

Hell House Study Guide

Hell House by Richard Matheson

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Plot Summary

Hell House by Richard Matheson is a story that takes four very different people into a house that has a life of its own. After sitting empty and boarded up by the owners for thirty years, Rolf Rudolph Deutsch wants a small group of hand selected experts from several unique fields of study to go into the house and stay for one week. With the promise of great remuneration, all he asks in return is that they answer definitively the one question he has: Is there life after death? Close to death himself, Deutsch needs to know. In fact, he is consumed with the need to have that one question answered. In return for his money, he wants to know definitively if anything lives in the Belasco house in Maine dubbed Hell House.

Dr. Barrett is the first one summoned and he is unable to turn down the offer of \$100,000. He agrees to go to Hell House with a couple of stipulations: Deutsch is to finance the completion of a machine Dr. Barrett created and calls a Reversor and his wife is to join him. Deutsch happily agrees and tells the doctor that he will be joined by a spiritualist and a medium - Benjamin Fischer, the lone survivor of the last encounter with Hell House.

Aptly named, the house is full of surprises for its newest troupe. Before one seemingly simple week is over, two of the professionals will die and the two that survive will come very close to losing their lives on more than one occasion. The house is haunted by Emeric Belasco who evades the removal of his temporal spirit by way of Dr. Barrett's Reversor because his remains are sealed in a lead walled room behind the alter in his chapel. Emeric returns after the house has supposedly been cleansed, and takes Dr. Barrett's life, but not before he reveals himself just as he had to Reverend Florence Tanner before him. Invading the minds of all who enter his house, Emeric forces acts of sexual perversion on his victims, possessing their spirits and breaking them, one by one.

In the end, it is former guest and world renowned Medium Benjamin Fischer and Edith Barrett who unravel the truth and put Emeric Belasco in his place. Only they see him for the pathetic little man he was, and understand why he felt the need to terrorize. A defense against his own feelings of inadequacy, Emeric is finally confronted and silenced forever. Sadly, Rolf Deutsch will never know any of this as he dies before knowing were is life after death before finding his way there himself.



Part One: December 18, 1970: Chapters 1 - 3

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Two others will join him, Deutsch continues and Barrett is disappointed to discover a Spiritualist and a Medium. Benjamin Fischer was the lone survivor of the last foray into Hell House after which it had been sealed and Fischer suffered an emotional break. Deutsch offers Barrett unlimited funds and autonomy and one week to complete his assignment. Barrett's only stipulations are that his 'machine' be built and brought along, that electricity and telephone service be installed, and a daily swim and steam bath be made available—a necessity in his physical condition. Deutsch agrees, but his son William swears he will block their efforts.

Barrett tells his wife Edith about the proposition and she is dubious but as they have hardly been apart in their entire marriage, wants to accompany him despite his reservations.

Part One: December 18, 1970: Chapters 1 - 3 Analysis

Rolf Deutsch is an old man who is wealthy and determined. He wants answers to the riddle of the Belasco house in Maine. Dubbed Hell House, it is reputed to be haunted, and Deutsch offers Dr. Barrett, a physicist of some renown, a hundred thousand dollars to offer up a definitive answer as to whether or not they exist. Along with Barrett, Deutsch has arranged for a Medium and a Spiritualist to join him for a week long stay in Hell House. Barrett agrees, but Deutsch's son William vows to block their efforts and their payment regardless of their success or failure, knowing that his father only wants confirmation of an assurance of immortality.

Hell House has been closed for thirty years, sealed off after the last attempt and one of Barrett's new team is the sole survivor of that escapade. Barrett agrees, and his wife Edith insists on joining him despite his reluctance.



Part Two: December 20, 1970: Chapters 4 - 6

Part Two: December 20, 1970: Chapters 4 - 6 Summary

Reverend Florence Tanner had informed her parishioners at both morning and evening services in her church that she would be gone for a week. Then she went to the lectern and prayed for the strength she knew she would need to cleanse the Belasco house.

Lionel makes Edith promise that once they arrive at the Belasco house, she is not to leave his side. She worries that her presence there will make it harder for him to work, but she knows how close to an emotional breakdown she had come the last time they were apart and can't face that again.

Fischer is already on Deutsch's private plane on the way to Maine's Hell House. Unable to sleep, he thinks about how naive he had been on his last trip into Hell House and is determined that things will be different this time. For thirty years since, he'd barely used his gift, but now he looked forward to opening himself up again.

Part Two: December 20, 1970: Chapters 4 - 6 Analysis

Florence Tanner tells her congregation that she will be gone for a week and prays for the strength to cleanse the Belasco house.

Lionel is afraid for Edith in Hell House and makes her promise to stay by his side, but he has no idea that the last and only time they'd been apart, Edith had come close to emotional collapse. Nothing frightens her more than repeating that feeling.

Benjamin Fischer had experienced Hell House as a sixteen-year-old. They had found him naked, curled up and after vomiting blood he had been in a coma for weeks. Afterward, he had been in a coma for three months, emerging to look like a man in his 30s. He welcomed the opportunity to reclaim himself.



Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 7 - 11

Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 7 - 11 Summary

The two cars contain Deutsch's representative in the first, and Lionel, Edith, Tanner and Fischer in the second. Even Florence is nervous about Edith's participation, and explains to Edith how Hell House's owner, Emeric Belasco had created a private hell there. He is supposed to be one of the entities that haunt the house. Deutsch's representative explains that their meals will be delivered, and says goodbye. Fischer drives the rest of the way to the house through fog. It is cold and there is an unpleasant smell in the air. They park and walk across a concrete bridge that spans Bastard Bog. Florence's first impression of the house is that it is hideous. The windows have been bricked up, and when they enter the house they find that the lights do not work. The smell inside the house is even worse than outside.

They investigate the house, from it's great hall to it's theater and Edith asks how wealthy Belasco was. Lionel tells her when he died he had in excess of seven million dollars. They find a chapel but the atmosphere is so intense that Florence is unable to enter. The rest go in and find the remains of a very disturbed mind. The religious icons are unnerving. They go back out and Florence is gone. They find her standing on the other side of the great hall, and she apologizes, telling them she thought she'd heard something, but what she'd heard was the voice of Belasco on a wind up phonograph.

They settle into bedrooms they will occupy for the next seven days and a breeze passes over them, blowing out Lionel's candle. He cautions Edith they will see much more of this, but won't discuss it in front of Tanner. He believes it is just kinetics, and doesn't want to fuel Tanner's belief in her 'erroneous disincarnate' views. Edith and Lionel take the first bedroom. Florence runs water over her face and chastises herself for being unable to enter the chapel while Ben sits at the foot of his bed, sensing that Belasco already knows he is there, and is watching him.

Ben changes and goes back downstairs to find Lionel and Edith have started a fire in the great hall. Lionel is unpacking his equipment carefully and he asks about the history of Bastard Bog. Ben explains that thirteen of the women who had stayed in Hell House had become pregnant. One of Lionel's instruments, cube shaped, has BARRETT - EMR stenciled on it. Florence comes downstairs and invites Ben to join her for a walk. Edith notices a list on the table that contains all of the observed phenomena at the Belasco house. It is considerable and she is appropriately numbed by it.



Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 7 - 11 Analysis

The chauffeur and Deutsch's representative won't go as far as the house and Fischer drives the remaining distance after receiving instructions regarding meals that will be dropped off and keys. They have to walk a small distance past the bog to get to the house and its bricked up windows lend to the hideous first impression it makes.

They investigate the house room by room, but Florence is unable to enter the chapel. When the others come out, she is gone and they find her standing in the great hall where a wind up phonograph playing a message from Belasco from 1940 was playing on its own.

The electricity is not working, but taking candles they ascend the staircase and choose their rooms. The strange phenomena has already begun as breezes blow out candles and recordings play. Even the scientist, Lionel believes that all of it can be explained by kinetic energy. Ben sits in his room with the impression that Belasco knows he is there and is watching him.

By the time Ben gets downstairs again, Lionel and Edith have a fire going in the great hall and Lionel is unpacking his crates of equipment. Florence descends and invites Ben to go for a walk, and after they leave Edith notices a long list on the table of observed phenomena in the Belasco house. It is somewhat unnerving.



Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 12 - 16

Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 12 - 16 Summary

Florence and Ben investigate the seven-car garage, then follow another set of stairs to find an Olympic sized swimming pool. They go around to the steam room and Florence has overwhelming feelings of perversion. Back out, they see a door leading to a wine cellar that is empty but Florence doesn't want to go in. She is still unable to go into the chapel feeling as though it is the root of the house's evil. Florence accuses Ben of blocking and obstructing his senses. He argues that the house is intent on killing them all and that by opening herself up to it, she puts herself in danger and then walks away.

The dining hall has thirty chairs around a forty foot table and Barrett is sitting at it's head eating the dinner delivered by the couple from Caribou Falls. Florence announces she'd like to attempt a 'sitting' that evening and asks Ben if he will 'sit' the following morning, but he declines. Florence believes the trouble is being caused by surviving personalities - one of them Belasco. Though his presence is documented, photographed and verified, Lionel is convinced that everything is rooted in science. Lionel asks Ben about Belasco and gets a glimpse into his madness and corruption.

After dinner, Florence prepares herself. A tape recorder is brought out, and she puts herself into a trance. Moments later, she introduces herself as Red Cloud and describes seeing a man whom he tells him to leave the house, but then says he has been there too long and doesn't understand. Another voice says they should leave the house before she kills them all. A cold envelopes them, and Lionel brings her out of her trance. Lionel is pleased with how things are going, believing that once they have power he will be able to prove his theories and finish his manuscript. As he is explaining things to her, the rocking chair behind him begins to rock. He calms her, explaining this away also and assure her there is no such thing as ghosts.

Florence takes a shower, gets out and hears footsteps. She senses a presence, and the bedspread goes into the air settling over a figure at the foot of the bed. The figure is tall, but she doesn't think it's Belasco. The bedspread falls to the ground and when she bends to pick it up a hand caresses her behind. It chuckles and knowing it is a male for sure now, she nervously asks him why he is a prisoner of the house. Something tries to pull the blankets from her hand. She tells him she's had enough and the door opens and closes again.



