

The House Next Door Study Guide

The House Next Door by Anne Rivers Siddons

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Plot Summary

The House Next Door tells the story of an allegedly haunted, or possessed, house that plays upon the weakness of the people who live in or even visit the home. Before the house is destroyed by well-meaning neighbors Colquitt and Walter Kennedy, it is the setting of a terrible accident that results in a miscarriage, the complete breakdown of an emotionally unstable woman and the murder-suicide of an entire family. Although others believe the occurrences in the house are merely the result of bad luck, the Kennedys trace the home's bad nature back to Kim Dougherty, the architect who built the house. In the final chapter of the book the Kennedys have murdered Kim and prepare to burn down the house.

The first family to live in the haunted house is first devastated by a miscarriage. The family is then torn apart when the husband is discovered in a homosexual embrace. The second family who lives in the house has no better luck. The already emotionally delicate Anita Sheehan is forced to lose touch with reality once and for all when she witnesses her husband having sex with their next door neighbor. The lives of the third family who live in the house are ended in a murder-suicide. Meanwhile, next door neighbors Walter and Colquitt Kennedy feel as if the house is trying to tear them apart. However, the two bind together in an attempt to destroy the house and keep it from devastating any more lives.

Although this book is disturbing and its ending unsatisfying, it is enjoyable and engrossing on the whole. The book is intended as a horror story in which the unwitting Kennedys become the pawn of a haunted house. Although they sacrifice their lives to save others from being destroyed by this house, they also allow themselves to be used by the house to spread its destruction. The ending of the book indicates that since the plans for Kim's house still exist, the Kennedys' sacrifice was meaningless.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The House Next Door tells the story of an allegedly haunted, or possessed, house that plays upon the weakness of the people who live in or even visit the home. Before the house is destroyed by well-meaning neighbors Colquitt and Walter Kennedy, it is the setting of a terrible accident that results in a miscarriage, the complete breakdown of an emotionally unstable woman and the murder-suicide of an entire family. Although others believe the occurrences in the house are merely the result of bad luck, the Kennedys trace the home's bad nature back to Kim Dougherty, the architect who built the house. In the final chapter of the book the Kennedys have murdered Kim and prepare to burn down the house.

Colquitt Kennedy begins the novel by describing the type of people she and her husband are not. They are not rich. They are not young with the promise of being famous, or old with stores of useful knowledge. They haven't done anything specifically worthy of publicity. Colquitt and her husband Walter live in a nice neighborhood and own two cars. Walter is the president of an advertising agency. Colquitt does freelance public relations.

Although Colquitt does not believe she and Walter are the type of people who should draw the interest of People Magazine, they are currently being interviewed for an article. However, it was Colquitt who called People and requested the publicity because she believes the house next door to them is haunted. Colquitt knows the article will cause her and her husband to lose their friends and their standing in society, but she is not concerned about these losses.

Colquitt decided to contact People Magazine because this haunted house is up for sale again. Colquitt and her husband plan to warn people against buying the house, even if they anger people. There is also a fear the couple may be sued. They also believe Walter may be forced to quit his job. Colquitt believes she is in danger of losing her clients. If the couple is unable to keep the house from being sold, they plan to burn the structure down. Colquitt and Walter do not believe they will be punished for their act of arson because they believe this act will result in their own death.

Prologue Analysis

As is expected from a prologue, this section introduces the main characters of the book, and also outlines the main topic of the book. The prologue is written from the first person point of view Colquitt, a woman who claims she lives next door to a haunted house. Colquitt sets a tone in her prologue that is both urgent and chilling. She and her husband Walter are being interviewed by People magazine concerning the things that have happened in the house next door to them. Although Colquitt does not describe



herself and her husband as people who would generally be interviewed by this magazine, she admits that she has initiated this meeting. It is the intent of Colquitt and Walter to keep anyone else from buying and living in the house next door to them. They are so determined to keep a new family from buying the house that they are prepared to lose their jobs and their friends in the process. Their determination is so strong that in the conclusion of the prologue, Colquitt writes that if the house is purchased, she and Walter plan to burn the structure. She ends with the chilling statement that they do not believe they will be punished for this act of arson because they won't live long enough to be punished.



Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 1 and 2

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Colquitt's friend and neighbor Claire Swanson is the one who tells Colquitt the lot next door to Colquitt's house has been sold. Although Colquitt loves the lot next door to her house, she and husband Walter did not buy it because they had been told no architect had figured out how to build a house on the unusually shaped lot. They instead bought the lot next door and enjoyed the privacy and beauty that the empty, wooded lot provided them. The Kennedy's bedroom, their patio and a room to be used as Colquitt's future office all face this lot. Although it has been said no one could build a house on this lot, Roger, Claire's husband, has seen the plans for the new house. Colquitt is unhappy with the idea there will be bulldozers and workers digging up the lot and taking down trees and bushes. Claire tells Colquitt the new home's owners will be a young couple who are expecting a baby. The house is a baby gift from the girl's father. Roger has heard the two refer to each other as Buddy and Pie. Colquitt shares the distress she feels about this news of the new house with Claire. Claire encourages Colquitt to make the changes she needs to in her life to adjust to the new house.

In Chapter 2 Walter and Colquitt meet their future neighbors. They had spent the night before talking about the future house and trying to keep themselves in a positive frame of mind. The next morning the couple ran some Saturday morning errands, ate lunch and watched a movie. They had returned home for yard work and are relaxing on the patio when a gray Mercedes pulls into their driveway. Buddy and Pie Harralson emerge from the car and introduce themselves. They have brought along their architect, Kim Dougherty. The Kennedys invite the young couple to sit and discuss their plans. They spend some time getting to know each other, then just before they leave, Pie shows the Kennedys the plans for the new house. Colquitt is impressed with the plans. She and Kim make eye contact over the plans in a shared appreciation of the beauty of the house. As they lie in bed that night, Colquitt hears an owl in the woods. The sound reminds her of her grandmother's superstition that this sound indicated that someone would die if the hearer didn't tie a knot in their sheets.

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The tone of the novel lightens as Colquitt and neighbor Claire discuss the sale of the McIntyre lot. Colquitt is concerned mostly with the ways in which the new house will disrupt her life. Colquitt comments she is tempted to move. Claire's words to Colquitt are that a house is not worth moving over. Keep these words in mind, as they will be seen to come back to haunt Claire.



Although Colquitt is prepared to hate any house that is built on the lot next door, she is pleasantly surprised by the plans the architect has drawn for the new house. Colquitt describes the house as if it looks like a living thing that has grown up out of the ground. She says that it has a commanding yet soothing presence. She and the architect connect in their admiration of the structure. Buddy and Pie Harralson, however, are a different story. Although Pie's father is paying for the house, she has chosen a design she knows he will hate. Colquitt senses some tension between Buddy, Pie and Kim concerning the circumstances under which the house is being built. Colquitt and Walter agree, however, that Kim would have the house built no matter what the circumstances. Colquitt senses that Kim is a great architect.

The tone of the story again turns chilling as Colquitt hears an owl in the woods. She remembers her grandmother's superstition that this sound indicates that someone will die. Although Walter discredits Colquitt's actions, she ties a knot in the sheets on their bed, an action she believes will keep the death from occurring.

It is important to notice the way in which the author describes the relationship between Colquitt and Walter. They have no children because they do not want them. They feel complete in their relationship with each other. Colquitt admits that in a way she feels guilty that her life is as comfortable and selfish as it is, but that she wouldn't want her life to be any other way.



Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 3 and 4

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Construction on the Harralsons' house starts the day after Labor Day. Colquitt is newly upset each day when she comes home from work to see trees have been cut down. Dust covers everything at the Kennedy house. Even the cats are angered by the construction. However, Colquitt does admit that once the house is finished and the lot landscaped, the lot next door will not have changed as much as she first thought it would.

One evening Claire and Roger Swanson kid Colquitt about her developing friendship with Kim, the Harralsons' architect. Colquitt writes that even her husband, Walter, likes Kim. She stresses that her relationship with Kim will never be anything but a friendship. The friendship had started one day when Kim asked Colquitt to make a phone call to his office for him. While discussing the Harralson's house with Colquitt, Kim admits this house is not his first project. While still in school, Kim worked on two projects that were never finished. These unfinished projects spear Kim's determination to finish this house. As they get to know each other Kim tells Colquitt he was adopted by a rich philanthropist. Although his father wanted Kim to be a lawyer, Kim wanted to go to architect school. The father paid for Kim's school, and helped him open an office and get started in his career.

In Chapter 4 Colquitt writes that she and Walter met Pie's father when Pie suffered a miscarriage. The Kennedys had seen the couple often at the house. Colquitt noticed Pie would often put herself in precarious positions on the new construction site. Pie admits she is ready for the baby to be born so she can dance again. She brags that her father is going to pay for a nurse so she won't be tied at home to the baby.

One day while talking with Kim he tells the Kennedys that it was his partner Frank who let him know that Harralsons were wanting to build a new house. Kim pitched himself to the couple and was hired to design the house. Although he is paying for the house, Pie's father has not been allowed to see the new construction or the plans. Kim jokes about the house being one that will put Pie's father in the grave.

In mid-November Pie falls down the basement staircase in the new house. This accident causes her to miscarry her baby. Colquitt learns about the accident from Claire, who found Pie after the accident. Later, at the hospital, Buddy asks why Pie was at the house by herself after he told her not to go there alone. Although Colquitt expects the miscarriage to change Pie, Pie appears normal when Colquitt and Walter visit her in the hospital. During the visit, the Kennedys also meet Pie's father. The father appears to be more upset about the loss of the baby than Pie. Pie tries to get her father to go to supper with the Kennedys, but he refuses to leave his daughter alone. When Colquitt

asks him if he has seen the house, Pie's father states that he wished he had burnt the house to the ground when he did see it.

