torey orders Jadie to get her clothes on and wait in the classroom. As she tries to comfort Reuben, Torey discovers human tooth marks on Reuben's penis.

Later, as Torey is on her way to the parking lot, Jadie appears between two cars. Torey asks her if she wants to go back to the room so they can talk. When she realizes Jadie is not going to go back to the room, Torey decides to address the problem there in the parking lot. She tells Jadie she assumes Jadie did not know she was not supposed to touch Reuben on his penis. Torey tells Jadie about the private parts of each person's body and instructs Jadie not to touch people in these places without permission. Jadie's only comment is that she thought that Torey understood and could help children like her.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Chapters nine and ten cover the last few weeks of school. When Torey tries to convince Jadie's parents to send her to church camp, she discovers that none of the Ekdahl children have ever spent a significant amount of time away from their parents with the exception of school. Torey also learns when she attempts to take a class group picture that Jadie does not like to have her picture taken. On the final day of class, Torey walks in on Jadie as she molests Reuben. Torey discovers that the girl has actually bit and left tooth marks on Reuben's penis. Torey suspects the girl may have been copying some program that she saw on television when she hurt Reuben. Assuming that Jadie does not know better, Torey explains to her about the private areas of a person's body.

Prior to Jadie's incident with Reuben, Torey had a meeting with Arkie. During this meeting, Torey asks Arkie if there has ever been any evidence of sexual abuse in the



Ekdahl family. Torey feels there may be sexual abuse both because some elective mutes won't speak as a result of sexual abuse. Torey also notices sexual overtones in Jadie's play with the dolls. Although Torey believes Jadie could have learned this sexual behavior from television, she also realizes that this could be a result of the child acting out things that have been done to them.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Torey spends the last six weeks of the summer in the city in order to spend time with Hugh, her former boyfriend. Torey had brought Jadie's file from school with her as well as examples of her work and the video clip Jadie had made. Although all of her colleagues at the Sandry Clinic seem to have an opinion of Jadie's problem, Torey does not find any of these opinions helpful in a practical way. Hugh, however, happens to see Jadie's file. As he flips through her artwork he asks Torey what was wrong with the girl. Hugh tells Torey that he has seen the encircled cross symbol in an occult bookstore. Hugh tells Torey that the symbol is similar to a figure that Satanists carve or draw in order to call a Black Mass.

In chapter twelve, Reuben, Philip and Jeremiah are joined by a new student, Brucie. Brucie's mother fills Torey in on all of Brucie's many special dietary and hygienic requirements. Since Jadie has still not appeared in the room, Torey assumes she is not coming and begins class. Mr. Tinbergen comes to Torey's room to ask her to go to the kindergarten classroom. He explains that Jadie is in that room and will not leave her sister, Amber. Torey takes charge of the situation. She lifts Amber over her protective sister and gives her to Alice, the teacher. Torey then picks up Jadie and carries her out of the room. Once outside the room, Jadie calms down. As they walk to their room, Jadie asks if Torey remembers the time they spent in the cloakroom. She also asks Torey if she is afraid of her. Jadie voices her concern that she made Torey go away, just like she made the prior teacher go away.

During the first weeks of the school year, Torey's room is full of chaos. Brucie's presence in the class has disrupted their usual routine. Although he did not do much most of the time, Brucie was intelligent enough to know how to irritate the others in the room. These irritations kept Torey's class in constant conflict. In addition, Torey is so busy with meetings and planning lessons that she does not see Jadie after school until the beginning of October. During this session, Jadie again asks Torey if she believes the things that Jadie tells her. Jadie then warns Torey to be careful around spiders. Jadie tells Torey they will both die if the spiders hear what they are talking about.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

During her summer vacation, Torey spends several weeks at the Sandry Clinic, where she is able to get input from her former colleagues about Jadie's behavior. Although they reach a consensus that Jadie is sincerely asking for Torey's help through her video clip, Torey gets a different opinion of the strange symbols that Jadie draws from each of her colleagues. The most common belief is that the symbol represents sex, with the "X" marking the point of sexual penetration. Unfortunately, none of the friends from the Sandry Clinic offer Torey any advice that she finds practical. Surprisingly, Torey's



boyfriend Hugh mentions that the encircled cross symbol reminds him of a symbol he once saw in an occult bookstore. Although Torey's story already had the dark tone of child abuse, this suggestion of Satanism gives the story an even more menacing and dangerous tone. This sense of danger is multiplied when Jadie suggests to Torey that the spiders want her dead. This statement suggests that Jadie believes the insects that she feels are spying on her suspect that she has sought help from Torey. Jadie has reason to feel that Torey's life is in danger because she is involved in Jadie's situation. Notice also that Jadie believes that it was her fault that her former teacher, Mrs. Harriman, went away.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Jeremiah snitches a puppy from the house next door to the school one day during recess. Torey finds Jeremiah and the puppy as well as Jadie hiding in a stairwell. Jadie and Jeremiah are discussing the puppy's private parts. Jadie tells Jeremiah she can get milk to come out the puppy's penis, and is about to demonstrate how she can do this when Torey stops her. Torey shoos Jeremiah off, then tries to talk to Jadie about what has happened. She suggests Jadie may have seen this action done by an adult or had the action done to her. Jadie will not talk to her and instead asks to return to recess.

In chapter fourteen, Torey tries to discuss with Arkie the possibility that Jadie is being sexually abused. Torey fills Arkie in on Jadie's behavior with the puppy. Arkie agrees with Torey that Jadie does seem to have an unusual turn toward sexual things for a girl her age. Although they can't outright ask Jadie about abuse, the two do agree to keep their eyes and ears open for any concrete signs of abuse.

One day in class, Jadie locks herself into the cloakroom after Jeremiah pretends that his hand is a spider climbing on her. Jadie refuses to come out of the cloakroom even when it is time to go home. Torey finally convinces her to unlock the door so the rest of the class can get their coats. After the boys are gone, Torey tries to get Jadie to tell her what she is thinking through role playing with the dolls. Although Jadie refuses to play along, she does suggest to Torey that the doll is frightened because it is her birthday. Jadie refuses to explain further, saying that Torey won't believe her or understand her.

The next morning, Torey is surprised to find Jadie waiting for her in the classroom before class starts. Jadie explains to Torey that her sister, Amber, will be turning six. Tashee died when she was six, Jadie explains, and is afraid that Amber will die also. In an effort to keep Jadie from running away again, Torey asks Jadie to describe how Tashee died. Jadie explains that Miss Ellie cut the girl's throat with a dagger.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

In chapter thirteen, Torey tells Arkie that she suspects that Jadie is being sexually abused. Although Arkie has not seen any signs of sexual abuse in the family, the two agree they will both be aware of any signs that abuse may be happening in Jadie's household. Torey's suspicions that Jadie is being abused or is witnessing abuse deepens in chapter fourteen. In this chapter, Jadie tells Torey that Tashee was killed with a dagger on her sixth birthday. Jadie may be involved in something more sinister than just sexual abuse. Although the story that Jadie tells Torey may seem far-fetched, her fear that something may happen to her sister is very real. Jadie's description of Tashee's death, as well as the detail that she includes is unsettling. What is even more



baffling in her description of the murder is her obvious relief when she believes that Torey has seen the murder on television. Again, the character Miss Ellie surfaces. Miss Ellie was apparently involved in the murder of Tashee.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Jadie paints a picture of Jenny. Jadie paints a series of orange bars over the picture, saying that it wasn't safe to leave the cat free. When Torey questions Jadie about the bars, Jadie cries, saying that she had ruined her painting. Jadie explains to her that the painting really is of Jenny and not a tiger. The picture represents Jenny's ghost, the only part of the cat that was real.

Philip brings to class a snow globe that his birth mother has sent him from Chicago. The globe causes a fight between Philip and Jeremiah, so Torey takes it away. When Torey tries to give the ornament back, she cannot locate it. After school, Torey discovers Jadie playing with the globe in the cloakroom. When Torey tries to take the ornament from Jadie, it is broken. Jadie becomes very angry and screams at Torey that she wants her to be dead. Jadie runs hysterically in the small room, then finally tires and lays crying on the floor. When Torey dries the tears from Jadie's face, Jadie admits to Torey that sometimes she wants to die. Jadie says she has been told that hurting will make her stronger so that she can kill the people she does not like. Miss Ellie has told Jadie that if Jadie wants Torey to die, she will die. Torey tells Jadie that Miss Ellie is wrong.