Part Three: December 21, 1970: Chapters 12 - 16 Analysis

Florence and Ben tour the house, and Florence picks up several psychic impressions as they go along. She is still unable to enter the chapel, somehow feeling as though it is the center of the evil in the house, but also feels impressions in the pool room, the ball room and even the wine cellar. She accuses Daniel of closing himself off, and he gets angry, telling her that she is being careless.

When they return to the dining hall, Lionel is sitting at the head of the table with dinner that has been delivered by their unseen couple from Caribou Falls. Florence announces she'd like to hold a sitting that evening and everyone is agreeable. Lionel asks Ben what he knows about Emeric Belasco, and Ben gives them his twisted history of madness and corruption.

Florence puts herself into a trance after dinner, and while the tape recorder is running, she discovers a new talent. She channels a spirit, and when the experience is explained to her afterward, she is a little unnerved having never been a physical medium before. She decides she'll continue if Lionel wants her to, but Ben who is the physical medium, nervously reminds her that though she thinks this is God's will, God may not have much influence in Belasco's house.

Later, Edith asks Lionel about the events and as they are talking the rocking chair behind them begins to rock. Edith is frightened, but Lionel assures her that this can all be explained, and is excited by the prospect that he will be able to complete his manuscript and prove his theories.

Florence showers and encounters a presence in her room. The bedspread comes off the bed to outline a figure who she can hear breathing, but won't talk to her despite her attempts. Surprised, she tries again to make positive contact, but the figure just chuckles and takes all of the bedding off. She tells him she isn't amused and insists he leave and return when he's ready to behave. Then she remakes the bed and doesn't turn around as the door behind her opens and closes again.



Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 17 - 22

Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 17 - 22 Summary

Lionel tries the pool, but it is still not warm enough. Edith pulls the metal door to the steam room open and follows him in. She sits down and watches Lionel as he bends over to turn the tap on, and his shadow on the ceiling begins to expand. Thinking she must be imagining it, she tries to ignore it, but it continues to spread. She calls out his name and tells him she's seeing things. He tells her it is her imagination, but they leave the steam room.

Florence goes to Ben's room and finds him asleep, but pale. She goes downstairs and finds breakfast. She tells Lionel and Edith her impressions that the figure she channeled and then saw again last evening was likely Belasco's son. Lionel nodded but didn't believe a word. A knock at the door interrupts them and they open it to find Deutsch's representative with the carpenter and the generator he ordered the day before. He asks about the cat he ordered and it also has arrived.

When the lights came on, all four of them were relieved and pleased at the same time. Now the great hall didn't look as ominous and even Ben looks more relaxed. The lights flicker once or twice, but then become steady. Edith is not so relieved, fighting a nagging feeling that any minute they'll be plunged back into darkness. Florence smiles at Ben but he doesn't smile back. He thinks they are all idiots for believing that a few light bulbs will dispel the danger.

A small cabinet is constructed and when it is finished, Lionel gets out a pair of black tights and a smock which he gives to Florence to put on. After Florence changes, Lionel sends Edith in to carefully examine her to make sure that she has secreted nothing.

Lionel puts gloves on Florence and a cat on her lap while her hands make contact with the arms of a chair activating a light. Her feet activate another set of bulbs. This way Lionel will know if she moves. A netting woven with small bells is weighted and hangs from a small table that is in the cabinet with Florence. Just as they are ready the cat jumps down, but Lionel says it doesn't matter and switches on the recorder. With his equipment connected, Lionel can tell that the temperature is dropping, and Florence's pulse is rising. Wisps of viscous matter appear on Florence's fingertips and Edith gasps. Florence maintains connection to the bulbs while filament spools out and rings the bell on the table. Within thirty seconds a figure stands before them. Lionel continues to dictate the changes into the recorder and Edith whimpers as the figure reaches for her. She screams and it disappears.



Despite all that was seen and recorded, Lionel is still convinced that it can all be explained by science. Edith naps and when she wakes he is looking at the sample of teleplasmic matter. He tells her that it is merely an 'externalization of thought.' Lionel is convinced that Florence created the figure to prove that Belasco's son existed - a fact which Lionel seriously doubts.

Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 17 - 22

Analysis

Edith and Lionel go down to the pool, but it isn't warm enough, so they go into the sauna. While Lionel is trying to get the steam valve open, Edith watches him, and thinks she sees his shadow on the ceiling growing and changing shape. Unnerved, she asks Lionel if they can leave and though he assures her it is likely all in her imagination, he indulges her and they go out.

Florence looks in on Ben and finds him sleeping, and then goes to Belasco's bedroom suite. She opens herself up just a little and receives a flood of impressions that include the birth of Belasco's son. All at once she knows who is communicating with her and she goes downstairs to share her revelation with Lionel and Edith who are sitting down to breakfast. Lionel listens and nods but doesn't believe any of what Florence is telling him. Deutsch's representative arrives with a generator, a carpenter, and the cat that Lionel ordered the day before.

Everyone is relieved when the lights come on, although they flicker once or twice before becoming steady. Edith fights the feeling that at any time they may go out again while Ben thinks about how stupid they all are to assume the danger is gone simply because a few light bulbs have gone on.

Lionel has the carpenter create a cabinet in the corner of the great room, and rigs it so that his equipment can measure everything from her movement to her pulse rate. He has Florence put on a special outfit consisting of tights and a black robe, and then sends Edith in to examine her to ensure that she has nothing secreted on her. Edith is taken back by how beautiful Florence is and has such a physical reaction to her that she has trouble completing the examination.

Lionel finishes setting up, helps Florence into gloves and ties them at the wrists. Both hands and feet are wired so that if Florence moves, Lionel will be alerted. When Florence is ready, she puts herself into a trance and Lionel begins recording. Ectoplasm forms around her fingertips, and slowly covers her face and her upper torso. Thirty seconds later a white figure stands in front of the cabinet. Edith gasps and it reaches for her. She screams and the figure disappears causing a premature retraction. Lionel records the changes before allowing anyone to help Florence.

Later, Edith wakes from a nap to find Lionel making notes. He has a sample of the material under a slide and is convinced that it is something entirely of Florence's making. Lionel is sure that Belasco's son doesn't even exist and tells Edith so.



Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 23 - 29

Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 23 - 29 Summary

Florence goes upstairs, and finds the cat outside her door. She takes it in, and keeps going over the whole experience. The cat jolts upright and darts out. Behind her the bed clothes once again come off the bed, and this time form themselves over an obvious nude male. She asks if he is Emeric's son, edges closer and tries to reason with him. The figure shouts "Boo!," causing her to jump. She tells the figure that she isn't interested in jokes. The Chinese lamp is thrown to the floor, the door is thrown open with such force that it crashes into the wall. She waits for a while before cleaning up.

Florence goes downstairs and Ben encourages her to eat. Lionel and Edith also come down and Lionel's attitude is so condescending that Florence gets angry. She tells him that she doesn't like his attitude, and the dinner dishes and food bowls become animated, hurtling themselves around the room. Ben tries to leave but is prevented. He suggests they all take shelter under the table, and they barely manage to before other objects in the room are thrown around. Lionel has a deep cut on his thumb, Ben is shaken and all but Edith accuse Florence of being the poltergeist.

The Barrett's go upstairs where Edith helps Lionel wrap his wounds. He suggests that she leave, but she won't go without him. Lionel tells Edith he doesn't believe that she'll do it again, and Edith is shocked. He convinces her easily, telling her he made a mistake by taking Florence at face value. Still, Lionel wants to stay, and Edith tries not to panic at the thought that it is another five days.

Florence goes to the Barrett's room and explains it is Belasco's son trying to separate them. She offers to prove it by sitting again the next morning, but Lionel already has all the information he needs. Edith puts another log on the fire, and opens the cabinet of books. The third one has a packet of pornographic photos of two women. She wishes she could get physical comfort from Lionel. She craves warmth or contact and feels like she is being watched. She drew a chair up beside Lionel, telling herself over and over there's no such thing as ghosts.

Ben cracks the seal on a bottle of Bourbon and Florence comes in looking for Belasco's son. Ben walks around the house himself and sees a ghostly figure on the stairs. He realizes it is Edith as she heads out the front door in her pajamas. She is heading for the barn and he stops her just in time. He leads her back to the house and puts another log on the fire. She is shivering and he offers her his sweater, but instead she begins removing her clothing. She wraps her arms around him and he struggles loose and slaps her across the face, bringing her back to the present. When she realizes she is naked, she is horrified and hurries upstairs.



Florence continues to search. She walks through the pool and steam room area and feels a malignant presence but it is not the same feeling as she got from Belasco's son, so she continues, resolving to tell Lionel to avoid the steam room. Drawn to the wine cellar, she finds a light and goes in. Unseen hands clutch at her and she prays, telling the presence she won't be deterred. She walks to the back wall, still fighting off the hands that are grabbing at her, and touching it knows she has found Daniel Belasco.

Part Four: December 22, 1970: Chapters 23 - 29 Analysis

Florence goes up to her room, and finding the cat outside her door, takes it in with her. She's trying to put the events into perspective when the cat reacts to something unseen and leaps for the door. She lets him out and turns to find her visitor has returned. This time, the male under the bedclothes is obviously nude. She asks if he is Belasco's son, but when she tries to reason with him he shouts "Boo!" and scares her. She indignantly tells him she isn't interested in practical jokes and for twenty seconds nothing happens, but then the Chinese lamp is thrown to the floor and the door is opened so hard it crashes into the wall.

Florence cleans up and goes downstairs where she finds Ben and dinner waiting. She asks him about Belasco's son just as Lionel and Edith are coming downstairs. Lionel is condescending in his attitude, and Florence gets angry about it. The dinner and it's dishes become animated, flinging across the room at them. They take shelter under the table as the chandelier swings violently. Ben tries to leave, but an unseen force prevents him. Lionel is cut and bruised and both he and Ben suspect that Florence is behind the poltergeist behavior.