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Although Pie's miscarriage is seen only as an unfortunate accident at first, it is actually the first of many unusual things that happen in the Harralsons' house. Buddy mentions at the hospital that he had told Pie not to go to the construction site alone. For some unknown reason, however, Pie was at the site alone. Since it was common for Pie to put herself in precarious positions while on the site, it was not odd for her to not take the extra care needed during the pregnancy. Colquitt also gets the feeling from Pie that Pie is not upset about the loss of her baby.

Notice also in this section the growing friendship between Colquitt and Kim. Although they have not known each other very long, Colquitt feels a deep connection with the young architect. There are jabs from neighbors that the relationship between the two is more than just a friendship. Colquitt claims there will never be more than a friendship between herself and Kim. She insists that Walter is her only love. During their conversations, Colquitt learns that Kim worked on two projects before the Harralson's house. Because neither of these projects were finished, Kim is determined to get the Harralson house up. Also, Kim is adopted. It is his adoptive father who paid Kim's way through architecture school and then helped the young architect get set up in an office.



Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 5 and 6

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

During discussion about Pie at the Swanson's house after Eloise's annual Christmas party, Kim mentions that he had been to see Pie. He jokes that he was afraid she would ask him to stop work on the house. If she had requested this, Kim jokingly indicates he would have demanded a check then choked her. As the house continues to take shape, Colquitt notices that Kim seems distracted. Kim admits that he has been having trouble designing new houses. Walter and Colquitt try to convince the discouraged young architect that he has simply hit a dry spell.

Meanwhile, Walter rebukes Colquitt for her relationship with Kim. He indicates that Colquitt has become obsessed with Kim. Colquitt searches her feelings for Kim and determines there is no romantic love there, only perhaps the love and concern a mother might feel for her child. She convinces Walter these are the only feelings she has for Kim. Later that night Colquitt notices Buddy and Lucas Abbott searching the building site with a flashlight. Lucas has lost his watch, but the two are unable to locate it in the dark.

In Chapter 6, Pie and Buddy Harralson and Lucas Abbott drop in to visit Walter and Colquitt one cold March day. The trio is accompanied by Casey, a setter puppy that Lucas has given the couple. The group talks about Lucas's family and his search for a home. Discussion then turns to the Harralsons' house. Pie invites everyone over to the new house to look at the wallpaper that Lucas has picked out for their bedroom. They allow the puppy to run loose on his leash and soon hear him howling from the opposite side of the house. Buddy goes to get the puppy and returns with the news the puppy had found a family of dead possums. The men won't allow the ladies to see the animals because the animals are so badly torn apart. Throughout the next weeks, decimated baby animals are occasionally found around the Harralsons' house. One day when Kim and Colquitt are discussing what might be happening to the animals, Kim mentions he still has not gotten his creative juices back. Kim suggests to Colquitt that he might finish his pending work and then travel to Europe. Colquitt is upset Kim wants to leave and slightly angry, because she feels Walter would be happy if Kim were to leave.

A few days later Pie comes to visit Colquitt and leaves Casey tied to the patio table. They leave the puppy tied on the patio while they discuss the house warming party that Pie is planning for her home. As Pie prepares to leave, they discover the puppy has gotten loose from its leash. Colquitt and Walter help Pie look for Casey. Colquitt finds the puppy when she steps on its remains in the Harralsons' yard. The next morning the Kennedys call the Humane Society and two animal control officers are sent to search the woods. Although they investigate every inch of the area, the officers find nothing that



might be killing animals in the way they are being killed. After the puppy's death, however, no more animals are killed.

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Although the death of Pie's unborn baby was seen as a tragic accident, it is harder to explain the mysterious deaths of small and baby animals that suddenly begin to occur around the Harralsons' house. These animals are killed in such a vile manner that no one can suggest their deaths were natural. The string of animal murders ends with the death of Pie's puppy. Although animal control officers are called to search out whatever is killing the animals, nothing is ever found.

The relationship between Colquitt and Kim develops and becomes stronger during this section of the novel. Although Colquitt sees her affection for the young architect as being somewhat like a mother's love for her child, Walter seems to have a different opinion of the relationship. There are situations in which Walter appears suspicious of Colquitt's affection toward the young man. In fact, in one instance Walter suggests that Colquitt is becoming obsessed with Kim. In all of these situations, however, Colquitt is able to convince Walter that she has no romantic feelings toward Kim.

Notice also the relationship between Buddy and Lucas Abbott. Although Lucas is Buddy's boss at work, it seems that the two are quite a bit closer than a boss and employee should be. In fact, Lucas has even been responsible for helping to pick out decorations and wallpaper for the Harralsons' new house. Even Pie indicates the two are unusually close.



Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 7 and 8

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The day of Pie's housewarming party, Walter and Colquitt notice the busy preparations at the Harralson house as they go about their daily business. Colquitt and Walter offer to arrive early at the party to help calm Pie's nerves. Colquitt writes that the party starts out well. The arrival of Pie's parents seems to complete her joy that evening. Colquitt and Walter both sense that Matt Gladney, Pie's father, doesn't like the house. This feeling spreads and soon Claire asks Colquitt why Pie's father is so angry. They suspect it is because Gladney had no hand in helping design or decorate the house. It was done by Pie and her husband alone.

The Abbott family and Kim are the final ones to arrive at the party. As Colquitt meets the Abbotts, she again feels uncomfortable. There seems to be an uneasiness between the family and a coldness on Mrs. Abbott's part. Colquitt slips away from the party, onto the deck, where she discovers Kim also standing there. Kim shares with Colquitt his feeling that there is something wrong in the house, some aspect built into it that he didn't put there. He believes it is this aspect that has taken away his ability to design. In an attempt to comfort her friend, Colquitt hugs Kim, then the two return to the party. They find Walter and Claire were watching them together on the deck.

It is at this time that Colquitt indicates the atmosphere of the party changes. Gladney and Buddy seem to engage in a tiff, then Lucas Abbott leads Buddy out of the room. Colquitt wants to leave then, but Walter encourages her to wait just a moment longer. Colquitt writes that she remembers hearing Pie scream. She then remembers being at the door of the downstairs guest bedroom where Gladney is on the floor, dead from a stroke. Buddy and Lucas are standing next to the bed, both nude, locked in an embrace.

In Chapter 8, Colquitt reports the Harralsons put their house up for sale immediately. Although Colquitt never sees either Pie or Buddy again, she hears they have divorced and that Pie now lives with her mother. When Kim comes to visit the Kennedys about a month after the party, he shares with them his idea that it was something in the house that made all of the tragedies occur. Kim feels that if he can bear whatever it is that is wrong with the house, he can get his own creative abilities back. A week after Kim's visit, Buck and Anita Sheehan move into the Harralson house.

Part One: The Harralsons, Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

In these final two chapters of Part One, the Harralson tragedies come to a head. During the housewarming party, Pie's father has a stroke and dies when he discovers his son-



in-law in what appears to be a homosexual embrace with another man. Most of those who attended the party assume the events are simply those of a natural type. Gladney had already had an altercation with Buddy and it was well-known Pie's father was not happy with the house, or with his son-in-law. The extra shock of the discovery of his son-in-law in a improper relationship would have increased Gladney's blood pressure to the point where a stroke was likely. Those who are aware of the unusual relationship between Buddy and Lucas assume their homosexual relationship has been going on for some time. Only Kim attributes these tragedies to the house. He believes the two men had never had homosexual tendencies before. He points out to Colquitt that the two seemed to be just as surprised as everyone else with what was happening. At this point even Walter and Colquitt believe Kim is slightly crazy for blaming the house for the things going on inside it.

Meanwhile, Claire and Walter have witnessed Colquitt giving Kim a comforting hug on the deck outside the Harralson house. As soon as Colquitt is aware they have been watching, Colquitt knows they suspect there is something going on between Kim and Colquitt. The looks on their faces make Colquitt angry that the two people she loves most believe she would engage in this type of relationship with another man. Later, after Kim's visit to the Kennedys, Walter indicates to Colquitt that she knows Kim better than he does. Walter also shows a desire to stop talking about the young architect and his ideas. Both of these actions by Walter indicate a hidden jealousy concerning his wife's relationship with the young architect.



Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 9 and 10

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Although they are uncomfortable with the idea of neighbors moving into the Harralson house so soon after the tragedies there, Walter and Colquitt trek across their yard to visit the Sheehans. Their first impression of Anita is that she has been sick. She appears too thin and overly shy. It is Anita who meets the Kennedys at the door. She quickly calls her husband, Buck, who leaves his wife in the house and pulls the door shut behind him. As they talk about moving and neighbors, Anita gets the idea Buck hopes she will spread the word not to bother Anita for awhile. Buck tells the Kennedys that Anita has just gotten out of the hospital after an eight month stay. As the Kennedys leave, Buck asks a series of question about the number and ages of children on the block. Although the Kennedys find the line of questioning unusual, they answer honestly. Back at their house, Colquitt quiets her fears about the Sheehans by engaging Walter in sexual relations. This renewed closeness makes Colquitt feel as if everything will be all right.

In Chapter 10, Colquitt holds a dinner party for the Sheehans about a week after their initial meeting. Claire and Roger Swanson and Virginia and Charles Guthrie attend the party also. Before the Sheehans arrive, Colquitt describes Anita to the others as being "haunted." As the night progresses, Colquitt realizes that others sense the same nature in Anita that she has sensed. Despite this feeling, the party goes well. Buck fits in well with the men and even Anita appears to loosen up and enjoy herself. After dessert, the Swansons' oldest son, Duck, appears in the Kennedys' driveway, calling for his mother. Buck and Anita have a violent reaction at the appearance of the young man. Anita drops her drink and begins to rock in her chair. Buck and Virginia help Anita up and they move toward the Sheehan house. Before they leave, Buck turns back and explains that their only son was killed in Vietnam. Duck's silhouette against the streetlight had reminded them both of their deceased son.

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

From the very beginning, Colquitt senses a strangeness and haunted nature around Anita Sheehan, their new neighbor. Colquitt describes her as being thin, pale and highly nervous. It appears that she has suffered with some sort of mental breakdown after the death of her son. The mere sight of Claire and Roger's son Duck sends Anita into shock.

