

House Study Guide

House by Frank E. Peretti

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

House Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue through Chapter 2.....	4
Chapters 3 - 5.....	6
Chapters 6 - 8.....	8
Chapters 9 - 11.....	10
Chapters 12 - 14.....	13
Chapters 15 - 17.....	15
Chapters 18 - 20.....	17
Chapters 21 - 23.....	18
Chapters 24 - 26.....	20
Chapters 27 - 29.....	23
Chapters 30 - 32.....	24
Chapters 33 - 35.....	26
Chapters 36-38.....	28
Chapters 39 - 41.....	30
Chapters 42 - 43.....	32
Characters.....	34
Objects/Places.....	39
Themes.....	43
Style.....	46
Quotes.....	48
Topics for Discussion.....	51



Plot Summary

The novel *House* by Frank Peretti and Ted Dekker is a modern horror novel that retells the Christian story of salvation. While the story can be interpreted on different levels, it is the ultimate story of good versus evil. In the novel, four people are pitted against a serial killer demon in a game that requires someone die before the game can be won. There is a twist in the killer's plan when a young, innocent girl steps forward to give her life so that the others could live.

Jack and Stephanie are on their way to a marriage counseling session when they are forced to take a detour on a back road, where their tires are slashed by a spike strip. They walk to a hotel advertised as the Wayside Inn, where they meet another couple who has had the same luck as they. After the lights go out in the house, the two couples met the owners of the otherwise lovely southern home who are rude, unpolished and lacking in intelligence. As they sit down to eat dinner, the food rots in front of their eyes. When Stephanie tries to run from the house, she is confronted by a man with a shotgun who chases her back in and locks the two couples, along with the "owners" of the hotel, in the house. He throws an old soup cap down the chimney that outlines the rules of the game that he has decided to play with them. He pits them against one another by seeking one dead body in exchange for the freedom of the others.

Throughout the remainder of the evening, the two couples try to make sense of their situation and find a way out without killing one another. Randy, the male counterpart of the second couple, gives in to the Tin Man's desires and kills Leslie, his girlfriend. A strangely innocent girl, who represents Jesus Christ, however, allows herself to be killed by the Tin Man in Jack and Stephanie's stead. Through their journey in the house, Jack and Stephanie are reunited with each other. They have each come to realize their own guilt and their own responsibilities in the break up of their marriage after the tragic death of their daughter.

The novel addresses themes such as good versus evil, and the condition of the human soul without its acceptance of the grace of Christ. The book contains various references to the Christian plan of salvation set against the backdrop of science fiction complete with demons with supernatural powers and a haunted house that transforms itself into a representation of the evil of each person's heart.



Prologue through Chapter 2

Prologue through Chapter 2 Summary

The novel *House* by Frank Peretti and Ted Dekker is a modern horror novel that retells the Christian story of salvation. While the story can be interpreted on different levels, it is the ultimate story of good versus evil. In the novel, four people are pitted against a serial killer demon in a game that requires someone die before the game can be won. There is a twist in the killer's plan when a young, innocent girl steps forward to give her life so that the others could live.

In the prologue of the novel, a character named Barsidious White stands in the doorway of an abandoned house. A broken window is the only sign that anyone has been in the house in years. It is noted that the broken window is a sign of an escape attempt. Further in the house are other signs of what has happened in the house the evening before. It indicates this was a perfect place for Barsidious' game. He is eager for another game.

In Chapter One, Jack and Stephanie are on their way to a marriage counseling session in Montgomery, Alabama, when Jack is almost rear-ended by a highway patrolman. The highway patrolman drives next to Jack's car until Jack finds a place to pull off the road. Once Jack is stopped, the highway patrolman races past them into the distance. As they drive on, Stephanie convinces Jack they are lost. Jack sees the lights of a law enforcement vehicle ahead and stops to ask directions. It is the same highway patrolman who almost rear-ended their car earlier.

In Chapter Two, the officer, Morton Lawdale, asks Jack to step to the back of the car. The officer uses his billy club to point out a brake light on Jack's car that is not working. The officer tells Jack the road is under repair for the next three miles but points out a shortcut through the backwoods. He warns the two that if they have car trouble they should stay in their car until he passes by in the morning on his way home. Although Stephanie discourages it, Jack takes the detour.

Prologue through Chapter 2 Analysis

The prologue of the novel sets an eerie backdrop for the beginning of the novel. A man, identified later as Barsidious White, stands looking into an abandoned house. There has been a struggle there because it is noted that window has been broken in an attempt to escape. It is noted that further in the house, there are more signs of some sort of game that has been played here by White. The rat, the torn wall paper, the smell of mold and the numerous references to death all add to the foreboding sense of coming doom in the novel.

After the numeral indication of Chapter One, there is an indication that it is 5:17 in the evening. This is an indication that the time will be a factor in the novel. Jack and



Stephanie are trying to get to a meeting on time, later it is learned the two are headed for a marriage counseling session. There is some mention of an accident that has driven the couple apart, but no details of this accident are given. Jack seems truly interested in saving their marriage, while Stephanie seems unconcerned. Jack believes that even after their session, Stephanie will go ahead with the divorce that she seems to want. Her singing is irritating Jack. Jack's tendency to speed is irritating Stephanie.

It is to this already tense scenario that Highway Patrolman Morton Lawdale enters. Stephanie first notices his cruiser, and then Jack gets worried as the car gets closer and closer without stopping. In an attempt to keep from getting rear-ended, Jack stomps the gas. Lawdale rolls up beside Jack's car and keeps pace with him until Jack finds a place to pull over. When Jack stops, Lawdale's car races past him. This unnerving scrape with the law combined with Stephanie's realization that they are lost makes the couple even more irritated with each other.

To make matters worse, the two come upon the same patrolman at a blocked road. He embodies the personality of the cop who has let the power of his job go to his head. Although the only problem that the law officer has with Jack is that he has a brake light out, Lawdale is threatening, overpowering and cocky. Lawdale tells Jack that he can tell he is a maniac and an idiot by the way that he drives. When the officer learns they are lost, he suggests an alternate route through the Alabama backwoods that will get them to their destination. Note that the officer warns the couple not get out of their car if they have car trouble, but instead to stay in their vehicle and he would pass them on his way home. Of course, considering the way that Lawdale has treated Jack, these instructions could not have been very comforting. Notice Lawdale's habit of cracking his neck. Notice also that his eyes are blue when Jack is finally able to see them clearly.



Chapters 3 - 5

Chapters 3 - 5 Summary

In Chapter 3, Jack and Stephanie travel on the dirt road for nearly two hours. The only sign they have seen is one for a hotel called the Wayside Inn. Just after Jack suggests they stay there the night, his car hits something metallic in the road. The car slides sideways and tips to the passenger's side, the crashes to a stop. All four tires are flat. When they look, the two see that they have hit a spike strip.

Jack decides they need to walk to the inn. They leave their car and walk nearly two miles to the inn. Stephanie is so happy she almost cries when she sees how beautiful the house is. A note on the door instructs them to sign in at the front desk. Stephanie feels grungy and out of place in the beautiful house. She feels even more so when she and Jack are confronted with two other guests. As they talk, the two couples learn they both had their tires slashed. Stephanie notices the table in the dining room is set for four. Randy fills a glass with tea and drinks, even though Leslie tells him not to. As Stephanie realizes this couple has troubles of their own, the lights suddenly go out. With the help of Stephanie's lighter, Randy finds an oil lamp and matches to aid in the search for candles or flashlights. Jack hears something high pitched. The others try to convince him it is only the noise of an old house, but he insists he hears a child singing. The others hear the sound also. Randy breaks the reverie and herds them into the kitchen to look for fuse boxes or breaker panels. Randy directs Stephanie to check out the pantry. As she is investigating, a light comes on. A voice asks what she is doing in the pantry.

In Chapter 4, Stephanie's scream scares the woman, who says she thought Stephanie was "him." Then she goes about instructing the guests to help her get dinner on the table. Randy asks about the power outage and the woman replies they only occur when they have guests. Although the four try to introduce themselves and make small talk, the woman is strictly business. She does finally introduce herself as Betty. She instructs Jack to get chairs out of the hall closet, and then yells at him when he almost accidentally opens the door to the basement.

As the guests add the extra chairs, place setting and food to the table, it becomes crowded. The silverware and glasses don't match. When Leslie returns to the table with a basket of rolls, she is shocked to find a man sitting there. The man, who indicates he is the woman's son, appears to be mildly retarded. He looks down Leslie's shirt with no qualms. He also points out a cut on her hand. Leslie doesn't know where the cut might have come from. Another strange man accosts Randy as he washes up in a downstairs bathroom.

In Chapter 5, Stewart joins the others at the dinner table. Jack and Randy again try to elicit some help for their situation. Those who own the house don't seem to be concerned with their predicament. As the conversation becomes more and more uncontrolled, the group at the table becomes tense. Suddenly the food doesn't taste as



good. When Jack and his group look at the meat, they see there are maggots crawling on it. Leslie and Randy try to leave the table and go to their room, but Stewart yells at them to sit down. Betty taunts Stephanie with ice and she runs from the room. Jack follows her to comfort her. Betty, Stewart and Pete follow them to the living room. Stephanie tries to run from the house but stops when she sees a huge man carrying a shotgun walking up to the house. Betty tells her to get back in the house.

Chapters 3 - 5 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that the story becomes very strange. Stephanie and Jack join another couple at what appears to be a beautiful inn. There are, however, no owners or operators present. The people who Jack, Stephanie, Leslie and Randy assume are the owners of the inn are the opposite of the type of people they expected to be in charge of such a place. The house is beautiful and impeccably kept. Betty, Stewart and Pete are hicks at best. They are dirty and rude.

Notice in this section that Betty keeps speaking of a "him" whom she expects to see. When Stephanie first interrupts Betty in the pantry, Betty tells Stephanie she is scared because she thought it was "him." Betty also tells the guests that it was "he" who put the spike strips in the road. It is not until the end of the fifth chapter that Stephanie, Jack, Leslie and Randy see "him" when they see a man, wearing a trench coat and wielding a shotgun, walking up the front walk. Betty orders everyone back in the house.

Notice also in this section of the novel that each character seems to have a weakness that the other characters, particularly Betty, Stewart and Pete hone in on. For Stephanie, this weakness seems to be ice as she quickly reaches her breaking point when Betty torments her with an ice cube. Leslie is tormented, especially by Betty and Pete, by the fact that she is unmarried but sleeping with a man. Pete seems to be infatuated with Leslie and asks her to be his wife. She refuses, saying she is already taken. Randy seems to have a fear of bullies, or anyone who appears to be stronger than he. He seems to feel the need to impress others with his strength and composure, yet he is quickly irritated, frustrated and frightened by anyone or anything that is threatening. Finally, Jack is tormented by the idea that his wife is leaving him. That she is no longer interested in him and there is nothing that he can do about it.

