

The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray Study Guide

The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray by Chris Wooding

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Contents

[The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....4](#)

[PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 1: Pursuit, Thaniel Gets a Cruel Surprise, First Impressions; Chapter 2: The Irrepressible Miss Bennett, Meet Doctor Pyke, A Name for the Girl5](#)

[PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 3: A Woman of Ill Repute, Turning Trucks, An Unhappy Twist of Fate; Chapter 4: Alaizabel's Fever, An Unwelcome Observer, A Letter from Doctor Pyke8](#)

[PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 5: A Race Against Time, Maycraft, Thaniel Gets a Second Chance; Chapter 6: Cathaline's Attic, A Rite Is Performed, Plans Are Made; Chapter 7: A Disturbance in the Night, The Fraternity Show Their Hand.....10](#)

[PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 8: Charity Street, The Green Tack Murders; Chapter 9: The Crooked Lanes, Grindle, Carver Makes a Discovery.....13](#)

[PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 10: An Audience with Crott, A Deal Is Struck, The Rat King; Chapter 11: The Strange Death of Alista White, A Carriage at Bedford Acres; Chapter 12: The Fiend in the Sewers, A Trick to Trap the Wych-Kin.....16](#)

[PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 13: Perris the Boar, Elisander and Sanforth, Maycraft Gets a Call; Chapter 14: Honour Among Vagabonds, An Unexpected Ally.....18](#)

[PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 15: A Lady in Distress, Thaniel Fights Alone, Disaster Strikes; Chapter 16: Vigil for the Dying, Despair in the Bell Tower; Chapter 17: A Gathering, Curien Blake.....21](#)

[PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 18: The Girl in the White Shift, An Ill Meeting; Chapter 19: The Beggars Ready for War, The Inevitable Arrives.....23](#)

[PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 20: Portents, The Night Mare, The First Dark Day; Chapter 21: At Stitch-Face's Mercy, The Siege of the Crooked Lanes, Reunion.....25](#)

[PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 22: The Wych in Alaizabel Cray, The Hallow Ghoul, The Puppets See the Strings; Chapter 23: Caledonian Road, Beneath the City, An Old Enemy Returns.....27](#)

[PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 24: General Montpelier, London by Airship, The Heart of Evil; Chapter 25: The Cathedral, Guardians; Chapter 26: The Wych-Dogs, Prophecies Fulfilled, The American Way.....30](#)



[PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 27: The Gallery, Gregor Gains His Freedom;
Chapter 28: Pyke Holds the Answers, The Wych-Kin Revealed, All Is Ended; Chapter 29:
Aftermath..... 33](#)

[Characters..... 36](#)

[Objects/Places..... 41](#)

[Themes..... 43](#)

[Style..... 45](#)

[Quotes..... 46](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 49](#)



Plot Summary

"The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" takes place in a fictionalized London, probably in the late 1800s. After an attack on London known as the Vernichtung, London is overrun with wych-kin. Thaniel and Cathaline, two wych-hunters, encounter a girl named Alaizabel. She seems virtuous, but she is somehow connected with a plot to destroy the world. As the novel progresses, Thaniel and Alaizabel fall in love, thwart the plot of the Fraternity, and discover the origin of the wych-kin.

Thaniel is a talented wych-hunter, following in the footsteps of his famous father. Her father however is lonely even though he shares his house with his wych-hunter partner, Cathaline. While out hunting one night, Thaniel encounters a deranged young woman, Alaizabel Cray. She remembers nothing about her past and Thaniel is attracted by her beauty and vulnerability. She has a strange tentacled tattoo at the base of her spine.

The spirit of a powerful wych named Thatch possesses Alaizabel. This witch is part of a plot to resurrect gods called Glau Meska and start a new world. Orchestrating the plot is a group known as the Fraternity, composed of wealthy and powerful members of society, along with other useful individuals such as policemen, civil servants, secretaries, and postmen. Dr. Pyke and Inspector Maycraft are important members of the Fraternity.

Stitch-face is a serial killer who plagues London. The Fraternity copy his techniques to cover up a series of murders. When these murders are plotted on a map, they match the tattoo of the tentacled chackh'morg on Alaizabel's spine.

Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel are joined by Detective Carver, Lord Crott, a Beggar Lord, along with some of Crott's men, in a dramatic struggle to thwart the plot of the Fraternity. The ultimate demise of the Fraternity takes place in a once-hidden cathedral in London's Old Quarter. Thatch is killed right at the moment when she is about to summon the Glau Meska. Dr. Pyke reveals that the wych-kin were actually created by mankind, in response to the helplessness and despair brought about by the Age of Reason. If man has nothing to believe in, no greater power, then he must take the guilt upon himself. That guilt comes in the form of wych-kin.

After the Darkness, survivors are grateful for their second chance.

"The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" was written by Chris Wooding. Born in Leicestershire, England, in 1977, he is known as a writer of fantasy and science fiction. "The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" won an American Library Association Best Book of the Year Award, among others.



PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 1: Pursuit, Thaniel Gets a Cruel Surprise, First Impressions; Chapter 2: The Irrepressible Miss Bennett, Meet Doctor Pyke, A Name for the Girl

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"The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" follows the adventures of wych-hunter Thaniel Fox and his partner, Cathaline Bennett, in an alternate nineteenth-century London. Thaniel rescues a beautiful young woman named Alaizabel Cray. Alaizabel has lost her memory and she is possessed by a wych named Thatch. Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel must unravel a plot by the Fraternity to take over the world while fighting a variety of wych-kin, discovering Alaizabel's past, and destroying the evil spirit that lives within Alaizabel.

In Chapter 1, Thaniel Fox, a seventeen-year-old wych-hunter, hunts his quarry in the Old Quarter of nineteenth-century London. It is a dangerous area after dark. The thing he seeks, a Cracklejack, had taken two babies from their cribs. Thaniel mixes a combination of sulphur and pig's blood in a small bowl; it fizzes and travels in the direction of his quarry. Thaniel has been a wych-hunter since the age of fourteen, apprenticed six years before that. He learned his craft first from his father, then from Cathaline Bennett after his father died. Thaniel finds the Cracklejack's lair in a building that used to show moving pictures. Creeping carefully inside an adjoining abandoned house, he sees half-chewed rats and small dogs. He hears a thump upstairs. He finds no Cracklejack, but he sees how it makes entry into the movie house using ledges on both buildings. The creature approaches as Thaniel is moving along a ledge. He fires his pistol and falls off the ledge, saving himself by grabbing on at the last moment. He pulls himself back onto the ledge as the Cracklejack flees. Thaniel hurriedly retraces his steps in the house, where he is attacked by a shrieking thing. It attacks wildly, scratching him, and he pins it down. It is a girl, to all appearances.

In Chapter 2, Cathaline Bennett is a wych-hunter, motivated by the fact that she is odd. Cathaline enters the house she shares with Thaniel Fox, surprised to hear the sound of someone sobbing. Kneeling at the hearth is a blonde girl, probably around Thaniel's age. Her dress is torn and bloody. Thaniel says he needs Cathaline's help. Cathaline wears trousers and also has her hair cut in a bob streaked with red, shocking for a



woman in London at the time. She doesn't care about other people's rules. Thaniel looks up to Cathaline more than he did his father, Jedriah, London's greatest wych-hunter. Thaniel explains that he found the girl in the Old Quarter while hunting a Cracklejack. The girl will not speak and might be mad. Thaniel has been scratched, but says his scratches came from the girl, not from the Cracklejack. This matters because Cracklejacks spread their condition through bites and scratches; Thaniel is immune but Cathaline is not. Thaniel asks Cathaline to look after the girl while he visits Dr. Pyke at his asylum, to see if any inmates are missing.

Thaniel doesn't like visiting the asylum, because he and his father had brought some of the inmates to this terrible place. Some wych-kin cause insanity in people they encounter. Thaniel explains to Dr. Pyke that he has a girl in his care, and wonders if anyone has escaped the asylum recently. He promises that, if so, he could return the girl without telling anyone else. Dr. Pyke dances around the question, saying no, but offering to check with other asylums. Thaniel agrees but gives a false description, not trusting the doctor.

Back at home, Thaniel finds the girl asleep in his bed. Cathaline had placed Wards, or spells, all around in the bedroom to protect the girl. When the girl wakes she is more relaxed, but she can't remember anything other than her name, Alaizabel Cray. Thaniel leaves the room to get her some stew. As a precaution, he locks the bedroom door behind him.

Thaniel has few friends, because he is a wych-hunter who works at night. His artistic mother was murdered when he was young. His father, Jedriah Fox, had been the foremost wych-hunter in London until he was killed.

PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 1: Pursuit, Thaniel Gets a Cruel Surprise, First Impressions; Chapter 2: The Irrepressible Miss Bennett, Meet Doctor Pyke, A Name for the Girl Analysis

These chapters introduce the main characters of the novel: Thaniel Fox, Cathaline Bennett, and Alaizabel Cray. They live in nineteenth-century London, but this London does not match the one in history books. This London features derelict buildings, airships, and frightening creatures called wych-kin.

Thaniel Fox is competent in his job as a wych-hunter. He lives with his work partner, Cathaline Bennett, but the seventeen-year-old is lonely. His life is fully taken up with work until the night he finds Alaizabel Cray in the Old Quarter. Alaizabel attacks Thaniel when they first meet, but even so the potential for romance is evident. Thaniel understands that Alaizabel is not in control of herself and that she needs his help.

Cathaline Bennett does not fit in with nineteenth-century society. Her bobbed hair streaked with red and her refusal to wear dresses show her rebellious spirit. She is



level-headed and smart, though, an excellent advisor for the younger Thaniel. Cathaline is also competent at her job, having placed Wards in the room where Cathaline sleeps, to protect her from unknown danger.

When Thaniel visits Dr. Pyke at the asylum, Thaniel exhibits his cleverness. He gives Dr. Pyke a false description of Alaizabel and doesn't reveal her name, just in case the doctor tries to hide the truth.



PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 3: A Woman of Ill Repute, Turning Trucks, An Unhappy Twist of Fate; Chapter 4: Alaizabel's Fever, An Unwelcome Observer, A Letter from Doctor Pyke

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In Chapter 3, Marey Woolbury, a prostitute, stands in a cold street in November, wearing flimsy clothes, trying to attract her next client. The last two men had been rough with her, but at least then she was out of the cold. She believes she had been born under a bad star. Marey had been born into a wealthy family, but her mother died in childbirth and her drunken father gambled her away to a workhouse, from which she eventually fled. A kindly prostitute took her in and introduced her to her new career. Tonight she accepts the offer of a free ride home from a carriage driver, then falls asleep in the carriage. When she wakes, she sees a man in a mask of grey sacking, stitched together, with holes cut out for his eyes and mouth. He wears a lady's wig and holds a knife. Marey recognizes the man as Stitch-face. Her bad star has caught up with her.

In Chapter 4, in Thaniel's living room, Alaizabel eats a bowl of stew and takes some medicine. Cathaline leaves to do some wych-hunting. Alaizabel is fascinated to learn that Thaniel and Cathaline are wych-hunters. She suddenly realizes just how filthy she is and asks Thaniel to explain how he found her. As he explains, Thaniel notices the quality of her muddy dress, her gold chain, and her excellent elocution. Alaizabel is apparently well-bred.