Note that in this part of the book, Virginia Guthrie, the Sheehan's other next door neighbor seems to take a more active role. In earlier parts of the novel, Virginia has been described as a beautiful lady who is full of grace. In this section, Colquitt expands

the description of her friend to include Virginia's nurturing qualities. It is Virginia who sits with and cares for the sick in the community. For this reason Virginia is drawn to the sickly Anita. Notice that it is she who helps Buddy attempt to calm Anita, then assists Buddy in getting Anita back to her own home.



Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 11 and 12

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

After Anita and Buck leave, those remaining at the Kennedys discuss Anita's condition and the house. Although Claire blames the house for what has happened, Colquitt insists that she does not. The group waits for some word from Virginia about what is happening at the Sheehans. When word does not come, Claire and Charles go to their respective homes. The next day Virginia calls and invites Colquitt and Roger over. Claire and Roger are present at the meeting also. Virginia tells them that Anita's sickness had been caused by emotional distress. She had been in a catatonic state triggered by the death of her son. Doctors had called it a miracle when Anita began to recover from her catatonic state.

Virginia indicates that although Anita's catatonia was caused by the death of the son, there were other incidents that added to her emotional delicacy. First, as a nine-year-old child, Anita had watched her father and much loved brother die in a plane crash. Following this experience, Anita had been unable to talk or move for about five months. Anita had met Buck in college. He reminded her of her father and brother. The first years of their marriage were happy. When the son, Toby, was born, he was their world. He did well and earned many honors. He entered the army against his mother's wishes and became a helicopter pilot. When officers came to tell Anita Toby had been killed, she was alone. Anita pulled away from Buddy and Buddy turned to drinking and other women. Finally Buddy got so low that he was fired by his company. At this point he decided to take charge of their lives. He planned to go to AA meetings and get a good doctor for Anita. When he returned home, however, Anita had gotten a letter from Buck's lover and had gone back into catatonia. Buck promised God at that point that if He brought Anita back to him, he would take care of Anita the rest of his life. Buck's miracle is granted and he now hopes to make a new start with Anita. The six friends at Virginia's home agree to help Anita and Buck in any way they can.

In Chapter 12, Walter and Colquitt spend some vacation time at the island cottage they share with Charlie Satterfield, Walter's partner. When they return home, Claire tells Colquitt that the once shy Anita has joined the garden club and is planning a dinner party. Colquitt sees Anita for herself the next day and is surprised at the change in her next door neighbor. Anita tells Colquitt she believes the experience with Duck has helped her to grasp the reality of her own son's death. She believes she will finally be able to go on with her life. Anita comments on how much she loves her new house, then tells Colquitt about the housewarming party she has planned. Colquitt considers telling Anita about the events of the Harralsons' housewarming party, but then decides against the idea.



A few weeks later, Buck calls Colquitt and tells her that he has to leave town for a couple of days. He wants Colquitt and Virginia to keep an eye on Anita. During his absence, a disheveled Virginia knocks on Colquitt's door. The night before, Anita had come to Virginia's house, in the same state she was in the night she saw Duck. When Virginia finally gets Anita where she is able to talk, Anita tells her she had gone to sleep lying on the couch. When she woke up, there was a movie on the television that depicted a young man killed in Vietnam in a helicopter crash. Virginia tells Colquitt that she and Charles had looked in the T.V. Guide and even called television stations to find what movie had been playing. No station in their area had played a movie about Vietnam that evening. Colquitt suggests Anita had dreamed the scene in the movie, but Virginia tells her that she saw the movie also. When she went into Anita's house to get her pills, the movie was just ending.

When Colquitt tries to discuss Anita's condition with Walter, he is alarmed and a little angry at how deeply Colquitt has allowed Anita's situation to affect her. Walter insists there are natural explanations for the things that have happened to Anita. The next day as they discuss Anita's condition with Buck, they offer to let the Anita and Buck use their island cottage. Buck takes Walter and Colquitt up on the offer.

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Siddons uses Chapters 11 and 12 to develop and describe the events leading up to Anita's emotional condition. Anita has been affected not only by the death of her own son, brother and father, but also by her husband's affair with another woman. Her inability to deal with these situations has twice left her in a catatonic state. When Anita and her husband move into the house next door to the Kennedys, Anita still has a very fragile and questionable grasp on reality and her own sanity.

Although there are times when Anita seems to be doing well and her condition improving, Colquitt indicates the house already has its hold on the woman. This hold becomes obvious when Anita claims to have seen a movie playing on the television in her house that depicted a young soldier dying in a helicopter crash in Vietnam. This movie is ironic because it depicts the exact way Anita's son died in Vietnam. It is also ironic because the Guthries check the local television stations and discover there were no war movies scheduled to play that night. Virginia, however, claims to have also seen the war movie playing on the Sheehan's television.

In this section, Walter and Colquitt's relationship begins to show strain caused by the unusual circumstances going on next door. Colquitt has begun to believe that it is the house that is causing Anita's troubles and caused Buddy and Pie's troubles. Colquitt tries to convince Walter that her suspicions are correct. Instead of taking Colquitt's fears seriously, however, Walter appears to believe she is letting the stress get to her and is losing her grasp on her senses. Walter reacts to Colquitt's suspicions by becoming angry and defensive. While the house has also gotten a grasp on Anita, it has also put a wedge between Walter and Colquitt. Therefore, the house is not only destroying Anita, it is also attempting to destroy Walter and Colquitt's relationship.



Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 13 and 14

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

With Anita and Buck spending time in the island cottage, the remaining occupants of the neighborhood enjoy some peace and quiet. Colquitt has heard from the Sheehans only once, when they requested that Colquitt water their plants. One evening, when Kim is visiting and Walter is not at home, Colquitt asks Kim to accompany her to the Sheehans' house. Kim at first balks at the idea, but then agrees to go with her after she prods him. Colquitt describes a strange sensation in the house, a sort of soundless sound. She has to call for Kim to turn on the light in the living room. Instead of turning on the light, Kim gathers Colquitt into a passionate kiss, which Colquitt responds to even though she knows she shouldn't. The lights turn on and Walter stands before them. He has a boning knife in his hand. Kim breaks the moment by forcing Colquitt, himself and Walter out of the house by breaking a window in the living room. Once outside, the three seem to return to their senses. As they talk about their experience, they realize that none of them remembered exactly what happened in the house. At this point Kim tells Walter and Colquitt that he believes it was the house that caused that night's events. He also believes the house caused the Harralsons' problems, the Sheehans' problems and took away his own talent. Three days later Kim leaves for his trip to Europe. A short while later the Sheehans return from their trip to the island.

In Chapter 14, Buck visits Colquitt and Walter the day after their return from the island. Although he and Anita enjoyed the island, Anita has been sleeping quite a bit. Colquitt sees Anita the next day. Anita apologizes for the breakdown and explains to Colquitt that her doctor has told her she should expect these momentary lapses. A short time later, Colquitt has lunch with Virginia and they discuss Anita. Virginia is concerned that Anita sleeps so much as she watches television all the time. Virginia also tells Colquitt that Anita has been receiving phone calls. Anita believes these phone calls are long distance calls and that they are from Buck's former mistress. Virginia has been spending quite a bit of time sitting with Anita and talking things over with Buck. In the conclusion of this chapter, the Kennedys receive a letter from Kim stating that he is doing well and enjoying his trip. Colquitt is happy to see glimpses of the old Kim in his letters.

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Chapter 13 is a very pivotal chapter in this book. It is in this chapter that Walter, Colquitt and Kim have their own personal experience with the strange things that happen in the house. There has been talk about Colquitt and Kim having a relationship above that of simple friendship. Colquitt, however, has searched her own thoughts and emotions and



found no evidence of any romantic feelings toward Kim. It is obvious, however, that Walter does hold some sort of grudge against Kim because he is so close to Walter's wife. With this information in mind, one must make up their own mind what actually happened between Colquitt and Kim in the house. Was the incident just Kim taking the opportunity to make a move on Colquitt? If so, then why did Colquitt respond the way she did? Since the novel is written in the first person point of view, the reader knows that Colquitt did not expect nor welcome the kiss. Colquitt finds herself responding to Kim's embrace; however, it seems as if it is almost against her will that she is responding. When Walter walks in on the two, he already has the knife in his hand. He had to have picked it up in the kitchen, anticipating that he would find his wife and Kim together. When Walter sees the two, Colquitt describes his face as having the look of murder on it, a look she has never seen on her husband's face before.

Kim takes charge of the situation and forces the three outside of the house, breaking a window in the process. As they come to their senses outside, the three discuss what happened in the house. Although at this time, Kim tells Walter and Colquitt that he believes all of the strange happenings in the house are a result of something evil built into the very soul of the house. Kim's explanation is that the house is greedy and it takes away the best in people. He believes that in this incident, the house was attempting to take Walter and Colquitt away from one another. Although Walter and Colquitt don't give Kim's explanation much credit at the time, the reader will notice that throughout the book, Colquitt will refer to it often when she tries to convince Walter the house must be destroyed.



Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 15 and 16

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Anita's older cousin, Marguerite Condon, comes to stay with Anita and help her rehabilitate from her mental disturbances. At first Marguerite seems to be just what Anita needs, but a few days later Anita knocks on Colquitt's door with an irrational announcement. Anita tells Colquitt that Toby, her son who was killed in Vietnam, is alive and is coming home. Marguerite arrives a few moments later and instructs Colquitt to call Anita's doctor and Buck. Anita tells Colquitt she got another phone call with the strange long distance noise, only this time she heard Toby's voice on the other end of the phone. Anita claims she has the operator tracing the phone call at the moment. After Buck and the doctor arrive they take Anita to Pacewood, a local hospital.