At this point, the tone of the novel is tense and its purpose unclear. The reader, as well as the characters, aren't sure what is happening. It is sure, however, that there is something less than natural going on as the food on the table rots and is overtaken by maggots even as the diners try to eat it. There is also no sign of anyone else in the house until the lights go out. When the inbreds appear, the circumstances of the hotel begin to seem very strange. Randy, who is in the hotel business, doesn't understand how such backward people can keep such a beautiful house. He is also offended that the silverware and glasses added to the table don't match the utensils that were already there.



Chapters 6 - 8

Chapters 6 - 8 Summary

After Stephanie and Jack run back inside in Chapter 6, the strange man begins tapping on the door with his shotgun. The group hears a clank like a deadbolt, and then the man walks away. Betty describes the man as the devil himself. Randy tries the doorknob but cannot open the door. They reach the back door just as the man gets there and locks it also. Betty will tell them only that she believes the man is there to kill them. As the group is making plans to secure the house, they hear the man walking on the roof.

The men run upstairs to make sure the windows are locked. As Jack leaves, Stephanie's mind wanders back across all of the times that Jack has left her in the past, especially on the anniversary of Melissa's birthday. When the men come back downstairs, Betty shows them newspaper articles about a serial killer who kills his victims in abandoned houses. The group hears a tinny rattling noise as the man drops an old soup can with a message written on it down the chimney. The message lists the "house rules." The man plans to kill all of them by dawn unless they buy their freedom with one dead body.

In Chapter 7, Randy decides to put an end to the man's "game" by shooting out the front door with a shotgun. Randy orders everyone out of the house, but a truck in the yard mysteriously starts and rams into the house, blocking the opening Randy has made. Randy drops the shotgun. Stewart picks it up and threatens Randy with it. He lines Randy, Jack, Leslie and Stephanie up against the wall and tells them that it is they who brought the trouble into the house.

In Chapter 8, Stewart orders his prisoners to move toward the kitchen and into the meat locker. Although Stephanie tries to run, Jack grabs her and leads the way into the locker. Stewart makes a deal with his guests: he will only kill one of them and will even let them decide which one is to die. Stewart suggests death would be justice for Stephanie. Randy tries to bribe Stewart, with no luck. Stewart threatens to drown Randy and tells Leslie they will let Pete have his way with her. Jack speaks up to distract the three and then tells Stewart that he has chosen himself to be killed. Stewart and Betty get into a argument about who they should kill and Jack takes the opportunity to grab the shotgun. As he and Randy fight with Stewart over the gun, he tells Leslie and Stephanie to run. Leslie jumps for Betty while Stephanie runs out of the locker. Stewart gets the gun away from Jack and aims it at him but Leslie trips Betty so that the gun is knocked off aim. Meanwhile, Stephanie realizes she is alone and lost.

Chapters 6 - 8 Analysis

In this section of three chapters, Jack, Leslie, Stephanie and Randy get some information about what they are up against. Betty shows them the stack of newspapers



she has detailing reports of people found dead in abandoned houses throughout the country. Betty believes it is this same killer that is after them. Although he has only been referred to as "him" before, Betty says they call him White, after the first family that he killed. She describes him as the devil himself. It is assumed this is the same White as the Barsidious White who stands in the doorway of the abandoned house in the prelude of the novel.

So far, it is known that the man is large and is armed with a shotgun. Jack gets a look at the man's face and sees a shiny silver mask with jagged eye holes. These holes show ice cold eyes. The man has fixed both the front and back doors so they cannot be opened from the inside. When Randy shoots through the front door, a truck collides into the building where the door is and the house melds to the wrecked truck to seal any possible exits. For this reason, it appears that the man has some sort of supernatural power over the house.

Notice also that as the situation becomes more tense Betty and Stewart continue to make jabs at the others, targeting the things of which they are most afraid. They threaten to leave Stephanie to freeze to death in the meat locker, a suggestion that not only terrifies her, but also causes her to cry out that it wasn't her fault, especially when it is suggested this death could be considered justice. Although it is still unsure what incident is bothering Stephanie so badly, it can be inferred that it had something to do with the death of a girl named Melissa.

The characters begin to carve out their roles and personalities quickly. Jack is the one who thinks rationally and takes charge of the others to keep them safe. Randy would like to be the leader but often takes his cues from Jack. Randy is too impulsive and too easily distracted by his anger to make a good leader. Stephanie prefers to run from her problems and pretend like everything is okay. Leslie irritates the others by trying to analyze everything, including the reasoning behind White's strange game.

Reference to sin, guilt and redemption begin to emerge in this section. For instance, Betty and Stewart repeatedly refer to Jack and the others as sinners. At one point, Betty indicates they thought they were better off stumbling around in the dark than knowing the truth. Although Jack and the others believe she is referring to the fact the lights have gone off again, Betty may actually be pointing out that sinners would rather stumble around in the darkness that their sin creates than to face the sin and live in the light.

Although sick, White's game is also reminiscent of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the atonement of sins as believed by those of the Christian faith. White asks for the sacrifice of one of the people in the house in exchange for the death of all of them.



Chapters 9 - 11

Chapters 9 - 11 Summary

In Chapter 9, Betty throws Leslie out of the meat locker. Then Leslie is chased by Pete. Randy and Jack manage to stun Betty and Stewart badly enough to give them an opportunity to lock the two in the meat locker. Randy takes a knife from the kitchen and the two go in search of the girls. They notice the basement door is open. Stephanie, meanwhile, runs into Randy as she tries to find her way in the dark. They decide Pete has taken Leslie into the basement when they find one of her earrings on the steps. Jack orders Stephanie to hide in the coat closet while he and Randy go after Leslie.

In Chapter 10, Barsidious White is waiting at the top of the steps that lead to the outside door to the basement. He realizes the game inside the house is going well. He hopes it will not be finished before he has a chance to introduce the real stakes of the game and show the real extent of his power. He listens to the sounds inside the house and realizes the players will soon be in the basement.

As Jack walks down the stairs into the basement, he is met by the odor of rotten eggs. Randy will not come downstairs until Jack suggests there may be more guns in the basement. Jack opens the first door of the three they find in the basement. They find a room set up like a living room but with a red pentagram on the wall. The saying: "The wages of sin is death" is written below the pentagram. In the next room there is also a pentagram and a mirror, which fascinates Randy because it does not show his reflection. Each room they enter branches into more rooms. As the men search through the basement for Leslie, they hear the singing again. At the conclusion of the chapter, Jack is sucked through a door into a dark room, separating him from Randy.

In Chapter 11, Randy feels himself coming completely unglued after he is separated from Jack. He hears Betty and Stewart talking about how they have locked the basement door so Jack and his group are trapped. Betty reminds Stewart that they have to open the door for "him" in order to keep up their part of the deal. Randy hears them leave the room and finds the only door that is unlocked is the one that Stewart and Betty went out. Although he doesn't want to, Randy opens the door. He is able to see a door, set at the top of three steps, that he believes leads to the outside. As he gets closer, Randy realizes the door is unlocked.

As Randy moves toward the door, he sees White walk in through it. Randy is hidden from White's line of sight and is able to jump into a passageway to keep from being seen. Randy has a brief moment when he thinks it might be better for him to join forces with White, but then White walks away and Randy hears a door close. Randy searches the nearby rooms and finds a shotgun. He hears footsteps and Betty's voice calling Stewart. He walks through another door and finds himself in a tunnel. Randy hears something that sounds like a hatch open, then footsteps running toward him.



Chapters 9 - 11 Analysis

The tone of the book becomes more and more ominous as it becomes clear to Jack's group that Betty and her weird family has turned completely against them and intends to kill them. It is also during these chapters that the action of the novel moves to the forbidden basement. It is indicated by the book that it is in the basement that the real game that White is playing with the group will begin. The basement is smelly, wet and made up of a maze of rooms, hallways and tunnels that branch off one another in a pattern that seems to make no sense to Jack and his group. Randy reasons as he tries to find his way through the basement that the house does not sit on a square foundation as the basement seems much larger than the house above it.

It is also in this section of the novel that White enters the house. Randy has overheard Betty and Stewart talking about the deal that they made to unlock the door for White. When Randy sees the unlocked door, he hopes he can make it out, but is interrupted by White's entrance. For a brief moment, Randy considers joining forces with White.

It is also in these chapters that the characters, particularly Jack's bunch, become separated. The authors take advantage of these times of separation to focus in on each characters thoughts and feelings as they are trapped in the house. Stephanie, for instance, is the first to escape from the meat locker and is scared because she is lost and alone. When she is reunited with Jack and Randy, Jack orders her into the closet while they go to look for Leslie. While Stephanie interprets his actions as not caring enough about her to come look for her while he is willing to look for Leslie, Jack is actually trying to protect Stephanie by putting her in a place where he knows where she is and that she is safe. All Stephanie can think about, though, is that Jack's abandonment of her is another sign that he does not love her. Stephanie seems to have an issue with abandonment as she believes she is the one who is being abandoned. Notice, however, that of all of the people in the novel, Stephanie has been the one who has run away from her troubles, twice. The first time she ran away was when Betty was tormenting her with the ice cube. The appearance of the Tin Man was the only thing that kept her in the house. Stephanie also ran out of the meat cooler at her first opportunity, without staying to help fight for the others' freedom as Leslie did. Once Stephanie has run away from her problem, however, she is hurt and scared when she finds herself alone.

Leslie, meanwhile, is believed to have been apprehended by Pete. Jack continues his role as leader. Randy, however, is beginning to appear to be the weak link in the chain. His fear is beginning to cause him to think irrationally. He is concerned only with saving his own self instead of the others. In fact, he admits that he would probably be willing to sacrifice Leslie, the woman to whom he is practically married, if it meant being able to save himself. Randy thinks about his own cowardliness. He remembers his father telling him not to be a wimp when he beat the boy with a belt. This insight into Randy's background gives the reader an idea why Stewart's actions with his belt before supper disturbed Randy so badly.

One question that is raised in Chapter 11 is a strange "she" who is mentioned in that chapter. It may seem at first this "she" is either Leslie or Stephanie, but it could also be another playing in the game who has not yet been introduced.