In chapter sixteen, Torey decides to invite Lucy bowling as a way to get her mind off Jadie. After bowling, Torey tells Lucy about her troubles with Jadie. Lucy disbelieves that anything as evil as what Torey is suggesting is happening in Pecking. Torey believes that some of her inability to figure out what is going on with Jadie is the result of her inability to understand and believe what Jadie is telling her.

Jadie is not at school the next day. Torey goes to her house at lunch and learns that Jadie has a stomachache. Torey visits Jadie for a short time and lets Jadie keep one of the Sascha dolls. Jadie's mother is standing outside the room when Torey leaves. She comments that it was nice of Torey to give Jadie the doll. She also notes that the doll looks like Torey.

On the Monday following Amber's birthday, Jadie tells Torey that Amber was not killed on her birthday, but that it could happen anytime during this year. When Torey presses Jadie for more information about who will kill Amber, Jadie tells her it is the people from Dallas. Jadie knows only that these people give her soda to drink and cover her eyes. Jadie also tells Torey that during these sessions Tashee comes back to life. Jadie believes that her parents are asleep while all of this is happening.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Because she is upset by the conversation she had with Jadie, Torey spends an evening bowling with Lucy. Lucy does not believe any sort of abuse like the kind Torey suspects could be happening in Pecking. This belief that bad things don't happen in small cities is



an idea that will be revisited in the novel. During the conversation, the two do talk about Jadie's strange personality and behavior. Lucy suggests that Jadie might have multiple personality disorder. Although Torey agrees there are signs that this may be Jadie's problem, she also believes there are other signs that indicate that Jadie does not have multiple personalities. Torey does indicate that she believes it is her inability to comprehend what Jadie is telling her and to interpret the clues and hints she gives as she tells her story that keep Torey from being able to understand exactly what is happening to the girl.

It is unusual when Torey visits Jadie when she is at home sick that Jadie's mother stands close outside the door while Torey is talking to Jadie. Jadie's mother also makes a point to tell Torey that she has heard what Torey was telling Jadie. Notice also that Jadie's mother mentions that the doll that Torey has loaned Jadie looks just like Torey. This doll's similarity to Torey will be important later on in the story.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Torey's class prepares for their part in the school-wide Halloween party. Unfortunately, Jeremiah forgot his costume so Jadie loans him a leopard costume. Jeremiah is awarded a prize for his costume. Because Jadie does not want to attend the Halloween party, Torey leaves her coloring in the classroom. When Torey returns to check on Jadie, Jadie tells Torey that it was last Halloween when Tashee was killed. Jadie explains how Miss Ellie had both Jadie and Tashee laying on a big table with their dolls behind them. People in the room were kissing either Jadie or Tashee and Jadie or Tashee's doll. Jadie tells Torey she knew Tashee was going to die when J.R. took a candlestick and broke the head of Tashee's doll. Jadie describes how Miss Ellie collected Tashee's blood in a cup after her throat was slit. The others in the room were forced to drink the blood.

In chapter eighteen, Torey is irritable and nauseated the rest of the day after Jadie tells her story about Tashee's murder. Although Torey begins to think more seriously about the idea that Jadie could somehow be involved in Satanism, she doubts herself at the same time. Torey feels most horrible because she is able to do nothing at this point to help Jadie. In class the next day, Jadie draws a picture of her family. Jadie indicates to Torey that sometimes she feels like she has to take care of the family. She explains they are all ghosts, with no mouths. Nobody hears what they have to say, so they really don't need mouths.

One day after school, Jadie talks to Torey about some of the things she and Amber are forced to do by J.R. and Bobby. Jadie tries to convey her fear to Torey that the group will abuse Sapphire. Jadie tells Torey that they had already put the baby upside down on a stick. Everyone in the room, including Jadie, had put their fingers into the baby's vagina. Jadie remembers how much this practice hurt. When Torey suggests to Jadie that they tell Mr. Tinbergen, Jadie becomes very upset. She wants Torey to be the only one who knows about what is being done to her. Jadie is afraid both she and Torey will be killed if anyone else finds out about what has been happening.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

It is in chapter eighteen that Jadie finally tells Torey that she and her sisters are being sexually abused. At this point, Torey has proof that the girls are in danger. She can now move forward with an attempt to tell those with the power to have Jadie removed from her home what is happening. As soon as Torey suggests this to Jadie, however, the girl becomes hysterical. Jadie is afraid that if those who are abusing her learn that she has told Torey about her situation, that she and Torey both will be killed.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

In chapter nineteen, Torey wonders what she should do concerning the information that Jadie has given her. Torey is required by law to tell officials if she suspects sexual abuse. However, Jadie's story is far-fetched and Torey has no facts. As Torey struggles with her decision, her thoughts return to Satanism. Torey decides to learn what she can about Satanism by visiting the occult bookstore that Hugh told her about. Torey buys two books from this store. One day later while watching children on the playground, Torey hears that Amber Ekdahl had hurt herself. Torey takes the child to the first-aid office and doctors her. When Torey pulls down Amber's pants to look at her bloody knee, she finds the scar of a cross with a circle around it on Amber's abdomen.

In chapter twenty, Torey at first believes that she has found the evidence that she needs to prove the Ekdahl children are being abused. However, Amber tells Torey and Mr. Tinbergen that Jadie used a kitchen knife to carve the symbol. Amber says that her mother warned her not to tell anyone about what Jadie had done or else Jadie would be taken away. Amber also tells Torey that it was Jadie who killed the cat, Jenny. When Jadie is brought into the room with Amber, her face turns gray. Torey tries to convince Jadie it is time to talk to Mr. Tinbergen. Jadie, however, only cries. She tells Mr. Tinbergen it was she who cut the symbol into Amber's stomach. After he allows the girls to leave the room, Mr. Tinbergen laughs about the incident, an action that deeply troubles Torey.

Several days pass before Torey has a chance to see Jadie alone again. Torey finds the girl sitting next to her car in the parking lot. Jadie tells Torey she needs to talk to her. Torey allows Jadie to get into her car. She gets them some drinks and stops in the grocery store parking lot. After some prodding, Jadie finally begins to speak. She tells Torey that it was Sue Ellen who hurt Amber. When Torey asks Jadie why Amber said that Jadie killed the cat, Jadie becomes upset. She defiantly tells Torey she did not kill the cat. Jadie does describe how the cat was killed, with the men pulling her apart on top of Jadie's stomach.

Torey again begs Jadie to tell others, or at least let Torey tell, what is happening to her. Torey explains to Jadie what would happen once the police knew about the abuse. Jadie cries because she doesn't want her family to be broken apart. She only wants the abuse to stop. Torey, like Jadie, wonders why children are forced to make the decisions like the one Jadie has to make.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

As Torey compares the information given to her by Amber with that given to her by Jadie, she becomes more and more confused about what she believes. When Jadie



describes in detail what actually happened to Jenny, Torey once again believes Jadie's story. Torey tries to convince Jadie that she needs to tell the police what is happening to her. When Torey realizes the child is confused about what will happen to her and her family after the police have been notified, Torey explains what will probably happen.

Jadie has been a victim of abuse. After she reports her abuse she will, in a way, be a victim of the system. If she tells what has happened, she runs the risk of having her family torn apart, a situation that she doesn't want to see happen. Note that Jadie does not believe that her parents are involved in her abuse. She still has positive feelings about her parents. Jadie also does not want to be separated from her sisters. Although the abuse may stop if she informs the police, there are other negative aspects of telling others that Jadie does not seem ready to face yet.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

In chapter twenty-one Torey meets with Arkie again to discuss the developments in Jadie's case. Torey suggests to Arkie that she believes Jadie is being abused in some sort of satanic rituals. Arkie tries to convince Torey there is little way Jadie's stories could be true. Arkie holds to her belief that Jadie is psychotic. Arkie suggests that Jadie's parents be convinced to take Jadie back to a mental health clinic at which the girl had formerly been treated. As Torey's class prepares for the Thanksgiving pageant, Jeremiah speaks of a headdress that his father has. Jadie tells the class that her friend Tashee had a real pair of Indian moccasins. After class Torey tells Jadie that Jadie will be going back to see a psychiatrist at the mental health center. Jadie talks instead about the new shoes that her mother is going to buy for her. When Torey asks Jadie if she is listening to her, Jadie indicates that since Torey wasn't listening to her, Jadie didn't have to listen to Torey.