In Chapter 16, there is a calm as Anita is at the hospital for three weeks. She comes home with a nurse who watches over Anita around the clock and takes her to her doctor's appointments. The summer is generally peaceful until one day Colquitt finds a shipment of medication intended for the Sheehans in her mailbox. Although she doesn't want to, Colquitt takes the medicine next door. Although the back half of the house is all glass, Colquitt sees nothing at first, but hears the sounds of a rhythmic thumping, then the crash of glass breaking. At first Colquitt believes Anita and Buck are making love on the couch, but then sees Anita sitting on the steps, watching the couple on the couch. Colquitt turns her eyes back to the couch and notices a gin bottle and broken glass. She also notices it is Virginia Guthrie who is on the couch with Buck. Colquitt first runs to her house and calls Anita's doctor to come. She next calls Walter and asks him to come home. By the time Walter arrives, Anita has already been taken back to Pacewood.

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

In these chapters, two things occur in the Sheehan house that cause Anita to completely lose her grip on reality. First, Anita believes she has received a phone call from Toby telling her that he is alive and wants to come home. Second, she witnesses her husband having sexual relations with Virginia Guthrie. Colquitt is an unwilling participant in both of Anita's tragedies. In the first occurrence, Colquitt is the first person Anita tells about her phone call from Toby. Colquitt finds herself witnessing the scene as Marguerite tries to calm Anita, and then Buck and the doctor prepare Anita for her trip to the hospital. Next, Colquitt receives what she believes to be Anita's pills in her mail by mistake. She feels obliged to take the pills to her neighbor, but once she is on the deck, she believes she might be interrupting a personal time between Anita and Buck. It is in horror that Colquitt realizes that it is Virginia and not Anita on the couch with Buck.



Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapter 17

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapter 17 Summary

In Chapter 17, Colquitt writes that she and Walter never told anyone about their experiences in the house next door to them. They never told about the night with Kim or the discovery of Buck and Virginia on the couch together. Colquitt wonders if they had told others about their experiences with the house if this action might have stopped, or at least changed, things that would happen in the house in the future. When Claire and her family return from their vacation, Anita and Buck are gone, and Virginia and Charles are getting ready to leave for a world cruise. Colquitt lies to Claire when she asks what is going on. Colquitt tells Claire she was gone the day of Anita's breakdown and does not know what happened. Claire, however, senses that Colquitt is lying and lets Colquitt know her feelings are hurt.

Colquitt finally convinces Walter they need to talk about what is happening in the house next door. She tells Walter she believes the house is able to find the things that make each person an individual, then destroy these things in an attempt to destroy the individual. Walter calmly attempts to convince Colquitt that she sounds as if she is crazy, and then explains that anyone else would see the incidents only as unrelated tragedies. Walter tells Colquitt that if he were able to believe the house next door was haunted, then he would no longer be able to live in the world. He claims this belief would take the core from his life. Colquitt suggests they try to warn people against buying the house, but Walter discourages the idea. While the house sits empty, Colquitt moves her office to her house. In October, the house goes up for sale again.

Part Two: The Sheehans, Chapter 17 Analysis

In this chapter, Colquitt and Walter make some decisions about their experiences with the house that actually cause them to fall deeper into the trap the house has for them. First, Colquitt and Walter don't share with anyone else their personal experiences in the house. They don't tell anyone about their near-death scare the night with Kim. They also don't tell anyone about Colquitt's discovery of Buck and Virginia having sex on the couch. Because she does not tell Claire the reasons why the Guthries are leaving on their trip early or what she knows about Anita's new illness, Colquitt causes a wall to form between herself and Claire. Keep in mind that Colquitt believes the house knows what is most important to each person it decides to destroy, then seeks to obliterate these things. The things most important to Colquitt are her husband and her friends. Using Colquitt's explanation of the reasons behind the unusual things happening in the house, the house is working on her by separating her from her best friend. Colquitt's belief that there is some sort of sinister energy in the house separates her from her husband, who cannot believe the house next door to them is haunted. Keep in mind that Walter tells Colquitt that if he were to believe there was some sort of evil force working in the house next door to them, his life would cease to exist.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 18 and 19

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

Walter and Colquitt spend the Christmas holidays in Ocho Rios. While there, they gain a new perspective on the situation with the house. Colquitt, however, admits she does not want to return home. When they do return, they discover the house next door to them has been sold again. The Kennedys learn that the new house has been purchased by Susan and Norman Greene when Claire brings the couple and their daughter Melissa to visit the Kennedys on evening. Colquitt first notices how similar Claire and Susan are. However, Colquitt is also struck with the idea that a friendship with Susan might be dangerous for Claire. Colquitt also notices how strangely severe Susan's husband is. Colquitt gets the feeling that Susan is afraid of him. Melissa hasn't been feeling well and asks to use the restroom, an activity her father almost doesn't allow. Claire and Colquitt are disturbed by his attitude toward the child. After the Greenes leave, Claire and Colquitt discuss Susan and Norman's unusual relationship. Claire believes Norman married Susan only for her family's money. They discuss whether or not the Greenes know what has taken place in the house they have bought. Colquitt and Claire decide the couple doesn't know about the house's history. As Colquitt thinks about the house, she suddenly speaks out and warns Claire not to get too close to Susan. Claire interprets her warning as jealousy. Claire tells Colquitt if Colquitt wants Claire to take her warning seriously, Colquitt has to tell her everything that has happened there. When Colquitt refuses to tell Claire, Claire leaves angrily claiming she can't be half a friend to Colquitt.

In Chapter 19, Colquitt sees Claire again at the Parsons' party. The Greenes are also there. Duck's girlfriend, Libby Fleming, is keeping Melissa. Norman comments that he hopes Libby and Duck won't get into trouble while at their house. Claire is deeply offended by Norman's insinuation. She shares with Colquitt some of the other unappetizing things Norman has done during the time he has lived on their street. This dislike for Norman helps Claire and Colquitt to forget their disagreement with each other for the moment.

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

In this section, Claire and Colquitt's relationship continues to deteriorate as Colquitt attempts to warn Claire about her budding relationship with Susan. Claire assumes Colquitt is simply jealous of her new friendship. When trying to explain to her feelings to Claire, Colquitt slips up and mentions the house next door had done something to Virginia. Claire demands to know what has happened and leaves angrily when Colquitt



will not tell her. This disagreement and the new relationship with Susan drives the wedge between Claire and Colquitt deeper.

Meanwhile, the reader is introduced to the oddities of the relationships between the members of the Greene family. Norman is an overpowering, demanding and overly proud man. He treats his wife and daughter badly and with little respect. In fact, Norman is so abusive to his wife that few people who meet him like him. Meanwhile, the once organized Susan finds herself unable to get control of her new house, a circumstance that seems to make Norman even more unhappy with his wife.

Finally, notice the attention given to the relationship between Libby Fleming and Duck Swanson. Both these young people are highly respected in the community. Since it is so well known that the two are chaste and honorable, Claire is offended when Norman suggests the two might do something that would reflect badly upon him while in his house.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 20 and 21

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 20 and 21 Summary

A week after Christmas, the Kennedys receive an engraved invitation to a Twelfth Night celebration at the Greenes' home. The night of the party, even Norman puts on a joyful face. He seems especially proud of the eggnog he has made from Colquitt's grandmother's recipe. The evening's troubles start when Susan asks Norman to help her with a second batch of this eggnog. As they head toward the kitchen, the lights in the house flicker, then go out. Norman is angry because he had asked Susan to have the problem with the lights checked on, but she forgot to do so. Susan tries to soothe Norman by telling him they don't need the electricity, but Norman insists they need the blender for the eggnog. Norman checks the fuse box, then demands Susan call the power company. Susan leaves him combining the ingredients of the eggnog in the blender. Suddenly, the electricity comes back. The blender starts up, accompanied by a cry from Norman. A shrill cry is also heard coming from the kitchen. After these noises, the lights go off again. The group, led by Walter and Colquitt, heads toward the kitchen. Norman is covered with the ingredients of the eggnog. Meanwhile, Melissa is on the floor next to the refrigerator. She has soiled herself and her clothes.

In Chapter 21, Walter visits Norman and tells him that he and Colquitt believe the Greenes' house is haunted. Colquitt thinks the only reason Walter has agreed to talk to Norman is because of Melissa's illness. After talking to Norman, Walter returns and tells Colquitt that Norman ordered him out of the house. Walter spoke to Norman out of concern for the family's well-being. Norman, however, believes Walter's story was a ploy to get Norman to move out of the house because Walter feels he is better than Norman and his family. Walter tells Colquitt that Melissa was away from the house, in the hospital, but that Susan was there. Walter indicates Susan was not only scared by his story, but then Norman blamed the entire situation on Susan. Later that day Claire calls Colquitt to congratulate her on terrifying Susan and giving Norman a reason to belittle his wife further. Claire tells Colquitt she no longer wants to be her friend. In addition, Walter's firm loses one of its clients as a result of the rumors spreading about Walter and the haunted house.

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 20 and 21 Analysis

In Colquitt's mind, the house has gone on overdrive in its attempts to ruin the Greenes. The once organized and efficient Susan finds herself unable to get things together. This makes her overbearing and somewhat obsessive husband even more irritated with her than usual. In addition, the Greenes' child has suddenly shown signs of an illness causing abdominal pain and uncontrollable diarrhea. All of this stress culminates the

night of the Greenes' party. Colquitt, however, is the only one who associates the troubles at the party with the house. It is her reaction to the ruined party, along with the idea that there is a child involved in the trouble, that encourages Walter to talk to the Greenes about their new house.

Walter's act of talking to Norman seems to have the opposite effect of what the couple hoped it would have. Instead of listening reasonably to what Walter has to say, Norman sees Walter's warning as an attack on his family. Norman turns Walter's words around and blames Susan for all of the troubles that he is having. When Walter tries to defend Susan, Norman asks him to leave. After word gets out that Walter had this discussion with the Greenes, the Kennedys' relationships are affected badly. Claire calls and tells Colquitt that their friendship is finished. Walter's company has also lost a client because of the rumors circulation about Walter's behavior. It seems that even in Walter and Colquitt's attempts to keep the house from destroying other people, they are allowing it to destroy their own lives.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 22 and 23

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 22 and 23 Summary

During the winter months, the Kennedys almost become recluses. They spend their time absorbed in each other. At a ballet guild meeting, Eloise pokes fun at Colquitt about her disagreement with Claire and the idea that the Greenes' house is haunted. In February an ice storm hits the area and leaves the Kennedys and their neighbors without lights and heat for two days. The evening of the second day, Claire knocks on the Kennedys' kitchen door. Claire tells Colquitt that Duck has dropped out of Yale and gotten married. Duck and his wife won't let Roger or Claire know where they are to come and get them. Colquitt finally coaxes from Claire that it is Libby that Duck has married. They have gotten married because Libby is pregnant.