Chapters 12 - 14

Chapters 12 - 14 Summary

In Chapter 12, the attention turns to Leslie. She has to run away from Pete into the basement. Leslie runs through the basement until she locks herself into a room. As she looks at the room, Leslie has a terrifying feeling of déjà vu. The room reminds of her of the one in which she was violated as a child. A bowl of cream on a dresser that looks just like one that Leslie had as a child draws her attention. She believes it is vanilla pudding laced with caramel. Leslie dips her fingers into the pudding and eats some of it. As soon as she does so, she realizes how irrational her behavior has become. As she thinks, Pete appears in the room. He is prideful as he tells Leslie that the room is his. Leslie decides to play along with Pete. She keeps up the charade well until she stops in front of the dresser and realizes that she cannot see herself in the mirror. Pete will only say that the mirror is broken and doesn't work. He pulls a bag of dog food from the closet and tells her it is cereal and eating it is what has made him so strong. He makes Leslie feel his muscles and Leslie is temporarily transfixed by his strength.

The conversation turns to White and Pete tells Leslie that he believes that White intends to kill them if they don't kill the girl, Susan. Pete becomes more and more agitated as Leslie tries to get him to talk about Susan. Finally he tries to force her to eat his dog food concoction. When she knocks the bowl from his hand and scatters the contents, Pete becomes enraged.

In Chapter 13, Jack finds himself in a tunnel. He wonders if the game is about the house, but then believes his idea is crazy. Jack hears a scream. He runs from end to end of the tunnel, trying desperately to find a way out. When he finally stops, he hears the singing of a young girl again. Meanwhile, Pete is still trying to convince Leslie to eat the dog food pudding. Although she really tries, she is unable. As a punishment, Pete straps her to a spinning dartboard and throws darts at her. The first dart strikes her thigh.

In Chapter 14, Jack hears the humming again and locates a small doorway in the tunnel. There is a girl in the room. It appears she has been staying there for some time. After she concludes that Jack is a friend, she wraps her arms around him. The girl tells him there is something wrong with the house. Jack wonders if he can trust the girl.

Chapters 12 - 14 Analysis

In this section, another character, a young innocent girl named Susan is added to the action of the novel. Jack finds this girl in a small room off a tunnel. Since the girl was hiding in this room and appeared to have been staying there for several days, this may be why Betty and her gang wondered if Jack's group had reached the tunnel yet. The reader learns through Pete's conversation with Leslie that he believes that White wants



them to kill Susan, the girl whom Jack later finds in the tunnel. He tells Leslie that Susan can't be trusted, setting up a question of Susan's integrity before she is ever introduced into the novel. Pete also becomes very agitated when Leslie questions him about Susan. This agitation indicates how strongly Luke feels about the girl.

In this section of chapters, it is learned that Leslie willingly ran into the basement to try to get away from Pete. Pete, however, followed her downstairs and found her in the room in which she chose to hide. The room the Leslie finds herself in is interesting because of the emotions that it evokes in her. She is both fearful of and comforted by the strange room. It is indicated that she may have been raped or sexually violated in a room such as the one that she finds in the basement. The smells of vanilla potpourri remind her of her grandmother. She finds a bowl of vanilla pudding in the room that she is drawn to and eats with her fingers. It is while she is eating this pudding that Pete walks in and finds her.

References to sin continue to be mentioned in these chapters. One of the most obvious is Luke's indication to Leslie that she must eat her sin, which is in the form of the dog food pudding. Even though Leslie ate this pudding before and liked it, once she realizes what it is, she can no longer bear the idea of eating it. Just like the pudding, sin seems enticing until one realizes what it really is.



Chapters 15 - 17

Chapters 15 - 17 Summary

In Chapter 15, Stephanie repeats "Oh, God" over and over as she is hiding in the closet. She is not praying, but thinking of all the ugly things she'd like to say to Jack. She feels her mind is snapping, the same way it did when her daughter fell through the ice on a pond and was killed. She realizes she doesn't believe in God. But she realizes that she believes both herself and Jack to be demons.

In Chapter 16, Randy runs from footsteps chasing him and slams into a wall. He opens a door into a room, where water runs nearly six inches deep across the floor. Stewart, armed with the shotgun, follows Randy as he progresses through this room and into another room. There are two Stewarts, one in front of him and one behind him. Randy tries to get away by escaping from the room through a pipe. One of the Stewarts attempts to follow him but gets stuck. Water is pouring into the room that Randy has entered. The only way out is through the pipe in which Stewart is stuck. Randy manages to get Stewart's gun away from him when he shoves it through the pipe, then thinks about what might happen if he shoots the man inside the pipe. Stewart tells Randy that if he doesn't help push him out of the tunnel, they will both drown. Stewart also promises to show Randy how to get out of the house. Although Randy does push against the man, he cannot push him free. Randy realizes that if the water continues to rise, the man will drown and Randy will not have to do the killing himself.

In Chapter 17, Leslie begs Pete to stop throwing darts at her. She finds herself almost reaching out to Pete as he touches her skin when she asks him to remove the darts. When she dry heaves, however, he goes to the dresser and comes back with a rope. He asks her if she wants more pudding.

Meanwhile, Randy feels certain that Stewart has drowned. He tries to find the pipe so he can dig Stewart's body out, but realizes the water is draining from the room. Randy looks through the pipe and sees Stewart's body lying in the other room. Randy nudges Stewart's body with his foot to make sure he is dead. He is surprised to see a tendril of black smoke coming from the man's mouth. Randy gets the remainder of the shotgun cartridges from Stewart's pockets. He hears a voice reminding him he needs one dead body. When he looks back at Stewart, the body is gone. The strange disembodied voice tells Randy that Stewart didn't count as the one body.

Chapters 15 - 17 Analysis

In this section, Randy continues to connect Stewart with his father. Although it seems strange to him because the man has a shotgun, Stewart is taking off his belt as he heads toward Randy. This action is done, though, because it reminds Randy of his father. The action of taking off the belt brings to Randy's mind the fear that he felt for his



own father. Randy connects this same fear to Stewart. When Randy has the opportunity to hit Stewart with the spade and then let Stewart drown, he feels as if he is doing these things to his own father. In his mind, Randy is finally getting the revenge that he has always wanted on his father for bullying him when he was only a small child. Randy feels proud of his kill when he realizes Stewart is really dead. Randy believes by killing Stewart, he has finally faced his fear of his father and returned triumphant. In reality, all Randy did was allow Stewart to drown.

In these chapters, Leslie finally gives into Pete and tells him that she will do his wishes if he will stop throwing darts at her. Even with all of her psychological training, Leslie feels herself wanting to reach out to this man who has kidnapped her and abused her. She realizes she is no better than anyone else who suffers with an addiction, whether it be sexual or physical. One of Leslie's thoughts about her situation is allegorical to the situation in which she finds herself. She believes her life is no different from others who live in whitewashed houses for their neighbors to see while they hide their problems in their basements. This can be seen both literally as the beautiful looking house that Leslie believed she and her friend were going to stay in. This house, however, turned into a nightmare of troubles one they got inside. The basement is even worse with its maze of rooms and sickening stench. Similarly, people often live their lives in public so that they appear to others that they have no problems. Inside, however, they are a maze of troubles, stench, evil, lies and addictions. It is interesting that Leslie notes, at the same time that she thinks about keeping Pete from hurting her further by endearing herself to him, that she can no longer smell the stench of the basement because she has grown accustomed to it. In much the same way, people become so accustomed to their sins that they no longer realizes just how bad these sins are.



Chapters 18 - 20

Chapters 18 - 20 Summary

In Chapter 18, Susan takes Jack to a door that she says leads to a closet in Pete's room. Through cracks in the wall he sees Pete. Leslie is tied to the bed. Pete is trying to force Leslie to eat something. Jack is shaking with revulsion.

In Chapter 19, Stephanie hears Jack calling for her, and then leaving. The idea that he is leaving again angers her. She feels a snake slither up her leg. In a quick decision that she doesn't even understand, Stephanie leaves the closet, unlocks the basement door and marches down the stairs. Her momentary courage flees when the basement door slams behind her and she hears the deadbolt slide into place.

In Chapter 20, Jack tries to pull a cricket bat free from the closet to use as a weapon and pulls something else loose also. The noise catches Pete's attention but Jack is able to hit Pete before he can react. He frees Leslie and continues to beat Pete off with the bat. Leslie begs Jack to kill the man but Jack looks for some way to disable Pete. Suddenly, the door opens and Betty, armed with a shotgun, stands in the doorway. Just as Jack believes that Betty is going to kill both him and Leslie, Susan steps forward out of the closet. This distraction gives Jack and Leslie a chance to get away.

Chapters 18 - 20 Analysis

Notice in these chapters that Jack develops a habit of ignoring Susan while she is talking. Notice also that Susan says that she has been hiding in the basement for three days. For those familiar with the Christian story of salvation, Jesus spent three days in the tomb after his crucifixion.

As Jack talks to Susan about her time in the basement, the saying, "A child shall lead them" comes to his mind. He believes he might have heard it in one of Stephanie's songs but it is actually a verse from the Christian Bible. As Jack gets to know Susan, her innocence reminds him of his daughter Melissa. He vows to himself that he will save Susan even though he was not able to save his own daughter. Strangely though, it is Susan who saves Leslie and Jack as she distracts Betty just as she is about to use her shotgun on the two.



Chapters 21 - 23

Chapters 21 - 23 Summary

In Chapter 21, blinded by her anger, Stephanie wanders around the basement searching for Jack and Randy. She walks through an open door, which is blown shut behind her, then another, which also blows shut. It is at this point that she runs.

In their pain and fear, Leslie and Jack find themselves drawn to one another. Randy catches Leslie and Jack in each other's arms. Leslie tries to explain to Randy that she was violated by Pete, but he only attacks her, saying that most of the population has some excuse to live like a victim. Randy tells her that while she did not triumph over her Uncle Robbie, he has killed Stewart. Stephanie interrupts them when she runs through the open door in the room. This door slams shut behind her. As the group begins to fight among themselves, Jack suggests they save fighting for the next day and for now concentrate on how to escape from the basement.

In Chapter 22, the group tries to make sense of what they have experienced while in the house. They believe the house may have been part of a mining operation or part of the underground railroad for it to have such a strange basement. Stephanie suggests the oddities may even be caused by a mass grave on the property. They determine for sure that White is manipulating them. As they try to devise a plan to get out, Jack tells them they cannot leave without Susan. Although Leslie agrees with him, Randy is dead set against wasting time looking for Susan and believes if they do so, they will only be doing what White wants them to do. Randy tries to make a rash decision to get out of the house using the gun to blow the locks on the door, Jack stops him and tries to make him think about the possibility they might be dealing with a haunted house.

In Chapter 23, Randy leads the others back to the room where he believes that he killed Stewart. Unfortunately, the door that leads to the room where Randy found the old shotgun is locked, but he blows the door open with the gun. Just as they are about to reach the door to the outside, Jack informs Randy that he will not leave without at least looking for Susan. They hear a noise and see Betty. Although Randy discourages him, Jack insists on going back. Leslie goes with him.