In chapter twenty-two, the school's Thanksgiving pageant goes smoothly. Afterward, Torey finds herself watching Jadie with her mother and sisters. She sees nothing in Mrs. Ekdahl's behavior that indicates there might be some truth to Jadie's stories. After school is dismissed, Torey visits the teacher's lounge, then heads home. She tries to back her car out of her parking space, but is unable to do so because the snow is so deep. As Torey digs some snow from around her car's tires, she discovers the Sascha doll that she had loaned Jadie. Lucy walks up behind Torey as Torey is trying to free the doll. Lucy comments that the way the doll is placed is strange. She tells Torey it is as if someone had wanted it to get run over. What puzzles Torey is that if there had been no snow on the ground, she would never have known she had run over the doll.

Torey drives to Hugh's apartment on Thanksgiving Day. During her stay, Torey decides to visit the occult bookstore again. Torey describes her incident with the doll to Brenda. Brenda explains to Torey that those who use black magic call upon the forces of darkness for power. In order to call up these forces, those doing black magic must make a sacrifice. The doll was used as a sort of willing sacrifice. When Torey asks why the doll was placed where she wouldn't see it. Brenda explains that the intention was to have Torey destroy the doll. Had Torey seen the doll there, she wouldn't have run over it. Brenda suggests the intention of the doll was to get Torey to commit suicide.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Over dinner, Torey and Arkie decide that Jadie should be sent back to counseling. Arkie believes that Jadie is psychotic and that she perhaps even needs to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Torey accepts Arkie's diagnosis. When she tells Jadie about this decision, however, Jadie purposefully does not listen to what Torey is saying but instead



talks about a completely different subject. This is Jadie's way of impressing upon Torey that she knows that Torey is not listening to her and taking her seriously.

Also in this section of chapters, Torey is given a particularly chilling message through the use of the Sascha doll she loaned Jadie. Torey finds this doll crammed under the tire of her car. Its position indicates that the person who put it there intended for Torey to run over it. Torey thinks at first this is just a message of hate and disappointment from Jadie. Later, when she talks to Brenda at the occult bookstore, Torey gets another more sinister possibility of the intent of the doll. Brenda believes the doll was placed beneath Torey's tire so that she would run over it without knowing about it. Since the doll represented Torey, she would in essence be killing herself. Brenda believes the intention of the person who placed the doll under Torey's tire was to get her to kill herself voluntarily, or commit suicide.

Notice in this section how strongly Arkie is set against believing Jadie's stories about her abuse. She chooses instead to believe that Jadie is psychotic. Arkie even tries to convince Torey that her suspicions are incorrect. Although Arkie does make a valid point when she tells Torey that it would be hard to cover up the disappearance or murder of a small child, she also indicates it would be difficult to cover up an organized Satanic group in a town like Pecking. Again, it is insinuated that simply because Pecking is a small town, things like what Jadie is describing cannot be happening there.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Torey mulls over the doll and its implications as she drives back to Pecking. On Monday, Torey places the doll in the cloakroom. Jadie comes in, but then leaves when she sees the doll. After school, Jadie surprises Torey by appearing in her room and announcing that she was not the one who damaged the doll. When Torey suggests that Jadie knew how the doll got under her car tire as well as why it was there, Jadie begins to cry. Jadie asks if the police will look for Tashee if she tells them what has happened. Jadie finally agrees to go talk to Mr. Tinbergen.

Once inside the principal's office Jadie refuses to talk. Torey instead tells Mr. Tinbergen the story. Mr. Tinbergen first calls Arkie, and then calls social services to handle the situation. The social worker, Delores Verney, informs the police about the situation. Delores prefers a lady officer from Falls River come to handle Jadie's case. At the conclusion of the initial discussions, it is decided that Jadie, Sapphire and Amber would be taken temporarily from their parents' home and put into the care of the social services. Later that evening, Lindy, the policewoman, calls Torey. Jadie's parents are bewildered about the goings on, Amber denies knowledge of abuse and Jadie refuses to talk. Torey is asked to come to the station to try to get Jadie to talk to Lindy. Jadie refuses. She tells Torey that Torey must tell her story for her. When the Ekdahls leave, Delores goes to get both girls. Although Amber clings to her parents, Jadie will not go say goodbye. After her parents have left the room, however, Jadie goes to make sure the door between herself and her parents is locked.

In chapter twenty-four, Jadie misses the day of school after Torey breaks her story. When she does arrive at school the next day, her hair is neatly brushed and styled. She wears clean, neat clothes. Although Jadie seems happier, Torey learns that Amber blames her for what is happening to her family. During recess, Jadie speaks with Torey briefly. Torey encourages her to tell the police her story instead of being quiet about the whole thing.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

In this section, Jadie finally agrees to talk about her story. Torey faces difficulties, however, when Jadie refuses to speak to anyone but her. Although the authorities remove the children from their parents' house just on the basis of what Torey tells them, they need Jadie to talk to them in order to keep the kids out of the home. Although Jadie will not speak, what she does in the police department seems to make a very clear statement. Jadie refuses to say goodbye to her parents. She tells Torey that she is too busy playing to say goodbye. However, after she is sure that her parents have left the building, Jadie runs to check the door. Although the adults interpret Jadie's behavior as saying that she wishes she could follow her parents, Jadie tells them she wanted to be

sure the door was locked. This indicates there is some fear that Jadie has in connection with her parents. She wants to make sure that they cannot come back into the area where she is.



Chapters 25 and 26

Chapters 25 and 26 Summary

In chapter twenty-five, as the police investigation continues, Torey feels most distressed because she is given so little information about what is happening. Torey discusses her real suspicions about what has happened to Jadie in Lindy's office. Although Lindy agrees with Torey that there has been some abuse, she believes it would be a bad idea to introduce any ideas of Satanism into the discussion. After her meeting with Lindy, Torey receives a visit from Lucy. Torey tells Lucy the whole story of Jadie and her suspicions of Satanism. Lucy comforts Torey by telling her she believes Torey is doing the right thing.

During a second meeting with Lindy, Lindy tells Arkie and Torey that the police were having difficulty with the case. There was no evidence of physical abuse and no hard evidence of sexual abuse. Lindy and Arkie both agree that without Jadie actually speaking directly to them about what has happened to her, there is not much that they can do for her. Arkie indicates she believes that Torey has forgotten that she is dealing with real people. Arkie is worried they are in danger of ruining a family as a result of something that a psychologically disturbed young girl has fabricated. Although Torey agrees the stories do seem far-fetched, she is still caught up in the reality of the details that Jadie gives when telling about her abusers and the circumstances of her abuse.

In chapter twenty-six, Philip tells the class his Christmas wish is for Jadie to stand up straight. Jadie tells the class that she can stand up straight, then demonstrates for them. She is amazed when she notices that while standing, her stomach does not hurt. During recess, Torey keeps Jadie in the room to talk to her about the possibility that Jadie and her sisters will have to go back home soon. Jadie says she wants to go back home, but can't because Miss Ellie will kill her. She tells Torey that she knows how to slit her wrists so that she won't have to go back. Torey asks Jadie what will happen to Amber and Sapphire if Jadie kills herself. Torey suggests to Jadie that she can call Lindy and the two of them can talk in the cloakroom. Jadie agrees to this proposition.