Alaizabel undresses to bathe, then studies herself in the mirror. She is relieved that her face and her body seem familiar. But then she is disturbed to discover a tattoo on her lower back, unfamiliar and disturbing, of a many-tentacled thing. While bathing, Alaizabel does not notice the imprints of a hand and part of a face in the bathroom window.

When Alaizabel appears before Thaniel downstairs, he is charmed by her beauty. She wears a dress that once belonged to Thaniel's mother. Thaniel promises to find Alaizabel's parents, and she is surprised by how little she cares about that. Later Alaizabel awakes from a nightmare to find her fever has gone. She is fascinated by the various talismans in Thaniel's room, items that seem to have been recently placed. She



fell asleep with a feeling of being totally alone, then wakes again with a start to find something in the room, on the ceiling. It is a shadowy thing, darker than the dark, "a clot of congealed dark that oozed malevolence" (page 38). She lights a match and it is gone. She almost drifts off to sleep again when she hears wet footsteps on the staircase. The room is cold and the air tastes like salt. Alaizabel finds a knife in a dressing table drawer and waits as something tries to open the bedroom door.

When Cathaline returns home, Thaniel explains that there has been a development. Alaizabel had screamed during the night, and when Thaniel was finally able to comfort her, the creature she described seemed to be a Draug, or Drowned Folk. Cathaline is skeptical, because Draug are extremely rare. Thaniel points out that the Wards Cathaline had placed in and around the bedroom had been tampered with. Cathaline thinks Alaizabel might be mad, but Thaniel believes her.

Cathaline warns Thaniel not to become too attached until he learns more about Alaizabel. Thaniel shows her a letter he received from Dr. Pyke. The doctor informs him that an inmate is missing from a nearby asylum, but she does not match the girl Thaniel said he was seeking. The inmate has blonde hair and green eyes, and her name is Alaizabel Cray.

PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 3: A Woman of Ill Repute, Turning Trucks, An Unhappy Twist of Fate; Chapter 4: Alaizabel's Fever, An Unwelcome Observer, A Letter from Doctor Pyke Analysis

The story of Marey Woolbury's tragic life and untimely death serves two purposes. First, the story hints at harsh living conditions in London, in which a wealthy girl can be drawn into the world of prostitution. Second, the story introduces the serial killer known only as Stitch-face, who kills women in a certain part of London near the Thames.

Thaniel and Alaizabel grow closer, even though Alaizabel knows little about her own self. Thaniel notices that she seems well-bred, with quality clothes and excellent elocution. True to her advisory role, Cathaline warns Thaniel to be careful with his feelings.

Alaizabel worries when she discovers a disturbing tattoo at the base of her spine, because it seems repulsive to her. She shows great bravery when a wych-kin known as a Draug, or Drowned Folk, visits her in Thaniel's bedroom.

With so many supernatural creatures about, it is hard to determine who is the true enemy. Dr. Pyke sends a letter, describing a blonde escaped inmate known as Alaizabel Cray - not matching at all the description Thaniel had given to the doctor.



PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 5: A Race Against Time, Maycraft, Thaniel Gets a Second Chance; Chapter 6: Cathaline's Attic, A Rite Is Performed, Plans Are Made; Chapter 7: A Disturbance in the Night, The Fraternity Show Their Hand

PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL - Chapter 5: A Race Against Time, Maycraft, Thaniel Gets a Second Chance; Chapter 6: Cathaline's Attic, A Rite Is Performed, Plans Are Made; Chapter 7: A Disturbance in the Night, The Fraternity Show Their Hand Summary

In Chapter 5, Thaniel and Cathaline are called to help a man, Johnaten Turner. He had encountered a Cracklejack in his baby's nursery, and the creature had scratched him before escaping. Johnaten quickly becomes emaciated, with pointy teeth and horizontal, hourglass-shaped pupils. Thaniel and Cathaline restrain him and draw a Ward on his chest with pig's blood, then Cathaline prepares to perform a Rite to stop Johnaten from totally transforming into a Cracklejack.

Thaniel and Inspector Maycraft leave the scene to find the Cracklejack, armed with a phial of the creature's blood from the nursery. Cracklejacks are repelled by gold and they hate sulphur, but sulphur is attracted to Cracklejacks. Thaniel adds sulphur to the blood, then uses the mixture to detect the presence of the Cracklejack. Inspector Maycraft is grudgingly impressed by Thaniel. Thaniel is sure they are seeking the same Cracklejack he had recently encountered, because they are rare. Thaniel and the inspector track the Cracklejack in the muck alongside the Thames River, until suddenly the Cracklejack leaps onto Thaniel. Inspector Maycraft tries to fire, but he hesitates. Thaniel fires his pistol into the Cracklejack's belly and it runs away in pain. The inspector does not fire then, knowing he would be wasting a bullet. Thaniel, however, takes careful aim and kills the creature from an amazing distance.

In Chapter 6, Cathaline warns Thaniel once again against becoming too attached to Alaizabel. Thaniel vows that he will not turn her over to Dr. Pyke, no matter what. But even if Alaizabel is mad, she has taken enough sedatives to last until tomorrow. They are surprised, therefore, when they find her in the living room when they arrive at home.



Alaizabel asks them who they are and she looks old. Her face and body are the same, but she is hunched, arthritic, and sagging. Her voice is the same, but with a different accent. She claims to be Thatch, wife and widow. Thatch asks how she got there, where the girl went, and why she must battle so. She asks Thaniel and Cathaline to show her their marks, then remarks that they are not part of the Fraternity. The girl isn't supposed to still be here, says Thatch. She claws at her nightgown, revealing the tentacled tattoo at the base of Alaizabel's spine. Thaniel finds it disturbing to look at, like a Ward. Then the girl slumps in her chair and becomes Alaizabel again, smooth and supple.

Cathaline's attic had once been an artist's studio for Thaniel's mother. The chaotic space contains many books and wych-hunting materials. Cathaline finds an image like Alaizabel's tattoo in a Sanskrit text. It is a chackh'morg, a symbol used by occultists. The symbol is burned on sacrificial victims, but tattooed on victims who are destined to be possessed. Cathaline and Thaniel realize that the Fraternity had summoned Thatch to possess Alaizabel's body, but the poison they had given her didn't work, leaving the spirits of both Alaizabel and Thatch within her body. The Fraternity must want to retrieve the spirit of Thatch. Thaniel confesses that he feels pulled to help Alaizabel, because she has no one else and she needs him. He needs her too, for her friendship and something new in his life.

Thaniel and Cathaline head to their sanctum, or work room, in the basement of Thaniel's house. They go to Cathaline's summoning circle, a heavily Warded space where wych-hunters perform Rites and the laws of physics don't always apply. Cathaline performs an elementary divination, meant to show the direction of nearby wych-kin. The stone flew upward to the ceiling, where Alaizabel was sleeping two floors above. She, or the spirit inside her, is like a lighthouse beacon for other wych-kin. They must perform a complex Rite to make her invisible, and they must also take Alaizabel to the Crooked Lanes, where the Fraternity can't readily find her.

Chapter 7: Alaizabel wakes to a feeling that she is not alone. Part of her feels alert while the other part feels foggy. Without warning or will, she gets out of bed. To her, this is "the most deep and intense violation she could imagine (page 73). She tries to control her body, but she cannot. The clear part of her mind, the spirit of Thatch, is working without her control, and her body tries to open the locked bedroom door. The clear part of her mind argues with the sedated part, telling it to be silent. Only the sedative cushions Alaizabel from going mad. Her body aches and feels stooped. Her hands seem gnarled. Her finger draws invisible lines in the air near the door, repeatedly, and eventually those lines seem to make the darkness thinner. Then the lines glow red, briefly revealing a Ward, and the door unlocks itself. Alaizabel realizes that Thatch is only able to control her because of her sedative. In her mind, Thatch shrinks in fear at that realization. The spirit of Thatch vows to deal with Thaniel and Cathaline and makes Alaizabel descend the steps.

Thaniel wakes to the sound of someone descending the steps, along with murmuring voices and laughter. He gets his gun and opens the door to the stairway. Alaizabel is there, frozen, with a strange look in her eyes, and Thaniel realizes the voices and laughter are coming from beyond the front door of his house. Thaniel says, "Thatch?"



and she springs past him to open the front door. Thaniel slams it shut again, but a howl of malevolence from the other side of the door blows his hair and knocks over a vase on a nearby table. Then it is over and Alaizabel has control of her body. Thaniel's eyes are red, with broken capillaries and bloody tears. Alaizabel demands to know what is happening to her. Thaniel and Cathaline explain to her about the mark on her spine, the spirit of Thatch within her, and the Fraternity. None of them understand why the Fraternity, a group of thousands of rich and powerful people with a coven at its core, has chosen Alaizabel as its victim.

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Thaniel's explanations to Inspector Maycraft give the reader insight into the ways of wych-kin and wych-hunters. On the other hand, Maycraft seems a bit too naïve about wych-kin and a bit too hesitant to fire his weapon.

Thaniel vows that he will never turn Alaizabel over to Dr. Pyke, even though she is apparently an escaped inmate from some nearby asylum. Thaniel and Cathaline witness firsthand the possession of Alaizabel, while Alaizabel is supposed to be sedated. The spirit of Thatch reveals herself and reveals the tentacled tattoo at the base of Alaizabel's spine. Thatch hints that the girl, Alaizabel, was supposed to have died so Thatch could live again. Alaizabel's body even seems old in manner. This scene reveals that Alaizabel is indeed an innocent victim, not an intentional antagonist. Also, she is not insane. Thatch and the Fraternity are evil forces which must be overcome in the course of the novel.

Later in her room, Alaizabel moves involuntarily, under the control of Thatch. Alaizabel realizes, however, that Thatch is only able to overpower her when she has taken sedatives. At full alertness, Alaizabel is stronger than the evil Thrush. This realization foreshadows a battle of wills yet to come.



PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 8: Charity Street, The Green Tack Murders; Chapter 9: The Crooked Lanes, Grindle, Carver Makes a Discovery

PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 8: Charity Street, The Green Tack Murders; Chapter 9: The Crooked Lanes, Grindle, Carver Makes a Discovery Summary

In Chapter 8, Priscena Weston has been almost deaf since the age of four, when her drunken father perforated her eardrums. She hears the blood rushing in her head, however, due to her fear. She is being chased by Stitch-face late at night, through foggy, deserted streets in London. For the past fifteen years, Stitch-face had been killing women near the northern banks of the Thames. A devout Catholic in spite of misfortune in life, Pris wonders why she has been chosen by Stitch-face. She slips on some ice, injuring her leg and face, and turns to see Stitch-face behind her. She bangs on the door of a nearby house, begging for help, but because of her deafness her words come out garbled to the rest of the world. She tries more houses, but no one risks opening their door to unknown danger. Pris runs as far as she can, but she doesn't know that the force that hits her from behind is the attack of a pair of wolves, not Stitch-face.

The next morning, Detective Ezrael Carver sticks a pin into a map of London on his office wall. The pin, with a 76 written on it, marks the spot where Priscena Weston was attacked. His thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of Inspector Maycraft, with whom he shares an office. The two muse that Pris is lucky, in a way, because she is only the fifth woman in fifteen years to escape Stitch-face. They also anticipate another attack in the same area, because Stitch-face always strikes again when he fails. Carver's map has seven green tacks as well as the many pins, marking the Green Tack murders that Carver believes were committed by someone else, even though the victims were similarly left with their eyes, tongues, and hearts removed, arms crossed, face-down. Maycraft rejects Carver's theory, even though the Green Tack murders took place outside of Stitch-face's territory. Carver wonders why Maycraft is so adamant, and he also tries to discern some sort of shape in the seven green tacks.