During her visit, Claire also tells Colquitt that Colquitt was right about the Greenes' house. She now believes, as Colquitt does, that the house is haunted. Claire claims the family plans to move as soon as they can find a house large enough. Claire has changed her mind about the house because it was in that house that Libby got pregnant. Duck told his mother neither of the young people knew what came over them, they hadn't intended to have sex, and never had before that time. Claire, like Colquitt, says that she does not intend to tell anybody else what happened in the house, or her opinion of it. Although Claire cares about Susan and Melissa, she tells the Kennedys she won't risk her reputation to try to convince them the house is truly haunted.

In Chapter 23, Claire begins looking for a new house for her family to move into. Colquitt helps her, and for awhile the two enjoy a relationship like the one before the house. As time goes on, however, Colquitt begins to realize that there is too much associated with the house, all of which they have agreed not to talk about, that makes up their recent relationship. First, the two begin to notice small spaces of silence in their conversations, then the two stop seeing each other as frequently. On one of their infrequent get-togethers, Colquitt asks Claire about Susan. Claire tells Colquitt there is to be another party at the Greenes. Susan has already mailed the invitations. Roger and Claire are the only ones invited from the neighborhood. Claire tells Colquitt they plan to drop in on the party for maybe a half hour, and then perhaps visit with the Kennedys afterward. Unfortunately, the Kennedys are leaving for New York the morning of the party and will not be at home.

Colquitt enjoys her time in New York. When they return home, however, Colquitt sees the Greenes' house and is struck by the idea that no one lives there anymore. She asks Walter to stop at the Swansons' house. He does so and they discover that the Swansons have moved. At her own house, Colquitt calls information and gets Claire's new phone number. Claire tells Colquitt that on the night of the Greenes' party, the



guests had never come. Norman called some of those who had been invited and discovered they never received their invitations. Norman finds the unmailed invitations and begins to berate Susan even as she tries to defend herself. Norman lets the secret slip that Melissa is not his child and is instead illegitimate. He holds the fact that Susan's family kicked her out when she became pregnant, but he took her in and gave the child his name. Roger and Claire left at this point, but heard the sound of shots as they had almost reached their own driveway. Susan had shot first Norman, then Melissa, then herself.

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 22 and 23 Analysis

In Chapter 22, Claire is finally affected by the house in the same way Colquitt has been. She apologizes to Colquitt about the way she has treated her and the lies she has spread about her friend. The only thing Claire could do to help erase these horrible things she has said about Colquitt is to help back up Claire's stories about the house. However, Claire refuses to do this. She values more than anything the opinion people have of her and is not willing to do anything to mar this opinion. Although Colquitt is frustrated by Claire's refusal to share her own story about the house, Colquitt is really not able to force her friend to talk about the house since Colquitt herself isn't willing to share her own experiences about the house with anyone.

In Chapter 23, the Greene family is destroyed when Susan kills her husband and daughter and then herself. Although some could defend this murder-suicide as an act of insanity caused by the combined stress from her daughter's illness and the abusive treatment by her husband, it is assumed this disaster is another victory for the house. It is this tragedy that convinces Claire to move her family into a ugly condominium that Colquitt knows Claire hates, just to keep the house from reaching out to hurt any other member of her family.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 24 and 25

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 24 and 25 Summary

As Colquitt tries to recover from the shock of what has happened at the Greenes' home, she first goes to visit Claire. Claire refuses to help Colquitt and Walter in any way in their attempt to warn people about the house. In fact, Claire refuses to even be around Colquitt because she is afraid the house will get to her through Colquitt. A few days later, they run into Eloise in a grocery store. Eloise tries to talk about what happened to the Greenes even though Colquitt is uncooperative. When Colquitt finally tries to end the conversation, Eloise pokes fun at Colquitt about the idea the house is haunted.

In Chapter 25, Walter and Colquitt first go to Chick Herren, the editor of the town's newspaper, to see if he will print their story. Herren refuses to print the story, saying that although it is a good story, it is not news. Herren suggests the Kennedys go to Ernest Lipschutz at KMO. The other local paper and two television affiliates will also not cover the story. Finally, the Kennedys do go to Lipschutz, but leave when he asks to be guaranteed an exclusive.

Walter attempts to convince Norman's brother not to put the house back on the market. Instead of listening, the brother threatens to sue Walter. It is at this point that Walter and Colquitt begin to wonder if they are insane and just aren't aware. A week later, Walter's company loses a deal with a big client. The client claims he won't work with Walter's company because he has heard about the claims Walter has made about the house next door to him. Walter decides if the house goes back on the market, he must separate from his company in order for it to survive. A few days later the house is back on the market and the Kennedys contact People Magazine.

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapters 24 and 25 Analysis

In this section of the book Walter and Colquitt finally go public about their troubles with the house. They cannot find a local news outlet that will carry their story, so they are forced to put their story in a national news magazine. It is significant that the story is published in a magazine that is so widely circulated. Colquitt attempts to convince Claire to back up their story about the house. Claire refuses, even goes to the point of threatening to sue if Colquitt mentions her name in the article. Although Colquitt is disappointed by her friend's response, she should keep in mind that she is also reluctant to talk about her own personal experiences in the house. For instance, the evening with Kim.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapter 26, 27 and Epilogue

Part Three: The Greenes, Chapter 26, 27 and Epilogue Summary

After their story is published in People magazine, the Kennedys are immediately faced with the ugly reaction of the public to the story. People flock to the Kennedys' street where they stop their cars, get out and stare up at the house. The afternoon of the publication of their story, the street is nearly impassable because of all the cars. Also the publication of the story causes three of Colquitt's clients to cancel their accounts with her. The Realtor handling the house next door, as well as Norman's brother, call and threaten to take the Kennedys to court. Walter and Colquitt briefly discuss the idea they may draw some sensation seekers to the house to live there. They finally decide if someone else does buy the house, they will burn it down. Although Walter is worried about the punishment for arson, Colquitt believes the house will kill them if they do attempt to destroy it.

In June, Colquitt and Walter hear Kim's familiar knock on the door. Kim has a girl with him whom he introduces as Hope, as his fiancée. Kim tells Walter and Colquitt that he will be going back to his architectural partnership. He adds that his designing talent has come back. As Kim talks about his relationship with Hope, Colquitt begins to feel a sense of terror. Colquitt offers to help the couple find a place to live, but Kim tells her they have already closed on a house. Colquitt reacts violently when he tells her they have bought the house next door. When she regains her senses, Kim explains he wants to live in the house so that people will know what kind of house that house was meant to be. He was angered by the article in the People magazine and feels as if he has been betrayed by his friends. After Kim leaves, Walter and Colquitt decide they will burn the house down that night. Later, however, a calmer Kim returns and tries once again to understand Walter and Colquitt's view of his house. As they talk, Kim tells them his history of two unfinished projects prior to the Harralson house. It is at this point that Walter and Colquitt realize it is Kim who has caused the evil nature of the house. They believe that in order to stop the evil, they must kill Kim.

In Chapter 27, the house has killed Razz and Foster Grant, the Kennedys' cats. Kim's body as well as the bodies of the cats have been moved to the basement of the house next door. The Kennedys wait until the others on their block have gone to bed to start the fire. They wonder how they will die.

In the Epilogue, a young couple looks over the plans of the house that Kim designed. All they know of Kim is that he died recently. Frank, Kim's partner, dug the house plans out and gave them to the couple. The novel ends with a comment made by one of the people looking at the house plans. They state that the house looks as if it is alive.



Part Three: The Greenes, Chapter 26, 27 and Epilogue Analysis

After their article is published in People magazine, Walter and Colquitt's lives change drastically. Walter is forced to leave his job so that his company will not lose clients. Colquitt's clients stop using her services. Strangers flock to the Kennedys' neighborhood to see the "evil" house for themselves. Walter and Colquitt basically become prisoners in their own home.

Kim's return adds a twist to the end of the novel. Walter and Colquitt's attempt to keep a new family from living in the house has attracted Kim and his fiancée to the house. The more the Kennedys try to convince Kim not to live in the house, the more he is determined to live there. Meanwhile, Colquitt and Walter learn that Kim was so determined to see the Harralsons' house built because he had two prior projects that were never completed because of tragedies. The couple decides the evil did not begin with the house, but instead with Kim. As a result, they decide they must murder Kim in order to end the evil. However, in the Epilogue of the novel, the plans for Kim's house are unearthed and a new couple plans to build from the plans. The ending of the book leaves the reader wondering if the house will be built and if the evil will continue in this new house.

Walter and Colquitt's sacrifice also leaves the reader with unanswered questions. Even with all that they did to keep others from getting hurt by the house, it appears their sacrifice was not enough since the house plans resurface. The ending of the book leads to reader to believe the Kennedys have somehow died during the burning of the house, but even this is not certain since the book ends with Walter and Colquitt sitting on their patio waiting for their neighbors to go to bed. It is known that Kim has died, but it is uncertain what happened to Walter and Colquitt. It is not even indicated whether or not their attempt to burn down the house was successful. Because there is no more writing by Colquitt, however, it is assumed the arson plan went as scheduled and the couple was indeed killed by the house as they destroyed it.



Characters

Colquitt Hastings Kennedy

Colquitt is the main character and narrator of the novel. She lives in the house next door to the haunted house. In the beginning of the novel, Colquitt works for a public relations firm. Toward the end of the novel, she quits her job to work at home. Colquitt is the wife of Walter and best friend of Claire.

