

Haunted: A Tale of the Mediator Study Guide

Haunted: A Tale of the Mediator by Meg Cabot

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Plot Summary

Haunted is a novel by author Meg Cabot, and is fifth in the series of the Haunted novels. In this novel, Susannah, is a 16 year-old girl who is also a mediator. As a mediator, Susannah talks with ghosts to help them resolve the issues they had when they were alive so they can pass on to their next life. Susannah takes readers into the lives of her family and the other people living in the town of Carmel, California.

As the story unfolds, the readers learn about the many situations in which Susannah has found herself with ghosts in the past. Susannah's encounters also help to unravel the secrets of missing and dead people who are associated with the family of the boy she likes, the Beaumonts. The evidence seems to point to the fact that the father of Tad, the boy she likes, is a vampire and killer of several environmentalists involved in trying to stop the development of some of his construction projects.

It starts when Susannah has a wailing woman appear in her room. The ghost asks Susannah to tell Red that he didn't kill her. When Susannah starts to investigate who Red is, it leads her to the father of the boy she meets at a pool party, Tad Beaumont's father, whose nickname is Red. As Susannah uncovers the truth, she realizes that it's not Red Beaumont who is responsible for the missing environmentalists, but it's his brother, Marcus. After getting rid of Marcus, with the help of the ghost that haunts her room, Jesse, Susannah realizes that Red is her youngest stepbrother, Doc, and the wailing ghost in her room is her stepbrother's biological mother.

In the end, Susannah is able to keep the secret from her friends and family members that she is a mediator. In the meantime, she is able to stop a murderer and help a ghost and her stepbrother find peace.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Susannah is a 16-year-old girl who recently moved to northern California with her mother because her mother remarried. Susannah is in the priest and principal's office of her private school. Both Susannah and Father Dominic are mediators, which are people who can see the dead and help lead them into their afterlife. Father Dominic is lecturing Susannah about not beating up ghosts to help mediate them. During the lecture, Susannah is trying not to itch the poison oak she acquired while spying on one of her stepbrothers, Brad, whom she calls Dopey. She's peeking in the window of the pool house where he is making out with Debbie Mancuso and she stumbles into poison oak bushes when she is walking away. At the pool party, Susannah also dances with her first boy ever. Father Dominic asks if Susannah has experienced any other paranormal activity since the incident a few weeks prior that destroyed the school and landed Father Dominic in a leg cast and with two broken ribs. Susannah says, "Well..."

Chapter 1 Analysis

Susannah's response to Father Dominic suggests that she has encountered some ghosts that she hasn't told Father Dominic about. Her inexperience with boys also suggests that Susannah will have her first kiss and possibly her first boyfriend as the novel unfolds. Because Susannah is a transplant from the east coast who is now living on the west coast, it also suggests that she will continue to make social blunders that make her stand out from her classmates.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

When Susanna arrives home from the pool party, she falls asleep and dreams about a boy she has a crush on, Bryce Martinsen. A woman, about her mother's age, screaming and crying wakes Susannah up in the middle of the night. When Susannah asks the ghost what's wrong, she says that she needs Susannah to tell Red that he didn't kill her and that it's not his fault. Shortly after the ghost leaves, Jesse, another ghost wakes her up. He's the Spanish son of a rancher who used to own the house in 1850. He had first appeared to Susannah two weeks ago. Susannah thinks Jesse is very attractive, but is sure that there are rules against mediators and ghosts becoming involved. Jesse chastises Susannah for not getting the name of the ghost woman and for the way Susannah treated her. Susannah doesn't tell Father Dominic about either of the ghosts. On the way out of his office, she mentions that no boy will go out with her. This shocks Father Dominic because he says she's so popular—even being elected class vice president her second week in school.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Because Jesse doesn't know why he has hung around as a ghost, it foreshadows that Susannah will help him to figure this out as the novel unfolds. Susannah thinks how Bryce had to switch schools after his ex-girlfriend's ghost caused Susannah to have to save Bryce's life and he had to switch schools. The back story on the events should unfold as the novel does as well.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Susannah's ability to see the undead is a secret. This means that she has to be somewhat sneaky in figuring out who the ghosts are that show themselves to her and whom the people are that she hunts down for the ghosts. At lunch, Susannah asks her friends Cee Cee and Adam who Red is. They say he is a local developer named Thaddeus Beaumont with the nickname of Red. They also tell her that he is the father of the boy she danced with at the pool party, Tad. When Susannah asks about Mrs. Beaumont, her friends tell her that she died a few weeks ago. Susannah gets the listing for Red's business and calls to leave a message for him to call her back under the guise she wants to interview him for the school newspaper.

