

# **Johnny the Homicidal Maniac: Director's Cut Study Guide**

**Johnny the Homicidal Maniac: Director's Cut by  
Jhonen Vasquez**

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



# Contents

<a href="#">Johnny the Homicidal Maniac: Director's Cut Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Part 1.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Part 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Part 3.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Part 4.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Part 5.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Part 6.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Part 7.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>



## Plot Summary

Johnny the Homicidal Manic, by Jhonen Vasquez, is a graphic novel about a young adult's descent into madness. Johnny is a troubled young man with few friends and no real recollection of his past. He hears voices that seem to come from various inanimate objects around his home, such as a rabbit he killed and Styrofoam animals. He is often made fun of, and as a result, he slowly desires revenge against those who persecute him. He is filled with sadness as the words of those around him hurt him, and as he sees those same individuals free of pain. He kills them, after torturing them, in order to keep their blood, so that he can paint his wall. He is certain there is a monster behind the wall, and that to keep the monster at bay he must keep the wall wet with blood at all times. Johnny's neighbor, little Todd, knows of Johnny's murder, since Johnny saved Todd from a child molester at the mall, and Todd watched as Johnny killed him. Todd, however, is also on his way to dysfunction as his family ignores him, his father treats him horribly, and as he witnesses Johnny's crimes. Johnny, after a deep depression, decides to commit suicide. He is almost convinced not to do so, but forgets he has a gun triggered to the phone, and he is killed when he answers. Johnny first travels to heaven, where the angels are sickened by his actions, and where he learns he is not to go to heaven. Johnny incites a riot in heaven, and is immediately sent to hell. Satan informs Johnny he is a waste-plug, and that he cannot be killed or harmed in life, since his role is to take the waste humanity spews and keep it inside to protect the rest of humanity. On his return, Johnny decides to become cold and unfeeling, since his destiny requires him to be abused. The creature in his wall, which turns out to be real, escapes and eats several of his hostages, and little Todd dreams of the animal.

The story of Johnny is one of teenage rage, anger against the world, and a mentally insane individual whose life consists of trying to find peace through violence. His happiness, although rare, causes him to spiral into despair and kill those closest to him. The voices in his head keep him miserable, while his own psyche makes him a slave to his desires. It is only when he dies and discovers his purpose that he is able to free himself from his misery. While Vasquez notes in the beginning of the novel his goal is not provide social commentary, his work truly does speak volumes about the damage humans do to one another, and the consequences of those actions.



# Part 1

## Part 1 Summary

Johnny the Homicidal Manic, by Jhonen Vasquez, is a novel about the effects of cruelty on humanity, and one young man's struggle to break free from his own insanity. Johnny fights the voices in his head as he struggles to find his purpose in life. This story tracks his journey from pain to heaven to hell and to emotional detachment.

In the first strip of Part 1, little Todd, or Squee, hears noises in his new home. He goes to his mother, who ignores him, and then to his father, who reminds him he is unwanted. Todd is sent back to his room, where he finds his bedroom window broken. He hears noises in the bathroom, and investigates to find Johnny, bleeding and searching for antiseptic. Johnny explains to Todd that his last victim fought, and then he greets Shmee, Todd's teddy bear. At first he is kind, but eventually begins screaming at the bear, calling him a liar. He then cuts him several times, and stops suddenly, handing the bear back to Todd. As he goes back out through the window, he informs Todd they are now neighbors. In the second strip, a surveyor is canvassing the neighborhood, asking people their opinions about the murders in the area. He arrives at Johnny's house and rings the doorbell, which is attached to a human in the basement who is electrocuted each time it rings. The surveyor notes Johnny's address is 777, but soon realizes there is nothing heavenly about Johnny's home. Johnny brings the man into the house, and accuses him of being sent by a dog who knew what he was. The man begins asking questions about Johnny's opinions. Johnny notes that people are unable to protect themselves since murder and death are instinctual. He also points out many "victims" are likely a part of the cause, since it is their mistreatment of people that causes murders to become violent in the first place. He adds that violence on television or in the media is only harmful if those watching it are idiots. When the surveyor asks Johnny's opinion of whether the murderer is a vampire, since blood is removed from the victims, Johnny screams at him that he is not a vampire, but that he must keep the wall wet with blood or the monster will escape. He then stabs the man in the head with his pencil, and throws him, dead, out the window, where Todd from next door sees the body. The next strip is, according to the novel, written by Johnny himself, and is called Happy Noodle Boy. In the strip, a stick figure screams incoherent phrases at individuals in the park on a daily basis. He screams about being a god, his anger about the people sinking his cheerios, and how humanity is an evil force. In the end, he is shot. In the next strip, Johnny is back, eating in a fast food restaurant. When he is called wacky by a waitress, he explodes, lamenting that he does not leave the house to be persecuted. He then slaughters everyone in the restaurant. On the news that evening, the newscaster notes Johnny even killed the roaches in the kitchen. He then claims the situation was "wacky", and Johnny begins to tense. Several of Johnny's captives are shown in various positions of torture in the next strip. In the end, Johnny writes in his "die-ary" that his friends stopped by.