Lionel and Edith go upstairs where she dresses his wounds and suggests they leave, but Lionel has everything tied up in the Belasco house. He tells her she can go, but she won't leave him. He convinces her that Florence is behind the ghostly behavior and she shudders thinking "only" five more days.

Sitting in her room, Florence is devastated by the events and prays for help. Suddenly she realizes what is happening, and goes to the Barrett's room to tell them that it is Belasco's son who is responsible. She is willing to sit again in the morning to prove it, but Lionel has enough information, he tells her. He is unwilling to listen, and Edith is so fearful that she retreats, insisting that it wasn't her.

Edith helps Lionel get undressed. She gets up and tries to find a book to read, but the third one she removes from the cabinet is full of pornographic pictures. Disgusted, she puts it back. She desperately wants human contact. She felt as though she were being watched suddenly, and is so disturbed that she drags a chair over to Lionel's side of the bed, and sits there touching his arm lightly and repeating over and over to herself that there is no such thing as ghosts.



Ben opens a bottle of Bourbon and Florence comes in looking for Belasco's son. Ben decides to walk around the house himself. He gets to the great hall, and sees Edith in her pajamas just as she glides out the front door. He catches her just before the tarn and manages to bring her back. She stands in front of the fire shivering but refuses the offer of his sweater and instead begins to disrobe. When she kisses him, he slaps her across the face and suddenly aware of her surroundings and her state of undress she hurries back up to her room embarrassed and ashamed.

Florence continues to look and finds herself in the cellar. The steam room has an evil presence but it isn't the same one she is encountering, so she continues, resolving to tell Lionel to stay away from there. She goes into the wine cellar, and knows she is in the right place. Hands grasp at her and she beats them back insisting that she won't be deterred, and leaning against the back wall knows that she has found the final resting place of Daniel Belasco, Emeric's son.



Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 30 - 35

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 30 - 35 Summary

A scream wakes the Barrett's from sleep and the second scream they recognize comes from Florence. They hurry to her room to find her on her back in bed with her arms across her chest. There are damp patches on her nightgown over each breast and underneath are two large bites, one on either side. She sobs, explaining that Belasco's son is punishing her. Ben shows up and Florence convinces him to help her exhume his body the next morning. Lionel is in no shape to help, but agrees reluctantly to be there.

The next morning Ben began working on the wine cellar wall with a crowbar. Lionel is about to leave when Ben notices a rope through the opening in the wall. He pulls on it until the whole wall slides to the right revealing the grisly remains of Daniel Belasco. Florence feels vindicated and removes a ring from the corpse who was obviously hung in there when he was still alive. It has the initials BD engraved on it.

Lionel explains the reasons he doesn't trust that the body is that of Daniel Belasco. Since Florence found the body, she is merely concocting situations to support her theory. When Ben comes down to eat after putting Daniel to rest, Lionel tells him that he agrees with Florence in that he doesn't think Ben is strong enough to stay in the house and he should leave. The only question remaining in Edith's mind related to the teeth marks on Florence's breasts, but Lionel is convinced this is just stigmata. He insists that when his machine arrives, which it does shortly after, he will be proven correct.

Florence holds a funeral service and believing Daniel is at peace, but Daniel tells her he can't leave. He wants something from her, and tells her she knows what it is. When she refuses he says he must kill her, she struggles, and finally gets free and Daniel is gone, but something is in bed beside her. She turns to see the cat, eyes glittering with madness. It attacks her, leaving bite marks and scratches on her head, torso and legs before she finally uses the telephone to beat it off of her and races into the bathroom slamming the door behind her. She can hear it's horrible vocalizations as it claws at the door trying to get in while she bathes the painful wounds.

Lionel unpacks his large machine, and calling it the Reversor, is certain that it will fix Hell House. Edith remembers nothing before Ben slapped her face and she discovered herself naked in front of him. Ben comes downstairs and tells them that Florence has been hurt again. They all go up and Ben has managed to coax her out of the bathroom after assuring her the cat was gone. She lies there, pale and in pain and explains that she believes the cat was possessed by Daniel Belasco. Lionel says little, but helps to disinfect her wounds and suggests that she leave. She stubbornly refuses, but Lionel won't allow her to become another victim.



Edith watches Lionel sleep. He explained to her that Florence's experience was nothing more than a division of her own personality, but all Edith can think about is the horrible marks and scratches all over her body. She pours herself a drink from a decanter. She feels better after finishing. She decides that she should go thank Ben for saving her life the night before, makes her way to his room, and knocks on the door. When he doesn't answer, she goes in. Ben isn't there, but comes in behind her. She tells him she is there to thank him, and he realizes she has been drinking. He tells her it isn't safe to drink in Hell House and recommends that she tie her wrist to the bed at night to prevent her from leaving her husband unconsciously again.

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 30 - 35

Analysis

A scream wakes the Barrett's and they hurry to Florence's room. She is very upset, lying on the bed, and there are two viscous bite marks - one on each of her breasts. She claims they were done by Daniel Belasco, but Lionel is still unconvinced. Florence wants to exhume him the next morning and Ben agrees to help her.

Ben digs with a crowbar until a hole is made in the wall through which a rope can be seen. He pulls it out and tugging with all his might finally feels something give. The wall slides open slowly and reveals a corpse tied to the wall behind. Florence feels immediately vindicated, but Lionel is still unconvinced that this is the body of Daniel Belasco, even when he sees the initials DB on the ring that Florence pulls from his finger.

The Barrett's sit down to dinner, and Lionel explains to Edith that he doesn't believe the corpse is Daniel Belasco because it is Florence who discovered it. He insists the initials could represent many names, and when Edith asks about the bite marks on her breasts, Lionel explains it away as stigmata of a sort. When Ben comes down to eat after laying Daniel to rest, Lionel tells him he agrees with Florence that he is too weak and should go. He believes the arrival that night of his machine will prove him out scientifically.

After taking Daniel out of the house and performing a service for him, Florence believes he is at rest. She holds his ring for focus and in a trance sees images of him but when Daniel approaches his father, Florence finds herself tumbling down a pit. Praying, she manages to pull herself back to her room, but while she is still in a trance he comes to her. He tells her she knows what he wants, and when she refuses he tries to strangle her. She fights him off, but then the cat next to her on the bed goes crazy and attacks her viciously, leaving bite and scratch marks on her head, torso and legs. She manages to get to the bathroom, locking the cat out. While listening to its horrible noises, she cleans herself up.

Lionel unpacks his machine, calling it the Reverser, and is convinced that it will cure Hell House. Edith is not so sure, and nervously talks to him while he works until Ben comes down stairs to tell them Florence has been hurt again. Lionel grabs his bag and they all go upstairs to find Florence pale and in pain, lying in bed. Lionel cleans her



wounds with antiseptic, and suggests she leave the house, but Florence is adamant that she wants to stay. Lionel insists he won't allow her to become another victim of Hell House and will send her home if necessary.

Later, Edith watches her exhausted husband sleep. She gets up and pours herself a drink and feels better after finishing it. She decides to go and thank Ben for saving her life, despite how nervous she is about leaving the room. She knocks on his door and when there is no answer she lets herself in. She is looking around when Ben comes in the door and asks what she is doing there. She tells him the reason she came, and when he smells alcohol on her he angrily tells her she shouldn't drink. It isn't safe to drink in Hell House. He recommends that she tie a rope to her wrist and fasten it to the bedpost to keep from leaving her husband again, and sends her back to her room.



Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 36 - 41

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 36 - 41 Summary

Ben again suggests to Florence that she leave Hell House. When she refuses, he tells her that what she thinks is Daniel may not be. Florence still won't relent. She gives Ben a medallion that says Believe on it, and asks if he will sit with her while she goes into a trance the next time, and he reluctantly agrees.

Lionel does laps in the pool and then suggests they go into the steam room. He goes in, and Edith undresses and follows him. She sits beside him, touches him, then straddles him. When he isn't responsive, she angrily leaves the steam room. He is surprised for a moment, and wonders if the house is effecting her also, and then realizes he shouldn't leave her alone out there. He gets up to leave, but the door is jammed. He calls out, suddenly afraid that she's left him there, but she answers, and tries in vain to get the door open from the other side. Finally he tells her to go and get Ben and despite her fear, she leaves. Fear overwhelms him and he hears noises in the room with him. He tries to talk himself through it, but feeling for the hose, he puts his hand into a warm slimy mass. What feels like a jellyfish and smells like the tarn is on him and before he knows it, in his mouth as he tries to scream. Arms reach for him and pull him out and he opens his eyes to see nothing on him at all.

Ben had been looking for the cat in the theater when he heard Edith's shouting and comes to her aid. When she tells him Lionel is stuck in the steam room, he remembers Florence's warning and races downstairs. He uses a bench and manages to get the door open. Between the two of them, they get Lionel upstairs and into bed. Ben sits drinking coffee and goes over everything that has happened since they arrived. He thinks about his last trip into Hell House, and how none of it fits together.

When Lionel wakes, Edith announces she is packing their things. She anticipates his response, but it disappoints her anyway. Lionel tells her he wants her to go to Caribou Falls and wait there for him until the following day. Though he had been badly frightened, he still insists that what he experienced was not the dead, and that after twenty years of research he is convinced that by the following day he will have ended the horrors in Hell House. She can't bring herself to say anything, and can only hold onto his faith as she has none of her own left.

Florence and Ben sit in her room. She prays, and puts herself into a trance. Ben watches as a viscous matter spools out until it covers her face. Shaking he asks it twice if it has a voice before it responds and when Ben asks who he is, he identifies himself as Daniel Belasco, and admits that it was his body they found in the wine cellar. Ben asks if he was the one who attacked Lionel, possessed the cat and bit Florence, and he



responds no. Daniel confesses it was his father who had done all of those things. Then he retreats back into Florence, and by the time Florence wakes, Ben is standing beside her with water. He tells her what happened and the knowledge pleases Florence.