Stephanie suggests to Randy that they go and leave the other two. Although Randy considers the idea, he decides they should give them the minute that he allowed. Just at the time, a door behind them opens and Pete grabs Stephanie. Randy cannot shoot because Stephanie is in the way. Randy heads out after Pete. He finds them in Pete's room where Pete is trying to convince Stephanie to eat the dog food. Randy shoots Pete twice. They run back toward the exit.

When Randy enters the hallway with the exit, the man with the tin mask is standing there. Stephanie has fallen behind and does not see the man. Tin Man tells Randy that he will win the game because he is like the Tin Man. He tells Randy that Jack is



planning to kill him, and that he must kill "her." When Stephanie finally catches up with Randy, the Tin Man is gone, but she thinks that he look different. The two go back to the exit door, which is still locked. Leslie and Jack are nowhere in sight. Randy blows the lock off the door and drags Stephanie through. Only, they aren't outside—they are back in the boiler room.

Chapters 21 - 23 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Stephanie realizes the truth about her own personality. She realizes that she is willing to do what others want her to do at the cost of denying her own principles. In this case, she eats some of Pete's dog food because she would do anything to keep him from hurting her. Although the food she has eaten tasted bad, it seemed to have some sort of drug-like effect that gave her ripples of pleasure. This feeling that Stephanie gets from the dog food is similar to sin, in that these wicked acts often do not seem like they are a good idea but have some ability to make the sinner feel good, an emotion that disguises how bad the sin actually is. Stephanie realizes what she has done, however, and the idea makes her sick.

Meanwhile, Randy seems to be getting braver and braver in his surroundings. Actually, his bravery might be better described as trigger-happiness. It appears that the gun he holds is giving him a certain amount of courage. He is beginning to have inner thoughts that suggest he might be the one to provide the dead body for White. In fact, when Randy is confronted by White in the hallway, White tells Randy that he and Randy are the same type of man. It is because of their similarities, White says, that Randy will win White's game. Note, however, that when White tells Randy he must kill "her" White does not tell Randy who "she" is. Randy assumes that "she" is Stephanie. However, it could also be that this person whom White wants Randy to kill is Susan.

In this section, the group is also divided on how it should handle Susan. Jack and Leslie have both been rescued by the girl so they believe they owe it to her to go back and try to save her. Jack's feeling of allegiance to Susan is even stronger than Leslie's because he connects her so strongly with his daughter, Melissa. Randy and Stephanie, however, do not believe they should risk their own lives for Susan. They are both very selfish in the belief that they should try to get out alive while they have the opportunity. To their disappointment, however, the two wind up in the boiler room when they try to make a final escape from the house.



Chapters 24 - 26

Chapters 24 - 26 Summary

In Chapter 24, Leslie tells Jack that Stephanie and Randy are gone. Since the back door is still padlocked, Jack believes they are still in the house and that Randy is taking care of Stephanie, so he decides to continue his search for Susan. When they reach the room where Betty and Susan are, they hear Betty asking the girl why the two are trying to save her. Jack cracks the door and can see Betty brushing Susan's hair. Susan reminds Betty that White is not beyond death and that although White may have had the power to bring the house to life, there was someone there before he was. Betty indicates that if Jack and his group were as strong as Susan thinks they are, they would not be fooled by her. Betty tells Susan she believes they should have killed her the day she first entered the house. Even though he is not sure whose side Susan is on, Jack goes in the room after her. Betty presses a knife against the girl's throat. Betty warns Jack that Susan is part of the game, the only thing keeping them alive. At Leslie's prodding, Jack hits Betty with the spade he is holding. Jack grabs Betty's shotgun and the three run for the stairs to the main house. When they enter the main hall, White is standing in the hallway. He tells them that he still requires one dead body and that Betty doesn't count. Susan calls for them to follow her and disappears through a door. White shoots and the door slams shut, locked. Jack and Leslie run for the upstairs door and make it through. Instead of the upstairs hallway, though, they are in the boiler room where Stephanie and Jack have just entered through the other door.

In Chapter 25, a message is scrawled across the room: "The wages of sin is one dead body." Jack and Randy begin fighting over the guns. They both reload their weapons. The house groans and Stephanie insists that it is alive. For once, no one argues with her. Jack wonders if he does produce a dead body for White if White will fulfill his promise and let the others go free. He suspects that he will not. As he contemplates, a dead body hung from a rope drops from the ceiling of the boiler room. The body looks like that of Randy. Black smoke creeps from the dead Randy's mouth and gathers on the floor. Jack suddenly wonders who the Randy next to him is if the real Randy is dead. He aims his gun at the Randy standing next to him. Jack is tempted to pull the trigger just because he believes he would be killing Randy in self-defense and at the same time fulfilling White's requirements for release. The body disappears and more people enter the room. There are now twins of each of the people in the room.

In Chapter 26, all eight of the men and women are uncertain who is real and who is not real. Jack suggests they all fire their weapons at the wall, believing that the guns held by the apparitions will not fire. This suggestion is not correct as all the guns fire. Randy points out that the bodies of those who are not real appear to leak black smoke when wounded. He suggests they cut themselves and see who leaks black smoke. Just after Jack cuts himself and passes the knife to Randy, the door opens and Susan runs in. Susan tries talking to them, but her voice skips and makes no sense. Black smoke begins to seep from the cut on Jack's hand. Susan reminds him that it is just as she has



been trying to tell him, that they are all guilty. Black fog pours from a vent in the ceiling and gathers on the floor. Jack and the others feel pain as the smoke hits them. Guns begin shooting as the fog thickens and fills the room. Suddenly, the fog is sucked back toward the ceiling, leaving only the original people in the room. Jack is suddenly aware of the sin in his own life, that he would have killed Randy if given the opportunity. He is also aware that Randy also intended to kill him. He wonders in all of this evil, where the good is.

Chapters 24 - 26 Analysis

Notice in this section Jack continues to connect Susan, the strange girl he finds in the basement of the house, with his daughter, Melissa. He acknowledges that it is not the girls' ages, but their innocence that makes him connect the two. Although Jack was unable to save his own daughter, he seems determined for his relationship with Susan to have a different outcome, even though he is still not sure if Susan is even on the same side as them or not. Leslie, like Jack, knows that Susan was responsible for saving their lives. But when she and Jack hear the conversation between Betty and Susan, they are not sure if Susan is working with White, with Betty and her group, or is really just a victim like Jack and his group.

One important factor to notice in this section of the novel is the black smoke that comes from those who are wounded. Susan is the only one who does not leak black smoke when Betty nicks her throat with the knife. Betty and Stewart begin leaking black smoke almost immediately after they are injured. Jack is beginning to understand the significance of the black smoke when he suggests to his friends and their twins that they cut each other to see who leaks black smoke. It is Jack's belief that those who are not real will not leak smoke; however, he is surprised to learn that even he has black smoke leaking from the cut on his hand. It is Susan who tells him this black smoke represents evil, and that all of them are capable of leaking it. Jack comes very close to determining the real meaning of the game when he comes to the conclusion at the end of chapter twenty-seven that the house is filled with evil. He wonders where the good is that should be present to even out the evil.

Although Stephanie is still not happy with Jack in these chapters, she has the sense to realize that Jack is probably the only one who can bring them out of their current situation alive. She also realizes he is the only one who has not undergone a major personality change since he entered the house. He has kept his wits about him while Randy has given into his anger and fear again and again; the scientific Leslie has begun to think about the possibility of religion and haunted houses and she has become angry and almost combative. Even the thought of singing a song makes her want to hit someone.

It is interesting to note Leslie's acknowledgment that something strange is happening in the house. Although she is a psychoanalyst and has made her living by being scientific and methodical, she is beginning to accept the idea that a house, an inanimate object,



might be reacting to the people inside it. This house is aware of and responds to their sins, fears and weaknesses.

As Jack and Randy's actions are masked by the fact that they have twins, as well as the black fog that surrounds them, Jack realizes how seriously he really considers killing Randy. He wonders if he kills Randy in self-defense if this death would fulfill the Tin Man's requirements for one dead body. It seems, however, that Tin Man wants the death and killing to come from an intent of malice and hate, not one of self-defense. His intention is to show those who are playing his game that they are as guilty as he is.



Chapters 27 - 29

Chapters 27 - 29 Summary

In Chapter 27, the four discuss their fate and try to determine what they should do to win the game. As they talk, a man beats on the door demanding to be let in. It is Officer Morton Lawdale.

In Chapter 28, Lawdale tells them that he believes they are the planned victims of a serial killer called the Tin Man. The officer tells the group that he is more worried about the fact they are dealing with a haunted house than with a serial killer. He believes the house isn't aware he is inside yet and that he may still be able to get back out. Lawdale plans to get out of the basement and back into one of the upper floors of the house. He hopes to get Jack and his group out through the interior door that leads to the basement.

In Chapter 29, Jack's group discovers there is black smoke seeping from what they believe is the door leading to the main hallway that leads to the basement door. When they open the door, they find themselves back in the boiler room. Their twins are there, facing off as they were before the smoke originally disappeared from this room. Susan calls for them to follow her. Jack slams the door and does so. Before they reach the stairs, Stewart is standing there with a loaded shotgun. Jack hears footsteps and turns to see the Tin Man walking toward them. Just in time, Lawdale opens the basement door. Before Jack makes it out, the Tin Man lifts his mask to show his face. It looks like the face of a man from the grave. Once upstairs, the main house is different also, looking as if it had been abandoned for decades instead of being a neatly cared for inn.

Chapters 27 - 29 Analysis

In Chapter 27, Lawdale re-enters the action of the novel and the tone changes. The four now have a reason to believe that they might make it out of their predicament as Lawdale puts a new opinion of their situation. The group has no reason not to believe this is not the real Lawdale as he cracks his neck, just as the officer whom Stephanie and Jack met in the first few chapters of the book did. Since he is a police officer, Lawdale is accepted by society as a person who can be trusted intrinsically. It is difficult, however, not to recall Lawdale's bizarre behavior at the beginning of the novel.

It is also in this section of the novel that the house changes one more time. Once they get upstairs, Jack and his group find that instead of a neat inn, they are in a house that appears to have been abandoned decades ago. The food that they had set down to eat just a few hours ago is rotten and bad. The condition of the house is described as a death that is clearly alive.