In the following strip, Johnny contemplates suicide, because the evening is so beautiful and he is so lonely. Johnny breaks out his gun, lamenting about the state of the world and his knowledge that something is wrong with him. He feels the diseased world has caused him to become the way he is. He is stopped, however, by the voice emitting from his dead pet rabbit, who is nailed to the door. The rabbit informs him suicide is not the answer, but is soon rebutted by the voice from a dough-boy statue. Dough-boy, or D-boy, tells him he should escape the world through suicide. The two begin to argue, and Johnny nearly shoots the rabbit, but the rabbit convinces him he could still get help for his problems. When D-boy again begins to spout about Johnny being beyond redemption, he again nearly kills himself, but in the end, another voice tells him his favorite commercial is on. The strip ends with Johnny in front of the television, laughing. Happy Noodle Boy is next, and this strip follows Noodle Boy throughout his day. He begins by verbally attacking a doughnut, jumping on cars, and yelling at beggars. He is shot, threatens several individuals on the way home, jumps onto another car hood, arrives home to yell at his appliances, and threatens someone who calls. In the end, he is shot again. In the final strip, Johnny writes to his die-ary that he has stuffed dolls with dead rats he has shoved into the blender. He wonders if there is something wrong with him.

## Part 1 Analysis

In the first section, readers meet the prime character, Johnny, as well as several other important characters, such as Todd, Shmee, nail-rabbit, and dough-boy. Johnny is clearly a disturbed individual who believes he is the victim of worldly discrimination. He kills several individuals for their treatment of him, but also seems to kill whenever he is slightly upset. He believes the voices he hears are real, and believes there is a monster in his home. Johnny's discussion with the surveyor enlightens readers as to the main theme of the novel, that humanity is the cause of their own demise as they treat others badly, thereby creating the anger and violence that eventually consumes them. Little Todd, the neighbor, is only a witness to such violence, but his parents' attitude certainly does not help him to combat the evil he sees.

Noodle-boy, Johnny's release, is clearly just as insane as Johnny. However, if one looks closely at the words he spews, there is some semblance of logic within the ideas, although the words seem out of place. Noodle-boy, too, is lamenting about the state of the world and the attitude of humanity as they spew hate and anger. He functions as an outlet for Johnny's own anger.

The characters within Johnny's home, including nail-bunny and Dough-boy, are also manifestations of Johnny's own personality. Nail-bunny appears to be the rational component of Johnny's mind, whereas Dough-boy is the irrational, emotional, depressed component. Both battle for Johnny, much as his own mind battles for sanity. His indecision is voiced in the end by another character, and for the present, Johnny is saved. The ending scene of Johnny filling dolls with rat parts shows again his unstable mental condition. Additionally, in this section, the idea that Johnny cannot die is mentioned briefly, foreshadowing his findings later in the novel of his true purpose.

It is also interesting to note that there are hidden messages in many of the borders surrounding the comic strips. These messages are simple and short, and say things such as "Have Some Grief" and "Worship Me". The author has integrated the letters into the graphics so the messages are difficult to see, but are entertaining once noticed.