Edith watches Lionel sleep, and finds herself going back to the decanter of Brandy. She drinks three cups, filled with guilt. She goes downstairs and finds Ben breaking open Lionel's crate with a crowbar. Ben tries to convince her to go back up to Lionel, but Edith is already too drunk to listen to reason. He grabs her arm to take her upstairs but she wraps her arms around him and he pushes himself away, yelling at her to wake up. She snaps angrily and calls him a sexless bastard as she takes off her sweater and bra. She offers him a breast and threatens to find someone who will if he doesn't indulge himself. His head turns suddenly and following the motion she sees Lionel standing there.

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 36 - 41 Analysis

Ben tells Florence to leave Hell House. He is worried for her safety, and feels she is putting herself at risk, but she won't hear it. He tries to explain that Daniel might not be who he appears to be, and tells her of previous events in the house, but she won't be moved. Finally, they just talk about their pasts and afterward Florence asks him if he'll sit with her when she is feeling better, as she is afraid now to go into a trance alone. He reluctantly agrees.

Lionel finally gets into the pool to work his damaged and convinces Edith to go into the steam room afterward, but something comes over her. She all but forces herself on him and he pushes her off. She leaves, angry and he decides to go after her, but can't get out. The door is jammed. He calls out to her, trying not to panic, but she hasn't left. Together they still can't get the door open, and he sends her to get Ben's help. When she leaves, he tries to turn the steam off, but finds the tap jammed. He looks for the hose, and instead encounters a slime that feels like jellyfish and smells like the tarn. He tries not to panic, but he can hear slithering noises. By the time Ben finally gets the door open, he is screaming and feels the oozing slime and its weight on him and even in his mouth, but when the door is opened and he can see, there is nothing.

Ben hears Edith calling and when she tells him Lionel is stuck in the steam room, he remembers the warning from Florence. He hurries down there, but would have been paralyzed by fear himself were it not for the look on Edith's face. He finally uses a bench to free the door, and between them they get Lionel upstairs and into bed. Then Ben goes back down and drinking coffee he thinks about everything that has already happened, and remembers the things that happened the last time he was in the house. In frustration, he is unable to connect any of it logically.

Edith tries to convince Lionel that they should leave, and is packing their things when he wakes, but he won't listen to reason, despite his frightening experience. He still insists that what happened to him has nothing to do with the dead, but he does agree that she should leave, and suggests that she go to Caribou Falls where he can meet her the



following day. He is convinced that his machine will fix everything. Edith won't leave without him.

Florence puts herself into a trance again, this time with Ben in the room. He watches as a substance spools out of her and slowly takes the form of a male in front of her. He asks the figure if it can speak, and the second time he asks, it answers him. Ben asks him who he is, and is told he is Daniel Belasco, and questioned further, he admits that it was his body they found and reburied outside the house. He asks why Daniel is still in Hell House, and Daniel tells him that his father won't let him leave. Ben wants to know if Daniel is responsible for biting Florence, attacking Lionel and possessing the cat, but Daniel insists that it was all his father. When the substance then retreats into Florence and she wakes, Ben tells her of the conversation, and Florence is pleased. She had suspected all along that Daniel could never have done those things and now felt more than ever that he was just another victim in Hell House.

Edith finds herself dipping into the Brandy decanter again, despite all advice to the contrary, and after several glasses she leaves the room feeling no pain. She goes to Ben's room but it is empty so she goes downstairs where she finds Ben using a crowbar on Lionel's crate. She approaches him drunkenly and he tries to convince her to return to her room and her husband, but she won't hear of it. She pulls off her sweater and bra, offering herself to him, but Ben refuses. This makes Edith angry. Ben looks suddenly to one side, and following his gaze she sees Lionel standing there. She loses her balance and as she is falling she loses consciousness.



Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 42 - 47

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 42 - 47 Summary

Music is playing and Florence is dancing with Daniel, but she can't remember how she got there. She sees Daniel standing in front of her in this mist. Water swirls around her feet and ankles. Smelling the rot, she thrashes and manages to get out of the tarn. Sick with fear she runs to the house and sees Ben leaving the kitchen with a glass of whiskey in his hand. She drinks it down she tells him that it is all Emeric. All of the hauntings are his doing. She swears she'll stay until she manages to fix it. She goes back to her room and washes the stink of the tarn off her legs. Then she sits in prayer and tries to convince Daniel that if he can interrupt his father from killing her, he can also leave.

Ben thinks about what Florence told him, unable to find any flaws. Lionel stiffly thanks him for his help both with Edith and with the unpacking of his machine. Ben tells him the house is affecting Edith, and mentions catching her heading towards the tarn, but Lionel tells Ben he believes Deutsch is wasting at least one third of his money. At first angry, Ben sits in a chair and puts himself in a trance. He makes a mistake by opening himself too far, and feels a force slam against him. He grabs his stomach and holds on until the force ebbs and finds himself on the rug in a fetal position with the feeling that someone was trying to decide when and how to finish him off.

Lionel goes up to Edith and sits watching her and thinks about the events that led to finding her downstairs with Ben. He touches her shoulder to wake her. She gets up and goes to the washroom to clean herself up and wash her face. When she comes out, Lionel explains that the Brandy she drank contains over fifty percent Absinthe, a powerful aphrodisiac. He blames her entire behavior on the house and on himself and she tells him she'd give twenty years to undo what she's done, and promises to stay with him for the rest of their time there. She sobs and he holds her.

Florence feels there isn't time to help all the souls trapped in the Belasco house. She prays for Daniel's release for more than two hours, but he is still close by after. She dishes out a plate and joins Ben in front of the fire. He asks her how she can know she hasn't deluded herself and there is no Daniel. It hits her that the answer is in the chapel. She prays and announces God is with her and the force holding her back dissipates. She averts her vision from the crucifix. At the altar, a massive bible turns pages, stopping at a single entry. Daniel Belasco, born on November 4th, 1903.

Lionel works over his machine while Edith watches. She asks what it does, and he tells her confidently that by tomorrow, Hell House will be drained. Ben comes into the room, and has obviously been drinking. He scoffs at the Reversor's ability to accomplish



anything, and suggests they get out while they can. Discouraged, he leaves, but Edith silently agrees with him. Still, Lionel insists that his machine has the power of life and death over it.

Florence continues to plead with Daniel to leave Hell House. He tells Florence he loves her, and begs her to give him the fulfillment he needs before Lionel banishes him. He tells her that Lionel has the means to remove him from the house, but will merely banish him from one hell to another without realizing it. He tells her that he will leave the house tonight if she will only help him and though he sobs, Florence tells him she can't.

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 42 - 47

Analysis

Florence is dancing with Daniel, but can't remember how she got there. She promises to stay with him, and then hear him shouting. She snaps out of it, realizing she is standing in the cold water of the tarn. She fights her way back out, and into the house where she runs into Ben. She downs his whiskey and tells him that it is Emeric Belasco pulling all of the strings and responsible for all of the hauntings. She goes upstairs and prays, then tries to convince Daniel he is strong enough to leave the house, but Daniel tells her through automatic writing that there is only one way.

Ben is standing at the tarn thinking about how close both Edith and Florence came when the couple from Caribou Falls show up with their food. He follows them in and sitting down to eat he thinks about Florence's hypothesis. He can't find a flaw in her thinking. Lionel comes down and thanks him for helping both with Edith and with unpacking the crate, and Ben tries to tell him that it isn't her fault; it's the house. Lionel tells him it's irrelevant, kind of like he has been, and while at first Ben is angry, he sees some truth in the statement. He sits down and puts himself in a trance, but since it has been years, he makes a mistake opening himself up too far. The force that slams him is very strong, and before Ben knows it, he is fetal on the floor with the feeling that someone is standing over him and calling all the shots.

Lionel goes up to wake Edith for food and thinks about everything that's happened. He knows they have to talk, and wakes her. She washes up and he tells her that everything that happened is the fault of the house or himself for bringing her there. She sobs, telling him she doesn't know what's happening to her, but he assures her that everything will be alright as soon as they leave the house.

Florence tries, praying with all her strength to help Daniel leave the house, but he unwilling to go. Ben is downstairs, and even more despondent. He asks her how she can possibly know that it is Daniel she is communicating with. He leaves her there, and she fears he is right, but then she knows she has to enter the chapel. She prays and announces that with God's help they will both enter. She goes in and finds the announcement of Daniel's birth.



Lionel checks his machine over carefully while Edith watches. He hasn't the time to explain it all to her, but insists that the following day, it will clear Hell House of the entities that haunt it. Ben comes in and claps, obviously having had a few drinks. He tells Lionel that his machine won't work and that Belasco controls everything. He says the best thing they can do is leave before they get themselves killed. Quietly, Edith admits to herself that she agrees with him, but Lionel is convinced that he will solve the problems of the house the very next day.

Florence continues to beg Daniel to leave, but to no avail. Exhausted, she gets back into bed, and sees a figure standing there. She asks if he can talk and Daniel tells her that he loves her and the only way he can leave the house is if she gives him the fulfillment he needs. He also tells her that Lionel has the means to banish him from the house, but he will only be removing him from one hell and consigning him to another. He adds that he will leave that night, if she will only help him, but Florence knows she can't.



Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 48 - 51

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 48 - 51 Summary

Lionel can hardly walk by the time he finishes, and Edith helps him upstairs. He asks her to get his tie, and tells her she should get ready for bed. When she comes back, Lionel ties one end of his tie to her wrist and the other to the bed post. Then he put his arm around her and she felt safe.

Despite everything, Edith is unable to fall asleep. She wonders about the real reason for the tie, and whether Lionel trusts her. The rocking chair begins to move and she tells herself that it is just energy and kinetics like Lionel said. She kept repeating that to herself and yet deep down knew that someone was sitting there. The chair continues to rock back and forth.

Florence can't resolve how to help Daniel, or give him what he wants. She gets a glass of water and the phone beside her bed begins ringing. She picks it up and lays the receiver on the cabinet but she can hear Daniel's voice pleading with her, and finally she gives in. She prays for help to enable Daniel to leave the house, and gets undressed. She calls Daniel to her, and tells him with love she gives herself to him that he might find the strength to leave the house. He climbs on top of her, and right before her eyes, turns into a putrefaction of decay as he enters her with a maniacal gleam in his eyes.