Chapters 30 - 32

Chapters 30 - 32 Summary

In Chapter 30, Jack and his group try to get out the back door that Lawdale came in but are unable. The windows now even have bars on them. After Randy has no luck with the gun on the back door, he tries the ax with no progress. Lawdale takes the ax to the living room wall with the same luck. There is a thumping sound from inside the walls. Lawdale tells Randy and Jack to get their guns and follow him. Black smoke comes from under the basement door and burns the words "ONE DEAD BODY OR SIX DEAD BODIES" in the outside of the door. At this point, Lawdale appears unnerved. He orders them to spread out to find some way out of the house.

In Chapter 31, there is only about thirty minutes left in the game. Stephanie and Randy head upstairs to look for a way out. Randy considers killing Stephanie but realizes he will be charged with murder. After Lawdale comes upstairs to check out what Stephanie has found, Randy considers killing the cop and claiming he mistook him for White. Lawdale tries to force his way out of the attic. He explains to Stephanie and Randy that White has not been caught because he has not left anyone alive to tell others the meaning of the game. He surmises that the whole game is about good and evil and what's inside. Lawdale wonders if there is one of them who will volunteer to die for the rest of them, and for the whole world.

In Chapter 32, Leslie and Jack have had no luck finding a way out through the main floor of the house. Leslie tells Jack she believes the house is after her because she is a whore. Leslie wonders where God is and why He is not helping them. They hear Susan crying and running through the house. They find her in the living room where she is being attacked by the armoire. Susan tries to talk to Jack but her words are interrupted by all of the doors in the house slamming in unison. Lawdale appears just in time and shoots down the ax that had come to life and was threatening to kill the trapped girl. As Susan runs away, she tells Jack that he is going to get them all killed. Lawdale again tells them they may need to play White's game as he has prescribed. He offers himself as the dead body. Lawdale tells them he is going to try to find Susan and will be back in twenty-five minutes. Leslie and Randy discuss, or rather, argue about their options.

Chapters 30 - 32 Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Jack wonders if Lawdale is part of the game. The cop does manage to get them out of the basement, but then they can find no way out of the house. In a way, Lawdale seems to be just as frustrated with what is going on as the others do. He appears to be legitimately trying to get them out as he attacks the walls of the living room with the ax. He also appears just in time to free Susan from the armoire and the ax that appear to be trying to kill her. Notice also that Susan continues to try to



talk to Jack but the house interrupts and masks her words with slamming doors. Jack is able to understand only that Susan believes that Jack will get them all killed.

The idea of salvation is very strong in this portion of the novel as Lawdale insists the world needs to know about what is going on in this game. He suggests that the only way to tell the world about the game and save them from this serial killer is for one of them to survive the game so that they can tell the rest of the world what is happening. It is in this section of the novel that Lawdale introduces the idea of the sacrificial lamb who volunteers to die for the rest of them. As Lawdale leaves Randy and Leslie with his suggestion, Leslie wonders about the reality of killing Randy. She agrees that Randy is a sinner and is evil, but wonders if even in Randy's sinful state if he really deserves to die. This same question can be put to all of humanity. Although we are all bad, is there one who deserves to die to redeem others for their sins?

As the time in the game winds down, it appears that the stress and action of the novel is coming to a climax. So far the players have not been able to come to any decision about the best way to escape from the house. They know that White requires that someone must die so that his requirements to let the rest of the group go can be fulfilled. Thus far, Lawdale has been the only one who has stepped forward and volunteered to die for the others.



Chapters 33 - 35

Chapters 33 - 35 Summary

In Chapter 33, Susan's voice cuts through Jack's frustration. He turns to see she is holding the Tin Man's mask. Susan tells Jack that if he kills her, they will all die. They must instead destroy the man responsible for setting up the game. She tells him that Lawdale and the Tin Man are the same person. Randy, who decided earlier in the novel that he wants to kill the girl, grabs Susan by the hair and tells Jack killing her is the only way for them to survive. As Leslie and Jack run after Randy, they are stopped by Lawdale who requests that they kill him.

In Chapter 34, the Tin Man/Lawdale tries to convince Jack to shoot him. In an attempt to determine the truth about him, Jack uses his gun to dislodge the bandana that covers his wound. For several minutes, there is no black smoke from the gash and Jack begins to wonder about Susan's trustworthiness. At Leslie's prodding, Jack pulls the trigger. The gun doesn't fire and Jack realizes that Lawdale emptied the gun when he last had it. It is at this point that Jack realizes that Lawdale really is the Tin Man and that Susan has been telling the truth all along. Leslie and Jack run to the upstairs bedroom where Randy is trying to get to Susan, who has hidden in a closet. There is a knock on the door and the Tin Man, still masquerading as Lawdale, enters the room.

In Chapter 35, the Tin Man forces the five of them to sit along the wall. Susan starts to speak but the Tin Man fires his gun. He puts a strip of tape over her mouth to ensure she can't speak. He tells them how he killed Lawdale and took his police cruiser to be sure there would be enough players for his game. He indicates his eyes are black because the evil is in his head—the same black evil that seeps out of the cut on his arm. He tells them they have six minutes left to figure out the game or he will burn the house down with them inside.

Chapters 33 - 35 Analysis

It is in this set of chapters that Jack learns both that the Tin Man is masquerading as Lawdale and that Susan is telling him the truth. Lawdale has already offered to die for the group. Just before he tries to force Jack to take him up on the offer, Susan has tried to tell Jack that Lawdale is really the Tin Man in disguise. Jack decides to test the man to make sure that he won't be shooting a cop if he does decide to go through with his plan. He uses the barrel of the gun to knock a bandage off a cut on the man's head. Because there is immediately no black smoke, Jack believes that Susan was lying to him when she said Lawdale was evil. As Jack watches, black smoke begins to ooze from the Tin Man's cut.

Leslie urges Jack to kill Lawdale, but when Jack pulls the trigger, the gun only clicks. This is when it clicks with Jack that it was Lawdale who removed the bullets from the



gun so that Jack wouldn't be able to kill him, even if he wanted to. When the Tin Man looks up at Jack, his eyes are black, instead of the blue of the trooper's eyes.

In this instance, Tin Man works as an anti-Christ in the novel. He comes as a false savior. He pretends to be one who can save Jack and his group from their predicament. He is attractive and appears to be a person who can be trusted. In reality, however, Lawdale turns out to be the enemy in disguise, seeking to lead Jack and his group away from the real intent of the game.



Chapters 36-38

Chapters 36-38 Summary

In Chapter 36, Jack goes for the knife as Randy dives for the crowbar. Jack asks Stephanie to help with the knife because he is unable to pull it from the wood. Stephanie moves to help him and with their hands on the knife, Jack feels as if the hatred they have had toward each other to this point has been petty. Even together, they are unable to pull the knife free. Randy has the crowbar and is ready to swing when Jack pulls the tape from Susan's mouth. He asks Randy to wait and hear Susan out. Susan tells them that even if she is killed, at least some of them will still have to die. She also tells them that she knows the way out of the predicament. Randy won't listen and threatens to swing so Jack and Stephanie attack him. While he is stunned, Susan leads Jack, Stephanie and Leslie from the room. The upstairs room leads directly into the basement.

In Chapter 37, Randy regains consciousness and realizes the others have left. Leslie, however, has stopped in the middle of the stairs. He has the urge to kill her. He is able to pull the knife easily out of the wall and believes this is a sign that the house is working for him. Leslie, meanwhile, realizes she is facing her own sin. She realizes that in many ways, she is Pete. Jack and Stephanie continue to follow Susan through the fog in the basement to the room with the four sofas. When Susan asks them if they see now, Jack realizes the paintings are representations of himself. Stephanie, meanwhile, sees herself. Jack finally realizes the house is drawing its power from the evil in their own hearts. Susan tries to lead them to the back exit but the door is blocked by Betty, Stewart and Pete along with masked apparitions that appear to Jack as Jack and Stephanie as Stephanie.

In Chapter 38, Randy starts down the stairs behind Leslie. He calls her name. She runs away from him into the fog. Randy feels waves of fear. At the bottom of the stairs stands six Stewarts. The Tin Man stands at the top of the stairs. He is holding a shotgun in both hands. He orders Randy to kill her as Stewart pushes Leslie out of a door into the hallway. When she sees Randy, she asks what is happening. He lifts the knife up and stabs Leslie in the chest. The Stewarts leave. Randy feels like he is finally home.

Chapters 36-38 Analysis

It is in this section of chapters that Leslie, Jack and Stephanie begin to grasp the idea of what they are going through. Leslie realizes just before Randy kills her that the house is a representation of her own sins and evil thoughts. She realizes that in a way, she is Pete, and thinks only of owning and manipulating men through the sexual relationship that she can have with them.



Jack and Stephanie, on the other hand, don't seem to catch on to this truth until Susan leads them back into the living room of the basement and Jack realizes that all of the paintings on the wall are of himself. Stephanie, meanwhile, sees pictures of herself. When Jack watches a twin of himself come into the room and forcefully destroy a picture of Stephanie, he realizes how much anger toward her that he has kept bottled up inside. He describes the things that he goes through in the house as an intensified and shortened image of the day-to-day struggles of life.

Jack and Leslie do come to realize that the reason they could not see themselves in the mirrors in the basement was because they weren't really able to see the truth about themselves at all. The truth was actually hidden from them, as their own image was hidden from them in the mirrors.

Throughout the entire novel, Randy is the only one who has really not even attempted to face his own shortcomings or really determine the meaning of the game that Tin Man has engaged them in. He takes the Tin Man's rules at face value and really believes that if one of them will kill another, the remainder of the players will be set free. He does not see that the abuse he suffered as a child has made him abusive toward others whom he meets. He believes he has reached a milestone in his life when he is able to allow Stewart, who represents his father, to be killed in the drainpipe. This action, however, only seems to make Randy more aggressive. He is ready to do anything that will save his life and at several points in the novel considers giving into the Tin Man's demands instead of remaining loyal to his friends.



Chapters 39 - 41

Chapters 39 - 41 Summary

In Chapter 39, Jack and Stephanie follow Susan blindly through the basement of the house. Susan leads them through a maze of hallways, black fog and masked Jacks to the study. Stewart is in the study. He is holding a shotgun.

In Chapter 40, Susan, with an ax in her hands, puts herself between Stewart, and Jack and Stephanie. Susan asks Stewart if he knows who she is. At this point, Betty and Pete join them in the room. Susan lays down the ax. Jack makes a lunge for Stewart with the ax but Stewart steps out of the way. In a surprise move, Susan gets the gun away from Stewart and orders them against the wall. There is a rapping heard on the door, then the doors begin to bow. Susan warns them that it is only the light that will save them. The door opens and the Jacks enter. As they watch, the Tin Man enters the room.