## Part 2

### Part 2 Summary

Part 2 begins with a conversation between Johnny and one of his captives. Johnny asks why humans are so unpleasant, and notes his inability to care for those who mistreat others. The captive notes this is a general statement, and Johnny agrees that since he might be completely insane, his ideas may be flawed. The prisoner asks to be set free, and Johnny refuses, informing him that he should see pain as a blessing, since it shows he is not yet dead. The victim asks why he is being harmed, and Johnny notes he is using him as an effigy for mankind's cruelty. When the victim points out Johnny could just kill himself, Johnny notes he knows self loathing, but that he is invincible anyway. The captive points out he is not like others, and that Johnny could have chosen someone else. Johnny agrees, but says he was not in the mood to hunt someone down. The victim reveals himself to be Edgar Vargas, and Johnny gives his own name, noting he is also called "nny," as in knee without the k. Nny explains he needs blood to cover the wall in his room. He also explains that he found the house with several levels of torture devices and moved in, but that something lives in the wall. Nny becomes angry, and Edgar explains he believes in God, so is unafraid. Johnny kills him, after telling him he envies his conviction. In the second strip, several victims of Johnny's are shown in various states of agony and despair as they either plead for their lives, swear to change their behaviors, or threaten Johnny. Johnny explains that all victims lie in their dying hours, and notes that if they had a desire to live better, they would have lived better. He notes they do not regret their actions, but regret being caught. Johnny states they all make noises, but sometimes, words get through that make him uncomfortable. After killing several, Johnny wonders why he does not get earplugs.

In the next strip, Johnny has taken a young woman hostage. He informs her she is beautiful as she cries, asking what she has done. Johnny becomes angry, and reminds her she and her friends laughed at him, even though he does not know them. He screams that perhaps she and her pretty friends do not recall such actions, but that people like her are pretty on the outside and ugly on the inside. He threatens to make her outside look like her inside, but suddenly stops, saying he will not. He notes he may be ugly on the outside, and when he begins to discuss what he is like on the inside, he kills the young woman. In his diary, he notes he has discovered he is ugly on the inside. In the following strip, Johnny is on a date with Devi, a pretty young woman. The two go back to his house, and discuss how their relationship has grown over several months as Johnny visited Devi in the bookstore. Johnny asks why she asked him out, and she replies that she thinks he is fun and enjoys his company. She jokingly notes she hopes he feels the same, or she will have to kill him, and the two laugh together. Johnny nearly kisses Devi, but suddenly realizes he is happy. He leaves the room, unable to deal with the emotion. Mr. Eff, one of the dough-boys, reminds him happiness should be enjoyed, but D-boy, the other dough boy statue, informs him love is fake, and that Johnny does not deserve happiness. Mr. Eff tells Johnny to capture the happiness so it cannot disappear. When Devi comes to find Johnny, he prepares to kill her, stating



that he cannot let her escape, because his happiness would end. However, Devi beats him up and escapes.

In the next strip, Johnny runs to the store, thirsty for a brain-freezy. When he is told the machines are turned off at night, he attacks the clerk, explaining he is planning to kill himself, and now the clerk, as well. When the clerk suggests Johnny just kill himself, he explains that he is alone in his misery in life, but wants a companion in death. When he is threatened with being caught by security cameras, he explains he is never caught. After noting the clerk has defecated in his pants, Johnny kills him. However, when he turns the gun on himself, he realizes he is out of bullets. He begins to complain about this, but suddenly sees flavors of soda he loves, and forgets the clerk as he happily begins to drink soda.

The next section is a Happy Noodle Boy strip. Noodle boy is asked if he has the time, and he responds angrily, believing he is being accused of hoarding time. When a small boy asks for help in finding his mother, Noodle boy screams that the population is now using babies in a conspiracy. He then chases a pig, believing it to be a car, rides it, kills it, and then notes it is a moose. Next he is in Africa, and is attacked by lions. He believes the maggots attacking his wounded flesh are jelly beans. Soon he is taken captive by aliens, but when Noodle boy begins to spout off, they throw him back to Earth.

In the final section, Johnny notes to his die-ary that he stands in front of the mirror, believing the other side is a better place, but that he always hits the glass when he tries to go through. He plans to kill a party clown.

## Part 2 Analysis

In Part 2, readers begin to understand more about why Johnny kills his victims. In the first strip, the conversations between he and his victim show his own knowledge that his mind is unraveling, but also show an amazing amount of intellect. Johnny is aware that pain makes pleasure more accessible, but that mankind's cruelty toward one another makes them impossible to respect or even care for. While it is clear Johnny likes his victim, he also realizes he must kill him to obtain the blood needed to keep the monster in the wall at bay. In this section, readers are also introduced to the idea that the torture chambers and multiple levels of the house below ground where Johnny kills people were there before him, possibly supporting the idea of an evil already existing in the house. This foreshadows events later in the novel. This strip also shows Johnny's own envy of those with religious faith, and his willingness to kill them.