When she gets home, her mom asks her how the student government meeting was. Her stepfather Andy is cooking quesadillas and Susannah is picking on her stepbrothers. She tells her mother they voted to cancel the spring dance so they can use the money to replace the statue of the man the school is named after. Everyone thinks the statue was vandalized, but a ghost severed the head from the statue and tried to bowl Susannah over with it. Susannah also mentions to the reader that she sees her father, who is also a ghost now that he died.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Susannah realizes the woman ghost appeared in her room because she felt a connection with Susannah because of her dancing with Tad at the pool party. Susannah thinks the ghost is Tad's mother. While Susannah's gift is a secret, her youngest stepbrother is very intelligent and the storyline foreshadows him figuring out Susannah's ability.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Susannah's dad shows up when she's pouring herself a bowl of cereal for dinner. Her dad shows up to warn her that Red Beaumont is not a man she should be messing around with. Her dad admits he's been spying on her. He knows about Jesse too. Susannah's mother comes into the kitchen to check on her after her dad leaves. She asks Susannah if she said the word dad, but Susannah covers up by saying that she said the milk is bad. Her mother asks if she would feel better if Gina, Susannah's best friend from Brooklyn, came for a visit. Later that night, Susannah calls the Beaumont house. She had gotten the number by borrowing Kelly Prescott's cell phone earlier in the day. Kelly Prescott is the girl who had the pool party and the girl who has a crush on Tad. When Tad answers, Susannah hangs up, but Tad calls back because he has caller ID. When he asks if he knows her, Susannah says no. That night while she's sleeping, Susannah is woken up by screaming.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Red's reputation hints that he might have murdered his wife. Susannah's mother asking about Gina coming out for a visit foreshadows her mother surprising her by paying to fly Gina out to California.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The woman ghost is more upset than she was the previous night. She's asking why Susannah didn't tell Red it isn't his fault. Susannah promises to tell him. When the woman ghost disappears, Jesse shows up. Jesse confronts Susannah about telling her father that he is living in her room. Susannah tries to get Jesse to talk to her about his death. She has found out he was supposed to marry his cousin, but mysteriously disappeared on his way to the ceremony. She doesn't know this from Jesse, though, but instead from a book her youngest stepbrother, Doc, found on the history of northern California. Jesse says he likes Susannah's father. Then he asks what's wrong with her hands and she tells him she has poison oak. Jesse too warns Susannah about the woman ghost. He tells Susannah she isn't who she thinks she is.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Since Jesse's death is a mystery, it foreshadows Susannah solving the mystery. Jesse's warning indicates that the woman isn't Tad's mother or Red's wife, but is instead someone else. Adam previously mentioned to Susannah that Tad had a twin that he killed before he was born. It could be that this ghost is Tad's twin and Red's other child that was never born.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Susannah gets Sleepy, her oldest stepbrother, to drive her to Red's mansion. She talks her way into the mansion and is escorted into the house by a servant. She is ushered into an elevator and deposited into Red's home office. She uses the guise that she is writing a story for the school newspaper on the top influential business people in Carmel, California.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Susannah believes she'll be able to deliver the message to Red and leave. It probably will be much more complicated than she thinks.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