With the exception of Kim, the architect who designed and built the house, Colquitt is the first to notice there is something wrong with the house. Colquitt is deeply disturbed by the tragedies that strike the Harralson family while they are living in the house. After the Sheehans also suffer tragedies while living in the house, Colquitt decides there is indeed some evil force working in the house. This belief is strengthened when she, Kim and Walter have an experience in the house in which Walter comes after Colquitt and Kim with a kitchen knife when he discovers them in an intimate embrace.

After the murder-suicide of the Greene family, Colquitt decides to declare war against the house. She seeks publicity for her story, and finally succeeds in having the account of the strange things that have been happening in the house published in *People Magazine*. Colquitt and her husband decide between themselves that if anyone tries to buy the house, they will burn it down in order to keep a new family from living there. After Kim appears at the Kennedys' home and announces that he and his fiancée have bought the house, it is assumed that Walter and Colquitt carry through with their plans to burn the house down. The novel ends with Colquitt and her husband sitting on their patio waiting for their neighbors to go to bed so they can destroy the house. Colquitt indicates she believes that if she and Walter attempt to destroy the house, they will be killed. Since Colquitt's story ends just before they actually set fire to the house, it is assumed that she is killed during the process of burning down the house.

Walter Kennedy

Walter Kennedy is Colquitt's husband. He lives next door to the haunted house. Although Walter does not believe as strongly as Colquitt does in the evil force that appears to exist in the house next door, he allows his wife to influence his beliefs. In fact, at one point Walter tells Colquitt that if he were to believe there was an evil force in the house next door, he would basically have to stop living. Notice that once Walter gives himself over to Colquitt's beliefs and begins to support her ideas about the house, he basically gives up living. Although he knows it is wrong, Walter agrees to help Colquitt burn down the house. Walter also murders Kim when he and Colquitt decide that the evil in the house came from Kim first. They decide the only way to stop the evil in the house is to keep Kim from designing and building any more houses.



Although he does allow himself to be greatly swayed by his wife's opinions of the house, Walter does take an active role in promoting Colquitt's cause. Walter has his own personal experience in the house when he almost kills Kim and Colquitt with a kitchen knife. Although he acknowledges that at the time he did not know what he was doing, Walter openly admits that he believes the other tragedies that have happened in the house are the result of coincidence. Despite this belief, Walter agrees to go and talk to Norman Greene after the Greenes' first disastrous party in the house. Walter also goes with Colquitt to help her find some media source that will carry their story. Finally, Walter agrees to kill Kim and set fire to the house.

Kim Dougherty

Kim is the architect who designs and builds the haunted house for the Harralsons. He was an orphan whose rich adoptive father pays to send Kim through architecture school. The father also sets up an office for Kim and helps him get started in the architecture business. While he is working on the Harralson house, Kim becomes very close friends with the Kennedys, especially Colquitt. Although it is hinted in the book that there are sexual feelings between Colquitt and Kim, these feelings never come to the surface. The only evidence that Kim ever had any feelings toward Colquitt happens on the evening that Kim kisses Colquitt in the haunted house. At this point, the kiss is blamed on the evil forces that appear to dominate the house.

While building the house for the Harralsons, Kim is deeply disturbed because the house appears to take his creative abilities away from him. In fact, Kim leaves the country and goes on a tour of Europe in an attempt to escape the troubling vibes that he senses coming from the house. While in Europe, Kim rediscovers his creative abilities and also becomes engaged. After reading Walter and Colquitt's article in *People* magazine, Kim decides to buy the house and live in it as a way to prove that his house is not a bad or evil house. In the end of the novel, Kim is murdered by Walter and Colquitt when they decide that Kim is the source of the evil that now abides in the house.

Claire Swanson

Claire Swanson is Colquitt's best friend. She lives two doors down from the haunted house. Claire is the one who finds Pie and calls for help when Pie miscarries her baby. Claire begins to believe the house is haunted when her chaste son has sex with his girlfriend in the house and the girl becomes pregnant. Claire believes this is an act of revenge by the house because Claire tried to interfere in the house's plans. Claire believes the house attacked her son instead of herself because it knew that the strike on the son would be more painful to Claire. After this experience, Claire begins looking for a new house to move into. After the Greenes' murder-suicide, Claire and her family move the next day. Although Colquitt tries to get Claire to help Colquitt and Walter spread the story about the house, Claire refuses to do so because she is so afraid of what the house might do to her or her family.



Virginia Guthrie

Virginia Guthrie lives on the opposite side of the Harralson house from the Kennedys. Colquitt describes Virginia as a true lady; a gentle, lovely and immaculate woman. Virginia is most active in the second part of the book, the book that spotlights the Sheehans. Colquitt describes Virginia as the caretaker of the neighborhood. She is the one who sits with the ailing, and comforts those who need comforting. It is for this reason that Virginia is so important to the second part of the novel. Virginia takes over as a friend and caretaker of Anita as Anita goes through her cycles of good and bad spells. Virginia also spends a great deal of time with Buck, listening as he talks out his concerns about his wife and her condition. The relationship is assumed to be innocent until Colquitt catches Virginia having sex with Buck Sheehan as Anita watches. After this discovery, Virginia and her husband leave suddenly for a world cruise they have been planning for years.

Duck Swanson

Duck Swanson is the eldest son of Claire and Roger Swanson. Duck surprises and shocks Anita Sheehan the night of the Kennedys' party because he looks so much like her son who died in Vietnam. Duck is a very sensitive and intelligent young man. He is concerned that he has upset Anita without intending to do so. Duck earns a full scholarship to Yale, but instead marries Libby Fleming and drops out of school. It was well known that Duck and Libby intended to remain sexually inactive until they married. One night while babysitting Melissa Greene in the haunted house, the two have sex with each other before they even know what has happened. It is from this experience that Libby becomes pregnant.

Pie Harralson

Pie Harralson is the wife of Buddy Harralson and daughter of Matt Gladney. The house next door to Walter and Colquitt Kennedy is paid for by Pie's father as a baby gift. Pie is described as an extrovert who was chosen as homecoming queen her senior year in college. Pie made bad grades in college. She tells Colquitt that all she ever really wanted to do was marry Buddy, have babies and a wonderful house. In her seventh month of pregnancy, Pie falls down a flight of stairs in her house and miscarries her baby. Although both Buddy and Gladney are obviously upset by the loss of the baby, Pie never seems to show any real remorse that her baby has died. On the night of the housewarming party, it is Pie who first discovers that her father has died. She also sees her husband in a homosexual embrace with another man. After the tragic events of the night of the housewarming, Pie's house is put on the market. Colquitt hears that Pie has divorced Buddy and is living with her mother.



Elliott Harralson

Elliot "Buddy" Harralson is Pie's husband. Buddy's father died when he was nine and he was raised by his mother. Buddy is described as being a mamma's boy. In college, he was a member of Kappa Alpha and made dean's list in prelaw. He is currently a new member of a large prestigious downtown law firm. He plans to specialize in tax law. Lucas Abbott has taken Buddy under his wing and is teaching Buddy everything that he knows about law. In addition to his work, Buddy adores Pie and is proud of their coming baby. The day of their housewarming party, Buddy appears to have some sort of disagreement with his father-in-law. It is just after this disagreement that Gladney discovers Buddy and Lucas Abbott in their embrace.

Matt Gladney

Matt Gladney is Pie's father and Buddy's father-in-law. Gladney appears to have a very close, almost incestuous, relationship with his daughter. Gladney is deeply upset at the death of his unborn grandson. Gladney suggests to Colquitt that he would like to burn the house down because of what it did to his grandchild. Gladney appears to have a hot temper and seems to grow upset easily. He is angered the night of the Harralsons' party because Pie took none of his suggestions when building the house that he financed. Gladney has a stroke from which he dies when he walks in on his son-in-law and Lucas Abbott in a naked, seemingly homosexual embrace.

Lucas Abbott

Lucas Abbott is the newest senior partner at the same law firm at which Buddy works. Eloise tells Colquitt she heard that Abbott left his law firm in Connecticut because of some trouble with a law clerk. Colquitt describes Abbott as looking like Gregory Peck. Abbott takes Buddy under his wing and teaches him about tax law. Even Pie mentions that her husband is spending an abnormal amount of time with Abbott. It is assumed that once Abbott's family relocates from Connecticut, he will spend more time with his family than the Harralsons. Pie tells Colquitt that Abbott has even helped them decorate their new house. The night of the Harralsons' housewarming party, Abbott is discovered by Pie's father in what appears to be a homosexual embrace with Buddy.

Anita Sheehan

Anita Sheehan is a member of the second family that lives in the haunted house. Anita is Buck's husband. Even before she moves into the haunted house, Anita has serious emotional and mental issues. When she was nine years old, Anita watched as her father and brother died in a plane crash. After this experience, Anita went into a catatonic spell. She recovers from this spell and has no further problems until the death of her son in Vietnam. After the death of her son, Anita withdraws from her husband, causing him to turn to another woman. It is when Anita learns about this affair that she returns to



her catatonic state. She remains in this state for nearly eight months before she begins to recover. After she is released from the hospital, Anita and her husband attempt to rebuild their lives in the new house. In the short time they live in the haunted house, however, Anita has several experiences that cause her to lose her delicate hold on sanity. These experiences include a movie on television about a helicopter crash in Vietnam and a phone call that Anita believes is from her dead son. Anita also watches as her husband has sex with next door neighbor Virginia Guthrie on the Sheehan's couch.

Buford Sheehan

Buck Sheehan is a member of the second family that lives in the haunted house. He is the husband of Anita Sheehan. Buck buys the house and moves his wife Anita to it in an attempt to get their lives back on track. In the aftermath of the death of the couple's son, Buck had an affair with one of his coworkers. This affair not only causes Buck to lose his job, but also sends his wife into a catatonic state. Buck makes a promise that if his wife recovers from her catatonia, he will dedicate his life to making up to her for his unfaithfulness. As a result of the influence of the house, however, Buck again has an affair with Virginia Guthrie as his wife watches. It is this experience that causes Anita to return to her catatonic state.