Chapters 25 and 26 Analysis

After a week of investigation, little evidence is found to substantiate Jadie's case. Although the police have found some things during their investigation that are unusual, they have found nothing to base a case of sexual abuse upon. Jadie still refuses to talk to anyone but Torey. It is perhaps Jadie's refusal to talk that has caused there to be little progress in the case. After speaking with Lindy alone, then speaking with Lindy and Arkie in conjunction, Torey realizes that if Jadie will not talk to either of them the way she has spoken to Torey, there is little chance that anyone will believe the story only from Torey. Although Torey agrees with Arkie that the story of Satanism seems far-fetched, she is troubled by the detail with which Jadie tells her tales. What Torey finds

even more interesting is Jadie's ability to talk about what has happened to her and to Tashee in such detail. Torey believes that a child would not be able to make up these stories, especially with the detail with which Jadie tells them.

When Torey tells Jadie that she may have to go home, Jadie is clearly afraid. She tells Torey that Miss Ellie will kill the children if they go home. Jadie finally indicates that if she is forced to go back to her parents, she will kill herself. It is only when Torey asks Jadie to consider what might happen to her sisters if Jadie is gone, that Jadie begins to consider talking to Lindy. Torey also suggests to Jadie that she and Lindy discuss the case in the cloakroom, a place where Jadie feels safe. Jadie finally agrees to talk to Lindy based on these conditions.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

In chapter twenty-seven, Lindy and Jadie hold their meeting in the cloakroom. About forty-five minutes after the two begin talking, Mr. Tinbergen joins Torey in the classroom and they wait together. When Jadie and Lindy exit the cloakroom about one hour and twenty minutes later, Mr. Tinbergen takes Jadie to lunch. Lindy, meanwhile, sits down across from Torey. She tells Torey she believes she is about to be sick. As Lindy talks to Torey about the things that Jadie has told her, she suddenly makes a connection between the cat that was killed when it was pulled apart, and the cat skeleton that Jadie's father had reconstructed. Later that day, as Torey is trying to get her class to finish their work, Mr. Tinbergen knocks on the door. With him is Delores, the social worker. Delores tells Torey she has collected the girls' belongings from their home and has now come to take Jadie, just as Lindy had promised her would happen. The Ekdahl's house has been sealed and there is an order to dig up the garden. Jadie, Amber and Sapphire will be sent to a school in another area, away from the investigation.

When Jadie is told she is being taken, she collects her things, then hands Torey a note. Jeremiah notices and points out to the others that as Jadie leaves, she is standing up straight. Jeremiah, Philip and Torey go to the window to watch Jadie walk away. When she is almost out of sight, Jadie turns around and waves. When Torey opens the paper that Jadie has given her, there are only two words on it. The note reads, "Thank you."

Chapter 27 Analysis

In this section, Jadie finally tells Lindy about what has happened to her. Lindy now only believes that Jadie's stories are true, she has also discovered a connection that may lend concrete evidence to the case. Lindy suspects that the cat skeleton that Mr. Ekdahl has pieced together may belong to Jenny the cat. Lindy may hope this skeleton will bear some sign of the abuse Jadie reported, this giving Lindy the concrete evidence that she needs to prosecute.

It is at the end of this chapter that Jadie is finally able to stand up straight. Jeremiah notices, and points it out the Delores as Jadie and Delores walk away that Jadie is standing up straight. It is significant that on the day that Jadie tells Lindy about the abuse and figuratively drops the weight and burden of what has happened to her that Jadie is finally able to stand up straight.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

In the epilogue to her book, Torey offers the possible explanations of Jadie's case. Because so little hard evidence was ever located, no arrests were ever made. Relying solely on circumstantial evidence, the authorities in Jadie's case determined that Jadie had been subjected to serious sexual abuse. These authorities believed Jadie had adopted her bent over posture as either a way to protect herself or as a way to keep herself from telling her story. It was suggested that Tashee was a representation of the good that Jadie saw in herself, kept separate from the part that had been damaged. The Dallas character could also have been alter personalities Jadie has created for her parents in order to deal with their abuse. Although Torey agrees this explanation is the most plausible one, she is still bothered by some unaccounted for details in Jadie's stories.

The only other explanation of Jadie's stories is that what she told Torey and Lindy was true. This explanation indicates that the stories Jadie had told were examples of the ritual child abuse being perpetrated by an organized group of people. Satanism, in particular, is the group to which Jadie's stories seem to be pointing. Two of the symbols that Jadie drew most often were associated with Satanist symbols. Jadie's stories are similar to stories other children tell of their experiences with Satanist abuse. Because these stories are so similar, some authorities choose to believe the children even if there is no concrete evidence of abuse available.

Torey next addresses the ignorance of the general public to the practices of those following Satanism. Torey admits that she doubts that she would ever have put together what Jadie was describing with an act of the occult. Luckily for her, she discovered the outlet of Brenda and her bookstore from which she could glean information. As she learned more about Satanism, Torey realized how possible it was that what Jadie was describing were occult practices. The most swaying evidence, Torey believes, is the fact that Jadie had reported that Sapphire was first molested on Halloween, the most important sabbat to Satanists. In addition, Jenny was killed on the day of Beltane, the second most important sabbat to Satanists.

Police were never able to identify Tashee or find her body. It is possible Tashee was born of a "brood mare" and intended for sacrifice. For this reason, her birth would never have been documented. It could also have been that she was a missing child who was never reported to the police. Torey also explores the possibility that Jadie's abuse was taped for adult viewing. While the adults in the action knew what was happening, Jadie believed the abuse was real. The use of the names of the characters of Dallas indicates the adults were trying to hide their identity, yet using code names with which the children would be familiar. In this explanation, Tashee's death might have been only a theatrical event, with no actual murder ever occurring.



Since she was taken from her parents, Torey writes that Jadie has done well. Both Jadie and her sister Amber were hospitalized for a time in order to assess their mental statuses. Although Jadie improved, Amber deteriorated. Torey writes that Amber remembered nothing of what had happened to her and appeared to be confused by Jadie's accusations. As a young adult, Torey writes that Jadie finished high school in the top ten percent of her class, and is currently attending classes at a university.

Epilogue Analysis

Torey uses this epilogue to describe the possible explanations for Jadie's stories. Luckily for Jadie, once she told her story to Lindy, she was taken from her family. Jadie provided enough detail in her stories that Lindy believed that although her stories may have seemed farfetched, there was enough detail given that Lindy realized that Jadie had undergone some serious abuse. Since there was really never any hard evidence found to prove any of Jadie's claims, police were never able to determine exactly what had happened. Torey uses her epilogue to describe some of the possible explanations of the stories Jadie told. Note, however, that Jadie's father is later arrested for molesting a child. This arrest indicates this man had both the ability and possibly the desire to molest children even while his own children were living in his home.

In this section, Torey also touches on the aspects of a good story. She writes that she realizes her story would have been a better one if it had a tidy conclusion in which she could tie up all of the loose ends. However, Torey writes that this type of ending would have made her story a work of fiction. Torey believes it is more important to tell the true version of the story rather than a fabricated one.



Characters

Torey Hayden

Torey Hayden is the main character and narrator of this novel. She has just left her job at the Sandry Clinic in a large town to teach a small group of special education children in the small town of Pecking. Although she takes a cut in pay and also distances herself from her colleagues, Torey writes that she wanted the teaching job in Pecking. It is apparent that Torey enjoys working with children, even those who are difficult to handle. She also meets conflict head-on. This aspect of her personality is demonstrated when she works with Jadie on the first day of school and successfully gets her to talk when others had failed.

Torey also has the courage to follow her gut instinct when it tells her that something is wrong. When Torey first received the tape recorded message from Jadie which appeared to be a cry for help, Torey began paying special attention to Jadie and the clues she could glean from the child's behavior. Others to whom Torey spoke about the girl's behavior, such as Arkie, wanted to believe the child was merely mentally unstable. Torey knew Jadie better than this, and stood up for her student even though others discouraged Torey's suggestion that Jadie was being abused. Torey is intelligent enough to realize that if it had turned out that Jadie was not being abused, it would have ruined, or at least put a black mark, her professional reputation. Although there are times that Torey wonders if the things Jadie describes have really happened to her and doubts whether or not she is following the right path, Torey does not back down from her instinct that something is badly wrong in Jadie's life. She is more concerned about her student's well-being than her own professional status.