As Red greets Susannah, he keeps staring at the cross necklace she's wearing. When Susannah delivers the message, Red seems fascinated instead of astonished. Susannah lies saying the woman came to her in a dream. Her instincts tell her to escape but the shutters outside of the window seem nailed shut. A man, Marcus, comes off the elevator. He too stares at Susannah's necklace and neck. Marcus leads Susannah on to the elevator.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Red staring at the cross indicates he might be some kind of supernatural being, such as a vampire. The shutters being nailed to windows not allowing light in further indicates Red is a vampire.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Marcus asks Susannah if Mr. Beaumont hurt her. She says no. Then he accuses Susannah of playing a prank, which she denies. As she walks past the pool to leave, she sees Tad Beaumont swimming laps and getting out of the pool. Marcus is surprised Tad knows Susannah but leaves them alone. Susannah tells Tad about her article. When Tad finds out she needs a ride home, he offers to take her. As he walks away to change, Susannah notices he has poison oak on his neck. She explains how he got it and they laugh.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Now that Tad knows her name, he and Susannah will form more of a relationship. It might even turn romantic since Susannah thinks Tad is a Greek god.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Tad asks Susannah out for a coffee. When he drives her home, he kisses her. It's Susannah's first kiss. Jesse greets Susannah as she's walking to the door and tells her she can't handle the situation alone. Susannah goes to Father Dominic the next day. When he hears Red's his nickname but he doesn't have red hair, that he's sensitive to light and he kept looking at Susannah's neck, he says Red is a vampire.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Now that Father Dominic knows about Red, it foreshadows him helping Susannah solve the mystery of the dead woman. Susannah might even go undercover as Tad's girlfriend to gather more information.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Susannah tells Father Dominic there are no such things as vampires. He says he'll do some research. Susannah puts Cee Cee up to doing some research of her own. In the meantime, Susannah and Adam try to rescue a kid's cat—a kid at school who died of cancer and came to Susannah as a ghost. Cee Cee finds out that multiple people who tried to stop Red's development projects are missing. One of the pictures is of the ghost woman who appears to Susannah. They capture Spike, the cat, and Adam drives them by Cee Cee's Aunt Pru's house. Aunt Pru claims she talks to the dead.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Aunt Pru is going to out Susannah's ability to Cee Cee and Adam. Since they think Aunt Pru is crazy, they might or might not believe what she says.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Aunt Pru tries to summon the ghost of Deidre Friske, who is the woman who keeps appearing in Susannah's room. The same card keeps appearing—the hermit card. While Susannah is using the phone to call home, an elderly woman dressed in gardening gear appears to her. She is Mrs. Fiske, but not the same woman from Susannah's room. Mrs. Fiske confirms Red killed her but before any other information is exchanged, Cee Cee comes in to get Susannah to leave. When Susannah arrives home with Spike in her bag, a stretch limo is in the driveway and Red is drinking tea with her mom.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The hermit card keeps appearing because it indicates to Susannah that the elderly Mrs. Fiske liked to stay in her home. Since Mrs. Fiske mentions that her children sold her land to Red, it is Mrs. Fiske's daughter who keeps appearing to Susannah in her room. It's possible that Red had an affair with the young woman and that has something to do with her death.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Susannah's mom says that Red and Tad are there to take Susannah to dinner. She tries to get her bag with Spike in it up to her room. The family dog, Max, follows her to her room, but runs away shrieking because he knows that Jesse lives in the room sometimes. Jesse appears as Susannah is preparing the room with food and a litter box for Spike. She asks Jesse to call Father Dominic if she isn't back from dinner with Tad and Mr. Beaumont by midnight. Susannah's mom comes to the door and tells Susannah how proud she is of her writing for the paper and that Tad is such a nice and handsome boy.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Father Dominic doesn't know about Jesse, so if he has to appear to him to tell him Susannah is missing, Father Dominic is not going to be happy. Red giving Susannah a knowing look is as if he is threatening to tell her mother what she said to him if she doesn't come to dinner with him and Tad.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Susannah has dinner at the Beaumont house, which consists of several courses served by waiters. Red doesn't eat anything. He just sits at the table drinking a glass of red wine. After dinner, Tad is about to kiss Susannah in the living room when Red comes in to get her to tell them about the restoration of the statue. While she's telling the story, Tad falls asleep in her lap—suddenly. Susannah realizes that Red has poisoned Tad, but Red says he didn't poison him, that he just drugged him. Red says he needs to talk to Susannah because she talks to the dead and he makes them that way. Susannah tries to spray Red in the face with pepper spray but nothing comes out of the bottle. Susannah then tries to run but Red seizes her wrists. As Red smiles at Susannah, she sees very pointy incisor teeth. Susannah pulls a lead pencil out of her bag and stabs Red in the chest with it. He pitches over onto the floor and lies there. Susannah thinks he is dead.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Ironically, Susannah believes in ghosts but doesn't believe in vampires. She assumes that Red is a vampire from the clues she has collected thus far. It's possible that he isn't a vampire though. Even stabbing a human in the chest with a lead pencil could cause the person to pass out.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Marcus rushes into the room. He seems more concerned about whether Susannah is all right than the fact his boss is dead on the floor. Marcus examines Tad and says he's just drugged. Marcus examines Red and says he's only fainted. Susannah admits that she thinks Red is a vampire. Marcus concurs and says that Red is on medication because he thinks he is a vampire, but the doctors say it's simply a fixation. Marcus blackmails Susannah into not mentioning what happened there tonight or he'll have to tell her parents about her prank. He suggests that nobody will believe a juvenile delinquent like her over a respected businessman like Red.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Ironically, Marcus blames Susannah for the incident. Marcus says that she agitated him when she mentioned the previous evening that the dead woman came to her in her dreams. It seems as if someone is framing Red for the murders or he is indirectly responsible for the people who are missing. It indicates that Marcus has done his research on Susannah because he knows she had been in trouble when she still lived in Brooklyn, before she moved to California.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