Susan Greene

Susan Greene is a member of the third family that lives in the haunted house. She is the wife of Norman and mother of Melissa. Susan became pregnant with Melissa before she was married. Although her own family kicked her out, Norman agreed to marry her. Norman is cruel to her, but Susan lives her life in such a way as to show her appreciation to Norman. While Susan is generally a very organized woman, she suddenly loses her ability to organize her life or keep her house in order when the Greens move to the haunted house. In addition to the loss of Susan's ability to organize, Susan's daughter also becomes very sick, another factor that distracts Susan from her housework. For the first party that Norman forces Susan to host, Susan forgets to contact the power company about some electrical problems the couple has noticed in the house. When the power goes out during this first party, Norman blames Susan for the resulting catastrophes. It is after their second party, for which Susan forgets to mail the invitations, that Susan kills her husband, her daughter and then herself.

Norman Greene

Norman Greene is Susan's husband and Melissa's adoptive father. Norman is a very stern and unloving man. He openly berates Susan and Melissa. Few people in the neighborhood like Norman because of his haughty attitude. Norman tells others that Melissa's illness is not an illness at all but instead Melissa's reaction to her mother babying her. Although he has converted to the Church of England, Norman is a Jew.



When Walter tries to warn Norman about the evil in his house, Norman accuses Walter of being a hater of Jews. Norman is killed by his wife after he berates her for accidentally forgetting to mail invitations to a party.

Melissa Greene

Melissa Greene is the daughter of Susan Greene and adoptive daughter of Norman Greene. Shortly after the Greens move in the house, Melissa begins to suffer from an illness that causes her to lose control of her bowels and have abdominal pain. At one point Melissa is even hospitalized for her illness. Melissa is shot to death by her mother.

Libby Fleming

Libby Fleming is Duck's long time girlfriend. Libby becomes pregnant one night while she and Duck are babysitting Melissa Greene at the Greene's house. Libby is afraid to tell her father she is pregnant, so she lies that she is going to visit her sister but instead meets Duck to get married.

Marguerite Condon

Marguerite Condon is Anita's cousin. With her take-charge personality, Marguerite at first appears to be just who Anita needs to help her get well. Even under Marguerite's close watch, however, Anita believes she has received a phone call from her son who is known to be dead. After Anita's final breakdown, it is Marguerite who oversees the removal of the Sheehans' furniture from the haunted house.

Rasputin

Razz and Foster are Colquitt and Walter's cats. The two cats are angry when the new house is first built because they lose their roaming territory. When small animals around their house begin to be killed, then again when crowds of people come to the Kennedys' neighborhood after the publication of the People article, the Kennedys make the cats stay inside for safety reasons. The night the Kennedys plan to burn down the house next door to them, they find both cats dead. Although there are no marks on the animals, or any evidence to indicate how they died, the Kennedys believe the cats' deaths are caused by the house.



Objects/Places

People Magazine

People Magazine is a weekly magazine that includes stories about celebrities as well as some other human interest stories. It is in this magazine that the Kennedys have the story of the house next door to them published.

Kennedy and Satterfield, Inc.

Kennedy and Satterfield, Inc. is the company that Walter Kennedy owns half interest in and for which he works in the capacity of president.

Vanderbilt

Vanderbilt is the college from which Colquitt graduated with a degree in English.

The Harralsons' House

The Harralsons' house is the house built by Kim Dougherty. Walter and Colquitt Kennedy, who live next door to this house, lead a public campaign to make others aware that the house is haunted

McIntyre Lot

The McIntyre Lot is a piece of property located next door to the Kennedy's home. This lot separates their home from the Guthries' home. It is on this lot that the haunted house is built.

The Fountainhead

The Fountainhead is a novel written by Ayn Rand. This book features a main character, an architect, who prefers to build his own visions despite public opinion. There are various references to this novel in the book The House Next Door.

Vietnam

The Vietnam War was fought between Communist and Non-Communist forces during the 1960s and '70s. It was during this war that Anita and Buck's son was killed in a helicopter crash.



Island Cottage

This island cottage is a cottage originally owned by Charlie's father. Walter and Charlie now share ownership of the cottage. The Kennedys use this island retreat to get away from the stress of the events occurring next door to them. The Sheehans also use the cottage as a retreat after one of Anita's episodes. The cottage is located on the island of St. Agnes

Computer Tech

Computer Tech is the firm with which Buck Sheehan works.

Stelazine

Stelazine is the medicine that the doctor gives to Anita to calm her down after her episodes.

Pacewood

Pacewood is the institution to which Buck takes Anita after the incident where she believes she hears her deceased son's voice over the telephone.

Uffizi

Uffizi is the museum in Italy where Kim is studying.

Ocho Rios

Ocho Rios is the location of Walter and Colquitt's honeymoon. They return to this place for a vacation after the Sheehans leave the house. The Greenes have moved into the house by the time the Kennedys return from their vacation.

Chase Preschool

Chase Preschool is the elite preschool into which Claire helps the Greenes get Melissa enrolled.

Epiphany

The Epiphany is a Christian holiday that falls on January 6. This holiday marks the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus.



Tiffany's

Tiffany's is an exclusive store from which Norman Greene orders the engraved invitations to both of his parties.

New York

New York is the city where Colquitt and Walter vacation. When the Kennedys return from New York they learn about the Greenes' murder-suicide and the Swansons' hasty move.

1114 March Valley Road

1114 March Valley Road is the street address of the haunted house.

Instamatic

An Instamatic was one of the first low priced point and shoot cameras available on a large scale to the public.

Tab

Tab is a diet soft drink.



Themes

The Haunting

The "haunting" itself is the main topic of this novel, and the most interesting. It almost seems as if the term haunted isn't quite right for this house, since there is no ghost or other figure associated with the strange things that happen there. In a sense, it is almost as if the house is possessed. The evil things that happen in the house don't seem to center around a being, as is general in a haunting, but seem to be the result of some evil aura that exists around the house. Walter and Colquitt believe that Kim, the architect who designed and oversaw the building of the house, is responsible for this evil aura. They deduce this conclusion after they learn that Kim's first two building projects were halted by terrible tragedies. Although Kim seems to think these tragedies are commonplace, the Kennedys believe three "bad" buildings in a row is more than just a stroke of bad luck. They murder Kim and burn down the house that he created, believing that by doing this, they are putting an end to the evil the house has wreaked.

The types of occurrences that happen around the house that lead to Colquitt's decision that the house is haunted are also interesting, as they are never similar. For instance, the first tragedy in the house occurs when Pie falls down the stairs and miscarries her baby. Perhaps more tragic than the actual miscarriage, however, is Pie's resulting attitude. According to Colquitt, Pie seems to show no remorse or sadness that she has lost her baby. Next, small animals, including Pie's new puppy, wind up dead in the yard of the new house. Although animal control officers search every inch of the area around the house, they are unable to find any creature that might be causing these deaths. Finally, Pie's father has a stroke in the house when he witnesses Buddy and Lucas in what appears to be a homosexual embrace.

The house treats the Sheehan's differently. Anita Sheehan is already emotionally delicate as a result of the death of her father and brother, the recent death of her son, and her husband's affair. During her time in the house, Anita is confronted with an unscheduled movie about the crash of a helicopter in Vietnam, a movie that basically allows her to see how her son died. She also receives a phone call that she believes is from her deceased son, telling her that he is still alive and wants to come home. At the end of their stay in this haunted house, Anita watches as Buddy sleeps with next-door neighbor Virginia Guthrie on the couch in their living room. In the Greens' situation, the house plays upon the emotions of guilt, responsibility and pride. Susan feels as if she is indebted to Norman for giving her child his name. In return, she tries to be the person he expects her to be. In the new house, however, Susan finds herself unable to pull things together. Some could argue that the murder-suicide was the result of an overstressed mother reaching her breaking point in dealing with a sick child and a demanding husband. Others, however, could argue that it was the house that helped push Susan to this breaking point.



Even Walter, Colquitt and Kim have had their own eerie experience in the house. For some time Kim has told Colquitt there is something not right about the house. One night when Anita and Buddy are on vacation, Colquitt and Kim enter the house to water plants. Colquitt is unprepared when she finds herself in a lovers embrace with Kim. What shocks both of them is the image of Walter coming toward them with a knife and a murderous look on his face. Once Kim forces them all outside, however, they seem to return to their right minds. Colquitt, however, is chilled by the thought of what almost happened to them that night and believes these things would never had happened if they hadn't been in that house at that time.

Those Who Crack and Those Who Don't

In Part 2, Chapter 14 Walter states, "It has always interested me...the people who crack and the people who don't." This idea of people reaching their breaking point seems to be an important theme in this novel. This book deals with a cast of characters that have been pushed by the circumstances in which they find themselves beyond their breaking points. Some of these cracked characters are obvious, while others are much less apparent.

Colquitt is one of these characters whose breaking up is not apparent. Up until the time the house was built next door, Colquitt enjoyed a relatively peaceful life. When the house next door draws troubled people to it, however, Colquitt's peace is shattered. She finds herself being draw into the problems of the people next door. As Colquitt becomes more stressed by what is going on next door, she begins to act in a way that is more and more irrational. At the end of the novel, this well-loved and law-abiding citizen has alienated herself from all who love her, with the exception of her husband. She has convinced her husband to commit murder by killing Kim, then the two together commit arson with their plan to burn the neighboring house down.

Along with Colquitt, Kim also cracks under the pressure of the troubles that are occurring in the house he has created. As Colquitt notes in the final chapter of the novel, Kim is the first one to notice there is something wrong with the house. Although he recognizes there are bad vibes in "his" house, Kim wants so badly for his house to be something good that he blocks out the bad. Colquitt, and Walter also, come to realize that the underlying evil is in Kim himself, a quality he cannot see. When Kim travels to Italy and gets away from the stress of his creation, he is able to forget some of the horror of what has happened there. Kim finally sums up all of his troubles and his doubts about the house in the excuse that he was suffering only with a dry spell. In addition, Kim probably feels as if he needs to keep himself from seeming crazy to his fiancée. Had he admitted to this girl that he believed what Colquitt and Walter were saying about this house were true, she probably would have thought he was crazy and abandoned him, just as people are doing to the Kennedys. Kim knows he has built the house to be loved and to shelter loving, generous people. Since he has distanced himself from and forgotten the evil aura of the house, Kim decides the answer is for him and his fiancée to live in the house so they can show everyone what a good life the right people can have there. Kim's breaking point comes when he lashes out at Walter and



Colquitt when he learns of their campaign to keep a new buyer from purchasing the house, an act that they believe will end the tragedies there.