Jade

Jadie Ekdahl is one of the children in Torey's special education class. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ekdahl. She is also the older sister of Sapphire and Amber Ekdahl. When Torey first meets Jadie, it appears that Jadie's biggest problem is her elective mutism. On her first day of working with Jadie, however, Torey persuades Jadie to begin talking. Jadie is very interested in Torey's work with mute children. She asks Torey often if these children talked to Torey about their problems and if Torey believed what they had to say.

Torey describes Jadie as attractive in a wild, provocative way. Jadie has full lips and clear, blue eyes. Jadie also has a mass of curly dark hair. What is perhaps most noticeable about Jadie is the hunched over posture that she exhibits. Whether sitting or standing, Jadie is always hunched over with her arms tucked up around her body. When Torey asks Jadie about his strange posture, Jadie tells her she has to be in this position or else her insides will fall out. It is only at the end of the book, after Jadie has told her



story to Lindy and is removed permanently from her parents house, that Jadie is able to stand upright in the presence of others.

For a short while, Jadie seems to exhibit some sort of strange multiple personality. In the classroom, she is quiet and withdrawn from others. When she is in the cloakroom alone with Torey, Jadie tells fantastic stories and appears to be almost hyperactive. Jadie acts out and speaks in ways that Torey would never imagine her doing in any other setting. Jadie does, however, suffer with trust issues as she finds it difficult to tell her story to anyone but Torey. Jadie is also unsure of her own power in her world. She has been told by the people who are abusing her that if she wants someone to be dead, all she has to do is wish for it and it will happen. As a result, Jadie believes that she was responsible for Mrs. Harriman's death. There are also instances in the novel where Jadie is afraid that Torey will die as a result of something that Jadie has said.

Tashee

Tashee is a girl who Jadie speaks of regularly in her descriptions of her abuse. It is of Tashee who Jadie speaks during her first conversation with Torey. Jadie has drawn a picture which includes Tashee as one of the people. Jadie tells Torey that Tashee was killed at the age of six. Jadie describes a ritual in which Tashee's doll was crushed, then her throat slit. Those participating in the ritual were made to drink Tashee's blood. It is possible that Tashee was an Indian child since Jadie speaks of the girl as having a pair of real Indian moccasins.

Although Jadie speaks of Tashee regularly, the child never appears as an active character in this novel. There are a variety of explanations for Tashee. Amber believes Tashee never existed. Other believed Tashee was the child of a brood mare, born in order to be sacrificed. Others think Tashee may have represented the good parts of Jadie that she wanted to keep separate from her abused self. Tashee's murder may also have been a theatrical ritual performed only for the purposes of making a movie. In this instance, Jadie would have been unaware that Tashee's murder was not real because it would have made her own actions more realistic. It is known that Tashee's body or remains was never found. There was also no child fitting Tashee's description reported missing anywhere in the United States.

Arkie Peterson

Arkie Peterson is the school psychologist for the Pecking School as well as other schools in the area. Her figure and dress remind Torey of a country western singer. Because she serves several schools, Arkie has a very full schedule. During one of her first visits with Torey, Arkie admits that she, like most others, tried to get Jadie to speak voluntarily. Arkie allowed the attempt to get Jadie to speak to turn into a power struggle. When Arkie became frustrated with the girl, she had her placed in the special education class.



Unlike Torey, Arkie believes Jadie is simply psychotic and needs professional psychiatric help. She discourages Torey's beliefs that Jadie is being abused and instead suggests that Torey consider that she is working with a real family. Arkie seems more concerned that Torey's accusations might destroy this family instead of considering that Torey's suspicions might be correct. In her later meetings with Torey, Arkie appears to be almost irritated with Torey and her suspicions that Jadie is being abused.

Hugh

Hugh is Torey's former boyfriend. She visits him several times during her stay in Pecking, their distance seems to reignite their affection for one another. Although he is by trade an exterminator, it is Hugh who offers Torey the best suggestions about what might be happening to Jadie. He recognizes the encircled cross symbol as one that he has seen in an occult bookstore. Hugh later takes Torey to this bookstore and introduces her to Brenda, the witch who runs the store.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is an eight-year-old Indian boy descended from the Sioux tribes. Although Jeremiah appears to be of average intelligence, he is mean, with a foul mouth. It is Jeremiah's behavior that has kept him out of regular classes. He was placed in the special education class as a last stop before custodial detention. Because Jeremiah is the only one in Torey's class who can speak well, it is with Jeremiah that Jadie has the most interaction. In one instance, Jadie attempts to show Jeremiah how she can get milk out of a puppy's penis. It is also Jeremiah who, at the end of the book, notices that as Jadie leaves the classroom with the social worker, she is standing up straight. Jeremiah's desire for Jadie to turn around and wave at them before she leaves also shows that Jeremiah has become emotionally connected to Jadie during their classes together even though he often appeared not to like her.

Reuben

Reuben is one of the children in Torey's class. He is diagnosed with autism. Reuben's parents were instrumental in getting the special education class at Pecking School organized. During the last day of class during Torey's first year of teaching, Jadie bites Reuben's penis while they are in the restroom together. Reuben does not speak and it is often difficult for Torey to orient him to the activities that he needs to complete.

Philip

Philip is also a student in Torey's special education class. He is a black child dealing with the aftermath of a premature birth and drug addicted mother. Philip has difficulty speaking and often Torey cannot understand what he is trying to say. While the students



are sharing their Christmas wishes, however, Philip makes Torey understand that he wishes for Jadie to be able to stand up straight.

Amber Ekdahl

Amber is Jadie's younger sister. Amber turns six during the time period in which the novel was set. Jadie is concerned that Amber will be killed during the year that she is six. When Amber starts kindergarten Jadie refuses to leave her sister in the classroom until Torey separates the two. One day, when Amber hurts herself on the playground, Torey discovers a scar in the shape of a encircled cross on the girl's abdomen. Amber tells Torey that Jadie made the mark on her stomach. She also tells Torey that it was Jadie who killed Jenny the cat. Even after the girls have been taken from their parents, Amber has no knowledge of the abuse. According to information in the novel, Amber apparently blocked her memories of the abuse out of her mind so completely that she is unable to remember anything that might have happened to her.

Lucy McLaren

Lucy McLaren is the teacher whose room is next door to Torey's class. Lucy often helps Torey with her students. She is also the one who tells Torey that Mrs. Harriman committed suicide. Torey talks more to Lucy about her problems with Jadie than any other teacher at Pecking School. However, since Lucy has grown up in and has always lived in a small town, she is unable to understand the kind of abuse to which Torey believes that Jadie is being subjected. Lucy believes that simply because they live in a small town, there should be no abuse happening in their area. When Torey does report Jadie's story, however, it is Lucy who tells Torey that she believes that Torey did the right thing.

Lindy

Lindy is the policewoman from Falls River that the social worker calls in to handle Jadie's case. Although Lindy repeatedly questions Jadie about the abuse, Jadie refuses to talk to Lindy. Lindy tells Torey that without Jadie giving her own testimony of what has happened to her, there is very little chance that the girls will be taken from their parents permanently. Jadie finally agrees to talk to Lindy as long as she can lock them into the cloakroom together. After Lindy hears what Jadie has to say, she tells Torey that she has never heard such a gruesome story during all of her years on the police force. Lindy promises Jadie that later that day the social services workers will take her to a permanent foster home.

Glen Tinbergen

Glen Tinbergen is the principle at Pecking School. Torey likes Mr. Tinbergen because he allows her students to take an active role in all school activities. When Mr. Tinbergen



awards Jeremiah a prize for having the best tail during the school's Halloween party, he shows that he is mindful of the needs even of the students who make trouble for others. Torey is troubled, however, when Mr. Tinbergen laughs off the incident of the scar on Amber's abdomen. Like others, Mr. Tinbergen does not seem to want to accept the idea that any serious abuse could be happening to any of his students. When Torey does finally tell Mr. Tinbergen the things that Jadie has told her, he calls for outside forces to come and help with the case.