One of the servants drives Susannah home. Susannah's mom accosts her at the front door trying to pry all of the details out of her. Susannah finds Max in front of her bedroom door, which has scratches all over it from him trying to get in and get to the cat. Doc opens his door across the hall and asks if she has a cat in there. Susannah admits she does. Doc said he knew because Max was trying to get in and that Max usually avoids the room and Susannah knows why. Susannah finds the bedroom window open and Spike gone. Father Dominic calls as Susannah is about to slip into a bath. He yells at her for not telling him about Jesse sooner. Cee Cee calls on the other line and when Susannah switches over, Cee Cee tells her she's been doing more research on Tad Beaumont. She says that his wife died of breast cancer ten years ago. About that time, Red turned his companies over to his brother Marcus. Susannah realizes Mrs. Fiske said Mr. Beaumont killed her, but didn't say Red or Thaddeus. The call waiting beeps again. Susannah thinks it's Father Dominic calling back but it's Tad. He apologizes for falling asleep and asks to make it up to her. She tells him that his father drugged him and thinks he's a vampire. Tad denies it and Susannah infers that he should check with his uncle on where all of their money comes from and hangs up the phone.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Doc knows that there is paranormal activity in Susannah's room. Susannah had assumed Marcus was a servant or secretary to Red, but he's his brother and Tad's uncle. This puts Marcus in a position to set Red up for the murders when Marcus himself is really the one responsible for them.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Susannah is having a hard time sleeping when Spike and Jesse show up through her window. What amazes Susannah is that Spike seems to like Jesse even though he is a ghost. When Jesse seems like he's going to kiss her, the screaming ghost woman shows up accusing Susannah of not telling Red. Susannah reassures her that she did tell Red.

Chapter 16 Analysis

It seems as if there is another Red whom Susannah has to track down. Now instead of having one killer to deal with, this foreshadows that Susannah might be dealing with two killers.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

The next morning, Susannah dresses in her best butt-kicking outfit. When her stepbrothers see her, Dopey calls her the "Queen of the Undead" and she punches him in the stomach. When Susannah gets to school, Sister Ernestine bawls her out in front of the whole school for wearing a miniskirt and sends her home to change. As Susannah is walking off school grounds, Marcus pulls up in a car with smoked windows and tries to get her inside. Suddenly, two men burst out of the car and try to grab Susannah. When the thugs fail at trapping Susannah, Marcus gets her and throws her in his car. She tells Marcus that her mother is a reporter in hopes of scaring him to let her go.

Chapter 17 Analysis

When Susannah infers something about her going missing Marcus dismisses her statement. Marcus infers he is going to kill her.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Susannah tries to escape from the car. Marcus screeches the car to a halt before hitting a guardrail and hauls Susannah back into her seat. Marcus continues to drive and pulls into the driveway of the Beaumont mansion.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Marcus insinuates that he has already killed or is going to kill Tad too since Susannah had told Tad about his killing too. Marcus tells Susannah she's going to die by drowning.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Marcus steers Susannah into Red's office in the mansion. He throws a Speedo swimsuit at her to put on. Susannah notices that Tad is laid out on the couch only wearing a pair of swim trunks. Marcus admits that he never intended for Mrs. Fiske's body to be found, but he intends for Tad and Susannah's bodies to be found as if they drowned in a tragic jet skiing accident. Marcus leaves Susannah to change into the bathing suit. Susannah decides to climb on the bookshelf with her gloves on and a shard of glass to use as a weapon when Marcus comes back into the office. As Marcus returns, Susannah pushes the swivel desk chair into the large aquarium in the room.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Marcus insinuates that he has already killed Tad and that Tad hadn't been as hard to convince to cooperate with him as she's being. Susannah plans to break the aquarium so she can escape through the room next store that she has figured out is where the food is deposited into the aquarium.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

As the wall of water gushing over Susannah subsides, she hears Jesse's voice calling her name. Susannah goes into the empty aquarium, confirming the room behind it is where the fish are fed. She picks up a flood light from the bottom of the now empty tank. Marcus pulls a small gun out of his jacket pocket. Susannah yanks the wires out of the light and throws them into the water at Marcus's feet.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Susannah climbs to safety. The entire time she has the plan to electrocute Marcus. She will then climb through the fish tank to the other room to escape the mansion and get help for Tad.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Jesse points out that there is smoke coming from the room where the fish are fed. Jesse uses his powers to make the shutters on the window break off so they can escape the fire. They pick up Tad and try to throw him through the window and into the pool below. Susannah jumps in after Tad to save him from drowning, but Tad regains consciousness from the water. Red Beaumont steps out of the sliding glass door and tells them to get out of the pool because there is a fire in the house. Mrs. Fiske's ghost steps up to the window to greet Susannah.