Emotion Versus Reason

Another important idea in this novel is that of emotion versus reason. When considering all of the bad things that happen in the house, it seems that the people involved act strictly from emotion, the house seems to cause them to lose all sense of reason. For instance, instead of heeding her husband's warning to stay away from dangerous areas on the construction site, pregnant Pie goes to the building site by herself and is, as her husband feared, injured. Pie acts from the emotional motivation of wanting to see every inch of her new house, she never stops to listen to the reasonable voice of her husband that tells her this curiosity is dangerous to her and her baby.

The already emotionally delicate Anita Sheehan is also affected by this apparent amputation of reasoning. A great deal of Anita's behaviors show a lack of reasoning behind them. She appears to act and react solely from emotion. Although Buddy swears he will never go back to drinking or sleeping around, he also loses the reason that should keep him on this track. Whether it is just the result of dealing with his sick wife, or a true attraction to Virginia, he gives into his emotions and sends his wife back into a catatonic state.

Although Walter attempts to encourage his wife to listen to reason, she too is ruled by emotion when it comes to the house next door. Colquitt is stressed by the happenings next door and is determined to stop them, even if it turns her and her husband into felons. Although Walter tries to keep her anchored, he too is swayed by the emotional pull of the house when he almost kills Kim and Colquitt when he finds them kissing in the house. It is after this incident that Walter allows himself to be swayed by Colquitt's emotional tirade against the house and agrees to help her warn others of its dangers.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from this first person point of view. The narrator is Colquitt Kennedy, the lady who lives next door to the haunted house and experiences much of the action associated with the house first hand. The choice of the narrating character is important to this novel because it must be someone who is close to the house, but not someone who lives there. Since Colquitt is able to see the house from her own home and spends a great deal of her time at home, she is the character most knowledgeable about what is going on at the Harralson house.

While there is a great deal of dialogue in the novel, Colquitt also spends a good deal of time describing things around her. She describes the features and personalities of each of her long time neighbors as well as those who come and go in the house next door. Colquitt also spends a good deal of time describing her relationship with Walter. Since Colquitt is the narrator for the story, the dialogue is important because it is only through dialogue that both Colquitt and the reader learn about things that have happened at the Harralson house that Colquitt has not experienced personally.

Setting

It is never indicated the specific location where the action of this novel takes place. The street is identified at one point as being March Valley Road, but no city or state is ever named. A great deal of action occurs at Colquitt's house, either in her yard or on her patio as neighbors drop in to visit the Kennedys. It is from this patio, and the back portion of her house, that Colquitt watches the new house being built. The next largest portion of the novel is set at the Harralson house. Although Colquitt avoids the house more and more as things become stranger and stranger, there are still stories told through the neighborhood gossip that are set in this haunted house.

In addition to her immediate neighborhood, Colquitt also includes the island cottage as one location in her book. It is to this island that she and Walter retreat at one point. They also allow the Sheehan's to use the cottage in hopes that it will help Anita recuperate from her problems. During the course of the novel, Colquitt and Walter also travel to Ocho Rios, where they spent their honeymoon. This Ocho Rios trip comes between the time when the Sheehans and the Greenes lived in the house. A final setting included in the novel is the city of New York where Walter and Colquitt take a short vacation. This New York trip comes during the time of the Greene murder-suicide. The Kennedys return home to find the house next door empty.



Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relaxed and informal. Note, however, that Colquitt, who is the narrator of the novel, was an English major in college. Therefore, the novel is written in a way that flows beautifully and is grammatically correct. One notices that there is a great deal of the novel that is dedicated to details that don't seem to be particularly related to the novel. For instance, Colquitt spends time discussing what she and Walter did while on vacation or while at a party, even though these events may not relate directly to the action surrounding the haunted house. In order to interpret the novel, one must pick through the details and determine which are significant and which aren't.

Structure

This novel is separated into three main sections. Each of these sections is dedicated to the family who lived in the haunted house at the time. For instance, the first part is titled "The Harralsons," since it was the Harralsons who had the house built and then were first to live in it. Each part is separated into several chapters. These chapters are designated simply with numbers. The novel has both an introductory prologue and a closing epilogue.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple, with no subplots. The writer, however, has a habit of starting some sections of the book at the end of the action, then working back to describe what happened. For instance, the prologue of the book actually starts at the conclusion of the action, as Colquitt has contacted People magazine about the phenomena occurring at the house next door. The writer also uses this reverse writing technique when she writes about Pie's miscarriage.

As a whole the novel is very easy to read and very entertaining. Its subject matter leads to an overall tone that is disturbing. The ending leaves the reader wondering if the phenomena of the house next door to the Kennedys will live on through any house built from Kim's designs.



Quotes

"The house next door is haunted, and I am the one responsible for all publicity."
Prologue, p. 3

"If we find that all our efforts have failed and someone buys the house, we shall set fire to it and burn it down." Prologue, p. 5

"We like our lives and our possessions to run smoothly. Chaos, violence, disorder, mindlessness all upset us." Part One, Chap. 1, p. 11

"But even if you don't, it's not worth moving, It's only a house." Part One, Chap. 1, p. 15

"This house was different. It commanded you, somehow, yet soothed you." Part One, Chap. 2, p. 24

"I'm glad neither of us is here during the day. You'd probably go berserk and axe-murder the entire crew." Part One, Chap. 3, p. 30

"On the seventeenth of November, when the shell was up and the interior finishing work begun, Pie fell down an unrailed flight of stairs leading into the basement of the house and miscarried." Part One, Chap. 4, p. 44

"'There's something wrong with this house, Col,' he said bleakly. His voice was low and ragged." Part One, Chap. 7, p. 81

"But there's something else wrong; there's something in this house I didn't put here. I can feel it, I can hear it talking to me, but I can't understand what it's saying. If I could, I think I'd know what was wrong with me..." Part One, Chap. 7, p. 82

"The unease and alienness of the past few minutes washed out of my mind at the twin sounds twisting and soaring into the dusk, but then I saw Buck Sheehan come into the lighted kitchen and lean against the refrigerator and drop his face into his hands, and it come flooding back." Part Two, Chap. 9, p. 104

"This was a pretty good place to live until Happy House went up over there." Part Two, Chap. 11, p. 120

"If it was an old house, I'd almost think it was haunted, but who ever heard of a haunted contemporary less than a year old? Maybe there was an Indian graveyard on the property once, and the natives are restless." Part Two, Chap. 13, p. 149

"'It's always interested me,' Walter said, 'the people who crack and the people who don't.'" Part Two, Chap. 15, p. 174

"Part of the ultimate agony of the whole thing and, perhaps, part of the cause of it, is that we never told anyone." Part Two, Chap. 17, p. 191



"But it's the things that happened to them! Not just bad luck, Walter, not just tragedies. The very precise things that those particular people couldn't withstand. The precise things that, out of all the things in the world, would destroy them." Part Two, Chap. 17, p. 196

"We've never put ourselves or anything we really value on the line. We've taken the best life has to give - and it's been good, it's been very good - and we really haven't given anything back. I wonder if this isn't the one crack we're going to have at it? The one chance we're going to have to...repay life, somehow." Part Two, Chap. 17, p. 201

"I thought swiftly and clearly: This is dangerous. This woman is dangerous to Claire. This friendship must not bloom. This alliance must be broken." Part Three, Chap. 18, p. 212

"I came to tell you you were right. You were right, and I was a stupid damned fool, and I'd give anything in the world if I'd listened to you, and now it's too late." Part Three, Chap. 22, p. 261

"I got too close to it, didn't I, Col? Interfered with it somehow. So it reached out for me, only not me but someone who means more to me than my own life." Part Three, Chap. 22, p. 262

"It was made for people to live in gracefully and comfortably, good people who'd appreciate what it stood for, and you've driven them all away now. Who would want it after all that stinking shit about hauntings, and forces..." Part Three, Chap. 26, p. 314

"'It's not just in the house,' I said, 'It's in him first. In Kim. That's where it starts. It was born in him. He's a carrier, some kind of terrible carrier, and he doesn't even know it. It will be in everything he ever builds for as long as he lives, and he'll never know it.'" Part 3, Chap. 26, p. 320



Topics for Discussion

Do you believe it is significant that Kim's fiancée is named Hope? Why is it significant?

Consider the change in Kim's attitude toward the house between the time that he left for Europe and the time he returned after the People article was published. Can you explain this change in attitude? Has he really forgotten the bad things that have happened in the house?

If Kim was indeed responsible for the bad aura in the house, why does the house turn against him? It seems the creator of this haunted house would have some control over its power, so why does the house come after Kim? Explain your answer.

Do you believe the house was really haunted, or possessed, or were all of the happenings there merely coincidental? How do Colquitt's experiences with the house make the idea it is haunted more believable?

Although Colquitt and Walter believe they are acting on their own behalf when they begin their rally against the house, there is a possibility that they may have been acting as the house wanted them to. That the perhaps the house wanted to get rid of them for some reason. Do you believe this reasoning is plausible? Why or why not?

In the Epilogue to the book, Kim's plans for the haunted house are pulled out by his partner and shown to a couple who decide to build the house. Do you believe this new house would have been haunted in the same way the first house was? Why or why not?

Consider the idea that when the Greenes died in the Harralson house, Colquitt indicated this was the first time the house had taken a life. Is this indication correct? Consider the Harralsons' baby and Pie's father. Why does Colquitt not think of the house as being responsible for these deaths?

Explore the incident that Kim, Colquitt and Walter had in the Harralson house. If they had shared this experience with others, do you think their story would have been more believable? Why or why not?