In the second strip, Vasquez says volumes about his belief of mankind, and their lack of true remorse. As Johnny notes the various states of his captives, they are all in different mental states, from angry to depressed to sorrowful. Yet Johnny knows these states are only the result of being held captive, and not true remorse. Additionally, as Johnny admits the words they speak sometimes make him uncomfortable, one can see he clearly knows there is something not right about his actions. Yet his desire to obtain





earplugs shows also his determination to continue his actions, despite knowledge of right or wrong.

This sense of knowing something is awry is continued in the next strip, as Johnny attempts to show a young woman she is more evil on the inside, but instead finds himself to be rather horrifying on the inside, as well. Even when Johnny discovers he is happy, as he does when he dates Devi, he is unable to maintain his sanity long enough to enjoy it. The moment his despair is threatened, the voices of the dough boys begin to fight for and against his sanity, and he is seemingly talked into killing her in order to preserve a positive moment. However, Devi proves herself to be stronger than those characters Johnny laments about, because she does not ask for mercy or beg forgiveness, but instead fights for her survival and escapes. This foreshadows her strength of character later in the novel. However, Johnny shows his happiness is, at times, his salvation as well. In the store, his depression takes over when he is told he cannot have a brain freeze, and his usual urge to kill himself and others rises. He does kill, but his own life is spared, both by only having a single bullet and by happiness at finding soda flavors. The single bullet foreshadows events in the novel that show Johnny's suicide attempts are never true attempts, but only masked urges to kill others. Further, the idea that Johnny cannot be caught, along with the idea that he cannot be killed, again foreshadows his discovery of his purpose in life later in the novel.

The Noodle boy comic in this section is again indicative of Johnny's own mental breakdown. Noodle boy, like Johnny, is beginning to fear conspiracy, as is shown in the next several strips. Noodle boy is also delusional and angry at the world, much like Johnny. In the end, Johnny's own revelations that he is trying to find the self on the other side of the mirror show his desire to stop his actions. However, his final statement that he always hits glass and plans to kill a clown shows that he is, at least for the time being, unable to stop himself.



## Part 3

### Part 3 Summary

Mr. Eff convinces Johnny in the beginning of Part 3 that while he is happy, he should enjoy things. He convinces Johnny that he spends too much time worrying about those who will disappoint him, when he should just focus on his own wants and desires. Johnny agrees, and leaves the house. He is passing a trendy cafe when someone asks him for a cigarette. When he politely notes he does not smoke, the person makes fun of him. Johnny then enters the cafe, and begins slaughtering nearly everyone, noting what they have done to him in the past as he kills them, including when they tripped him, laughed at him, and beat him up. Others he kills, noting only what he does not like about them. He blows up one individual in the bathroom. Johnny leaves a few patrons alive, and informs them they should think about the fact that life is a pain without comfort for the rest of their lives. He leaves, but a bomb explodes mere minutes later, killing everyone else. In the next strip, Todd loses his mother in the mall. A man tells him he knows where she is, but leads him outside instead of to her. He tells Todd to be quiet, and that he should do something nice for him. When he says his name is Todd, the man becomes angry, screaming that he did not want to know his name. Suddenly, the man's head explodes as Johnny throws an ice pick through his head. Johnny explains he saw Todd with his mother, who seems less than caring. He explains to Todd that men such as the one who attempted to molest him are not monsters or nightmares, but simply bad human beings. He proves this to Todd by cutting off the man's arm, and noting the tissue, bone, and blood that comes out. He then rips the man's head off, and shows Todd the brain, which he says is filthy and vile. Johnny, as he mutilates the man, tells Todd it is okay to feel above vile creatures such as this. He ends by joyfully telling Todd to revel in his superiority as he throws the man's brain against the wall. In the end, he notes that his own opinions are just that, and because all people are allowed an opinion, his may be wrong. He tells Todd aliens are coming, and to run.