Chapter 21 Analysis

The ghosts are not only turning to Susannah for help to straighten out their problems so they can move on to the next world. Now, the ghosts, such as Jesse and Mrs. Fiske, are coming together to help Susannah on matters that are not even their own challenges.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

After the fire, Susannah never sees Marcus again. Susannah's parents ground her when they find out she had been at the Beaumont's when she was sent home to change her clothes. Mr. Beaumont claims he had been waiting for his lunch by taking a nap in his coffin when he found out about the fire. This lands Mr. Beaumont under psychiatric observation for a few days. When Susannah is going to her room to serve her punishment, Dopey tells them about her punching him in the stomach that morning. Susannah is looking at some pictures her mom hung up when her father appears. Susannah's mom tells her that Gina's parents agreed to let her fly out for a visit when she realizes that Andy's first wife died of ovarian cancer and that he had to pull the plug while she was in a coma. She confirms these facts with her mom.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Susannah realizes that Marcus might have burned his victims because their bodies vanish just as Marcus does. From the picture, Susannah realizes that the crying woman in her bedroom is Andy, her stepfather's, first wife.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Susannah is in her room when Jesse and Spike appear in the window. Susannah asks Jesse what he did with Marcus. Jesse says that Mrs. Fiske and some of the ghosts of the other people he killed are torturing Marcus until the day he dies. Susannah goes into Doc's room. She tells him that his mother appears to her and tells her that he can't blame himself for pulling her tubes. While Doc is hugging and thanking her, his mother appears to Susannah and thanks her as well. When Susannah returns to her room, Jesse mentions that he came because she called him. Mrs. Fiske said the same thing to her when she was at Cee Cee's aunt's house. Tad calls to tell Susannah the doctors found a drug in his dad's system they think Marcus was giving him to hallucinate. Gina includes a tarot card with her letter. It is the ninth key, which is a hermit that is a spiritual guide to the afterlife. As she and Tad hang up, Dopey realizes that Susannah has a cat in her room and tells her she's busted.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Susannah realizes that Doc has red hair. When Andy's wife appears to Susannah, the Red she is talking about is Doc. Additionally, it is starting to come out that Susannah has the power to call ghosts in addition to her seeing and communicating with them when they appear to her.



Characters

Susannah Simon

Susannah Simon is a 16-year-old girl who attends Junipero Serra Mission Academy in Carmel, California. Susannah is the only daughter of her mother and biological father. Her biological father is deceased. Her mother is remarried to a man, Andy, who has three sons, so Susannah now has three new stepbrothers.

Susannah is a mediator. A mediator is someone who sees and talks to ghosts to help them make the transition from their life on earth to wherever it is they go when they die. Her ability is a secret. The only person who knows about it is the priest and principal of her school, Father Dominic, who is also a mediator.

Susannah lived in Brooklyn, New York prior to moving to Carmel with her mother. When she lived in Brooklyn, Susannah got into trouble at school and at home. She was somewhat of a delinquent. Since she has moved to California, however, Susannah has changed her ways and is getting better grades and trying to stay out of trouble. From time to time, her interaction with ghosts and her need to keep her ability a secret, lands her in trouble with her parents.

In Brooklyn, Susannah's best friend is Gina. Because she is new to Carmel, Susannah is still building her social circle of friends, but she does have two new best friends, Cee Cee and Adam.

Father Dominic

Father Dominic is the priest and principal of Susannah's school. Father Dominic is a mediator also, so he shares Susannah's ability to see and talk with ghosts. Father Dominic acts as a mentor to Susannah. Throughout the novel, Father Dominic tries to teach Susannah how to take a softer and more sensitive approach in helping ghosts to pass over to the other side.

In a recent run-in with a ghost, Father Dominic suffered some injuries. When the novel opens, he has a cast on one of his legs and he is using crutches to walk around. Because Father Dominic is the only person who knows about Susannah's ability, he is also Susannah's confidante. She is able to confide things in Father Dominic that she cannot share with anyone else.

Jesse

Jesse is the ghost that occupies Susannah's room at her home in Carmel, California. Jesse lived in the house in the 1850s when it was owned by his father, who was a rancher. Jesse is Hispanic so he also speaks Spanish, in addition to English.



Jesse's death is a historical mystery. He was on his way to his wedding ceremony when he was killed. Nobody seems to know what caused his death. Susannah believes Jesse is stuck in her room and on earth because he has unresolved issues. She is trying to help him work through these issues throughout the novel.