The screaming in the next room wakes Ben and he goes to her room, but the door is locked. Her mindless screams unnerve him. The Barrett's door opens and Edith looks out stricken. Ben grabs a wooden chair and crashes it against the door. The screaming stops, and the door flings open. The sight of Florence makes Edith throw up. She is lying on her back, her eyes mad, legs spread and body bruised, bitten and running with blood. "Filled," she keeps repeating and when Ben asks with what she smiles hideously.

Part Five: December 23, 1970: Chapters 48 - 51 Analysis

Lionel finally finishes his machine, and with Edith's help, barely manages to get upstairs and into bed. He doesn't even want to undress. Edith lies down with him, but he asks her to get up and get his tie and suggests she get ready for bed. When she returns, he asks her if she'll sleep in the small bed with him, and when she agrees, he ties one end of his tie around her wrist and the other around the bed post.



Still, Edith can't sleep. She looks around and sees the rocking chair is moving again, and though she tells herself over and over that it is merely kinetics, a part of her is aware that someone is rocking in the chair. The rocking continues.

Florence is having trouble sleeping as well. She can't stop thinking about the dilemma with Daniel. She can't go to Lionel for help because he doesn't even believe that Daniel exists, and she can't allow him to be consigned to hell without doing something. She gets a drink of water and when she comes back the old and defunct telephone is ringing. She ignores it for as long as she can and then places the receiver on the table. She can hear Daniel's voice pleading with her, sobbing over and over begging her to help and finally she breaks down. She prays for help from God and then getting undressed, gets back into bed and calls Daniel to her. He enters and tells her he loves her. She returns the sentiment, telling him that she gives herself to him in love and in the hopes that he will find his way out. He climbs onto her, and just as he is about to enter her, he changes. She opens her eyes and sees a corpse, rotting with putrefaction and with a maniacal gleam he enters her.

Ben wakes to screaming from next door and is at first paralyzed with indecision. Then he gets up and goes to her door, but it is locked, and the mindless screams continue. Edith opens the door to their room and looks out as Ben grabs a heavy chair and bashes it against the door. Finally it flings open on it's own, and Florence's screams have stopped. They look in and Edith throws up. Florence is on the bed, with her legs spread, filled with bites, bruises and blood. Ben goes to her, and all she can say is the word 'filled' over and over. He asks her with what, and she gives him a hideous grin.



Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 52 - 57

Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 52 - 57 Summary

Ben sits at Florence's side the rest of the night. He gets himself a glass of water and when he returns, her eyes are open but glazed, and tries to talk to her, but her personality has split. One part of her invites him to get into bed, blunt and forward, and the other is the Florence he knows who sobs at the hopelessness of having this sexual predator locked inside with her. Ben promises he'll help her, and tells her he is taking her out of Hell House, asking her to get dressed, but even that task is interfered with as she continues to solicit him in an altered state. He wonders if the house will let them leave.

Lionel thinks his Reversor will be ready by early afternoon and explains how it will remove the psychic energy from the house. Florence feels her only option is to disable the machine. When Ben tries to stop her, she swings a crowbar at him with a strength he can't fend off and he takes a blow to the skull that knocks him out. She easily fends off Lionel as well, then chases Edith upstairs and threatens to smash her skull in. Florence's demeanor changes again, and full of honey she tells Edith she has no intentions of hurting her, and tries to mount her instead. Edith cries out and Lionel finally makes it upstairs just as Florence returns to herself, embarrassed beyond speech for her behavior.

Lionel gives her sleeping pills which she soundlessly swallows and climbs into bed. Ben is also put to bed for his concussion, and then finally Lionel takes Edith back to their room where he swallows two codeines. He tells her he is going to call an ambulance and have both Ben and Florence taken from the house, and wants Edith to go with them, but Edith argues. Lionel is more convinced then ever that he is right.

Lionel falls asleep and wakes up feeling guilty. He goes downstairs to call for medical assistance for Florence and Ben. The phone seems to be out of order. He is about to hang up but Deutsch's man comes on the line so he asks for an ambulance. He hesitates and finally tells Lionel that Deutsch died that morning. He had apparently taken too many pills to dull his pain and had accidentally killed himself. He asks if Lionel has anything in writing, but he doesn't. Deutsch's man had been told by the son to leave them stranded out there, and Lionel is filled with despair and thinks suddenly about the tarn, but angrily shouts that the house that it won't win. The only thing that matters now to him is that he defeats Hell House.

Florence wakes with Daniel's voice in her head. He causes her to wet the bed, possessing her and she prays. She looks in the mirror, horrified by the sight and feels Daniel grab her from behind. She prays, but Daniel replaces her words with things she



would never say. She bites her fist hard and he vanishes, pain leaving no room for him in her mind. Knowing that, she runs for the chapel, and finds the cat cut in two. The crucifix falls over on top of her in a final act of degradation, and she realizes this is Daniel's intention. It takes all of her strength to push it off. She finds a large nail on the back of the crucifix and saws at her wrists, knowing God will forgive her. Just as she is losing consciousness, she hears footsteps and she is filled with awareness of the truth. Unable to move, she uses the rivers of her own blood to leave a clue.

Ben wakes, and checks Florence's room, but she isn't there. He has waves of pain and nausea, and sees Edith alone. He wakes her and asks where Lionel is but she doesn't know. She calls for Lionel and Ben follows, finding him by his machine, Ben asks where Florence is. Suddenly Ben knows she is in the chapel. When he gets there, Edith looks in and throws up. Florence is surrounded with blood and there is blood on the phallus of the crucifix. Wanting to move her out of the chapel, they crouch beside her and see the symbol of the letter B.

Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 52 - 57

Analysis

Ben sits awake beside Florence all night, and when she wakes, she shows definite signs of split behavior. One minute she is baring her breasts and inviting him to join her in bed, and the next is filled with shame and self loathing for her actions. Even a simple task like putting on clothes is difficult as she cycles through the two personalities: one sexual and wanton, the other chaste and embarrassed. Ben promises to take her from the house but he isn't sure the house will let them go.

Lionel works, despite his pain and exhaustion, but Edith's faith is faltering. Ben announces that he wants to leave, but Florence won't go until she knows what the Reversor will do. Lionel basically tells them that it will remove the residual psychic energy from the house. Florence changes in the blink of an eye she takes the crowbar and begins to smash at the reverser. When Ben and Lionel try to stop her, she wields it against them as well giving Ben a concussion and knocking Lionel to the floor. Then she chases Edith upstairs, threatening to kill her until she gets her alone. Then she changes again, telling her she wants her and forcing herself on top of her with strength that Edith can't fight off. Lionel finally makes it upstairs and his arrival brings Florence to an embarrassed stop.

Lionel gives Florence sleeping pills and puts her back into bed. Then he checks on Ben and reassuring Edith all the way, takes two codeines to cope with the pain. He wants to call an ambulance and have it take all three of them to Caribou Falls, but Edith stubbornly wants to stay with him.

Lionel wakes and goes down to get medical attention for Ben and Florence. When he reaches Deutsch's man, he finds out the Deutsch had died during the early morning and he has been instructed to abandon them. It is obvious to Lionel that they won't be getting paid, and getting even with Hell House becomes his first priority.



Florence wakes and hears Daniel's voice in her head, pleading, then mocking her. He causes her to wet the bed, and then possessing her, makes her do things to herself that fill her with shame when he allows her control again. She prays for deliverance from him and then finds herself praying for sex and is filled with despair. She bites her own fist, and Daniel's presence vanishes. Feeling as though the chapel holds the answer, she races there, finding the cat dead in the aisle. Part way up the crucifix pulls away from the wall and pins her to the ground in a final act of degradation. The pain is almost unbearable, and it takes several attempts to push it off, but when she manages to she uses a nail that supported it to saw through her wrists. Just as she is losing consciousness, she sees a figure, and suddenly it is all clear to her. She needs to tell the rest, but too weak to move, all she can do is leave them a message in the rivers of her own blood.

Ben wakes, his head pounding and nausea threatening. He checks on Florence but she isn't there, and going by the Barrett's room he sees Edith alone. He wakes her, asking where Lionel is, but she doesn't know. They find him downstairs, and Ben demands to know where Florence is, but Lionel is so focused on his task that he doesn't know. In a flash, Ben knows she is in the chapel. They find her on the floor, surrounded in her own blood, the crucifix near by with its phallus covered in blood, and Edith retches. They try to move her out, and see the B that she wrote in her own blood.



Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 58 - 63

Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 58 - 63 Summary

In the great hall, the Reversor is ready. Ben takes Florence's body out of the house. Lionel turns on the machine and Edith can feel it. He tells her it's time to leave, they go to the car. When Lionel opens the door, Edith sees Ben holding Florence's body and is so disturbed that she would rather go back into the house, but Lionel explains that the radiation will kill them. Lionel tells them Deutsch is dead, but neither seems to care. Hell House is dying.

Forty five minutes later Lionel announces it's done, and asks Ben to accompany him to the house to verify it is clean. Ben is unconvinced. When they go back in the door, Lionel looks expectantly at Ben, and after a moment he is amazed to realize that the atmosphere has changed. He walks slowly through, still nervous about letting down his guard. When he finally does, he can't believe it. The house is empty. Hell House is clear. Lionel hugs Edith enthusiastically. Suddenly Ben realizes that if Florence had only lasted one more hour, she'd be sharing this moment.

Ben leaves with Florence's body, driving the Cadillac slowly through the mist, his mind trying to process the fact that Lionel was right. He wondered about Lionel's assessment that Florence had created all the attacks on herself to validate her theories to him, and though he didn't want to believe it, he kept coming back to the fact that Hell House was clean. Ben had a bad feeling about it all somehow though. He couldn't shake the sense that he should get back to the house before it was too late.