Jenny

Jenny is the cat that Jadie finds in a box in her garage. Jadie has been taking this cat food and has been taking care of it. She is upset when she tells Torey that the cat has disappeared. Jadie believes that Miss Ellie has taken the cat. If so, she says that Miss Ellie will kill and eat the animal. Although Amber tells Torey that Jadie killed the cat, Jadie says it was the Dallas characters who killed Jenny. The cat was laying on Jadie stomach when they pulled the animal apart. Lindy later makes a connection between the cat skeleton that Jadie's father reconstructed and the skeleton of Jenny. It is never determined, however, if this skeleton actually belonged to Jenny.

Brenda

Brenda is the witch who works at the occult book store. She explains to Torey that she is a white witch and does not call upon the forces of evil for her power. Brenda tells Torey that she believes the people with whom Torey is dealing are involved with black magic. Brenda believes the Sascha doll was placed under the tire of Torey's car in an attempt to get her to commit suicide.

Delores Verney

Delores Verney is the social worker who takes on Jadie's case. By the time she has arrived at the school, Delores has already contacted to police. She does not want the police in Pecking to work the case; she would rather have a female officer come from Falls River to work with Jadie. Like Torey, Delores seems convinced that there has been some sort of abuse going on in Jadie's life. At the end of the book, it is Delores who collects Jadie and her sisters' belongings from their home. She comes with Mr. Tinbergen to Torey's classroom to take Jadie to her new foster home.

Miss Ellie

Miss Ellie one of the Dallas characters that Jadie refers to often in the stories of her abuse. Because Miss Ellie is referred to so often, it is assumed that she is the leader of the group. It is Miss Ellie whom Jadie says took Jenny the cat. Miss Ellie is also the one who slit Tashee's throat, then collected the girl's blood in a cup.



J.R. and Bobby Ewing

J.R. and Bobby Ewing are two of the Dallas characters involved in Jadie's abuse. Jadie mentions these two men to Torey when they are talking about the video camera. Jadie says the men have a video camera that they use to put her on television. It is assumed the men used these names taken from a popular television show in order to hide their real identities.

Alice Havers

Alice Havers was Jadie's kindergarten teacher for two years. Although she tried to get Jadie to talk, she was never successful. The fight over speech eventually became a power struggle for the two. Mrs. Havers embarrasses Torey with her over-the-top comments when Torey is successful in getting Jadie to talk during her first day of work. Alice also teaches Amber, Jadie's younger sister. Because of her experience with both children, Mrs. Havers is questioned about both Jadie and Amber during the police investigation.

Brucie

Brucie is a student who enters Torey's class during her second year of teaching at Pecking. Although Brucie isn't able to participate in the class in a positive fashion, he seems able to cause troubles for Torey and her class. Torey indicates the boy has learned how to manipulate others and often would pit one student against the other. Brucie's addition to the class adds much work for Torey since Brucie cannot eat food with lumps in it and must have his food put through a sieve. Brucie is also not toilet trained and must have his diapers changed on a regular schedule. Torey indicates that she believes the boy used his free time thinking up ways in which he could disrupt class and cause problems for the others.

Mrs. June Harriman

June Harriman was the special education teacher who taught Torey's students prior to Torey being hired for the position. It is only after Torey has already taken the job that she learns that Mrs. Harriman died as a result of suicide. Lucy, who taught in the room next to the deceased teacher, told Torey that although Mrs. Harriman had indicated she was depressed and overwhelmed, no one had really believed she was a candidate for suicide. After Torey becomes more involved in Jadie's case, she wonders if the suicide may have resulted from Mrs. Harriman's association with Jadie.



Sapphire Ekdahl

Sapphire Ekdahl is Jadie's infant sister. Jadie tells Torey that Sapphire was first molested at the age of one year. Jadie reports that the men put their fingers into Sapphire's vagina while Sapphire hung upside down on a stick. Although police find Sapphire's hymen is broken, a discovery that is uncommon for such a young child, the broken hymen alone is not a cause to suspect child abuse.

Mrs. Ekdahl

Mrs. Ekdahl is the mother to Jade, Amber and Sapphire. It is Mrs. Ekdahl who tells Torey that her girls have never spent a night away from home. When Torey takes the doll to Jadie when Jadie is at home sick, Mrs. Ekdahl listens outside of Jadie's door while Torey is talking to the girl. Torey notes in her book that she almost bumps into the lady as she leaves Jadie's room. Jadie's mother makes a point to tell Torey that she heard what Torey was saying to Jadie. She also mentions how much the doll looks like Torey.

Mr. Ekdahl

Mr. Ekdahl is the father to Jade, Amber and Sapphire. Mr. Ekdahl refuses to allow Jadie to attend a Methodist church camp. He claims he wants his children to be open minded about religion. During the police investigation of his daughters' sexual abuse, it is discovered that Mr. Ekdahl has a box of animal bones in his home. He claims he enjoys piecing the bones back together. One of Mr. Ekdahl's skeletons is a cat skeleton, which Lindy believes might be the skeleton of Jenny. Mr. Ekdahl, however, claims he discovered the cat hit by a car in the road. Although he is never charged in the case of his children's abuse, Mr. Ekdahl is later jailed on a charge of sexual abuse of another school girl near his home.



Objects/Places

Pecking

Pecking is the town where the school at which Torey teaches students Jadie, Reuben, Philip, Jeremiah and Brucie is located.

Sandry Clinic

Sandry Clinic is the clinic at which Torey worked before taking a job with the Pecking school system.

Pecking School

Built in 1898, this school had once been Pecking's high school. Now it serves children attending kindergarten through the sixth grade.

Old Reel-to-Reel Video Recorder

Torey borrows this machine from The Sandry Clinic in order to tape her classes. It is also this machine that Jadie uses to tape her strange message to Torey.

Coke

Jadie often refers to drinking this beverage when talking to Torey.

Spiders

Spiders are the insects that Jadie fears will see her talking to Torey about private things and alert the police.

A Quartered Circle

Jadie creates a picture of this symbol when Torey asks her students to make collages during class. Torey later finds a scar in this shape on Amber's abdomen.



Sascha Doll that Looks Like Torey

Torey loans this doll to Jadie one day when Jadie stays home sick. Torey later finds the doll wedged under the wheel of her car where someone attempted to make her run over the doll.

Play-Doh

Jadie uses this dough to symbolize the poop that she cleans out of the dolls' underpants.

Tottie's

Tottie's is the restaurant where Arkie and Torey meet to discuss Jadie's strange behavior.

Occult Bookstore on East Marl Street

Torey and Hugh visit this bookstore in order to learn more about Satanism and black magic.

Carved Dagger

Jadie tells Torey that Miss Ellie uses an elaborately carved dagger to cut Tashee's throat.

Christmas Snow Globe

Philip brings this Christmas snow globe to school with him one day. It was given to him by his birth mother. Jadie later steals the snow globe.

Pair of Real Indian Moccasins

One day during class, Jadie comments that her friend Tashee had a pair of real Indian moccasins.

Black Magic

Those who practice black magic call upon the powers of darkness to provide them with power and influence over others.



White Magic

White magic is the type of magic that Brenda claims to practice. Those who practice white magic do not attempt to call upon the powers of darkness.

Voodoo Doll

A Voodoo Doll is a doll used by Satanists to represent a person. It is believed that whatever Satanists do to this doll will happen to the person that it represents in real life. The Sascha doll that Torey loans Jadie is used as a Voodoo Doll in an attempt to make Torey commit suicide.

Valium

Valium is an anti-anxiety medication that is sometimes dissolved in soft drinks so that children or other victims of sexual or ritualistic crimes will be easier control.

Cat Skeleton

Lindy believes the cat skeleton that Mr. Ekdahl has put together might actually be the skeleton of Jenny, the cat whom Jadie said was pulled apart. No positive identification was ever made on the skeleton.

Ekdahl's Garden

During the police investigation of the alleged sexual abuse of their three daughters, the police dig up the Ekdahl's garden. No incriminating evidence is found in this garden.

The Number Six

The number six is an important number for Satanists because it represents power and perfection. Jadie tells Torey that Tashee was killed when she was six and that she is afraid that Amber will be killed because she has just turned six.

Halloween

Halloween is the most important sabbat of the Satanists. Torey figures it was on this day when Tashee was murdered and also when Sapphire was first molested.