Jesse also helps Susannah when she is kidnapped by Marcus Beaumont. Jesse appears at the Beaumont mansion to help Susannah get away from Marcus.

Dopey

Dopey is one of Susannah's stepbrothers. He is the second oldest of Andy's sons. Dopey is Susannah's age so he is about 16 too. At the pool party to which Susannah goes, she finds out that Dopey sneaked out of the house from being grounded. He is at the pool party, in the pool house, making out with Debbie Mancuso. Susannah is looking in the window of the pool house to verify it is her stepbrother when she falls into the bushes that end up giving her poison oak on her hands.

Sleepy

Sleepy is the nickname for Susannah's oldest stepbrother. He is 18 years old. He has his own vehicle. He works as a pizza delivery boy so he can save his money for a Camaro that he wants to buy.

Doc

Doc is the nickname for Susannah's youngest stepbrother. His real name is David. He is 12 years old, but he is a genius. It turns out that the woman ghost talking about "Red" is referring to Doc, who has red hair. He feels guilty for his father having to pull the life support off his mother after she fell into a coma from her breast cancer.

Tad Beaumont

Tad Beaumont is the boy who asks Susannah to dance with him at the pool party. He plays football for the nearby public school. Susannah thinks he's very handsome, but also that he is not very smart. When Tad drives Susannah home from his house, he kisses Susannah. It is Susannah's first kiss.

It's Tad father whom Susannah thinks is killing the environmentalists who go missing when they oppose his company's building projects. It turns out to be Tad's uncle who is the culprit, however.



Thaddeus

Thaddeus "Red" Beaumont is Tad's father. He is very wealthy and the owner of one of the biggest land development companies in northern California. Susannah also discovers that Red thinks he is a vampire. It turns out that his brother, Marcus, has been giving him hallucinogenic drugs that are making Red think he's a vampire.

Marcus Beaumont

Marcus Beaumont is Red Beaumont's brother and Tad's uncle. When Red starts to act delusional, Marcus takes over running the development company. Marcus turns out to be the one responsible for killing and getting rid of the bodies of the environmentalists who are trying to stop the development projects. At the end, the ghosts of the people he killed are haunting him and he disappears from the Carmel area.

Cee Cee

Cee Cee is one of Susannah's best friends in Carmel. She is very intelligent and somewhat of a nerd. When Susannah needs help researching people and things, she puts Cee Cee on the Internet. Susannah also lets the reader know that Cee Cee has a crush on their friend Adam.

Adam

Adam is another of Susannah's best friends in Carmel. Adam has his own car, so he Susannah and Cee Cee use it to get around to different places in the novel. Adam is the one who drives them to the mall to pick up the cat, Spike, who belongs to a ghost of a boy that appears to Susannah.

Mrs. Fiske

Mrs. Fiske is one of the land owners and environmentalists whom Marcus kills for trying to stop one of the Beaumont development projects. Her ghost appears to Susannah and helps her to resolve the mystery of who the murderer is. Mrs. Fiske's ghost also helps to get Marcus out of the area.

Aunt Pru

Aunt Pru is Cee Cee's aunt. She is a psychic who reads tarot cards. When Cee Cee, Adam and Susannah visit Aunt Pru, she keeps turning up the hermit card. Susannah finds out later that this card talks about mediators, so Susannah believes that Aunt Pru had been indicating this with the turning of this card.



Objects/Places

Carmel, California

Carmel is the city in California where the novel takes place. Susannah and her mother have just moved to Carmel when her mother remarries. The entire novel unfolds at different locations around Carmel.

Junipero Serra Mission Academy

Junipero Serra Mission Academy is the private Catholic school Susannah attends. It is also the school where Father Dominic is the principal. Two weeks prior to the start of this novel, Susannah and the ex-girlfriend of one of her classmates had been in an altercation on the school. The ghost had tried to use the head of the founder's statue as a bowling ball to mow Susannah down.

Hermit Card

The Hermit card is one of the cards in a deck of tarot cards. Another name for the card is the ninth key. The card represents those people who have the ability to talk with the dead in an effort to lead them into their afterlife. When Susannah visits Aunt Pru's house, this card keeps turning up but Aunt Pru doesn't understand why. At the end of the novel, Susannah's best friend from Brooklyn, Gina, includes the card in a letter she writes to Susannah. Gina includes the card because at a tarot card reading, the reader predicts that Susannah is a mediator.