Edith sleeps and Lionel goes downstairs to the machine, feeling sorry Deutsch will never know the truth. He is astounded at the number on the main dial. The needle twitches and he is unable to believe it at first, but then the camera turns on and the temperature drops. Angrier by the moment, he watches the EMR recorder as it grows and then explodes. A force grabs him and drags him to the pool, submerging him. His last thought is of Edith.

Edith's wedding band suddenly breaks in half. She calls Lionel and he answers, climbs into bed, and announces he plans to satisfy her. She tries to pull away, the lights come on, and she sees it is only his hand severed at the wrist. She screams as it goes under the bed, and an explosion of moths comes out filling the room and her mouth. Lionel's manuscript shreds itself. She almost loses consciousness, but a force won't allow it. A voice, sounding like Lionel mocks her as it drags her to the theater, and a booming voice in her mind says 'Welcome to my house.' Then Lionel is standing in the corridor. She follows to the pool room and sees him floating there, then her mind caves and madness takes over. Someone yells, strikes her jaw and she is mercifully unconscious.



The next time Edith wakes, she is in the car beside Ben. Lionel's body is in the trunk and Ben insists he is going back into the house. He is convinced it is his duty. Edith is convinced Ben will also die, but he insists most of him is already dead and to retrieve himself, he must go back in. It is easier to say than do though, and after Edith leaves, he stands there alone in front of the house shaking. Forcing himself in, he finds the phone line dead, and feels like the house is swallowing him alive.

Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 58 - 63

Analysis

Ben takes Florence's body out to the car while Lionel starts the Reversor. Then he and Edith follow. Edith is reluctant to climb into the car with Florence's body, but there is no choice. The radiation in the house is deadly.

After less than an hour, Lionel announces they can go back, and reluctantly Ben goes with them. It takes a few moments to work up the courage to open himself up to the house, but then amazingly he discovers it's actually clean. He can hardly believe it. He goes from room to room, the only damper on his growing excitement is the realization that had Florence lasted another hour, she could have shared this with them.

Ben leaves in the Cadillac with Florence, and still can't get over the fact that the house is clean. Still, he had gone from room to room and felt nothing. Now he had to face the fact that perhaps Florence manifested all of the attacks as well. It is hard to believe, and he is beginning to get a really bad feeling about having left the Belasco's there.

Lionel is relaxed after Ben leaves with Florence's body and thinks a celebration dinner is in order. Once Edith is asleep he goes downstairs, and gets some unpleasant surprises. At first, he is stunned by the sheer volume of energy his machine registers, but then it comes to life, defying everything he believes is possible. Needles jump, cameras click, and finally the machine itself throbs, swells and explodes. Lionel is dragged by an unseen force to the swimming pool, and his last thought as he is held under and drowned is of Edith.

Edith wakes upstairs as her wedding ring breaks off her finger for no apparent reason. She calls out to Lionel in the dark, and he answers, coming to bed with her and inexplicably amorous when the lights come on and she finds that it is only his hand, severed at the wrist. The horror is only beginning as she is then attacked by moths, and even a figure of Florence before she is forced into the theater where a voice welcomes her to his house. Horrified, she then sees Lionel and following his voice as he retreats, she goes to the pool room where seeing his lifeless body in the water, her mind snaps. A figure races to her, yells at her and slaps her. She falls into unconsciousness.

The next time she wakes, she is sitting in the car with Ben, who is apologizing for hitting her. He tells her Lionel is in the trunk before insisting that it is his duty to return to the house. She tries to talk him out of it, sure that he will also die, but he is resigned to that, having felt dead since his last trip to Hell House anyway. He almost has a change of



heart as she pulls away, crying, and leaves him standing there alone, but he manages to summon his resolve and go into the house. The phone line is dead, and he fights the feeling that the house is swallowing him alive.



Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 64 - 67

Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 64 - 67 Summary

Ben sits in the great hall, stunned that he cannot find the source of the power. He listens to the first sitting with Florence again, hoping for a clue but nothing. He walks the house letting his defenses down something shoves him towards the corridor, but he senses no malice. He realizes that it is Florence and the altar springs into his mind. The bible is open to the page announcing the birth of Daniel Belasco. Wallpaper behind him rips off the wall. Then he is assaulted by the wicked power he expected all along. He knows the answer now because he is about to die. He gets up and with no will, drifts out the front door to the bog. He fights the hands that grab at him, determined to follow Belasco's orders and die.

For half an hour, Ben sits in the car, teeth chattering and unaware. Edith keeps trying to put a blanket around him, and the car is warm, but seems to have no effect. Finally, barely lucid, he thanks her. He tells her about Belasco, and how he finally realizes what Florence tried to tell them. It was Belasco alone the entire time. He manifested every entity and horror in the house. He explains how Emeric finds their weakness, and uses them against themselves, even tricking Lionel into thinking the house is clean after his machine deployed. His final joke is that he is still there and there is nothing they can do about it.

Edith insistent that she gather Lionel's things, determined to go in alone if necessary. Ben finally summons his courage and goes up the steps quickly to throw the Barrett's things into their suitcases. He can't understand is why Belasco hasn't finished him like the others. Edith stands there until anger overwhelms her fear, and goes upstairs to Ben. Edith talks to him of the Reversor and Lionel's confidence in the machine and Ben stumbles on the answer: Belasco's ego. He thinks about the tape and begins antagonizing Belasco, taunting him to finish them. When Belasco finally makes his entrance, Ben continues to taunt him. A section of wall behind the altar opens showing a staircase. They descend to find a lead lined room and corpse of Emeric Belasco sitting in an armchair. His legs have been surgically extended, further exhibiting the vanity that supports Ben's theories.

They finally leave Hell House, knowing that they truly discovered the ultimate source of it's disruptions. Edith is remorseful that Lionel wasn't part of it, but Ben reminds her that it was his machine that weakened Belasco to a degree that they could overcome him. Before leaving the house, Ben opens himself up to it, and discovers that Florence has now left as well, having stayed just long enough to help. Then he wishes Edith a Merry Christmas.



Part Six: December 24, 1970: Chapters 64 - 67 Analysis

Ben goes back into the house, but feels nothing. He walks the house, slowly opening himself up, but senses no presence. He can see the damage, and listens to the tape recording Lionel made over and over again looking for a clue. He is determined to solve this issue though, and finally goes into the chapel with a little influential help from Florence's spirit. He sees the announcement of Daniel's birth at the altar as Florence had and a section of wallpaper comes off the wall behind him. He is assaulted by the intense evil he expected all along and because he is about to die, he is shown the truth. With no will of his own, he heads to Bastard Bog. Standing in the water, he feels a force and struggles against it as it tries to get him out. All he can think of is following Belasco's instructions.

Edith sits with Ben in the car for more than an hour before he begins to show any signs of knowing where he is. The car is warm, but he still shakes uncontrollably. Finally, his color returns and he thanks her, telling her about Belasco and how Florence pointed him in the right direction. He explains how Belasco used their own weaknesses against them, and one by one, eliminated them, even tricking Lionel into thinking his machine had worked and eradicated him.

Edith is insistent that they return to the house for Lionel's things. Willing to proceed alone if necessary, she convinces Ben to overcome his fear and reenter the house. He goes upstairs nervously to pack their bags, but it isn't long before Edith follows. They talk about Belasco, and Lionel's failed attempt to rid the house of him. Ben and Edith slowly put it together. Ben remembers things from the recording he listened to that make him realize that it is all about ego. Belasco had a huge ego, and his haunting centered around it. They go to the chapel and Ben taunts him until he shows himself. Then he continues to verbally push until he finally remembers Florence's comment that perfect love casteth out fear. He tells Belasco that God should help him, and he vanishes. They find a room located behind the altar and down a flight of stairs that is lined with lead, explaining why he was able to survive Lionel's machine. They also find Belasco, sealed there in an armchair, his legs showing signs of the surgery he had to lengthen them years previous.

When they leave Hell House at last, they know that it was their combined efforts that finally rid the house of Belasco, and Ben is no longer reluctant to open himself up as he has been since his first trip to the Belasco house. He wishes Edith a Merry Christmas after assuring her that even Florence has left now after staying just long enough to help them.



Characters

Dr. Lionel Barrett

Dr. Barrett is a physicist who has studied parapsychology for twenty years. He has a neatly trimmed beard and is mildly overweight. He is in his middle fifties, but his blond hair shows no traces of white like his beard does. He is a tall man and sits erect. He walks with a cane and his leg aches requiring him to take regular exercise in the pool and steam room.

He is the inventor of the Reversor, a machine he believes is capable of removing lingering energies from places like Hell House, and has dedicated his life to proving that spiritual entities are explainable by science. Though married to wife Edith, their marriage is one of intellectual rather than physical contact as Lionel has little interest in the actual act of sex anymore. Confident and self assured, he is more than willing to go to Hell House, provided that he is in charge and that his few conditions are met. They include electricity being reestablished, the pool and steam room opened, food regularly delivered and the financial completion of his machine to his specifications.

Rolf Rudolph Deutsch

Rolf Deutsch is a very wealthy man who at the age of eighty seven and in failing health, his only concern is whether or not survival is possible. He is bald and skeletal, and has dark eyes that are determined as is his attitude. All he wants is a definitive answer from Dr. Barrett, and he wants it in one week.

Rolf Deutsch is dying. Aware of this and the slim amount of time he has remaining, all he wants now in life is to find out if there is anything that comes next. He believes that by offering an exorbitant amount of money to three very different types of experts, and exposing them to the Belasco house, he should be able to pay for the answer he so desperately seeks. His son, William Reinhardt Deutsch is desperately opposed to the idea from the beginning, and tries to dissuade his father, feeling it is merely a waste of money that will soon be his.

Rolf lives up to his end, ensuring everything is in place for the guests when they arrive at Hell House, but sadly, he dies before they accomplish their goal, or can explain anything to him.

Reverend Florence Tanner

Reverend Tanner has run the Temple of Spiritual Harmony for the past six years. At forty three, she still looked beautiful, with long red hair and a tall Junoesque figure that has changed little since her twenties. Her church is her strength.