In Chapter 9, Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel head for the Crooked Lanes. Wych-kin do not live in the Crooked Lanes, an abandoned part of London with rubble from the Vernichtung, a past attack on London by the Prussians. Thaniel seeks a Beggar Lord named Crott. Thaniel's father had once removed an Incubus, a wych-kin that hangs on a person's back, weighing them down until they lose the will to live, from Crott's wife. Thaniel hopes Crott will help them to protect Alaizabel. Alaizabel feels better now that she knows she is possessed; the not knowing had bothered her more. Alaizabel offers



her theory that she is stronger than Thatch, but when Alaizabel is sedated Thatch can control her body. Romantic sparks fly between Thaniel and Alaizabel. They ask a member of Crott's beggar gang, named Grindle, to help them arrange an audience with Lord Crott. Grindle wears rags and is badly scarred from some sort of attack.

Carver muses that London has been going downhill ever since the Vernichtung and ever since the wych-kin came, twenty-odd years prior. Carver and Maycraft are collaborating on the Stitch-face case. Carver wants to call Dr. Pyke, for his opinion about whether or not Stitch-face is responsible for the Green Tack murders. While searching Maycraft's phone book for Dr. Pyke or the doctor's secretary, Lucinda Watt, Carver notices a doodle of a many-tentacled creature. The shape is familiar somehow. Carver realizes it resembles the shape the green tacks form on his London map. Two murders, two more green tacks, would complete the creature.

PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 8: Charity Street, The Green Tack Murders; Chapter 9: The Crooked Lanes, Grindle, Carver Makes a Discovery Analysis

Priscena Weston is yet another apparent victim of the serial killer Stitch-face, and her story is yet another glimpse into the unfairness of life in London. Not even faith or sympathy for her handicap can save her. And yet, she doesn't die. She is attacked by wolves before her stalker can reach her, and she is convinced that the hand of God saved her life. Priscena exhibits great faith in the face of hopelessness.

Thaniel and Cathaline decide to hide Alaizabel in the Crooked Lanes, a place so dreary that even the wych-kin leave it alone. Much of the activity in the Crooked Lanes takes place underground, in abandoned sewers and tunnels. The bonds have tightened between Thaniel and Alaizabel: he is risking his life in the Crooked Lanes to help her; she is trusting him to protect her even the most dangerous parts of London.

Detective Carver is immaculate, meticulous, and savvy. He discerns that some of the murders attributed to Stitch-face might be the work of a copycat killer. Some of the killings are out of the usual territory of Stitch-face, and plotted together on a map these so-called Green Tack murders seem to form a picture. Carver cannot quite discern the shape, but he knows it is there. Carver's partner, Maycraft, seems overly eager to dismiss Carver's theory.

Carver happens upon a doodle in Maycraft's desk drawer, a tentacled creature that resembles the shape formed by the green tacks in his map. This discovery could be happenstance or destiny. In either case, Carver knows for sure that Maycraft cannot be trusted, that he is involved in evil activity. Furthermore, Carver can predict the location of the next two Green Tack murders, after which the figure will be complete. The reader is left to wonder if Maycraft's doodle matches Alaizabel's tattoo, and if so, why.



Carver muses about the downslide of London since the Vernichtung. This allows the reader to learn important backstory about the current decrepit state of the British city. The attack on London by the Prussians twenty or so years prior left not only physical destruction, but also a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Shortly thereafter, wuch-kin and disease arrived.



PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 10: An Audience with Crott, A Deal Is Struck, The Rat King; Chapter 11: The Strange Death of Alista White, A Carriage at Bedford Acres; Chapter 12: The Fiend in the Sewers, A Trick to Trap the Wych-Kin

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In Chapter 10, Lord Crott's banquet hall is filled with the beggars in his gang, all eating and chatting merrily. Many have deformities - some because poor people often cripple their children so that passersby will compassionately give them more money. Crott makes room at his table for Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel, then introduces his friends. Devil-boy Jack is a valued advisor. Armand, rather dim, is a mountain of a man. Thaniel explains their predicament regarding Alaizabel, saying that he thinks "the story behind her will affect us all" (p. 107). Devil-boy says Thaniel is right, to everyone's surprise. He says the darkness is coming, brought on by the aged spirit in Alaizabel. Crott agrees to shelter Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel and help them learn more about Alaizabel, in exchange for a service from Thaniel and Cathaline: they must hunt down and kill an unwelcome guest in their sewers. Then the feast is interrupted by screams. Some of the beggars kill a Rat King, a portent of evil, which resembles five rats attached by their tails.

In Chapter 11, Alista White, mother of three, is walking in the rain rather than riding in order to save money. She does not realize she is being followed. She is on her way to see a doctor, to get medicine for her son who has Crimson Fever. The rain stops, and Alista hears a third footstep every time she takes two. Twice she looks behind her but sees nothing. She struggles to remember something she'd heard about this sort of thing, but she can't. Her third look behind her is her last.

Lucinda Watt, secretary to Dr. Pyke at the asylum, is ready to leave her office after working late. She starts to call for a cab, because it is raining hard, but just then a carriage pulls up outside. The driver explains that Dr. Pyke had ordered the carriage for her. Lucinda is surprised but grateful. The carriage stops well before they could have



reached her home, and she calls to the driver. No response. She exits the carriage to find herself alone in an open area, away from the streets of London, and the driver is missing. She gets back into the carriage and notices a piece of paper that had not been there before. "Chackh'morg," she mumbles, seeing the drawing of a many-tentacled creature. Stitch-face enters the carriage, puts a knife to Lucinda's throat, and demands to know who has been killing in his name.

In Chapter 12, Thaniel and Cathaline are exploring the rubble of an abandoned pump station, along with Armand and Grindle. Alaizabel stayed behind, looked after by Crott. The wych-hunters think they are hunting a wight, their half of the bargain with Crott. Wights cause living tissue to decay with just a touch. Wights are made of shadow, so they cannot harm anyone in total darkness. On the other hand, too much light destroys them. The wight they seek has killed beggars in the sewers and train tunnels beneath the Crooked Lanes. Cathaline instructs everyone to turn off their lanterns when she says so. She sets up a series of fireworks in the sewer. She and Thaniel will drive the wight to this area using small fireworks, then Grindle will set off the group of fireworks to destroy the wight. Eventually the wight comes upon Thaniel, reaching out to touch him, and Cathaline sets off a firework. The wight flees toward Grindle and Armand. Thaniel runs, trying to warn Grindle, but he is too late. The wight is on Grindle and he decomposes before their eyes. Cathaline sets off the fireworks sequence, destroying the wight. Armand sobs next to the body of his dead friend, Grindle.

PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 10: An Audience with Crott, A Deal Is Struck, The Rat King; Chapter 11: The Strange Death of Alista White, A Carriage at Bedford Acres; Chapter 12: The Fiend in the Sewers, A Trick to Trap the Wych-Kin Analysis

Alista White dies in a strange manner, involving threes. For every two steps she takes, she hears a third. The third time she looks over her shoulder, she is attacked.

The confrontation between Lucinda Watt and Stitch-face confirms, for the reader, Crott's theory that a copy-cat killer has been at work. Lucinda Watt is also familiar with the strange tentacled chackh'morg. She is a member of the Fraternity, just like her employer, Dr. Pyke. The connection between these facts and Alaizabel remains unclear, and yet the connection is surely there.

The extreme danger of the tunnels beneath the Crooked Lanes is demonstrated when Thaniel and his group hunt for a wight at the request of Lord Crott. One of Crott's men is killed in the process. But this activity creates a debt on the part of Lord Crott, and he is honor-bound to help Thaniel and Alaizabel. In this world, thieves are expected to be more honorable than respected members of society.



PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 13: Perris the Boar, Elisander and Sanforth, Maycraft Gets a Call; Chapter 14: Honour Among Vagabonds, An Unexpected Ally

PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 13: Perris the Boar, Elisander and Sanforth, Maycraft Gets a Call; Chapter 14: Honour Among Vagabonds, An Unexpected Ally Summary

In Chapter 13, Crott, Thaniel, Cathaline, Alaizabel, and Devil-boy Jack gather at in Crott's chambers. The rooms are gaudy, overdecorated with trinkets, furniture, and shiny things. They drink a toast to Grindle. Crott says that something dark is afoot in London, and has been ever since the Vernichtung. What is bad for London is also bad for Crott and his men. Crott wants to know everything Thaniel and the others know about the darkness; in exchange he has arranged a meeting for the following day, during which Alaizabel will learn about her past.

Traveling to the meeting with Alaizabel, Thaniel notices the sentries guarding the bridge across the Thames. They are the last line of resistance between London and the Old Quarter, haven of the wych-kin. Thaniel suspects the wolves and wych-kin travel underground, anyway, via tunnels and sewers. Thaniel and Alaizabel discuss the Vernichtung, twenty or so years ago, when the Prussians used airships to bomb London. The wych-kin seemed to appear right after the Vernichtung, although no one knows why. At first Parliament ignored the situation, not believing the wych-kin were real. Fever and rats took over the area where the area of Camberwell, where destruction from the Vernichtung had been greatest. By the time Parliament took notice, it was too late. Now wych-kin inhabit most large cities across the globe. Thaniel and Alaizabel arrive at the Green Angel, where they meet Perris the Boar, the man who knows Alaizabel's history. Alaizabel's parents, Elisander and Sanforth Cray, married young. She was a musician and he was the heir to a merchant shipping company. They left their daughter in the care of nannies and eventually squandered her talent and his inheritance. Alaizabel remembers as Perris the Boar continues his story. Elisander and Sanforth joined the Fraternity and their fortune improved. But then, a week ago, all three members of the Cray family disappeared without a trace, because the Fraternity controls what the public needs to know. Four days ago, Alaizabel's parents were found in the Thames, after apparently jumping from the Tower Bridge.



Maycraft is disturbed at having seen the remains of Lucinda Watt. He knew her, unlike the other victims, and he had been fond of her. He decides not to call Carver just yet, because he is too perceptive at putting facts together. The phone rings and the caller worries that someone is on to them, someone was leaving them a message. Maycraft believes that person is Stitch-face. The caller says it doesn't matter much, because the first part of their ceremony will begin in two days, and the girl will no longer be able to hide from them. Also, a wych-hunter has been hired to help find Thatch. Maycraft worries that Stitch-face might know the identities of the rest of the Fraternity. He studies Carver's map, relieved that only one more green tack will be placed.

In Chapter 14, Alaizabel and Thaniel meet on the roof of the building where Crott is hiding them. Alaizabel wonders if she is a horrible person for not missing her parents, for not feeling much about their loss. Thaniel says the fault is probably theirs. Alaizabel wonders if she has an estate, or if the Fraternity has taken it already. Alaizabel appreciates everything Thaniel has done for her and the two embrace. She calls him "the diamond at the heart of the coal" (page 143). Thaniel starts to say something meaningful and romantic, but then he loses his nerve. Devil-boy Jack had told Alaizabel he could remove the spirit of Thatch from her, but the preparation would take three days. Devil-boy also said that the Fraternity could not carry out their plans until Thatch was back with them. Meanwhile, Alaizabel feels that Thatch is sleeping within her, exhausted. Alaizabel knows that she is stronger than the two-hundred-year-old wych.