Beaumont Mansion

The Beaumont mansion is where Tad, Red and Marcus Beaumont live. Red Beaumont also has a home office. Inside the home office is where Susannah meets Red Beaumont and Marcus Beaumont for the first time. Later in the novel, the mansion is where Susannah and Red have a physical altercation, which ends with Susannah stabbing Red with a pencil. Finally, the mansion is where Marcus takes Susannah after kidnapping her from her walk home from school when she is sent home to change her clothes.

Corvette

Tad drives a Corvette. He drives Susannah from his house to the coffee house in his car. When they are done at the coffee house, Tad drives Susannah home in his car. When they reach Susannah's house, she experiences her first kiss with Tad inside of the Corvette.



Fish Tank

The fish tank in Red Beaumont's office reaches from the floor to the ceiling. Susannah breaks the fish tank so the water will spill out all over the place and she can stop Marcus from killing her. Susannah also uses one of the fish tank lights to expose live wires in an attempt to electrocute Marcus.

Susannah's Room

Susannah's room is haunted by a ghost by the name of Jesse. The family dog, Max, won't go into Susannah's room because he senses Jesse's presence. It is in Susannah's room that the wailing woman ghost appears to ask for Susannah's help in letting someone by the name of Red know that it isn't his fault that she died. When Susannah rescues Spike the cat, her room is the hiding place she uses so her family doesn't know she has a cat in the house.

Wedding Photo

The wedding photo Susannah's mom hangs on the wall toward the end of the novel is of Susannah's stepfather and his first wife. When Susannah sees the photo, she realizes the wailing ghost in her room is Andy's first wife, who died when her cancer sent her into a coma and Andy pulled her life support. This is the point where Susannah realizes that the message from the ghost is meant for her youngest stepbrother, Doc or David.

Bookbag

Susannah uses her expensive name brand bookbag to hold Spike the cat when they capture him. Spike uses his paw to claw a hole in the bag so that only his swiping paw comes out during the ride from Aunt Pru's house to Susannah's house. It is from the bag that Susannah releases Spike into her bedroom.

Father Dominic's Office

Father Dominic's office is where Susannah meets with Father Dominic often. It is a place of solace for her because she can talk with Father Dominic about her mediator abilities in private. The office is also the setting at the start of the novel.



Themes

Good versus Evil

The primary plot throughout the entire novel is that of good versus evil. While it is presented in a light-hearted manner, Susannah struggles with the state of mind of the ghosts and people with whom she deals in the novel. For example, the ghost of a dead ex-girlfriend seems to be more on the evil side when she tries using a statue head as a bowling ball and Susannah as a pin.

Susannah struggles with whether or not Red Beaumont is good or evil. When he confirms Susannah's suspicions about being a vampire, this solidifies evilness for Susannah. Later, when she finds out that Red has mental problems, she no longer thinks he's evil but simply needs some help.

Finally, Susannah struggles with good and evil once again when she interacts with Marcus Beaumont. When she first meets Marcus, he seems like he is saving her life from Red Beaumont, whom Susannah believes is a vampire. Later, however, Susannah learns Marcus is evil. He is the one responsible for the disappearance and presumed murders of the environmentalists.

Coming of Age

One of the other primary themes that runs throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having a parent die or being a mediator for ghosts. Susannah struggles with the fact that her coming of age includes the ability to see and speak with ghosts. Susannah deals with the responsibilities in life of having this ability by trying to help both the dead and living resolve unresolved issues they have with each other.

Susannah also faces the rite of passage of having her first boyfriend. Along with having her first boyfriend, Susannah experiences her first kiss. Susannah faces the possibility that Tad might want to have sex with her, so she is also processing these types of feelings and obstacles while trying to solve the case of who murdered the environmentalists. She especially struggles as to whether she possesses the psychic powers that she suddenly discovers she might have, which involve summoning ghosts without being aware that she is doing it, in addition to being able to see and speak with ghosts.

Family

Family is another central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of this particular family—the coming together of Susannah and her mother with Andy, her new stepfather and her three stepbrothers. While every

family has their trials and tribulations, Susannah's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view. The narrator of the novel is also the main character of the novel, Susannah, or Suze. The narrator is telling the story as it unfolds, but she also switches back to some past events in her life to provide the reader with some prospective.

The point of view of this novel is an intimate point of view that allows a reader to connect closely with the main character, who also happens to be the narrator of the story. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place to her, the members of her family and the people of the town without having to move out of character or interrupt the flow of the narration. For these reasons, the point of view works well with this novel and the author's writing style.