In Chapter 41, Tin Man tells Jack that if he will kill Susan, he will let them go, as he let Randy go. Later, though, Jack catches sight of one of the "Jacks" in the crowd that is actually Randy. Randy tells Jack that he killed Leslie and Tin Man shoots him. When the Tin Man again orders Jack to kill Susan, Jack tells him no. Susan turns to Jack and tells him that only the death of a guiltless person will satisfy Tin Man's lust for death.

Meanwhile, Tin Man is becoming more and more unglued. He doesn't understand why his game has gone so badly askew. He almost killed Jack for refusing to kill Susan, but Susan stepped between him and Jack. Now, Tin Man isn't sure if he is capable of killing Susan. When Susan turns to him and tells him that Jack has refused to kill her, Tin Man shoots Susan. Susan's body crashes into Jack and she dies in his arms.

Chapters 39 - 41 Analysis

Notice in this section of the novel, Jack has finally decided that he trusts Susan. He is now allowing himself to be led blindly through the basement with its maze of halls, dangers and enemies. It is at this point that Jack gives himself and Stephanie completely over to the mercy of this young girl.

Once the group is in the study with the group of masked apparitions, Betty, Stewart, Pete and Tin Man, Jack realizes that when Susan speaks of using his strength to overcome the enemy, she isn't speaking of physical strength. Jack learns this lesson the hard way when he attacks Stewart but makes no impact on the man.

It is also learned in this section of the book that the Tin Man had no intention of letting the others go even if he was presented with one dead body. This is proven when Randy kills Leslie, but no one is set free. In fact, even Randy is shot by the Tin Man when he tells Jack that he killed Leslie.



Another important issue in this section of chapters is the effect that Susan has on the Tin Man. He has apparently intended from the beginning of the novel for someone else to do the job of killing Susan. He had no idea that he would be put in the position of having to kill her himself. When he comes to the point of being forced to do this job, the Tin Man is not sure that he is able of committing the act. He is angry both with himself and the girl for the unnerving feelings that he has while in her presence.



Chapters 42 - 43

Chapters 42 - 43 Summary

In Chapter 42, as all of those in the room look in shock at the dead girl, there is a slight crackling sound. Susan's blood is laced with a crackling white light. Stephanie drops to her knees beside Susan, telling Jack that she is the light. Meanwhile, the Jacks in the room begin to chant the word "kill" over and over again. When Stephanie cries out the words "Son of Man, have mercy on me, a sinner," Jack realizes the true meaning of the game. Fingers of power reach into Jack and the light pours out of him just as it does Susan and Stephanie. The Jacks disintegrate into fog when the light comes close to them. The light throws Tin Man into the air and then drops him in a pile on the floor.

The only sign outside the house of what is happening inside takes place at 6:17 a.m., when a flash of light goes off in the basement. Then, a white light pours from the windows and cracks around doors. The light shoots blindingly into the sky, then is gone.

In Chapter 43, Stephanie and Jack are watching the house from behind a wall. Two police cruisers are already parked in the yard, with three more on the way. When Jack and Stephanie awoke, they'd found the bodies of Randy, Leslie and White. Susan was nowhere to be found. The police arrived as Jack and Stephanie came out of the basement. When Lawdale had not reported for his midnight shift, officers had found him dead inside his house. They had found his police cruiser and tracked it to the only house near the area. After the police go inside the house, Jack sees a movement in the woods. It is Susan. She tells Jack and Stephanie that Tin Man locked her in the basement, but admits that she had come willingly. Stephanie believes she is an angel. As they talk with her, they hear on the police radio that the officers have found only the bodies of Randy and Leslie, no White. Susan tells them that White is not finished. As they watch, an attic window opens and they see the inbreds standing just inside. Stephanie takes a step toward the house and shoos the inbreds. They disappear. Susan has disappeared also.

Chapters 42 - 43 Analysis

In this final section of the novel, Jack and Stephanie finally realize the intent of the game. Through the evening, they have been made aware of their own shortcomings and the evil that they harbor in their own hearts. With the death of Susan, they finally realize that it is only by accepting the offering of an innocent savior that they will be able to survive and be freed of their own sins. Susan represents the savior, but causes Stephanie to realize that she must confess her sins to Christ Himself. Jack joins her plea for forgiveness. While the others in the novel leak black smoke when they are killed, Susan gives forth a crackling white light that has the power to overcome the host of evil Jack and Stephanie look-a-likes.



During the encounter, the Tin Man is injured by light that comes from Susan but is not killed because his body is gone when the police enter the house to inspect it. Stephanie suspects that the man will continue with his spree of murders.

Susan's body disappears also, but she later reappears to Jack and Stephanie. She tells them that while she had been locked in the basement, she had allowed Tin Man to lock her in the basement willingly. This is similar to the way that Christ comes to earth willingly as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Stephanie believes that Susan is an angel, as she appears to them after she was obviously dead in the basement of the house. Susan also disappears from Jack and Stephanie's sight just as mysteriously as she appeared.



Characters

Barsidious White, Tin Man

Barsidious White is the antagonist of the novel. He refers to himself as Barsidious White as well as Tin Man. His name Barsidious White comes from the name of the first family that he killed. Of course, white is also a color that symbolizes innocence, which is what was ultimately destroyed by the devil. He is called the Tin Man because of the tin mask that he wears most of the time. During the novel, White also masquerades as Officer Morton Lawdale as he tries to convince Jack and his group that he is the one who will bring them their salvation from their problems in the basement. In this role, White serves as the anti-Christ.

Before Jack and his group came to the house, White made a deal with the inbreds to let him in the basement door at the appointed time so that he can join the game. White is also the one who sets out the spike strips so that the tires on the two couples' cars are flattened. White kills Lawdale and takes his uniform and police cruiser so that he can appear to be Lawdale. The only different that Jack finds between the real Lawdale and the fake is that the fake Lawdale has black eyes while the trooper's eyes were blue.

White's game is one in which he hopes to prove to the people who he chooses to play his game how guilty they actually are. He tries to make the people realize this by pitting them against each other the dark and evil intentions they really hold in their hearts. He describes this as the playing out of everyday life in which people take out their anger on others in action instead of talking about them and being petty behind their backs. His intention is to prove that everyone is as capable of murder as he is.

Although it is never made completely clear, it is assumed that White is some sort of demon or ghost. Susan indicates White can be killed, but says that this action is not easy. It appears that White has been at least badly injured by the light that emits from Susan, Jack and Stephanie at the end of the novel, but he does not appear to have been killed because the police do not find his body when they investigate the house. Stephanie indicates that she believes he will kill again.

Jack Singleton

Although this novel doesn't really have a main character, Jack Singleton is the closest thing to a leading character that it does have. Jack appears to be more of a leading character than the others because he is one of the initial characters to be introduced. He also acts as the leader of the group of four people trapped inside the abandoned house by White.

When the novel begins, Jack and his wife are on their way to a counseling session. Although he wants to stay married, he believes that his wife will get divorced from him regardless of the outcome of their session. Through the course of their stay in the



Wayside Inn, Jack realizes how much anger he has toward his wife, Stephanie, who he blames for the death of their daughter, even though the child's death was an accident.

During the novel, it is Jack who emerges as the leader of the group of four who are trapped inside an abandoned house. He is the one who distracts Betty and Stewart so they can get away when he offers to die for the others while they are trapped in the meat locker. Jack is also the one who first finds Susan in the house, and then decides that he will not leave the house without saving her also. It is to Jack that Susan keeps trying to explain how to get out of the house, but Jack either ignores her or does not understand her completely.

In the end of the novel, it is Jack whom Officer Lawdale/Tin Man begs to shoot him so the others will go free. With the help of Susan, however, Jack realizes almost too late that this officer actually is the Tin Man in disguise. After Susan is shot and light begins to emerge from her blood, Stephanie tells Jack that Susan is the light. After Stephanie begs God for forgiveness, Jack realizes his mistakes and joins her in her pleas.

Stephanie Singleton

Stephanie Singleton is the young, attractive wife of Jack. She has aspirations of leaving her husband and becoming a country singer. Stephanie's habit of singing in order to block out any unhappy or uncomfortable feelings irritates Jack. Stephanie was with their daughter, Melissa, when she died when she accidentally fell through the ice on a frozen pond. Stephanie blames herself for Melissa's death, as does Jack. Stephanie reasons with herself that she is abandoning their marriage because of the numerous times that Jack has abandoned her.

During their time in the house, Betty torments Stephanie with ice cubes and the idea of freezing to death. Although Stephanie tries to run away from these problems as she has from problems in the past, she cannot do so because Tin Man has them locked in the house. When forced to face her problems, Stephanie develops some spunk and tries to fight back. Although in the past she had sung songs in order to cheer herself up and forget her problems, the idea of singing begins to make her sick.

It is when Pete abducts her and she almost willingly eats his dog food that she realizes how quickly she does what others believe she should do even though these things might be wrong. The idea makes her physically ill. She realizes that although they don't have much of a chance in the house, that if anyone were able to get them out of their predicament it would probably be Jack. As she and Jack fight their way through the house together, Stephanie's love for her husband returns and she realizes she has been as much at fault in the destruction of their marriage as he.

Randy Messarue

Randy Messarue is the male half of a second couple that is locked with Stephanie and Jack inside an abandoned house. Randy is very worldly and believes himself to be very



successful and important. He runs a chain of hotels for a living and for this reason takes it on himself to complain about the service at the Wayside Inn. Throughout his time in the inn, Randy is pursued by images of his father who apparently abused Randy as a child. Stewart, one of the inbreds, develops a habit of removing his belt as Randy's father did. This action alone unnerves Randy. Randy believes he has overcome his fear of his father when he allows Stewart to drown in the drainpipe.

Randy is the weak link in the group of four people trapped inside the abandoned house. He is the one who becomes arrogant and hateful with his first encounter with Stewart while the others try to make friends with the strange people. Randy is also the one who takes the shotgun and shoots out the front door of the house in an attempt to free himself and the others. Randy thinks several times during the evening that he would be better off if he joined forces with Tin Man instead of trying to fight against him as the others do. In the end of the book, Randy does join the Tin Man as he gives in to the temptation to kill Leslie and stabs her with a knife. Even though Tin Man had told Randy that he would be allowed to go free if he produced a dead body, the Tin Man does not keep his promise. When Randy tells Jack that he killed Leslie, the Tin Man kills Randy.

Leslie Taylor

Leslie Taylor is an attractive woman who works as a psychiatrist. She is Randy's girlfriend and describes their relationship as being "practically married." She is disturbed when Pete looks down her blouse and then Betty suggests that Randy will violate her in the room that night. Later in the novel it is learned that Leslie's uncle sexually abused her as a child. Although Leslie has let her experiences with abuse lead her to be a psychiatrist and help others, she realizes that she is still stuck in the grips of her own sexual addiction. She uses her sexuality and the appeal that it has over men as a way to control them. She realizes that she has various personality traits that are like Pete.