Devil-boy Jack had advised Crott to kill Alaizabel, thereby killing Thatch, thereby thwarting the plans of the Fraternity. But Crott had reluctantly promised Thaniel that he would not harm Alaizabel, partly out of respect for Thaniel's deceased father. And a beggar's honor could be trusted. Detective Carver arrives, requesting a meeting with Lord Crott. This is highly unusual, but Crott agrees. Carver shares his information with Crott, about the green tack murders, the tentacled creature, and the plot involving Maycraft, Dr. Pyke, and Lucinda Watt. Crott shows Carver a drawing of a chackh'morg, then tells him about the Fraternity and Alaizabel. They realize they must do something before darkness descends, and they agree to join forces.

PART TWO: STITCH-FACE - Chapter 13: Perris the Boar, Elisander and Sanforth, Maycraft Gets a Call; Chapter 14: Honour Among Vagabonds, An Unexpected Ally Analysis

Crott echoes Carver's sentiment from earlier in the novel, that London has gone downhill ever since the Vernichtung. No one knows why the wych-kin came. Parliament ignored them for too long, choosing instead to rebuild after the Vernichtung, and now the wych-kin are deeply entrenched. That is why Thaniel and Cathaline are so well paid for their wych-hunting services.

Alaizabel learns of her past at last, from a man hired by Lord Crott to investigate. The actions of her parents started the chain of events that led to her being a victim of the



Fraternity, just as surely as the actions of Marey Woolbury's parents started the chain of events that led to her being a prostitute and murder victim. Once again, the author presents the question of destiny vs. fate, via characters in his novel.

Things begin to unravel for Maycraft, who had seemed to be at the center of everything and in control. He is saddened by the death of Lucinda Watt, because he knew her and had feelings for her. He is alarmed to learn that Stitch-face or someone else is on to the plot to disguise the Green Tack murders as the work of Stitch-face.

The mystical Devil-boy Jack says he can remove the spirit of Thatch from Alaizabel. Alaizabel feels strong, able to overpower the evil Thatch, and yet she is plagued by self-doubt because she doesn't feel bad about the loss of her parents. Only Thaniel, who loves her without saying the words, is able to comfort Alaizabel. She needs him in her life just as much as he needs her.

Detective Carver seeks out Lord Crott, and at last information about the chackh'morg is put together, like pieces in a life-altering puzzle.



PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 15: A Lady in Distress, Thaniel Fights Alone, Disaster Strikes; Chapter 16: Vigil for the Dying, Despair in the Bell Tower; Chapter 17: A Gathering, Curien Blake

PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 15: A Lady in Distress, Thaniel Fights Alone, Disaster Strikes; Chapter 16: Vigil for the Dying, Despair in the Bell Tower; Chapter 17: A Gathering, Curien Blake Summary

In Chapter 15, Thaniel and Alaizabel walk the streets of Whitechapel in London, pretending they are married. Detective Carver had told the group that the next Green Tack murder would take place in Whitechapel, and Devil-boy Jack divined that the event would take place tonight. Carver and Cathaline also strolled casually as a couple. Crott's men were hiding everywhere. A woman approaches Thaniel and Alaizabel, worried that someone unseen is following her. Thaniel senses the presence of something, and his nervousness spooks the woman, who runs. Thaniel pours sulphur compound on the ground, and it forms into a two-toed footprint. Thaniel runs after the woman, knowing he is too late. When the woman looks behind her for the third time, Rawhead appears and attacks. Thaniel had believed Rawhead was a childhood tale, but now they are face to face. Rawhead seems little damaged by Thaniel's pistol shot to his neck. Thaniel fires again, then waves his string of Wards in the hope at least some of them might help. Rawhead attacks again, and he is entangled in the string of Wards. He howls in agony, then disappears, the Wards blackened and smoking. Others come running to help, and Thaniel urges them to tend to the injured woman. As long as she is alive, the chackh'morg is not complete. Thaniel tells Cathaline that he saw Rawhead, and they both remember the childhood rhyme, known long before wych-kin had arrived: "Rawhead close behind you treads, three looks back and you'll be dead. But close your eyes and count to ten, and Rawhead will be gone again" (page 161). Then everyone realizes that Alaizabel is missing.

In Chapter 16, everyone hopes Leanna Butcher, the latest Green Tack victim, will hold on to life. She had a letter with her from a married man. She was going to meet him on the night of the attack. Devil-boy sets Wards around the patient's bed, to repel other wych-kin who might want to finish the job. Thaniel, angry and worried, wishes they had



left Alaizabel in Crott's care on the previous night. Cathaline reminds him that Alaizabel had insisted on coming. Thaniel goes to an abandoned bell tower to despair in solitude. Thaniel always felt that he didn't measure up to his father, but Cathaline reminded him that Jedriah himself didn't live up to that legend. Thaniel can't think of a way to find Alaizabel, the woman who had helped him see that his life could be about something more than just wych-hunting. The very charms they had placed on Alaizabel to stop wych-kin from finding her now prevented Thaniel and his friends from finding her.

Chapter 17: Select members of the Fraternity gather at the home of Dr. Pyke, to discuss the current situation. Inspector Maycraft is introduced to Curien Blake, a wych-hunter from America, whom Maycraft dislikes by reputation. Dr. Pyke has hired Curien Blake on occasion, to clean up the Fraternity's mistakes. Once Curien Blake kidnapped the eight-year-old daughter of a judge, trussed her like a chicken, then threw her in the Thames, to discourage the judge from leaving the Fraternity. The Fraternity members are gathered to hear Dr. Pyke speak, waiting for him to explain why their gods had not been unchained. Dr. Pyke explains that the attack had been intercepted by wych-hunters, but soon the victim would die, completing the chackh'morg. He asks for sixty volunteers to begin reciting a distillation at one hour after midnight, to the shock of Maycraft.

PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 15: A Lady in Distress, Thaniel Fights Alone, Disaster Strikes; Chapter 16: Vigil for the Dying, Despair in the Bell Tower; Chapter 17: A Gathering, Curien Blake Analysis

Yet another woman, Leanna Butcher, is attacked in an odd way involving threes. Rawhead, thought to be a fictional character in a children's poem, strikes only when a person looks over her shoulder for the third time. Lucinda clings to life, but if and when she dies she will be the final victim needed to complete the chackh'morg.

Horribly, Alaizabel goes missing. The irony is, the very spells her friends had placed on her to protect her from wych-kin, now prevented her from being found by her friends. After this loss of Alaizabel, Thaniel fully realizes how much he cares about her.

The Fraternity, which does not allow members to leave once they have joined, prepares to begin its ritual as soon as Leanna Butcher dies. Maycraft is shocked by the speed with which events are progressing. Everyone in the tangled plot is drawn, as if by destiny rather than chance, to a final showdown.



PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 18: The Girl in the White Shift, An III Meeting; Chapter 19: The Beggars Ready for War, The Inevitable Arrives

PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 18: The Girl in the White Shift, An III Meeting; Chapter 19: The Beggars Ready for War, The Inevitable Arrives Summary

In Chapter 18, a group of cultists, dressed in hooded crimson robes with mirrors where their faces should be, begin chanting in a harsh, guttural language. Sigils and Wards cover the walls. Hanging above the group, in a hammock, is Alaizabel Cray. She is very hot and heavily drugged. A large bowl below catches her sweat. Alaizabel and Thatch argue in her head. Thatch explains that they will move her spirit to another young girl who will die properly, unlike Alaizabel. Alaizabel sees another girl, the one destined to receive Thatch's spirit and then die, and tears well up in her. She remembers that her parents didn't want to sacrifice her, even though they didn't necessarily love her, and that was why they had been murdered. Alaizabel remembers that just a few days ago she was in the position of the other girl, poisoned, struggling not to be sacrificed. She gets angry and vows to survive and seek revenge on the Fraternity, which treats people like pawns. Suddenly she feels crushed from within. She screams and the spirit of Thatch screams as well. Only Alaizabel's anger kept her alive during the excruciating pain. Finally the pain subsided, and Alaizabel saw the poisoned girl forced to drink Alaizabel's sweat. The spirit of Thatch was in that other girl now, and when she died, Thatch would live again in her body.

When Alaizabel wakes, she is in a padded cell in Redford Acres, Dr. Pyke's asylum. She remembers being snatched away by the American wych-hunter on the night when she and Thaniel were searching for the next Green Tack victim. She feels the lightness of being alone, now that the spirit of Thatch is gone. She wonders what revenge Thatch might have in store, and she wonders if Thaniel wants her back. She doodles in the grime of the cell padding, and inspiration strikes. She went to the door of her cell, which has no handle, and begins tracing a shape she had seen only once before. She sits back, but the door does not open. She retraces the lines and sees a thinning of the padding or the air, and the Ward of Opening becomes visible. It glows red, then the door opens. She runs down a corridor, hearing the voices of tortured souls in their cells. In a kitchen, she finds a partially eaten meat pie, which is cold. She finishes the pie, glad



that the person who had eaten it is probably long gone. Alaizabel makes more Wards and opens more locked doors, amazed at this new-found skill. Apparently Thatch had left vestiges of her knowledge behind, when she left Alaizabel's body. Alaizabel exits the asylum. The November night is unbearably cold for Alaizabel, dressed only in a cotton shift, and gravel cuts her feet. Nevertheless, she tries to make her way to London. A carriage approaches. As soon as she is certain the carriage does not contain Dr. Pyke, she calls out for help. The driver promises to take her wherever she wants to go. Alaizabel is grateful, not realizing that the driver is Stitch-face.

In Chapter 19, at Crott's feasting hall, Devil-boy Jack and Cathaline both feel the power of Chandler's Distillation, which transferred Thatch from one body to another. Devil-boy is worried by the strength of the Fraternity's power. Crott is cracking under the pressure of leadership, unsure how to save his men from impending disaster. Devil-boy comments that Alaizabel no longer matters, angering Thaniel. Crott sends messages to the other three Beggar Lords, warning them of the danger at hand, then orders his own men to forsake begging and prepare for battle. The beggars were always prepared for conflicts with Peelers, other beggars, and wych-kin, so preparing for this battle takes little effort. Cathaline visits Leanna Butcher, insignificant, married to a callous man, but suddenly important to the world now that she is dying. Cathaline wonders why Leanna never left her husband, never tried to be happy. She despises the Age of Reason with its filthy factories and greed. Cathaline is holding Leanna Butcher's hand when she dies.

PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT - Chapter 18: The Girl in the White Shift, An Ill Meeting; Chapter 19: The Beggars Ready for War, The Inevitable Arrives Analysis

Alaizabel remembers the previous time she was at the mercy of the Fraternity, when they put the spirit of Thatch into her body, expecting her to die. She is at the mercy of the Fraternity once again, this time while they remove Thatch from her body and put the spirit into another girl who might be more compliant. Alaizabel's strong will to survive is evident. Later, when she escapes from Dr. Pyke's asylum by using knowledge left behind in her brain by Thatch, her resourcefulness and perseverance shine through. She is hope in the midst of despair.

Devil-boy Jack, almost always right in his predictions, states that Alaizabel no longer matters since the spirit of Thatch is no longer with her. She matters very much to Thaniel, however - and, presumably, she matters very much to the reader.

The independent and rebellious Cathaline is saddened by the plight of Leanna Butcher, and, by extension, the plight of many women who are her contemporaries. Cathaline doesn't understand how a woman can stay with a man she does not love, or work under inhumane conditions. Cathaline represents an early spark of the women's rights movement. Leanna Butcher dies, completing the chackh'morg and hastening unknown evil.



PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 20: Portents, The Night Mare, The First Dark Day; Chapter 21: At Stitch-Face's Mercy, The Siege of the Crooked Lanes, Reunion

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 20: Portents, The Night Mare, The First Dark Day; Chapter 21: At Stitch-Face's Mercy, The Siege of the Crooked Lanes, Reunion Summary

In Chapter 20, a new day begins in London, and only animals and sensitive people feel the darkness coming. A huge mass of spiraling clouds is masked by storms. After sunset people see the base of the spiral, glowing red over the Old Quarter. Wych-kin make their way to the Old Quarter from miles around, killing when so inclined as they travel. The next day, the sky remains dark. Many who venture out to work never return. Wolves attack carriage horses. Many die of Crimson Fever.

In Chapter 21, Alaizabel is tied to a chair, wondering how she could be so unlucky as to be rescued by Stitch-face, a serial killer. She wonders if she is suffering for the sins of her parents. Stitch-face enters the room, carrying a knife, and Alaizabel vows not to scream. He asks her where the wych-spirit has gone, and why she is no longer with Alaizabel. Alaizabel tries to bluff, hoping to save her own life. Stitch-face asks her to stop playing games. He would gut her like a fish, he says, if the wych-spirit were still present, in order to stop the Fraternity's plan. Stitch-face explains that he had come to kill her, but he was too late. Now he will not kill her, for she is too young and he has other concerns. He cuts her ropes and shows her the maelstrom outside, above the Old Quarter. Stitch-face explains that Lucinda Watt was persuaded to tell him many things about the Fraternity's plans. Now that Thatch knows the pathway back from the dead, she plans to summon the Fraternity's god. But Thatch can be killed, putting an end to the Fraternity's plan. Stitch-face is especially angry with Dr. Pyke, who arranged for the Green Tack murders to mimic Stitch-face's methods. He is a monster, but he has his pride and he wants to live. Stitch-face leaves, pointing out that he will not bother to lock the door.

Crott and his men fight hoardes of rats and Dog-rats, throwing grog-bombs. He feels helpless against the invaders. He meets with Thaniel, Cathaline, and Carver to come up with a battle plan. No one has any ideas. Devil-boy Jack confirms that Thatch is in the Old Quarter, below the spiraling clouds, but getting there is too dangerous. Carver is



frustrated by everyone's defeatist attitude. He proposes they travel underground through an old train tunnel to Finsbury Park, where they can get an airship to fly over the Old Quarter. Everyone agrees to the plan. Devil-boy Jack throws some scrying stones indicate that they are destined to follow the plan. A stone representing Alaizabel is there in the circle, along with the others. Just then the real Alaizabel arrives. She and Thaniel hug each other, with no need for words.

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 20: Portents, The Night Mare, The First Dark Day; Chapter 21: At Stitch-Face's Mercy, The Siege of the Crooked Lanes, Reunion Analysis

The darkness arrives in the form of storms and a red spiral centered over part of the Old Quarter. At first only sensitive people notice; eventually it is impossible to ignore. This might be compared to people's complacency when the Nazis began their awful mission, in reality, or when the Prussians first conspired to destroy London in the Vernichtung, in this novel.

Alaizabel finds herself in danger once again, this time in the form of Stitch-face. But surprisingly, he does not see her as a victim. He sees her as part of a plot to stop the Fraternity from completing its plan. Stitch-face has a vendetta against the Fraternity in general and Dr. Pyke in particular. Most of all, even though he is a monster, he wants to survive. As predicted by Devil-boy Jack and his scrying stones, Alaizabel is reunited with her friends to fight against the Fraternity. She and Thaniel embrace with no words needed, a love story in the midst of great danger and tragedy.



PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 22: The Wych in Alaizabel Cray, The Hallow Ghoul, The Puppets See the Strings; Chapter 23: Caledonian Road, Beneath the City, An Old Enemy Returns

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 22: The Wych in Alaizabel Cray, The Hallow Ghoul, The Puppets See the Strings; Chapter 23: Caledonian Road, Beneath the City, An Old Enemy Returns Summary

In Chapter 22, Cathaline, Carver, and Devil-boy, Jack, agree that they must wait until nightfall to travel to the Old Quarter. Thaniel and Cathaline prepare Wards and gather supplies, along with Devil-boy Jack. Alaizabel studies a book of simple Wards. Just looking at the disturbing images triggers memories left behind by Thatch; by the end of the day Alaizabel knows thirty Wards. She cries at the notion that she is now a wych.

That evening, Thaniel hoists a trap door leading to an abandoned Gothic church at the edge of Crott's territory. A Hallow Ghoul, barely visible, guards the church. Cathaline lights an incense mixture, containing the smells of a funeral, to ward off the ghoul. She, Thaniel, Alaizabel, Carver, Crott, Devil-boy Jack, and Armand make their way through the church, highly on guard. They spot the Hallow Ghoul, half skeleton and half corpse. It pretends not to see the group. A flash of lightning makes Armand shriek, and the ghoul disappears. Suddenly the creature appears, lunging for Alaizabel, but stops at the smell of the incense. Crott fires, and his shot pass through the ghoul and shatters a large stained-glass window. Infuriated, the ghoul reaches into Crott's chest for his heart. Thaniel extinguishes the ghoul with a charm string, burning two Wards, but Crott is seriously injured. Cathaline performs some temporary measures, then orders Devil-boy to take him home to perform the necessary Rite. Devil-boy refuses, stating that they must move forward as the scrying stones ordained. If they proceed, he says, they will be victorious; otherwise, they might not. Devil-boy will not jeopardize the world for the sake of Crott. He also admits that the scrying stones told him who in their group will live or die. A higher power is directing them, evidenced by the fact that Carver independently came up with the same plan of attack as the scrying stones. This notion infuriates Thaniel, who does not believe in a higher power and refuses to be a pawn to man, wych, or other entity. Devil-boy says he doesn't mean an entity, but rather the force that created the physics of the universe, including coincidence, unlikelihood, and



happenstance. It is a pattern. In answer to Carver, Devil-boy explains that he is merely a vessel, like Alaizabel. He tells Armand to pick up Crott, for he will not die yet.

In Chapter 23, Thaniel and his companions arrive at Caledonian Road station, a train station that stood bombed out and abandoned since the Vernichtung. The middle of the floor was gone, so they stepped their way carefully to the stairway which led to the trains below ground. They hear a low growl from down a tunnel, and Cathaline fires. She knows that this is only a temporary delay, however. Meanwhile, Crott looks weaker. They make their way along the cold and dark train tunnel, toward Finsbury Park. They are followed by wolves. They come upon a train in a part of the tunnel where the walls have sagged, leaving little room for them to pass around it. Thaniel, Cathaline, and Carver hold off the wolves with pistols as the others travel on. At the far end of the train, Alaizabel draws a Ward, causing the long-rusted train to move forward. A wolf claws at Cathaline, gouging her forearm. The train drives itself into a part of the tunnel that is too small, due to the sagging walls, trapping the wolves on the other side. The group continue traversing the tunnel, until the air suddenly gets colder and heavy with the taste of salt. Draug are approaching. Devil-boy Jack draws a circle on the ground and performs rituals to make the group invisible within that circle. Alaizabel starts to try a Ward for warmth, but Devil-boy Jack warns that any Ward would draw the Draug "like a tide to the moon" (page 238). Everyone puts out their lanterns and remains silent as the Draug pass by, feeling for their victims, unable to find them. Cathaline realizes this is the first time she has ever been in total, complete darkness. When a Draug's fetid breath hits Alaizabel's face, she whimpers slightly, just enough to bring all of the Draug right to the brink of their circle. Armand the simple ogre wails and flees into the darkness, his voice gradually fading. When the others finally dare to light a lantern, Armand and Lord Crott are nowhere to be found.

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 22: The Wych in Alaizabel Cray, The Hallow Ghoul, The Puppets See the Strings; Chapter 23: Caledonian Road, Beneath the City, An Old Enemy Returns Analysis

Alaizabel cries at the notion that she is a wych. And yet, Alaizabel is a force for good, not evil. She can create Wards because Thatch left her with that knowledge, but Thatch did not leave her with the desire to do harm.

After battling a Hallow Ghoul, Devil-boy Jack and Thaniel debate the notion of a greater power. Devil-boy insists that a pattern guides everything, and that with his scrying stones he can see that pattern. They must not deviate from the pattern, if they want to succeed in thwarting the Fraternity. Thaniel is angry, insisting that he is no one's pawn. Such is the ongoing question of destiny vs. free will.



When Thaniel and his group encounter a pack of wolves in a sagging train tunnel, Alaizabel saves them by making a rusty train move with a Ward. When they encounter Draug a bit further along in the tunnel, Devil-boy Jack saves them by creating a circle which conceals them. Armand panics, however, and runs out of the circle of safety, carrying Crott. The two are overpowered by Draug. Armand's lack of faith causes his demise.



PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 24: General Montpelier, London by Airship, The Heart of Evil; Chapter 25: The Cathedral, Guardians; Chapter 26: The Wych-Dogs, Prophecies Fulfilled, The American Way

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 24: General Montpelier, London by Airship, The Heart of Evil; Chapter 25: The Cathedral, Guardians; Chapter 26: The Wych-Dogs, Prophecies Fulfilled, The American Way Summary

In Chapter 24, two airships sit idle at Finsbury Park. The airstrip was built by a train station after the Vernichtung, with plans at the time to restore the rail line. The trains never ran again, but the airstrip remains. Devil-boy Jack admits he knew Armand and Crott would die; he refuses to say if any others will die, for fear of jeopardizing the outcome. Detective Carver meets with General Montpelier, to obtain authorization to borrow an airship. Carver claims to have a letter from the Palace, but when the two are alone Carver points a gun at the General and explains that he has no time for bureaucracy.

Gregory stands by an airship, ready to pilot its passengers wherever they need to go. He is a self-admitted coward, a deserter from the Russian armed forces. He is surprised that Detective Carver has authorization from the Palace to use an airship for twenty-four hours, but just as happy to be going up in the air, where wych-kin can't follow. In the air, Alaizabel muses that the seemingly peaceful scene below is misleading. Thaniel tells Alaizabel that his life has not been the same since she arrived, in fact his life has fallen apart, but he does not regret a thing. At last, the two kiss in the gondola of the airship.

The center of the activity is a giant Gothic cathedral, which had been cloaked in invisibility Wards for years. The Wards are now removed. Devil-boy Jack calls it "the womb of the darkness" (p. 251). The cathedral must be open to receive the Fraternity's gods, the Glau Meska.

Jerob Whatley is in charge of defense at Finsbury Park. He waits for the command to use the two airships against the wych-kin, but no order comes. Even when one airship was taken by Detective Carver, the other remained unused. Then the airstrip is taken



over by wych-kin. Finally, Jerob breaks into General Montpelier's office to demand the remaining airship be used for escape. That is when he discovers the general bound and gagged.