Setting

The novel is set primarily in Carmel, California. The author never states the specific year or time period, but it seems to be in the 21st century. The setting of this novel is important because the mysterious occurrences in this particular town set the scene for the entire plot of the novel. The main character of the novel is a teenage girl who works to help ghosts resolve unresolved matters with the living so the ghosts can continue on to their afterlife.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware of all of the missing people associated with Red Beaumont's business. However, as events unfold, one secret after the next is either explained or inferred.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is informal and appears to be that of modern times, such as the 21st century. It is educated, strong and descriptive enough that it creates a flow which leaves the reader impressed with the words as much as the plot when the novel ends.

The language of the novel is appropriate to the plot because it is accurate for the characters in the novel and the education level of the writer. The novel is not in love with its own words, but it is descriptive enough that the reader finds enjoyment in the words as well as the plot. The language is not difficult to understand, however, and everything is clear in its context. For this reason the language of the novel fits well with the plot of the novel.



Structure

The novel consists of 23 chapters. Each chapter is anywhere from two to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue. The author is the narrator and main character of the book, so it seems as if she is injecting her own voice throughout the novel—as if she has become Susannah. This allows the author to provide her own opinions of the events surrounding the setting of the novel, as well as the actions taking place within the plot, but from the eyes and words of Susannah.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows good versus evil between the characters in the novel. The subplots involve coming of age and the trials and tribulations of the family.



Quotes

"As a mediator—which is what we are, you and I, Susannah—we have a responsibility."

Chap. 1, p. 1

"Tell him it wasn't his fault. He didn't kill me."

Chap. 2, p. 9

"Anybody know of a guy named Red?"

Chap. 3, p. 14

"This is not a guy you want to be messing around with, Suze."

Chap. 4, p. 23

"She isn't—she isn't who you think she is."

Chap. 5, p. 32

"I'm doing a story for our school paper on the ten most influential people in Carmel, and I was hoping to be able to interview Mr. Beaumont, but unfortunately, he hasn't returned any of my calls, and the story is due tomorrow, so I was wondering if he might be home and if he'd see me."

Chap. 6, p. 35

"As if I, in some way, were responsible for killing her."

Chap. 7, p. 41

"Did Mr. Beaumont hurt you in any way, Miss Simon?"

Chap. 8, p. 42

"I think he's a vampire."

Chap. 9, p. 50



"It's about my cat."

Chap. 10, p. 51

"There it is again. The ninth key."

Chap. 11, p. 57

"You are really finding yourself out here."

Chap. 12, p. 66

"He's merely drugged, of course."

Chap. 13, p. 70

"—he was a vampire."

Chap. 14, p. 74

"It was around this time that Red Beaumont handed over almost all his responsibilities to his brother."

Chap. 15, p. 79

"I guess I got the wrong Red."

Chap. 16, p. 86

"Your corpse is going to be found rather quickly, I imagine."

Chap. 17, p. 92

"You're going to drown."

Chap. 18, p. 97

"But dead's never been my color."

Chap. 19, p. 100

"Now put the light down and let's—"

Chap. 20, p. 103



"There's a fire! Get out of the house at once."
Chap. 21, p. 106

"Oh, I just have to tell him something."
Chap. 22, p. 112

"That's how I recognized her, you know. From the wedding photo of her and your dad,
downstairs."
Chap. 23, p. 114



Topics for Discussion

Who is Susannah Simon? Why does she feel like she is an outsider in her own family? What does Susannah recall about her childhood? What is Susannah's biggest demon that haunts her throughout her life? Why is this important? How does it change her life?

Discuss the relationship between Susannah and Jesse. Are they really in love? Is there love, guilt or a sense of obligation in their relationship? How does Susannah feel about Jesse? How does Jesse feel about Susannah? Why does Susannah think Jesse has a crush on her? What does she do about it?

How does Susannah's father die? How does this affect Susannah? How does her father react to Susannah being a mediator? Why does Daisy decide her father is visiting her as a ghost?

Who is Jesse? Why does he agree to help Susannah in the investigation? Why does there seem to be a strain in the relationship between Susannah and Jesse at times? Why does Jesse warn Susannah about helping the ghost lady? How does the reader know this?

Who is Marcus Beaumont? Why does he continuously try to help Susannah throughout the novel? Why do you think he drugs his brother? What happens when the ghosts find out where Marcus is? What do you think happens to Marcus?

Who is Tad Beaumont? Does he really like Susannah? Why do you think he calls her Susan and Susie? What do you think happens to Tad since his father has to get medical care?

Discuss the ability Father Dominic and Susannah have as mediators. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them or hold them back? Why is the mediation an issue to the characters? Does it have anything to do with the way that relationships develop and evolve? What impact does it have on the overall desire to expose the truth as to why the environmentalists are missing?