Beltane

Beltane is the second most important sabbat of the Satanists. Torey figures it was this day when Jenny the cat was killed



Themes

Satanism

As this novel evolves, the theme of Satanism threads through the text, appearing more and more frequently. Torey is almost one-third of the way through her book before the first mention of Satanism appears. When Torey is visiting her boyfriend, Hugh, over summer break, he recognizes one of the symbols that Jadie has drawn as being similar to one he saw in an occult bookstore. As Torey learns more and more about Satanism, she finds herself wondering if it is this type of abuse in which Jadie is involved. Most of the people in Pecking with whom Torey discusses the case don't want to admit that something of the magnitude of Satanism could be taking place in Pecking. Even at the conclusion of Jadie's case, it is uncertain whether or not Satanism was involved in her abuse.

Although it was never determined if Jadie's abuse stemmed from Satanistic rituals, there was much evidence that pointed in that direction. First, the encircled cross symbol that Jadie drew often was a symbol used in Satanism to call a Black Mass. Second, Jadie talked about Tashee being killed on Halloween. The day of Halloween is the most important sacred day of the Satanists' beliefs. Third, Jenny was killed on Beltane, the second most important sabbot for Satanists. Fourth, Jadie speaks of herself and her sisters being put upside-down on a stick to be abused. It is believed that this upside-down stick may have been an upside-down cross, a common fixture in Satanistic rituals. Finally, many of the stories that Jadie told both Torey and Lindy are similar to others that children being abused by Satanists tell. Torey believes these similarities provide clear proof that Jadie is being abused by Satanists.

Torey as God

At several points in the novel, Jadie seems to be under the impression that Torey is God. For instance, Jadie repeatedly asks Torey one day who Torey is. When Torey is unable to answer her question, Jadie volunteers the idea that she believes that Torey is God. This idea of Torey being God is important to Jadie on two levels. First, the idea of God gives Jadie a sense of peace and security. One day when they are locked in the cloakroom, Jadie tells Torey that she know realizes what a sign indicating that one could be "Safe with God" meant. In this conversation, Jadie is telling Torey that she feels safe with Torey, just as one might feel safe with the power and comfort of God.

Jadie also wants to believe that Torey is God because to Jadie, God represents someone who is more powerful than the people who are abusing her. Several times Jadie mentions to Torey that she knows that Torey is strong. It is important for Torey to be strong because Jadie believes the people who are misusing her are also strong. Jadie needs Torey to be strong so that she can help Jadie escape from her abuse.



Jadie also believes that Torey's survival depends on her ability to be stronger and wiser than those who want her killed.

Abuse in a Small Town

When Torey is first trying to introduce people to the idea that Jadie might be being abused, the most common reason that gets explaining away the suspected abuse is that Pecking is a small town. There seems to be some idea present that somehow small towns are immune to abuse. For instance, Torey writes that she is hesitant about talking to Lucy about what she suspects is happening to Jadie because Lucy is just too innocent. When she does tell Lucy what she suspects is happening, Lucy believes that sort of abuse might happen in large cities, but not small towns. Similarly, Arkie tells Torey that it would be hard to cover up a large, organized crime group in a small town like Pecking.

On the flip side, Torey is told that she is bringing big city ideals into a small town. It seems that some characters in the book, Arkie particularly, almost resent Torey for bringing Jadie's abuse to light. Arkie tells Torey she shouldn't try to introduce the unfounded idea of abuse in Jadie's case because it would bring drama to the small city. Arkie seems to believe that Torey is embellishing on Jadie's tales in order to make life in Pecking more interesting. Her concern is that Torey will ruin Jadie's family and start a media frenzy with no real evidence. It is perhaps because Torey has ties to a large city that she is able to finally recognize that there could be some truth to Jadie's stories. Not only do those in small cities not believe they have abuse occurring around them, they also don't know enough about the different types of abuse to know when they are dealing with a case of abuse.

Style

Point of View

The novel *Ghost Girl* is told from the first person point of view of Torey Hayden. Torey acts as both the main character and narrator of this novel. Torey is a teacher who has transferred from a research clinic to a special education teaching position in the small town of Pecking. The use of the first person point of view seems ideal for this story because it allows the reader to discover information about Jadie's situation as Torey learns this information. Torey knows only what information Jadie gives her through their short one-on-one sessions after school. In the same manner, Torey does not have inside information into the thoughts and minds of the other characters except through any conversations that she has with other characters.

The book is equally dedicated to both description and dialogue. It is through description that Torey gives her opinions and descriptions of the people with whom she works. It is also through these descriptive passages that Torey shares her thoughts and ideas about Jadie's situation with her reader. It is through Torey's passages that include dialogue that the reader learns about the thoughts and emotions of the other characters that Torey includes in her novel.

Setting

This novel is set in the fictional city of Pecking, a town in the United States. Torey describes Pecking as being a small town in which all people know one another. She says that its open spaces remind her of the place where she grew up. Torey indicates she is tired of living in the city and welcomes the move to a more rural area. The majority of the action of the novel takes place in the Pecking School, the only school in the area. Settings inside the school include the special education classroom as well as the cloakroom adjacent to the special education classroom. The school's gymnasium, playground, kindergarten room and first aid room are settings for brief parts of the book's action. Other settings in Pecking include Torey's apartment, Lucy's house, Jadie's house, the grocery store and the grocery store parking lot. Tottie's, the restaurant where Arkie and Torey discuss Jadie's case over dinner, is a setting that is visited twice.

During the course of the novel, Torey also takes at least three trips to an unnamed large city located about a four-hour drive from Pecking. The most notable setting in this city is the occult bookstore which Torey visits twice with her boyfriend, Hugh. Also while in the city, Torey spends some time with her old colleagues at The Sundry Clinic. Hugh's apartment is another setting that Torey visits when she goes to the city.



Language and Meaning

Language is important in this novel for multiple reasons. First, the novel deals with the absence of language, then the information that language can convey. When Torey first meets Jadie she is classified as an elective mute. This indicates that she chooses not to speak at all. She is capable of speaking, but chooses not to. Those in the past who have tried to get Jadie to speak have wound up in a power struggle with the girl. In this way, Jadie uses the absence of language as a way to manipulate and control people.

Next, when Torey convinces Jadie to talk, some of the things that Jadie tells Torey are strange and baffling. Torey does not understand what Jadie is trying to say to her because she does not understand the background from which the girl is coming. Had Torey been familiar with Satanism, she might have recognized right away that the symbol that Jadie drew was a symbol used in Satanism. She might also have realized that some of the rituals that Jadie told her about were rituals used in Satan worship. Because Jadie and Torey aren't speaking a "language" that the other recognizes, however, Torey is unable at first to determine what Jadie is saying to her.

Another aspect of language in this novel involves the type of job that Torey does. She teaches children who are mentally or emotionally disturbed. For this reason, there are various references to different disorders and diseases that affect children. In some instances, the reader may not be familiar with all of the disorders that Torey uses to describe her students. Some of the names of these disorders include autism, scoliosis, aphasia and multiple personality disorder. Although Torey does not fully define each of these disorders, it can be determined from the information given in the text how these disorders generally affect a person.

Structure

This novel is structured as a typical novel. It is divided into twenty-seven chapters, with each chapter having ten to fifteen pages each. These chapters are titled only with a chapter number, there is no title or description of the chapter included. Torey tells her story of her work with Jadie in the course of these chapters. The story is told in a linear fashion with no flashbacks. The only way that Torey, and the reader, gets about Jadie's past is when Jadie describes her incidents of abuse to Torey while they are alone together in the cloakroom.

Torey includes an Epilogue at the conclusion of her book. Although she is unable to give her reader a complete, tidy ending to her book, she does include some of the suspicions that the police have about what might have happened to Jadie. There is no doubt that Jadie suffered some sort of serious abuse, it is just unsure who performed the abuse and under what circumstances it was performed. In this section, Torey also lets her readers know how well Jadie is handling her situation and how much progress the girl has made both in her personal and educational lives.



Quotes

"The reason that Jade's case had caught my eye was that for the better part of the previous ten years, from college right through my work at the Sandry Clinic, my special research interest had been elective mutism. Fascinated by this disturbance, in which an individual is physically and intellectually capable of speaking normally but refuses to do so for psychological reasons, I had worked with these children extensively."