In Chapter 25, the airship is tethered to the cathedral. Untethering requires two people, so everyone feels confident about leaving Gregor alone on the airship. Wych-kin are blocked from entering the cathedral or its courtyard by powerful Wards, placed there by Thatch herself. The Wards are too powerful for anyone but Thatch to remove. And yet - perhaps Alaizabel, with her vestiges of Thatch's knowledge, can do it. Thaniel admires Alaizabel as she attempts to draw a Ward. He imagines most people would have cracked under the pressure of everything she has gone through, including this sudden power to perform wych-craft. Thaniel decides that Alaizabel's true power is that "she would never be conquered" (page 256). He thinks of their kiss and wonders what might happen when their battle is over. Alaizabel's Ward blazes, then Thatch's Wards sputter and die.

Inside the cathedral, Fraternity members perform the Rite of pthau'es'maik. The rite is the final ritual performed by the Fraternity, to summon their gods, the Glau Meska. The ritual takes forty-eight hours of constant effort, during which members switch in and out in four-hour shifts. Everything must be properly timed and everyone must be properly purified. If anyone makes a mistake, the rite will fail.

Elsewhere in the cathedral, Thatch searches for Dr. Pyke. Curien Blake stands outside the doctor's door, with orders that he is not to be disturbed. Unlike the Fraternity members, Curien Blake treats Thatch with little respect. She yells for Pyke, however, and he comes to the door of his room. Thatch informs him that someone has broken her Wards and entered the cathedral. Dr. Pyke sends Curien Blake to deal with the intruders, then releases several experimental wych-Dogs.

Chapter 26: Cathaline and the others hear the wych-dogs long before they are visible. They turn the tables in a large room sideways, forming a barricade maze. They shoot at the wych-dogs. Then Curien Blake and three other men appear, shooting at Thaniel and the others. Devil-boy Jack tells Alaizabel that she and Thaniel must fight to the end, because he can't, and just then he is shot to death. More dogs fall, as do Carver and two of Blake's men. Cathaline is shot in the hand. Then Curien Blake offers a challenge: He wants to duel with Thaniel. Thaniel agrees, providing they duel with knives. Thaniel has a famous knife with Wards, given to him by his famous father. Blake's one surviving companion, Hodge, holds Cathaline and Alaizabel at gunpoint while Blake and Thaniel fight, occasionally cutting each other, and Cathaline sees Hodge's aim start to drift. Thaniel surprises Blake by being unpredictably reckless, breaking Blake's nose, then throwing his knife into Hodge's forehead. Thaniel receives a large cut in his side, but Cathaline manages to shoot Blake with her good hand. Then Cathaline sees something moving across the room, It is Carver, apologizing for getting himself shot.



PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 24: General Montpelier, London by Airship, The Heart of Evil; Chapter 25: The Cathedral, Guardians; Chapter 26: The Wych-Dogs, Prophecies Fulfilled, The American Way Analysis

Detective Carver is not usually a man to break rules, but given the urgency of their situation he is willing to restrain a General and commandeer a government airship. Meanwhile, back at the airstrip, the man in charge of defense seethes for too long before demanding that the General should act against the invading wych-kin. It is too late when he discovers the General bound and gagged, just as it was too late when Parliament finally decided to act against the wych-kin. People cannot rely on bureaucracy to solve problems.

A heretofore invisible cathedral, concealed by Wards, is now visible at the base of the spiraling darkness in the Old Quarter. The cathedral must be open to receive the Glau Meska. Thatch and the Fraternity perform their ceremony within the cathedral, confident that they are safe, because the remaining Wards can only be undone by Thatch herself. No one realizes that gentle Alaizabel has the power to surprise them all.

The Fraternity need a certain kind of faith to complete their terrible ritual. It is a complex, two-day affair, in which no mistakes can be made. If the Fraternity had worked together with such passion against the wych-kin, perhaps they would not feel the need to destroy the world and begin again.

The bravery and singlemindedness of Devil-boy Jack is admirable. He urges Alaizabel and Thaniel to finish their mission, knowing that the words will be his last. Devil-boy Jack has completed his part of the pattern; he expects nothing less from Thaniel and Alaizabel.



PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 27: The Gallery, Gregor Gains His Freedom; Chapter 28: Pyke Holds the Answers, The Wych-Kin Revealed, All Is Ended; Chapter 29: Aftermath

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 27: The Gallery, Gregor Gains His Freedom; Chapter 28: Pyke Holds the Answers, The Wych-Kin Revealed, All Is Ended; Chapter 29: Aftermath Summary

In Chapter 27, haniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel try to find the large room where the Rite of pthau'es'maik is taking place, but the cathedral is a maze of red, gold, and black. They had hidden Carver in a side room, bandaged, because he was too injured to be of help. Suddenly Thaniel falls to one knee, hit full-force with the wych-sense of what the world might become. The oceans will rise and flood the earth, releasing foul creatures from below. Then the Glau Meska will come, they will build temples of bone and sinew, and they will take over the Earth. Thaniel feels a sensation of power and realizes that Thatch has begun her part in the ceremony. Members of the Fraternity appear, and Thaniel and Cathaline shoot them. Thaniel now understands how his father could have closed himself off after losing his wife. Thaniel understands his father's pain. The three find the large hall where the rite is being performed. Many are chanting, and in the midst of it all is the stooped young girl that contains the spirit of Thatch. Just then a gun barrel is pressed against the nape of Alaizabel's neck.

Gregor waits in the airship, terrified. He worries that something might crawl up the tether line and onto the gondola. He starts the engines and tries to rise, hoping the ropes might break before the engine overheats.

Inspector Maycraft was losing his nerve, wondering if the Fraternity's plan was a mistake. Maybe he likes the world as it is, or maybe he worries that the powerful entities they are summoning will not save the humans who helped them. Maycraft wonders how the wych-hunters got to the cathedral, and then he discovers the tethered airship. He finds the dead wych-dogs, Devil-boy Jack, and Curien Blake. He goes outside, wondering what to do about the airship. He sees Gregor drop the bombs from the airship, not only severing the tether ropes but blowing out a side of the cathedral. Gregor floats away with glee. Maycraft is gone, and the wych-kin that had been drawn to the cathedral by the immense power within, scramble into the cathedral to devour those within.



In Chapter 28, Thaniel is shot in the gut. Those performing the rite continue however, so as not to destroy their progress, even though they hear occasional gunshots and explosions. Dr. Pyke aims his weapon at Cathaline's forehead. Thaniel stands, despite his wound, and Alaizabel does her best to staunch the blood flow. Thaniel asks why Dr. Pyke won't stop the ceremony, and why the Fraternity wasn't satisfied with the wealth and power they already possessed. The doctor explains that the wych-kin are overrunning everything, so it is better to be on their side. Thaniel asks why the Fraternity won't fight the wych-kin instead. Dr. Pyke explains that the wych-kin come from us, when we no longer believe in a higher power. Wych-kin are the worst things we can imagine, the result of our guilt. The Age of Reason took away belief in gods and made man responsible for his own mistakes. The resulting sense of hopelessness brought on the wych-kin. The Fraternity are summoning new gods for men to believe in, and surely the Glau Meska will wake Charles Darwin. Just then, a horde of wych-kin arrive, and Dr. Pyke shoots Thaniel in the head. Cathaline smacks the gun away, then realizes it had jammed. Thaniel takes aim and shoots Thatch. She falls out of her summoning-circle, to be devoured by wych-kin along with the other cultists. The sky is torn and hurricane winds rush through the cathedral as the gateway for the Glau Meska suddenly closes. Around London many buildings and monuments topple, and the Tower Bridge sinks into the Thames. The darkness leaves the sky and the daylight makes the wych-kin disappear. Cathaline believes that it is all over at last, but Thaniel worries that it is just beginning.

Chapter 29: Detective Carver sits on a bench in London. People have celebrated Christmas amidst the rubble, grateful that they have been given a second chance after what they call the Darkening. The Darkening had "cleansed things that needed cleansing" (page 290). The Old Quarter had burned to the ground. Carver doesn't know the whereabouts of Thaniel and Alaizabel, but he knows they are in love. Thaniel has stopped wych-hunting, and plans instead to study wychlore and find ways to destroy the wych-kin. Carver is grateful to Cathaline for bandaging him and hiding him on that fateful day, but he is sorry that he passed out and missed the finale. He muses about the complex pattern we all walk, interconnected in ways we don't always understand. Even Stitch-face served a purpose, bringing Carver and Maycraft together, so that Carver could discover the Fraternity's plot. Carver's one regret is that Dr. Pyke carries on as always. No one knows of his involvement with the Fraternity, and he now stays above the law. Carver tips his hat to a passing carriage, driven by Stitch-face, who is on his way to settle a score with Dr. Pyke.

PART FOUR: THE DARKENING - Chapter 27: The Gallery, Gregor Gains His Freedom; Chapter 28: Pyke Holds the Answers, The Wych-Kin Revealed, All Is Ended; Chapter 29: Aftermath Analysis

Thaniel has a vision of the coming darkness, a reverse Noah and the flood of sorts, in which all remaining goodness in the world is drowned and replaced with rising evil.



The cowardice of the airship pilot turns out to be a stroke of luck, as the bombs he releases in order to break the tethers also destroy part of the great cathedral. Wych-kin pour into the structure, eager to destroy everyone inside.

Maycraft's growing doubt cause him to look for an airship, which might have brought Thaniel and the others. Like others before him, he had waited too long to address a problem, and he watches in horror as the bombs drop. That sight would be his last.

Dr. Pyke ends in a standoff with Thaniel and Cathaline. He reveals that the source of the wych-kin is man's lack of faith, man's lack of anything to believe in, in the

Age of Reason. Ultimately the doctor and Thatch lie dead, and the Fraternity is overcome by wych-kin, until the bright light of day dissipates the wych-kin. Hope has returned to London, with fresh possibilities.

Carver survives the Darkness, as do Thaniel and Alaizabel. Thaniel vows to stop hunting wych-kin, choosing instead to compile and share his knowledge of the creatures. This combination of knowledge and hope is the best chance our world has for a bright future. Many people are grateful for their second chance.

The author proposes that faith can, indeed must, coexist with knowledge. Only then can we fight evil, in whatever form it may take.



Characters

Thaniel Fox

Thaniel Fox is a seventeen-year-old wych-hunter. His father, Jedriah Fox, had been considered to be the best in his field until his death, when Thaniel was eleven. Thaniel learned his trade from his father, then from Cathaline Bennett after his father died. Thaniel has worked since the age of fourteen. Blond and blue-eyed, he resembles his deceased mother, Chiana Roseleaf Fox, who had been murdered in a graveyard.

At the beginning of the novel Thaniel lives in the house he inherited, along with friend and coworker Cathaline. He is busy but unfulfilled, because his life is totally taken up with his work. When a young woman who doesn't remember her past, Alaizabel Cray, enters his life, she awakens feelings he didn't know he had. As Thaniel and his friends battle wych-kin, unravel Alaizabel's mysterious past, and battle the Fraternity, Thaniel and Alaizabel fall in love.

Alaizabel Cray

Alaizabel Cray is a beautiful young woman, found by Thaniel Fox in London's Old Quarter. At that time Alaizabel was possessed and deranged, and she clawed at Thaniel. She is blonde, with green eyes and a tattoo of a many-tentacled thing at the base of her spine.

At first Alaizabel remembers nothing about her past. She feels alone in the world until she falls in love with Thaniel. Over the course of the novel, Alaizabel, Thaniel, and Cathaline learn about her past, especially about her parents' involvement with the Fraternity. Her parents were ultimately murdered and thrown in the Thames, and then Alaizabel was used by the Fraternity as a vessel for the spirit of the evil wych, Thatch. After the spirit of Thatch is finally removed from Alaizabel, vestiges of Thatch's power remain, especially the ability to cast spells known as Wards. Alaizabel is very brave, able to cope with the notions of being kidnapped several times, being possessed, suddenly developing wych powers, and fighting against the Fraternity.