She joins the group as a mentalist but to her surprise and everyone else's, she exhibits unexplainable ability to be a spiritualist and channel for the dead as well. This new talent is surprising, but she takes it as a gift from God, and gracefully agrees to continue sitting in order that Lionel can continue his scientific study of the house.

Florence lost her son earlier in life, and Belasco uses that knowledge to prey on her. He helps Florence to find evidence of his own son, and then uses the boy's personality to inflict himself on her over and over again, pleading with her to help him escape his tyrant of a father. Before she is finally killed, Florence is subjected to an attack from a cat that leaves her with bites and scratches from one end of her body to the other. She is also tricked into a sexual incident involving Belasco who posed as his own despondent and trapped son.

Benjamin Franklin Fischer

Benjamin is a Spiritualist who survived the last trip into Hell House. It had its cost though, as Fischer had a breakdown, and after accusations of fraud had disappeared from the field. He was only fifteen during his first visit to Hell House, but already a renowned Spiritualist, and by the time he was found on the front porch of the house, he had aged thirty years at least, was naked and curled up into a fetus position. He had spent three months in a coma afterward, but that doesn't stop him. Now, at the age of forty five, he finds himself given a second chance to confront the house that so remarkably changed his life the first time.

He believes he is no longer the naive and gullible prey he had been in 1940 and felt he had a chance to shake loose his spiritual side once more. He thinks of himself now as a cautious and intelligent man, and yet still spends the first few days all but paralyzed with fear over the mere thought of opening himself up in the house. Memories of being the only one of nine who remained from their first encounter plague him with uncertainty and erode his confidence.

Edith Barrett

Wife of Lionel Barrett, Edith has seldom been apart from Lionel since their marriage, and can't bear the idea of it now. She'd rather expose herself to Hell House than go without Lionel now. A constant companion to Lionel, she is his strongest supporter, and relies on him totally. She is almost as nervous as Ben is to be entering the house, but Lionel convinces her that with him the experience will be safe.

Her weaknesses are easily exploited by Belasco, and he uses her fear against her. He compels her to drink spirits that she is unaware are mixed with psychotropics, and almost dies in the house herself on two different occasions. She is made to have sexual hallucinations, pushed onto her unwilling mate in a sexual manner that Lionel finds offensive and is even made to believe she has latent lesbian tendencies before finally discovering her courage and through it the secret to Hell House with Ben at her side.



Emeric Belasco

Son of Myron Sandler and Noelle Belasco, Emeric began his nastiness as early as the age of five when he hanged a cat to see if it really had nine lives. At the age of ten and a half, he sexually assaults his younger sister, hospitalizing her for two months. He was sent to private school then where he was molested by a homosexual teacher. He later invited that teacher to his house, and after a week he had gone home and hung himself. He had the teeth of a carnivore, and green eyes that seemed to possess an inner light of their own. He had a broad forehead and black hair and short trimmed beard. He was handsomely demonic in appearance as described by his second wife. He was six foot five inches tall and was able to master any subject he chose to study. He spoke and read a dozen languages and studied all of the religions.

Emeric Belasco is an egomaniac who never managed to leave his house. He was every bit as awful a person after death as he was during his lifetime, inviting his guests to explore the depths of their depravity. He was a tall man, but only because he had his legs surgically increased to make his stature more imposing. In death, he became a sad and sorry example of how lonely and desperate a man he had really become in his life. He formed a club while alive called Les Aphrodites which held meetings he called Sinposiums. They members attending would all consume drugs and aphrodisiacs, and participate in orgies. He was so depraved he even assaulted his own sister sexually who finally died of an overdose of heroin in 1923.

Hanley

Rolf Deutsch's male secretary, it is Hanley who makes all of the arrangements for the group to stay in Hell House. He is the one who communicates with the couple from Caribou Falls who are to bring meals twice a day, and he is also the one who calls Lionel with the news that his employer is dead, and that the son has no intentions of honoring his contract with them. In fact, he tells Lionel, they are to leave immediately. Hanley stays with Deutsch until his death, but refuses to stay on afterward with the son, the task too distasteful to contemplate.

Daniel Belasco

Son of Emeric Belasco, Daniel was drawn into the debauchery at Hell House as a young man, and never developed the strength to leave the atmosphere his father created. He was found still chained to a wall hidden in the wine cellar, having died there after being buried alive many years earlier. Many of the nasty manifestations are at first attributed to Daniel, but it is later discovered that every haunting in the house was perpetrated by Emeric Belasco himself. Florence finds Daniel's identity in a bible in the chapel that lists his birth and then finally uncovers his remains, and takes them from the house that he may rest in peace. Born November 4th, 1903, his birth is announced in a bible that sits on the altar in the chapel.



Objects/Places

Hell House

Name given to the Belasco family home in the Matawaskie Valley in Maine. It is the pinnacle of haunted houses, and two attempts to investigate it were disastrous. One was in 1931 and the other in 1940. Eight people involved in those attempts, three of them scientists, had either committed suicide, were killed or went insane. The house had been locked up since the last attempt.

Bastard Bog

The name given to the bog outside Hell House. Strong smelling, it is so named because over the years thirteen of Belasco's female guests had become pregnant. The surface resembles gelatin and the stones around it are green with algae. The tarn has a smell of decay.

Great Hall

Measuring ninety five by forty five feet, the walls of the great hall are two stories high and paneled in walnut to the eight foot mark. A fireplace on the far side is made of carved stone and is appropriately huge to fit the room. There are a variety of marble statues, a grand piano and in the center of the hall is a circular table that is easily more than twenty feet across, and has sixteen high backed chairs around it. A chandelier hangs over it. A wind-up phonograph sits inside a Spanish cabinet that comes complete with a recording of Belasco's voice welcoming his guests to his house.

The Chapel

On the far side of the great hall, the Chapel is a reflection of Belasco's twisted mind. There are pornographic murals on the walls, and a large and naked depiction of Jesus on the cross with a huge phallus exposed between his legs. There are enough wooden pews to seat fifty people with an altar in front.

Caribou Falls

Nearest town to Hell House, it is the home of the couple who daily prepare and deliver meals to Hell House's guests, and it is also the town where Ben delivers Florence's body after her death.



Reversor

The machine designed and conceived of by Lionel Barrett for the sole purpose of eliminating lingering radiation and electrical emanations he believed responsible for hauntings of all kinds. It also was capable of recording sounds and pictures.

Wine cellar

Cellar in Hell House where Daniel Belasco's body is discovered, behind a wall. His corpse suggests he was sealed in there while still alive, tied to the wall behind.

Counterbalance

A contraption that was used to seal Daniel Belasco alive in a hidden tomb in the wine cellar. Attached to a rope, when pulled it enabled the heavy wall to slide to one side.

EMR

Electromagnetic radiation. The Reversor emits an counter charge of electromagnetic radiation that dissipates the aura or psychic manifestations of hauntings.

Temple of Spiritual Harmony

Florence Tanner's church.

The Roaring Giant

Name given to Emeric Belasco for his height and his imposing presence.

Les Aphrodites

Club formed by Emeric Belasco when he lived in Hell House.



Themes

Good vs Evil

The very basis of mankind's survival centers around the battle of good and evil. Emeric Belasco created an atmosphere of pure evil in his house, later named Hell House, and encouraged his guests, and family members alike to partake with abandon. He had an enormous ego that required constant boosting and it was increasingly obvious that Emeric was out of his mind. He sank deeper and deeper into depravity, encouraging his guest to partake of everything from human flesh to aphrodisiacs, orchestrated orgies and even took his own sister as his mistress for over a year. Those who arrived as regular guests, unaware of his debauchery, soon became part of the house and it's games of increasing depravity.

His guests often arrived and were unable to leave, staying until they died either from drugs, disease or mishap orchestrated by Emeric himself. He had no qualms about killing, sodomizing, and indulging himself in every form of evil imaginable. In his house, good and God had no place. He made that abundantly clear with his use of statues including a large crucifixion portrayal complete with large phallus. In death, he changed little, still welcoming his guests to his home and then ensuring that their stay was evil and vile from the first moment forward. Several groups attempted to solve the hauntings at Hell House after his death but few survived to tell about it afterward. In the end, remembering that God and love will overcome all evil, Ben is able to send Emeric from this world for good by sincerely wishing that God help him, and taking pity on his soul.

Faith vs Science

In the final excursion to Hell House, one scientist, his wife, a spiritualist and a medium spend a week trying to determine once and for all the source of the hauntings in the home. They are there at the direction of Rolf Deutsch who is dying, and wants the answers, one way or another, before he takes leave of his mortal self. Dr. Lionel Barrett is a renowned scientist who is absolutely convinced that all hauntings and associated problems are created by the residual electromagnetic forces left behind. He describes them as auras and builds a machine he calls the Reversor which he claims will counteract any energy that is left in the house.

Florence Tanner is a Medium and a firm believer in God and the existence of the spirit world. She is the first victim of the four who are the last in Hell House, and her experiences there include possessions, hauntings, and a variety of personal attacks that she attributes to Daniel Belasco, Emeric's son. Just before she dies, she is made aware by Emeric that he is behind everything that happens in the house. Dr Barrett retains his faith in science throughout, and when he engages his Reversor, he is convinced that the house will be rendered harmless by it. Though his machine seems to work at first, when they return to the house after it's cleansing, Lionel is sure the house is empty, and



sends Ben to town with Florence's body. While he is gone, Lionel is attacked and killed by drowning, held under water by Emeric's spirit.

It turns out that both sides are correct, and Emeric's spirit would likely have been long gone, but Emeric created a lead lined room in which he entombed himself, which kept out the Reversor's effects and allowed him to regenerate himself afterward. Sadly, Lionel never lived long enough to understand the truth.