Chap. 1, p. 9

"The first morning was hell."

Chap. 2, p. 13

"Toilet trained he may have been, but twice he whipped down his pants and peed into the trash can beside the bookshelf."

Chap. 2, p. 14

"Jadie might as well have been a ghost. No one spoke to her, looked at her, or even acknowledged her presence in the room."

Chap. 2, p. 19

"After all, it wasn't the act of speaking that should get the attention, it's what people said that was important."

Chap. 3, p. 24

"So's we can go visit Tashee. Tashee can't come here. She's been dead more than a year now."

Chap. 5, p. 54

"However, as I glanced across the classroom at Jadie, contorted in her chair, it struck me that perhaps this was why June Harriman had committed suicide - driven to believe that somehow she was the crazy one."

Chap. 6, p. 62

"There was an unmistakably manic quality to her play. She yanked, jerked, shouted and threw. The doll so tenderly put away on Monday was screamed at and flung around with the others."

Chap. 8, p. 77

"The hardest adjustment I had to make in returning to teaching after three years at the Sandry Clinic was the sudden and total loss of professional peers."

Chap. 9, p. 88

"'It's just that...' I paused. 'In the past, I've found quite a high correlation between certain types of abuse - among them, sexual abuse - and some kinds of elective mutism, so it's something I always need to consider.'"

Chap. 9, p. 93



"In the six weeks I'd been back, I was surprised to find myself increasingly uncomfortable at the clinic. I became aware of feeling a quiet resentment toward the patients for the way they could afford to pay for such good treatment, could capture such high-quality professionals with their pocketbooks, and thus, automatically have a better chance of getting over their problems than those less financially fortunate."
Chap. 11, p. 115

"In fact, my gut feeling about Brucie was that he had devoted so much effort to manipulating those around him that he'd had no time left over for normal development."
Chap. 12, p. 124

"She was talking about sucking milk out of a penis, definitely a penis and not a teat, and it doesn't take a lot of imagination to substitute 'milk' for 'semen.' Your average eight-year-old wouldn't come up with that on her own. Most kids that age are appalled by the idea of sexual intercourse, much less fellatio."
Chap. 14, p. 139

"One of the nicest aspects of working in the Pecking school was everyone's general acceptance of my children. This was the first place I'd worked where I felt my special education class was genuinely integrated into the life of the regular school."
Chap. 17, p. 174

"Satanism. The thought assailed me with the same force it had that afternoon of the Halloween party. Halloween. Abruptly, it occurred to me that Jadie had said "last week" in terms of Sapphire's molestation. Had it been on Halloween? Six. Miss Ellie said six was an important number. Having read the Book of Revelations, I knew 666 was the number of the beast, often assumed to be Satan."
Chap. 19, p. 195

"Deeply troubled, I returned to my class. I didn't know what to think now. While the degree of Jadie's disturbance had always been an issue in interpreting the things she told about, it had never crossed my mind that she, herself, might actually be the perpetrator."
Chap. 20, p. 209

"Child abuse is such a patent evil that exposing and rectifying it should possess only black-and-white clarity - abuse identified, child rescued, perpetrator gets what's coming to him. Sadly, I knew it was never so. The reality always included the ruins of small, shattered lives, destroyed relationships, and broken hearts."
Chap. 20, p. 217

"She can be incredibly specific about some things, things you'd never imagine a kid her age could make up, so you just assume they've got to be true. Then you ask her about the basic stuff - who, where, when - and she never seems to know any of this. I mean, what I've got is a girl who can tell me in excruciating detail how she and her sisters are molested, but she can't tell me who's doing it."
Chap. 21, p. 220



"Well, see, they...them... well, in doing black magic...they're usually doing it for power. Power to get the things they want. Power to influence people. Power over their enemies. And part of getting the power means having to call up the forces of darkness."
Chap. 22, p. 240

"'I don't think they were trying to scare you,' Brenda replied. 'Like, I suspect the doll was deliberately hidden. This is black magic, not just some game. The point of it was to get you to destroy the doll, which you wouldn't have done, if you'd known it was there.'"
Chap. 22, p. 241

"'The doll's in your image, isn't it? If you destroy your own totem, you're destroying yourself. The will have put a very powerful spell on that doll. To invoke a willing sacrifice. They want you to commit suicide.'"
Chap. 22, p. 242

"I could hardly ignore the fact of June Harrison's suicide the previous year, and, while there was in all likelihood no connection, it still made a chilling backdrop to the implications of the ruined doll."
Chap. 23, p. 243

"'From what you've said, from the way the eldest girl acts, I feel fairly definite about the fact these girls have been abused, and I'd hate to see them go back home. But if you get in there talking about ghosts and witches and all that, Torey we're going to be asking for it.'"
Chap. 25, p. 265

"'In terms of sexual abuse, well... the hymen's been broken in all three girls. This happens naturally in many instances and, of course, this is what the parents maintain. That's feasible in the two older girls' cases, but it is rather unusual in an eighteen-month-old.'"
Chap. 25, p. 269

"'I've been in this business six years now.' Lindy said, as I returned from the sink, 'and I have never in all my born days heard anything like that.' Taking the water from me, she sipped it. 'Did she tell you about that little girl? About what...those people...are supposed to have done to her? How they killed her?'"
Chap. 27, p. 285

"Her mutism resulted perhaps from a fear that if she talked, she would tell about the abuse."
Epilogue, p. 292

"The Black Mass itself is a perverted form of the Catholic Mass."
Epilogue, p. 295

"On the other hand, a considerable number of children over the past ten years have reported startlingly similar experiences. Among these are being given drugs, either legal ones, such as muscle relaxants, or illegal ones, by means of drinks or injections;



participating in chanting to call up the devil or demons and to put themselves into an altered state of consciousness; being urinated upon or having excrement wiped over them; being made to eat insects or being told that the insects were messengers of Satan and would report back everything the child did when not with the group; engaging in a wide variety of perverted sexual acts; being placed in coffins and having the lid shut; being tortured by snakes; and being tied to or suspended from upside-down crosses."

Epilogue, p. 296

"Perhaps most convincing of all for this theory, however, is that much of her distress and the reported abuse coordinated quite closely with important dates on the pagan calendar, with, most notably, Jenny's death occurring near April 30th, or Beltane, the second most important sabbat, or celebration date, and Tashee's reported murder and Sapphire's first molestation occurring near or on Halloween, the most important sabbat."

Epilogue, p. 299

"Some ten years on I still find this the single most harrowing case I've been involved with, in part because it still persistently controverts all efforts to close it. As I write the book, I so wish I could draw the kinds of satisfying conclusions that would elevate it from the inelegant real-life situation that it is. Certainly, I realize a clear-cut climax and resolution would make it a much better book. Unfortunately, it would also make it fiction."

Epilogue, p. 304

"A few years later, our actions were further justified when Mr. Ekdahl was arrested and convicted of molesting and eight-year-old schoolgirl near his home. He is now in prison. Jadie, Amber and Sapphire all now live in permanent foster homes."

Epilogue, p. 307

"Whatever the past, Jadie is now doing admirably. Almost twenty, she has been living for more than six years with her current foster family and this she considers her home. By choice, she has no contact with either of her natural parents, although she does remain close to her two sisters, who both live in separate foster homes nearby."

Epilogue, p. 307



Topics for Discussion

Do you think June Harriman's suicide was related in any way to her work with Jadie?

Consider Jeremiah's statement in chapter fourteen that while Jadie was quiet, she appeared normal, but once she started talking she appeared to be crazy like the rest of them. What does this statement reveal about Jeremiah? About Jadie?

Why is it so important to Jadie that Torey be God? Explain your answer and defend your answer with examples from the book.

Briefly research Wicca and Satanism. Compare and contrast the two sets of beliefs.

Do you believe Tashee was a real girl? Do you believe she was really killed by the group that abused Jadie and her sisters? Why or why not?

Had you been in Torey's situation, how might you have responded to Jadie's cry for help? Do you believe her way of handling the situation was the best? Why or why not?

Do you believe any of Jadie's abuse sessions were taped? Do you believe this was why she knew so much about the video recorder that Torey borrowed? Why or why not?