Leslie is not as bad or as hopeless as Randy. However, she is his victim at the end of the novel. Randy catches Leslie in her moment of weakness as she is trying to make up her mind if she wants to follow Susan, Stephanie and Jack or not. When she turns back toward Randy, he stabs her with a knife.

Morton Lawdale

Morton Lawdale is the police officer who originally almost runs Jack's car down from behind because Jack has a brake light out. It is this same man who Jack and Stephanie see at the roadblock. He appears to be a trigger-happy cop who has let his power go to his head. Lawdale is the one who suggests that Jack and Stephanie take the shortcut that leads them to the Wayside Inn. Lawdale he has a habit of cracking his neck. He also wears black sunglasses so that Jack can't see his eyes. When Jack finally does see the man's eyes, he realizes that they are blue. Lawdale is killed by Tin Man and the killer assumes the officer's appearance in order to manipulate the people he has locked



inside the abandoned house. Jack later realizes it is the Tin Man masquerading as Lawdale when he sees that the man's eyes are black.

Betty

Betty is the first of the inbred people that Jack and his group meet. Stephanie is in the pantry of the house looking for candles or flashlights because the lights have gone out when she comes in contact with Betty. Although they believe Betty is the owner of the home, Betty seems interested only in having them help her get dinner on the table. Betty torments Stephanie with the ice, then later with the idea of freezing to death in the meat locker. It is Betty who shows Jack and the group the newspaper articles about the families who have been killed by the Tin Man. Betty continues to torment the four as they try to escape from the house. It is later when Leslie and Jack eavesdrop on Betty and Susan's conversation as Betty is brushing Susan's hair that they believe that Susan may be working on the side of the inbreds and the Tin Man.

Susan

Susan is a young girl/angel who willingly allows the Tin Man to trap her in the basement of the haunted house three days before Stephanie, Jack, Leslie and Randy are caught up in the Tin Man's game. At first Jack and the others are unsure if they should trust Susan because they are afraid she is working with the Tin Man in an attempt to trap them. The Tin Man is frustrated with Susan because he has never met anyone so completely innocent and good. Susan frustrates the Tin Man and ruins his game because she is willing to give herself as a sacrifice so that Jack and Stephanie can live. Susan represents Christ in this novel. She also reminds Jack of his daughter, Melissa, because of their innocence.

Pete

Pete is the son of inbreds Betty and Stewart. He seems to have the intelligence level of a child, but is abnormally strong. He is also obsessed with women. He torments Leslie by first looking down her blouse, then trapping her in his liar. Pete tries to force both Leslie and Stephanie to eat a mush that he makes out of rotten dog food. He claims this cereal will make them strong. When Leslie refuses to eat the mush, Pete puts her on a spinning board and throws darts at her. In an effort to get Pete to stop abusing her, Leslie almost turns to the sexual power that she holds over Pete but stops at the last moment. Stephanie does eat Pete's food.

Melissa

Melissa was the young daughter of Jack and Stephanie. She was killed when she fell through ice on which her mother had her standing to take her picture. Stephanie did not realize she had her daughter standing on thin ice over a pond because there was snow



over the ice. She had to look away from her daughter for a moment to change the batteries in her camera, and the child fell. As a result of Melissa's death, Jack and Stephanie have moved away from each other. Susan reminds Jack of Melissa and he is determined to save Susan because he could not save Melissa.

Stewart

Stewart is the inbred father of Pete and husband of Betty. Stewart and Betty have made an agreement with the Tin Man that they will unlock the basement door and let him into the house when the time is right. Stewart seems to be especially created to torment Randy. Stewart reminds Randy of Randy's father who used to beat and torment him. Stewart is "killed" when Randy allows him to drown in a drainage shaft. Stewart comes back to life though to continue to help the Tin Man in his game.



Objects/Places

A Broken Window

A broken window is the only evidence of what happened in the house the night before as White surveys the house in the prelude of the novel.

Blue Ford Mustang

This blue Ford Mustang is the car that Jack is driving as he and Stephanie travel to Montgomery.

Spike Strip

It is this device used by law enforcement officials to stop fleeing suspects that Jack and Stephanie's car drives over and the tires are flattened.

Wayside Inn

The Wayside Inn is the name of the house where Stephanie and Jack believe they will find a phone to call for help and perhaps a place to stay for the night.

Basement

The basement is the area of the house that Jack almost enters when trying to find the downstairs bathroom. Betty yells at him not to ever go in this area of the house. It is in the basement that the evil natures of people are uncovered and put in plain sight.

Ice

Betty taunts Stephanie with ice cubes during their dinner. This taunting is significant because Stephanie's daughter fell through ice and was killed.

Veranda

Stephanie runs out on the veranda of the home in an attempt to leave when she sees a man on the walkway.



Newspaper Article

Betty shows the four guests this newspaper article that shows the story of a couple found dead in an abandoned house.

Old Soup Can

White drops this soup can with the house rules written on the label down the chimney in the abandoned house.

Old Pickup Truck

White rams this truck into the front of the house after Randy shoots the lock of the door in an attempt to escape.

The Meat Locker

It is in this locker that Betty attempts to imprison Stephanie, Jack, Randy and Leslie. This is another dig at Stephanie because of the way that her daughter died.

A Drop-Shaped Earring

When Jack finds this earring on the basement steps, he feels certain that Pete has taken Leslie down into this area of the house.

A Pentagram Painted in Red

This religious symbol, painted on the wall of a basement room assumed to be a living room, has the saying "the wages of sin is death" written through it.

The Mirrors in the Basement

The mirrors found in the basement of the abandoned house befuddle those who look in them because they cannot see themselves in the mirrors.

A Huge Purple Bag of Purina Dog Chow

Pete pulls this bag from a closet and tells Leslie that it is cereal that will make her strong. He straps her to a dartboard and throws darts at her when she refuses to eat the mush that he mixes up for her from the dog food.



Black Smoke

This black smoke is a sign of evil that Jack first believes comes only from people who are not real. It turns out that this smoke is a visual representation of the evil that is in all people. It is only the Tin Man, however, who leaks black smoke from his cuts in the upstairs of the house.

Snakes

Stephanie runs from the closet when she feels snakes crawling up her legs.

Cricket Bat

Randy finds this cricket bat in the closet when he is watching Pete abuse Leslie. He uses this bat to attack Pete.

Large Armoire

It is this large armoire that comes to life in the living room of the house and begins attacking Susan. It is the Tin Man, disguised as Lawdale, who keeps the armoire from hurting the girl.

The Knife

Near the end of the novel, Jack tries to pull this knife out of the wood but is unable to do so, even with Stephanie's help. Randy, however, he is able to pull the knife out easily. Randy later uses this knife to kill Leslie.

Old Wooden Placard

This placard, which bears the saying "Home is where the heart is," helps Jack to determine the real meaning of the game that White is playing.

Three Days Ago

Three days ago was when Susan came into the house.



Thirty Pieces of Silver

It is when the Tin Man is trying to get Randy to kill that he asks if thirty pieces of silver would help him make up his mind. The reference is to the payment that Judas accepts in exchange for betraying Jesus.

Crackling White Light

This crackling white light represents goodness and destroys the evil spirits.



Themes

Symbolism

Symbolism, a literary technique where one object represents another, is used often in this novel. There are a variety of common items used to symbolize aspects of the typical human life, as well as aspects of salvation. The house, for instance is symbolic of the way that many people live their lives. The outside and upstairs portions of the house is clean and white. This represents the way that people generally tend to keep the parts of their lives that other see clean and free from any signs that there is any troubles. The basement of the house, however, is smelly and dirty with confusing hallways that don't match the upstairs. This is representative of the sins, troubles and evil that people often keep hidden behind the clean façade of the their life.

The mirrors found in the basement of the house are another form of symbolism. Randy is fascinated with the first mirror that he comes in contact with because he cannot see himself in it. Leslie also realizes that she can't see herself in the mirror in Pete's room. The couples try to explain this phenomenon away by believing they are some sort of trick mirrors. In reality, the non-working mirrors represent the way that Jack and the others couldn't really see themselves as they were. They kept their true nature and true selves hidden even from themselves. It is only in the basement of the house that the true nature of each person is revealed.

Sin and evil are portrayed in two different ways in the novel. The first way that sin is represented is by Pete's dog food mush. When Leslie first enters Pete's room, she believes that this mush is actually vanilla pudding and eats it willingly. When she realizes what it really is, however, she not only refuses to eat it but is also physically unable to eat it. Later, when Stephanie eats the mush, she believes it has some sort of drug in it as she begins to feel a sensation of pleasure. Sin is often regarded in the same way as Pete's dog food. Before a person realizes an action is a sin, they often find this action pleasurable, as Leslie did when she first thought the mush was pudding. Once a person becomes aware that their actions are sinful, however, these actions become repulsive to them and they are unable to participate in these actions again. Sin, like the pudding, also has the ability to give a person a feeling of pleasure. This is similar to Stephanie's experience when she eats the dog food even though she knows that she shouldn't. The pleasure sensation would generally make a person want more of the sin, even though it was bad for them. Sin and evil are also represented by the black smoke that billows often from people when they are injured. To his surprise, even Jack leaks black smoke when he cuts his own hand.

Story of Salvation

This novel is interesting because of its unique retelling of the story of salvation. While the book can be read on face value as a story of some people who are trapped in a



haunted house by a demon, people who are saved from their predicament by an innocent girl who dies in their stead, it can also be interpreted as another version of the story of salvation.

The book makes references to the Biblical idea of salvation in various places. For instance, Betty tells the four who believe they have come to stay in an inn, that they are nothing but worthless sinners. They don't understand why Betty regards them as sinners, but later come to realize when even Jack leaks black smoke when he cuts his hand in the basement of the house that all of them have evil in them. Meanwhile, in the living room that the four find in the basement of the house, the saying "the wages of sin is death" is written on the wall. This indicates that whoever wrote this saying believes that all who have sinned should die.

The house rules, as lined out on the tin can the Tin Man drops through the chimney of the house, indicate that in order for those in the house to live, there must be a sacrifice. As he says at one point, the wages of sin is one dead body. The Tin Man indicates that if there is not a sacrifice of one person, everyone will die. Later, when the Tin Man is disguised as Lawdale and is discussing their predicament with Leslie and Jack, he indicates this one person that dies in the house will do so not only to save the others there but also the rest of the world. Lawdale says the reason no one has been able to stop the Tin Man is because no one knows how to win the game. No one knows how to win the game because no one has ever stayed alive through the entire game.