Influence vs Nature

Emeric Belasco had a negative influence on everyone he came into contact with. It began with simple promiscuity but he soon grew weary of merely orchestrating orgies and handing out drugs. His ego led him to affect everyone he had as a guest by appealing to their most basic savagery. He did whatever he could to open up the worst in people, and as time went on, his madness in that area knew no bounds. From orgies and drugs he graduated to more drastic offerings of human carnage. He began as early as childhood himself, hanging a cat to see if it truly had nine lives, and when it didn't revive, chopping it into pieces and throwing it from his bedroom window. The next recorded incident involved a sexual assault on his own sister which hospitalized her for two months when he was merely a boy of ten. He was sent to private school and abused there, but got even by inviting the man to his house years later and by the end of one week with Emeric he had gone home and hanged himself. He was intelligent, educated, and enjoyed using his mind to dominate others. Dining became an exercise in gluttony, and as he opened the minds of his varied guests, the house became their way of life.

Isolated from normalcy, ordinary people soon found themselves doing things that were quite out of the ordinary to them. They became the evil that Emeric orchestrated, simply by the exercising of his will and mental power over theirs. As the house was very isolated, those who found themselves in his presence for any length of time never came out the same. Many never came out at all. He called on young creative minds and once they arrived, he used his magnetic and dominating personality to alter theirs. After some years, he tired of being a participant himself, and became more and more reclusive, taking his pleasure from being able to manipulate his guests at will. All of his energies were then put to the study of evil. He so corrupted the minds of his guests that when the furnace went out in 1928, no one bothered to relight it. They were all too deeply absorbed by murder, necrophilia, and cannibalism.



Style

Point of View

Richard Matheson uses first person perspective, switching between the various characters from one chapter to another. Despite this, the story is told in a very straight forward and understandable manner, and follows an easy to read sequence of events. Each chapter is outlined with a time reference and while the perspective switches, the character 'in charge' tells the story from their unique standpoint. As a result, the story is told from the perspective of a dedicated scientist who scoffs at the very idea of a spirit who remains behind after the body has died; his wife Edith who is terrified of all she hears and sees, but is determined to have faith in her husband; a Mentalist who had a church of her own and who is a devout believer in God and in the afterlife and spirit world; and a Spiritualist who not only survived his first visit to Hell House, but who is once again one of two survivors when the mystery of Hell House is finally solved.

The reader is taken on a wild ride that includes attacks perpetrated by the spirit world and the science that is supposed to put an end to it all. Richard Matheson wove an artful tale with a good variety of points of view, making an overall entertaining read, if the imagination is slightly stretched.

Setting

Set almost entirely in Hell House, located in Maine just a short distance from the town of Caribou Falls. The house is the very description of evil from the fog that envelopes it to the bog that is a part of it's front yard. The house is huge, and completely furnished and has changed little since occupied by the original owner, Emeric Belasco. Since his disappearance, the house has had several parties try to unravel the mysteries of its hauntings, but none manage the task until this group arrives. Most of the story is told between the Great Hall, the Chapel, the wine cellar and the pool/sauna room. All of these are contained within the house itself, and all are affected by the evil presence that still exists. The house itself has an aura of evil, and while no expense was spared in it's decoration, all of the themes tended toward evil.

The house is well isolated, there were no outside phones and located in the Matawaskie Valley. A green mist of fog is the first introduction to a house set next to Bastard Bog. The bog has a surface like gelatin and the smell of decay and once crossed the house comes into view: it`s windows bricked up by Emeric years earlier. The atmosphere inside is a combination of arrogance and decay.

Language and Meaning

Hell House is written in straightforward English language. There is little in the way of scientific references but for one chapter describing both the Reversor built to Lionel



Barrett's specifications, and his beliefs regarding the human spirit and what remains after death. There is much made of the use of mind control, of the power of evil and of the lasting ability of one spirit to infect and afflict others. Some discussion of Spiritualists, and Mediums comes into play, but none of it is confusing or difficult to follow.

The story is based entirely on the premise that there is a part of the human spirit that can in some cases remain behind after death. This 'aura' is seen by some who are sensitive to it, and can even affect those who are not. It is a story about one man, so depraved in life that even death cannot separate him from his house of many horrors. He lies in wait of each group of new 'guests' and begins to access their feelings immediately, using their experiences and their fears to guide his approach. Emeric uses Florence's loss of her brother to his advantage by mimicking his own son and gaining her sympathy. He takes Lionel and Edith's relationship to its brink by manipulating them sexually, and nothing seems beyond his capability or desire to destroy. A story of spirits, both good and evil.

Structure

Hell House is divided into six parts. Each part represents one day. Within each part, subdivisions are made but without chapter numbering. Instead, Matheson uses time of day as reference for each chapter. A book of just over 300 pages, it takes the reader on a fast paced walk through the spirit world, and the unimaginable strength and courage of those who face it to eradicate it once and for all.

Though it begins as a story of scientist for hire, where money and the goal seem to be the only concern, the book evolves over the week of days it covers beginning with December 18th, 1970 and ending on Christmas Eve of the same year. In the end, the money offered is revoked by the son and heir of the man who hires them, yet the remaining two members persist and manage to clear the house of its lasting evil. What begins as a job becomes a matter of principle and a tribute to those who were lost in the house forever. The spirit of Emeric is finally released, and those who remained in spirit form to aid the living on this quest are able to continue their journey as well.

Christmas Eve 1970 becomes a new beginning for both Edith Barrett and Benjamin Fischer. Edith faces life without Lionel, something at the beginning of the story she could not have believed possible, and Ben faces life with optimism and his abilities to open up to the unknown again - a talent lost in his first visit to Hell House.



Quotes

"That rare vis viva of the self, that magnetism, that most secret and prevailing delectation of the mind: influence." Pt 3, Ch 12, Pg 57

Quote by Emeric Belasco in 1913 referring to his lack of belief in love.

"It's occurred to me that the evil in this house is so intensely concentrated that it might be a constant lure to earthbound spirits everywhere In other words, the house might be acting like a giant magnet for degraded souls." Pt 3, Ch 13, Pg 62

Florence to the remainder of the guests as she settles in for her first psychic impressions.

"The world hath felt a quickening breath from heaven's eternal shore. And souls, triumphant over death, return to earth once more."

Pt 3, Ch 13, Pg 64

Florence's hymn before her trance.

"The Lord may not have too much influence in Hell House." Pt 3, Ch 13, Pg 69

Ben to Florence after her first experience as a physical medium.

"If practical jokes are all you're interested in, stay away from me!" Pt 4, Ch 22, Pg 97

Florence to the spirit of Daniel Belasco after her first experience with physical mediumship.

"It just so happens I believe that mediumship is God's manifestation in man." Pt 4, Ch 23, Pg 99

Florence to Lionel when he gives her an attitude that is laced with doubt and distrust.

"I made a mistake. I accepted her genial attitude toward me at face value. You can never do that with a medium. You never know what's underneath."

Pt 4, Ch 24, Pg 105

Lionel to Edith after the dining room had become so animated and destructive.

"A counterbalance." Pt 5, Ch 29, Pg 123

Florence to Ben, Lionel and Edith as they find Daniel Belasco's body behind the wine cellar wall, hung from the wall, the counterbalance to open the wall.

"But I would feel derelict in my responsibility toward you if I didn't urge, no warn you to leave this house while you can." Pt 5, Ch 33, Pg 140

Lionel to Florence after the cat attacks her in her room.

"Suffice it to say that any form of energy can be dissipated - which is what I plan to do."

Pt 5, Ch 45, Pg 199

Lionel to Edith as he is readying his machine.

"I was the only one who made it out alive in 1940, and I'll be the only one to make it out alive in 1970." Pt 5 Ch 45, Pg 200



Ben to Lionel and Edith when they won't take his advice and quit attacking the house before the energies in in kill them.

"Just as the radiation of light negates mediumistic phenomena, so the radiation of my Reversor will negate the phenomena of Hell House."

Pt 6, Ch 52, Pg 228

Lionel's explanation to Ben, Florence and Edith as to how the Reversor works.

"Her attack on my Reversor was the ultimate tribute. She knows I'm right. There was nothing else to do - her very words, if you recall - except to destroy my beliefs before they could destroy hers." Pt 6, Ch 53, Pg 234

Lionel to Edith after Florence tries to damage his Reversor.

"Leaving this house with you by my side will be worth a million dollars to me." Pt 6 Ch 60 Pg. 261

Edith to Lionel after he confesses that Deutsch is dead and they will never be paid.

"If I leave Hell House now, I might as well crawl into my grave and die." Pt 6 Ch 62 Pg 274

Benjamin to Edith, explaining why he has to return to Hell House.

"His final jest. Even though we actually know his secret now, there's not a damn thing we can do about it." Pt. 6 Ch 64 Pg 289

Ben to Edith after returning to the house again to find Emeric still there.

"If Belasco had destroyed it before it could be used, wouldn't that be as much as an admission, to Lionel, that he was right?" Pt 6 Ch 65 Pg. 293

Edith to Ben after they return to Hell House for the last time to retrieve Lionel's things.

"God help you, Belasco." Pt 6 Ch 65 Pg 298

Benjamin to Belasco, pitying him and finally setting him free.



Topics for Discussion

What information did Rolf Deutsch want for his one hundred thousand dollars? Why did he want this information and why was his son so opposed to the whole venture?

What was Lionel Barrett's driving reason for going to and staying at the Belasco house?

Why didn't Lionel believe Florence when she told him she wasn't behind the poltergeist behavior?

What was the nature of Lionel's Reversor and what did he hope to accomplish with it? Why didn't it work on Belasco?

What power did Belasco use to manipulate and eventually kill the guests who came to his home?

What surgery did Belasco have that became evident in the end, and why did he have it?

What was Belasco's underlying greatest weakness and his eventual undoing?

What secret did each guest discover through Belasco just before they died?

What was Belasco's entertainment? Why did he become reclusive, and stop interacting with his guests?

Who survives Hell House?

Each survivor takes something away with them when they leave Hell House. Describe them and the reasons for them.

What and who releases Belasco and how? Where does the information come from?

Where do they find Belasco's body and in what condition? Why is it's location significant?

Where do they find Daniel's body, and what is significant about his death?

What trick does Belasco employ to get to Florence and why does she fall for it?