Cathaline Bennett

Cathaline Bennett is a wych-hunter. She had worked with the great Jedriah Fox until his death, then she became a mentor for Jedriah's son, Thaniel. At the time of the novel she lives and works with Thaniel. She is tall with bobbed black hair, streaked with dark red.

Cathaline rebels against convention, refusing to wear dresses just because she is a woman. She is competent and independent. When Thaniel starts to fall in love with the mysterious Alaizabel, Cathaline advises him to be careful so he won't be hurt. Cathaline is touched when she encounters women who seem trapped in miserable lives. She



plays an important role in the novel, advising Thaniel and battling against wych-kin and the Fraternity.

Dr. Mammon Pyke

Dr. Mammon Pyke heads the Redford Acres Asylum. He is pinch-faced, lean, and scrawny, and he is losing his grey hair. Dr Pyke is a well-respected man in London, but he belongs to the Fraternity, a mysterious organization with plans to take over the world. As part of the plan Dr. Pyke orchestrates a series of murders that, when plotted on a map of London, resembles a many-tentacled creature known as a chackh'morg. When the chackh'morg is complete, the Fraternity begins summoning gods known as the Glau Meska. The wych spirit within Alaizabel Cray is instrumental in this plan. At the end of the novel, Dr. Pyke explains the motives of the Fraternity and the origin of the wych-kin.

Marey Woolbury

Marey Woolbury is a woman of ill repute. Her mother had died in childbirth and her father was a drunken gambler. He lost his daughter in a wager, and she was sold to a workhouse for two shillings. She is murdered on one unfortunate night, presumably by a serial killer known as Stitch-face.

Stitch-face

Stitch-face is a serial killer, so named because he wears a mask of sackcloth, stitched together, with holes for his eyes and mouth. He also wears a lady's wig. He kills his many victims with a knife. He removes each victim's eyes, heart and tongue, then leaves them lying face-down with arms crossed. For fifteen years he has killed women near the northern banks of the Thames. Stitch-face vows revenge against Dr. Pyke, who has orchestrated copycat murders in the style of Stitch-face.

Inspector Regillen Maycraft

Regillen Maycraft is the Chief Inspector of the Cheapside Peelers. He is tall and stocky, with a stiff salt-and-pepper moustache and thinning hair. He shares an office with Detective Carver, and the two are assigned to catch the serial killer known as Stitch-face. Maycraft, however, is secretly an important player in a group known as the Fraternity, and he knows that some of the murders attributed to Stitch-face were actually orchestrated by the Fraternity.

Johnaten Turner

Johnaten Turner is a wealthy man. When he investigates strange noises in his baby's nursery, he is scratched by a Cracklejack. He starts to change, becoming emaciated,



with pointy teeth and horizontal, hourglass-shaped pupils. Thaniel and Cathaline perform a Rite to stop him from transforming into a Cracklejack.

Thatch

Thatch is a wych, dead for two hundred or so years at the time of the novel. The Fraternity had installed her spirit into the body of Alaizabel Cray, intending that Alaizabel would die so that Thatch could live again, but Alaizabel's will is too strong. Alaizabel and Thatch battle within Alaizabel, and Alaizabel is stronger. The spirit of Thatch is eventually removed from Alaizabel and put into another young woman, but remnants of Thatch's power remain within Alaizabel. Thatch is central to the Fraternity's plan to summon the Glau Meska, but the portal from death to our world is shut when Thaniel kills Thatch.

Priscena Weston

Priscena Weston has been almost deaf since the age of four, when her drunken father perforated her eardrums. She is unable to find help when she is pursued by someone, presumably Stitch-face, but as she tires from running she is attacked by wolves. A religious woman, she believes that God saved her from certain death.

Detective Ezrael Carver

Detective Ezrael Carver shares an office with Inspector Maycraft. Carver is neither tall nor short. He has black hair, a thick black moustache, and his clothes are always impeccable.

Detective Carver maintains a map with push-pins, diagramming the murders of Stitch-face. Some of the murders, however, are marked on the map with green tacks, because Carver believes they are the work of someone else. His partner, Inspector Maycraft, rejects this theory.

Lord Crott

Lord Crott is one of four Beggar Lords that run the Crooked Streets in London. Thaniel's father had once helped Crott's wife by removed an Incubus, a wych-kin that invisibly hangs on a person's back, weighing them down until they lose the will to live. Crott is lean and might have been handsome without the sword-scar that crossed his face. He collects twenty percent of everything his beggars bring in, and he believes in honor. He joins forces with Thaniel, Cathaline, and Alaizabel in their fight against the Fraternity. He is injured by a Hallow Ghoul, then killed by a Wight.



Grindle

Grindle is an old man, a member of Lord Crott's gang of beggars. He is badly scarred from some sort of an attack. Grindle is killed in the sewers below the Crooked Lanes, by a wych-kin known as a wight.

Devil-boy Jack

Devil-boy Jack is young and mysterious, with long, scraggly hair and eyes that have been sewn shut. He is a valued advisor to Lord Crott. Devil-boy Jack knows many complex spells and can foretell the future with scrying stones. He helps in the fight against the Fraternity, even though he knows that he will die in the process. He tells Alaizabel that she and Thaniel must finish the job.

Armand

Armand, an ogre from France, is a friend of Lord Crott. He is rather dim. Armand dies, along with Lord Crott, when he panics while hiding from the Draug.

Alista White

Alista White is a mother of three, followed by an unknown stranger when she tries to get medicine for her dying son. For every two steps she takes that night, she hears three. The third time she looks over her shoulder is her last.

Lucinda Watt

Lucinda Watt is Dr. Pyke's secretary. She is a severe woman, dedicated to her job, and she does not realize that Inspector Maycraft finds her attractive. She is a member of the Fraternity. Stitch-face tortures her for information about Dr. Pyke, the chackh'morg, and the Fraternity, then he kills her.

Perris the Boar

Perris the Boar is a fat man with a cataract. He is paid by Crott to discover the background of Alaizabel Cray.

Leanna Butcher

Leanna Butcher is the last of the Green Tack victims, attacked by Rawhead, rescued by Thaniel. She had been having an illicit affair. When she dies, the Fraternity's chackh'morg is complete.



Curien Blake

Curien Blake is an American wych-hunter, hired by Dr. Pyke on occasion to clean up situations for the Fraternity. He is shot to death by Cathaline, after he tries to kill Thaniel.

General Montpelier

General Montpelier is in charge of the Finsbury Park airstrip. He is a foghorn of a man, only fully alive when he is at war. He is bound and gagged by Detective Carver, as part of his plot to commandeer an airship in the fight against the Fraternity.

Gregor

Gregor is a self-admitted coward, a deserter from the Russian armed forces. He is an airship pilot at Finsbury Park. He pilots an airship to the Old Quarter so that Thaniel, Cathaline, Alaizabel, Devil-boy Jack, and Carver can try to defeat the Fraternity. Fear overtakes Gregor while the airship is tethered to a cathedral, and he drops bombs to break the ropes and fly away.



Objects/Places

Old Quarter

The Old Quarter is a section of London that had been heavily damaged by bombs during the Vernichtung. Wych-kin and wolves have overrun the area. Early in the novel Thaniel finds Alaizabel here, while hunting a Cracklejack. At the climax of the novel, the Fraternity occupies a cathedral in the Old Quarter to perform the Rite of pthau'es'maik and resurrect the Glau Meska.

Pig's Blood

Pig's blood is used by wych-hunters to help track creatures and to paint Wards.

Cracklejack

A Cracklejack is a type of wych-kin that makes lairs high up, for easy escape. Cracklejacks are scavengers and they eat rats. A scratch from a Cracklejack will turn most people into one, but Thaniel is immune. Cracklejacks are repelled by gold. They hate sulphur, but sulphur is attracted to them.

Wych-kin

Wych-kin are evil creatures that come in many forms. Thaniel and Cathaline make a lucrative living hunting and destroying the wych-kin. Different types of wych-kin are repelled by different objects and Wards. At the end of the novel, Dr. Pyke reveals the origin of the wych-kin.

Draug

Draug are the Drowned Folk, a type of wych-kin. Their approach is signalled by cold and the taste of salt water.

Redford Acres Asylum

Redford Acres Asylum is headed by Dr. Pyke. It houses the truly insane along with those afflicted by contact with wych-kin. Dr. Pyke confines Alaizabel to the asylum after the spirit of Thatch is removed from her.



Wards

Wards are magic spells which can be placed, used to ward off evil. They are sometimes painted using pig's blood. Wyches can draw Wards in the air with their fingers. Wards have a certain wrongness about them, hurting the eyes.

The Fraternity

The Fraternity is a secret organization of occultists who seek power from wych-kin and offer them sacrifices. They seek to summon the Glau Meska, to begin a new world. The group includes thousands of rich and powerful people, with a coven at the core. They are able to keep certain events out of the news, alter records, commit murder, and much more because of their well-placed membership. Dr. Pyke is a powerful member of the Fraternity, and Thatch the wych is central to their plan.

Chackh'morg

The chackh'morg is a symbol of sacrifice used by the Fraternity, burned onto sacrificial victims, tattooed when the victim is meant to be possessed. It is the many-tentacled tattoo that Alaizabel discovers at the base of her spine. The Green Tack murders form the shape of a chackh'morg on Detective Carver's map of London.

Vernichtung

The Vernichtung was an attack on London about twenty years prior by the Prussians, according to the novel, which destroyed many buildings and took many lives. The airships that fly over London are a residual effect of the Vernichtung. Few Londoners mention the word, because it is a reminder of failure. The word means "destruction" in Prussian.

Wight

A wight is a wych-kin made of shadow. It cannot exist in total darkness, and yet bright light destroys it. The touch of a wight causes living tissue to decay.

The Rite of pthau'es'maik

The Rite of pthau'es'maik is the final ritual performed by the Fraternity, meant to summon their gods, the Glau Meska. The ritual takes forty-eight hours of constant effort, for which members switch in and out in four-hour shifts. Everything must be properly timed and everyone must be properly purified. If anyone makes a mistake, the rite will fail.

Themes

Higher Power vs. Free Will

Chris Wooding is very interested in questions surrounding a higher power and the concept of free will. The main proponent of a higher power in the book is Devil-boy Jack, who reads the future in his scrying stones and fights to ensure that no one does anything to alter the destined outcome. He goes so far as to stand in the spot where he knows he will be killed, for the greater good of saving the world. Thaniel Fox, on the other hand, detests the notion of a higher power or divine pattern. He refuses to be anyone's pawn. He believes that his actions are his and his alone, despite the many coincidences that allowed him to meet Alaizabel and find the right partners and strategies to fight the Fraternity. Throughout the novel, wycraft and the actions of the Fraternity point to a higher power, albeit an evil one.

Science vs. Faith in the Age of Reason

The story takes place during the Age of Reason, a time when science and the Industrial Revolution have changed society forever. Factories bring pollution, the theory of evolution destroys faith in God, greed creates poverty, and science trumps art. The members of the Fraternity, at least the most powerful ones, are beneficiaries in the Age of Reason, at the expense of the uneducated, and they have the wherewithall to carry out their evil plans. Scientific advancement brings about a lack of faith, and a lack of faith results in man having no one to blame but himself for his mistakes. There is no higher power left to blame. This sense of guilt and despair, according to Dr. Pyke, is what brought the wych-kin into existence. Knowledge, therefore, must be tempered with a sense of wonder, an appreciation for art, and a determination to have faith.