It is interesting that the person who becomes the sacrifice in this book is one who is completely innocent and comes willingly to participate in this strange game that she knows will lead to her death. Susan has been in the basement, which at times is said to represent death or the grave, for three days. When the Tin Man is trying to convince Jack to kill Susan, he offers Jack thirty pieces of silver, the same amount of money that Judas was given to betray Jesus, according to Christian tradition. Susan also reappears to Jack and Stephanie after her death.

Human Nature

Another theme addressed in this novel is the different ways humans respond to stress in their lives. Jack, for instance, is able to keep a cool head. He emerges as a leader even in a stressful and life-threatening situation. Although Jack briefly considers killing Randy in order to save the others, he also knows this is not the right thing to do. He employs all of his mental and physical strength to finding some way to get everyone out of the house alive. In this time of stress, Randy, however, completely loses his cool. He is easily threatened and feels comfortable only when he has a gun in his hands. When he is faced with Stewart, who reminds him of his father, Randy's fear almost becomes uncontrollable. Randy feels as if he has done a great thing when he allows Stewart to drown in the drainpipe. He has realized that even though Stewart is standing in his way of living, he cannot kill the man. Just a few hours later, however, Randy has worked up the courage to kill Leslie, believing that this action will allow him to go free. He does not realize that the Tin Man was only lying to him to persuade him to do his work.



After the death of her daughter, Stephanie abandoned Jack without even realizing that she has done so. She instead accuses him of abandoning her. This abandonment issue comes often to Stephanie's mind, such as the time when Jack shuts her up in the upstairs closet so that he will know where she is and that she is safe. In reality, it is Stephanie who is running away. She is attempting to run away from Jack to avoid the pain of her daughter's death just as she tries to run away from the house after Betty upsets her by taunting her with an ice cube. The house is different, though, because the house will not let Stephanie get away. She is forced to see the kind of person she has become and what it has done to her relationship with her husband. When Stephanie sees the light coming from Susan, she quickly recognizes its importance and turns to Christ.

Leslie is the most unfortunate victim in the Tin Man's game. Although she has begun to realize the evil life that she has led, Leslie does not move quickly enough to follow Susan and is killed by Randy. Leslie has realized that although she was abused as a child, she has done nothing to stop affect the abuse had on her life. Instead, she manipulates and uses men because she is aware of the affect that her sexuality has on them. As Randy is preparing to kill Leslie, he is thinking about how much he resents they way that she has manipulated him.



Style

Point of View

This novel is told from the third-person point of view an omniscient narrator. The narrator follows all of the main characters, along with the Tin Man, who is the villain of the novel, at some point in the book. As these four players in the Tin Man's game are separated at different points in the novel, the narrator is able to record what is going on with each group of characters even when these actions occur at the same time.

The story is told through both exposition and dialogue. The conversations between characters as they try to determine how they should react to the things that are happening around them are important to the novel as these conversations show the changing attitudes they have toward each other. These conversations also show how drastically different the characters are reacting to the stress compared to one another. On the other hand, it is important that the thoughts of each character are known to the reader because without having this glance into the private thoughts of each character, the reader would have no idea who is thinking of killing who and what the motivation behind their thoughts is. These private thoughts also give the reader an idea of the way each individual is reacting to the house and the individual terrors that it holds for them.

Setting

The majority of the action in the novel takes place in an abandoned house located in the backwoods of Alabama. The only other settings beside the abandoned house include a stretch of Highway 5 where Stephanie and Jack have their two encounters with Officer Lawdale. Lawdale directs them onto a gravel road that is supposed to be a shortcut to Highway 82, but it is on this road that the tires of their car are slashed by a spike strip. It is on this back road that they see advertisements for the Wayside Inn, which turns out to be an abandoned, haunted house in which Jack and Stephanie, along with another couple, are trapped the remainder of the evening.

The setting of the novel is the old abandoned house that draws Stephanie, Jack, Leslie and Randy to it with its promise of being an inn. The house, however, has been possessed by a demon by the name of Barsidious White, who is able to change the floor plan of the house, as well as the appearance of the house and grounds at will. When Jack and Stephanie first approach the house, it appears to be an impeccably kept bed and breakfast. The interior is impeccably clean and beautifully decorated. Things become sinister, however when the group is lured into the forbidden basement, which is a maze of ever changing rooms and halls and locked doors. The basement of the house represents the hidden thought life of people. While they keep the main portions of their houses, or lives, the parts that others see clean and neat, their basements, representative of their hearts, are often full of dark and evil thoughts. Once the group of



visitors emerges from the basement for the first time, they see that the house has changed and has taken on its true nature as a dirty and abandoned old house.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel makes it highly engaging and easy to read. The reader is caught up in the action of the novel because of its suspenseful nature and it is often difficult to stop reading. One of the elements of the novel that add to its suspenseful meaning is the way the writer uses words and images that have multiple meanings to tell a story that is highly allegorical. The writer tells the story of salvation through a house, representing a person, that is filled with evil, in the form of demons, evil people, etc. The only way for the house, and the people inside it, to be freed from their demons is to accept the light that comes from Susan, the guiltless sacrifice. In the end, the light cleanses not only Stephanie and Jack, but also the house of the evil that has overtaken them all.

Structure

The novel is divided into forty-three chapters plus a prologue. The prologue sets the reader up for the fate of Stephanie and Jack and also sets an eerie and suspenseful tone as a backdrop for the beginning of the novel. The chapters are of varied length, with some as long as sixteen pages and some as short as one page. The average length of a chapter is eight pages. Each chapter is headed with a number designation. All but seventeen chapters also include a designation that indicates what time in the night the action is happening. The book covers a span of slightly more than thirteen hours, but nearly the entire last half of the book focuses on the last two and a half hours that the couples spend in the house. The last quarter of the book focuses on the final hour in the house.

The book has only one main plot, but this plot is not simple as there are many levels on which White's "game" can be interpreted. It is the classic story of good and evil played out in an arena where the forces of evil seem to have complete control over the outcome of the game. The game can be interpreted at face value as the demented game of a serial killer/demon or as a retelling of the story of salvation.



Quotes

"Through the pane, Jack saw the drooping hat and, just under the brim where a face should be, a plate of steel with ice-cold eyes watching him through two jagged holes."

Chap. 6, p. 52

"You are the sorriest bunch of sinners I ever seen. Come in here acting like you own the place, all well-to-do like we can't tell what lies you are hiding. Filthy atheists! But you're guilty! Guilty as sin!"

Chap. 7, p. 69

"The game was being so perfectly executed that he wondered if his luck would run out before he had a chance to introduce the real stakes."

Chap. 9, p. 91

"In the end he would be God, because the game being played behind these dirty white walls wasn't unlike the game all people played everywhere, every day, every last one of them."

Chap. 9, p. 92

"She was in nothing more or less than the same predicament shared by an endless sea of humans who hid in their own prisons of abuse and alcohol and sex and money and whatever other kind of addiction or vice that both tormented and comforted at once. She was no better or worse than any other person who lived behind whitewashed walls to hide the problems in their basement from their neighbors."

Chap. 17, p. 155

"I've got news for you. The whole world thinks their uncle violated them. It gives us all an excuse to live like victims."

Chap. 21, p. 180

"The mind is a fragile instrument. It snaps easily. If there's anything you have to ask yourself, it's why you've become a completely different person since you've entered this house."

Chap. 22, p. 186

"But that fits into White's game, because he wants the others to do his killing. He intends to force his victims to extract the penalty for sin themselves."

Chap. 22, p. 190

"And he knew that he was guilty of a desire to kill Randy, of bitterness toward Stephanie, of a hundred other smudges on his life. And this killer didn't seem the kind to let them slide."

Chap. 26, p. 237



"If he exists, where is he tonight?" She swallowed. 'There's evil in this house; there's supernatural entities I knew believed in until tonight; there's a serial killer with his sick, demented game. But where is God?'"

Chap. 32, p. 274

"Someone has to give their life so that the rest can live, not only here, but out there, in the world. Put an end to this lunatic's game."

Chap. 32, p. 278

"They stared at him. The cop was actually offering to die for them all?"

Chap. 32, p. 279

"Lawdale. The Tin Man, the one who leaks black smoke even up here. I told you before, he wants to kill me. That's the real game."

Chap. 33, p. 284

"But up here evil doesn't just walk around for us to see it, like it does down in the basement."

Chap. 33, p. 286

"He always killed the guilty, proving to them they were as guilty as his own murderous self; every single one of them eventually turned to murder to save their necks."

Chap. 35, p. 295

"Because I'm not really White in the house, I'm really Black in the box, and this is my showdown. Good versus evil, only in your case it's evil vs. evil. No contest."

Chap. 35, p. 296

"They like little white houses with big stained-glass churches and prefer to do their killing with looks and words behind one another's backs."

Chap. 35, p. 297

"Welcome to my house. No secrets allowed. Here we all do our killing with guns and axes and knives. It's more bloody than what most people are accustomed to, yes, but it's far less brutal."

Chap. 35, p. 297

"In some ways this night was nothing more than a stark playing out of the struggle he faced every day of his life."

Chap. 36, p. 299

"They were doing little more than reacting to the horrors that had pressed them to the breaking point, but in that moment, with their hands together grasping the one weapon that might save them, the bitterness and denial that had kept them from so much as a touch for over a year became nothing but a petty distraction."

Chap. 36, p. 301



"She was facing her own sin. She'd been abused as a child, but as an adult she'd embraced that abuse by becoming an active participant."

Chap. 36, p. 308

"'This house is mirroring our hearts.' He blinked. 'It's drawing its power from the evil in us!'"

Chap. 37, p. 312

"It's not just what you do, it's who you are. You've got to change who you are. That's how you change the house. You'll have to see it; words don't mean much at times like this."

Chap. 39, p. 323

"He'd enter the house, invoke the powers of darkness to fill the house to personify the evil of all who entered."

Chap. 41, p. 340

"The truth struck Jack full in the face. Susan had taken their death as the guiltless one."

Chap. 42, p. 345

"The light came into the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it, but that no longer mattered because the light was now obliterating the darkness."

Chap. 42, p. 346



Topics for Discussion

Are the inbreds part of Barsidious White's game or are they real people? What is their function in the novel?

What do Leslie's cuts symbolize?

What is White's real game?

What is Susan's role in the novel?

Identify Biblical references in the novel. What Biblical story does the novel represent?

Identify any forms of symbolism in the novel.

Why is it significant that White wants to kill Susan? What does Susan represent?

Do you believe White's game ends with the novel? Is White really gone, or does he continue to survive in the world?

Why is it significant that the name of the first family that the Tin Man killed was named White?