The Sins of the Parents

Many characters in "The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" are products of their parents, pawns if you will, destined to follow certain paths because of their parents' actions.

Thaniel Cray was destined to be a wych-hunter, following in the footsteps of his talented father. Thaniel felt he couldn't measure up, even though his partner, Cathaline Bennett, assured him that even his father couldn't live up to his own legend. Thaniel was also sealed off from the notion of love, until he met Alaizabel, since his only example had been the bitterness of his widower father.

Alaizabel Cray became a sacrifice for the Fraternity because her parents had joined the organization out of greed. Alaizabel chastises herself for having no real sorrow over the death of her parents, but they had shown her little love or attention when they were alive.

Many victims of Stitch-face and the Fraternity lived lives of violence, poverty, and hopelessness, due to uncaring and cruel parents.

And yet, Thaniel and Alaizabel ultimately make their own way, finding each other, finding true love, and finding the inner strength to fight countless wych-kin and Fraternity members. We may be products of our parents, products of our parents' sins, but we have the power to define our own selves.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in "The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" switches from character to character as needed, showing the world from different perspectives. This technique, known as the omniscient point of view, allows the reader to be in the shoes of not only the main characters, but also lesser characters. Some characters make only a brief appearance, perhaps long enough to share a brief life story and a last breath. The love story of Thaniel and Alaizabel is best enjoyed by their combined perspectives, as each tentatively reaches out to the other.

Setting

The setting of the novel is nineteenth-century London, but overrun with wych-kin and in rubble due to a Prussian attack known as the Vernichtung. The reader can glean lessons from the novel and yet feel a certain sense of safety and distance, because wych-kin are not a part of the true history of London.

Language and Meaning

The characters in "The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray" use formal language. They have a veneer of nineteenth-century politeness that is rare in the world of the twenty-first century. In the case of the love story of Thaniel and Alaizabel, their formality seems to inhibit their progress. British reserve and formality could be blamed, in fact, for inaction when wych-kin first appeared in London. And yet, the formal language adds a certain charm to the story and serves to reinforce the nineteenth-century setting. American readers may struggle with some British slang and spelling conventions.

Structure

The structure of the novel is straightforward, with events presented in chronological order. Backstory is provided via the thoughts of characters, as described by the omniscient narrator. The book is divided into four parts: PART ONE: THE LOST GIRL introduces the main characters and an overview of London's troubles; PART TWO: STITCH-FACE chronicles the trials of Alaizabel as she struggles against the wych spirit within her, as her friends try to learn about her past, and as they struggle to determine her role in the evil plans of the Fraternity; PART THREE: THE FRATERNITY ASCENDANT details the Fraternity's motives and progress, building tension as their evil plan seems likely to succeed; and PART FOUR: THE DARKENING details the heroic actions of Thaniel, Alaizabel, and their companions when the world seems about to end, as well as the unraveling of the Fraternity.



Quotes

"It had to be here. It had all the hallmarks of a classic Cracklejack lair. And besides, his intuition crowed at him, you know it's in there. Wych-hunting's in your blood; isn't that what Father always said? You've got the wych-sense just like he had. You just know" (Chapter 1, p. 5-6).

"We are in an age of industry, Thaniel. The Age of Reason. Men toil in factories, scientists create wonders; we are unravelling the mysteries of the universe, and they are cold and hard. Science is the new way, and science has not time for poetry or stories or careless folk. I fear for you, son. I fear that those traits that were your mother's will mean your undoing one day.'

'What of the wych-kin, Father? Where do they fit into this new age of science and reason and logical thought?'

Jedriah's head had sunk a little. 'They do not fit,' he said. 'That is why we kill them'" (Chapter 2, p. 21-22).

"Something was up there, on the ceiling.

Her chest froze in panic. The room had darkened, she was sure of it, the shadows thickening until they choked out the light, and the temperature had fallen to the point where her breath panted out in rapid clouds. But even in the blackness, she could see the deeper shadow, the vast thing that stood at the foot of her bed and bent over her, pressing against the ceiling, a clot of congealed dark that oozed malevolence. It was impossibly tall, an undefined, faceless, looming presence, motionless, paralysing her with fear."

Chapter 4: Alaizabel's Fever; An Unwelcome Observer; A Letter from Doctor Pyke, p. 38

"Wychcraft is not a science; rather it is ninety per cent guesswork and ten per cent superstition. You wonder why the wych-kin are driving us out of our city? It is because it has taken us this long to even begin to learn how to beat them. Trial and error, sir. And every error means another wych-hunter has an appointment with Old Boney'" (Chapter 5, p. 53).

"Then she got up, and that was when she realized with a terrified inner shudder that something was seriously wrong. For she had not willed herself to move, not intended to shuck off the blanket and stand. Her body was acting under someone else's will, and it was the most deep and intense violation she could imagine" (Chapter 7, p. 72-73).

"Somewhere behind her, Stitch-face was following.

For fifteen years he had stalked the people of London, prowling the areas on the northern banks of the Thames. For fifteen years he had been a threat that mothers used



to make their children behave - 'To bed now, or Stitch-face will get you!' Few of those threatened were wise enough to know that it was only women that Stitch-face killed, never men and never children" (Chapter 8, p. 85-86).

"She was handsomely paid, and dedicated, and had little else in her life to distract her but her small flat in Islington and her two cats, both called Cat - her imagination was as limited as her flair for fashion" (Chapter 11, p. 112).

"With her cheek to his shoulder, she murmured, 'You have a good heart, Thaniel. I have seen enough rotten hearts to know the difference. There has been little but horror in this city for me, but you...' She paused. 'You are like the diamond at the heart of the coal'" (Chapter 14., p. 143).

"So, they had his word. And a beggar's word was as ironclad as a thief's. A strange irony, Crott reflected, that the most base and lowly of London folk were the most honour-bound of all, and that the value of honour diminished in direct proportion to the heights of society a man climbed to" (Chapter 14, p. 145).

"All it had taken was Alaizabel to destroy the walls of silence in his life. Without really doing anything, just by being there, she had awakened in him feelings he did not know he had. She had unravelled him, unknotted him. And it was not until now, now that she was gone, that he realized the depth of it all" (Chapter 16, p. 165-166).

"Here, a portion of the Fraternity was assembled: judges, barristers, doctors, politicians, a mayoral candidate from Essex; the highest strata of society. They came beguiled by the promise of joining a group comprised of the most powerful men and women in London, bewitched by greed for success, knowing that with people such as these helping them out, they could not fail to get all that they wanted. Beneath them were the less affluent, those who were influential because of their jobs. Nurses, civil servants, nannies, secretaries, policemen, even postmen; all placed so that records could be changed, messages could be intercepted, people could be coerced. And there had been more than one occasion when a baby had gone missing from of London's many orphanages, and found its way into the Fraternity's ceremonies" (Chapter 17, p. 169-170).

"Sometimes she hated the city. The factories spewing filth, the endless new inventions, the strict manners, the criminals...this was the face of the Age of Reason, the new world of science. Muck and soot and horrible, horrible greed. Murder and spite and hatred. The factories brought the money, and where there was money there were the businessmen, and who gave a shilling about the life of a poor woman like Leanna Butcher when there were a million like her to pack the boxes, work the looms, stir the



lye?"

(Chapter 19, p. 190-191).

"The creature was already recoiling, pulling back with a hiss, and Crott's shot passed directly through it and through the great stained-glass window on the façade of the church. The glass shattered and came tumbling down in a riot of colour and sound, a disastrous waterfall of accidental destruction" (Chapter 22, p. 224).

"'I do not speak of entities,' Jack said. 'I speak of the force that created the physics of the universe, the force that makes time flow forward and not allow everything to happen at once, the force that sets the patterns to which the planets turn. Its weapons are coincidence, unlikelihood, happenstance. It is there when a man stops suddenly to pick up a coin dropped by another man ten days before, and the woman who is to be his wife bumps into him, and five hundred years hence their offspring rules half the world'" (Chapter 22, p. 226-227).

"'I feel that . . . everything has gone beyond my control,' he said quietly. 'The way things were...I was not happy. But I was safe, and secure. Since you came, everything has changed. I have seen my life crumbling around me, I have abandoned my home, touched madness, I have...changed. I feel it. Since you came.'

'Do you regret it?' she asked, unconsciously tensing as she waited for his reply.

'Not for a moment,' he replied"

(Chapter 24, p. 249-250).

"Thaniel watched her at work, faint amazement on his face. This new-found ability, a leaving present from Thatch, and she already seemed born to it. To be suddenly bestowed with such a power would unsettle the strongest mind as much as waking up with a new limb, yet Alaizabel had already accepted it. That was her power, he decided. She would never be conquered" (Chapter 25, p. 256).

"He knew the power of the Fraternity and what they could do. He knew that they had been heading towards this moment for nearly thirty years now, when their gods would be brought into the world, born screaming into cataclysm. So why, now that the moment was at hand, did he fear it? Was it possible that he liked the world the way it was? Was it possible that he harboured a little doubt about Pyke's promises that the Fraternity would be spared the destruction to come? Did he really believe that entities so massive that they defied human sight would care about the insects that brought them" (Chapter 27, p. 277).

"'The wych-kin,' Thaniel whispered, mesmerized. 'When there's no more belief, the wych-kin come'" (Chapter 28, p. 286).



Topics for Discussion

What are the trademark signs that a murder victim has been killed by Stitch-face? Why does Stitch-face have a vendetta against Dr. Pyke and the Fraternity? Why does Stitch-face spare the life of Alaizabel, after tricking her and tying her to a chair? How does Carver determine that the Green Tack murders are not the work of Stitch-face?

What is the religious viewpoint of Devil-boy Jack? Why does Thaniel disagree with Devil-boy Jack? What, according to Dr. Pyke, caused wych-kin to appear in the world? Whose viewpoint is most compatible with the notion of faith, or with organized religion?

Why does much of London lie in ruins, over twenty years after being attacked by the Prussians? Why are the Old Quarter and the Crooked Lanes especially dangerous? What is the connection between the wych-kin and the Vernichtung? What do the airships symbolize in the novel?

What are Wards? How did Thaniel and Cathaline learn to make Wards? How does Alaizabel gain the ability to make Wards? Is the creation of Wards evil?

How did Thaniel's parents influence his character? How did Alaizabel's parents influence her character? Were their parents positive or negative influences? Why does Thaniel have such a difficult time living up to the reputation of his father? Why does Alaizabel care so little that her parents were found dead?

Can predestination coexist with heroism? With evil? If actions are predetermined, are people responsible for their actions? Are victims random or predestined? List several life lessons that the author shares within the pages of his novel.

Why do people join the Fraternity? Why don't people leave the Fraternity, even after they realize that it is a force for evil? What is the ultimate goal of the Fraternity? Does the Fraternity equate with Nazism or communism? Why are greed and power so intoxicating?

Based on lessons learned in the course of this novel, must the Age of Reason result in the decline of happiness, self-sufficiency, art, and faith? Can knowledge coexist with faith? Will the survivors of the Darkness continue to be grateful for their second chance, or will they fall into the same habits that brought about the wych-kin and the Darkness?