In the next strip, Johnny is telling the story of his torture of a young woman. Straps around her head placed to restrain her are too tight, and eventually pop her eyeballs out. Johnny laughs as he tells the story, and it is revealed he is telling the story to a young man in the same straps. Johnny is surprised when the man does not find it funny. In the next piece, two individuals are walking, discussing their annoyance at a man who sat in front of them at a theater and told them to shut up. The young woman of the couple seems to think the man was probably just trying to watch the movie. The man, on the other hand, complains about the movie, and makes fun of the man, saying he was a dork, was alone, and cried a lot. The woman asks why they are berating him when they complain if others do the same to them, but the man responds, noting that to talk about anything else might show that their arrogance is really self alienation. The woman begins to badmouth a heavy woman near them, and the man begins to again berate the man from the theater. Suddenly, a car drives up, and both are knocked unconscious. They awaken to Johnny, telling them to prepare for some fun. The woman calls the man a name.



Next, a Public Service Announcement is shown. Sarah, a young woman, discusses her pregnancy at age 15, and how difficult her life is with her boyfriend who sometimes does not come home and her new baby. She has to work in order to afford food, but has no one to take care of the baby. In the end, she begins to eat the baby, and the sponsor for the ad is said to be the council for people who are tired of seeing more people. In the next section, Johnny informs D-boy he is happy, and that he is tired of D-boy telling him to be unhappy. D-boy tells him he has become what makes him ill, and that the world laughs because he has given in to its disease. Johnny tells him he no longer believes he can commit suicide or be caught, and that something keeps stopping it from happening. Mr. Eff jumps in, stating he and D-boy only need Johnny for a little while longer. Johnny begins to question whether he is the anchor point for the universe as Mr. Eff reminds him again not to kill himself. Nail Bunny chimes in, noting that the dough boys are using Johnny. He says the dough boys are no longer a part of Johnny, and that they are even growing apart from that which now controls them. The dough boys rip Nail Bunny from the wall, and Johnny realizes he has never seen them move. To prove he is not being manipulated, Johnny attempts to electrocute himself, but fails, since the battery in his device is dead. Johnny thinks this is just more proof he is being protected. He begins laughing, and frightens Todd next door. In the next section, Johnny captures someone, threatens them, makes them test food from his fridge for freshness, and then lets him go. Happy Noodle Boy is next, and in this section, he crashes a funeral and convinces the family the man being buried is still alive. They pull the man from the ground as the mother informs the son he still has a father. When the casket is above ground, however, Noodle boy tells them the man is dead. Noodle boy, at the end, spouts off about the negative aspects of conformity. At the end of the section, Johnny tells his die-ary he has had a great week.

## Part 3 Analysis

In this section, the characters of the dough boys are shown with more detail, and Johnny's own role in life is beginning to unwind. Mr. Eff consistently tries to stop Johnny from killing himself, and in this section, it is revealed that the dough boys need Johnny to stay alive for a short time, until they are completely free of their controller. On the other hand, D-boy seems to want Johnny to die, in respect for whomever is controlling their movements. Only Nail Bunny appears to be on Johnny's side as he tries to explain the situation.

Johnny is clearly on a downward spiral as well in this section, although his mood is improving. Rather than lamenting on his condition, Johnny is beginning to enjoy not only his killings, but also his inability to be caught or killed. His violence is increasing in nature, and he is becoming more bold in his actions, foreshadowing his death later in the novel. However, Johnny again shows an affection for Todd in this section, as he saves him, albeit gruesomely, from a child molester. Johnny appears to relate to Todd in that Todd has no family to love him, and no friends but his teddy bear to turn to.

Vasquez again seems to make a social commentary in this section with the appearance of the young man and woman who make fun of others to defend their own elitist



attitudes. The young couple even realize in this section their own faults and shallow reasons for hurting others and for remaining friends with individuals they do not like, but continue to behave this way for fear of complete alienation from all others. In the end, after Johnny has kidnapped them, the young woman seems to realize her mistakes, but again, as noted previously in the novel, such people appear to only have remorse when their actions come back to haunt them. Vasquez also has a small social commentary with his Public Service Announcement about children having children. In this case, however, he is very clear and obvious in his objections to teen pregnancy. As Sarah finds herself raising a child alone with no money, she clearly is unfit to care for her child, as is shown by her willingness to eat the baby.

In the next strip, Johnny's spiral is again noted, as he begins to see the objects in his home move and hears them speak more about his inadequacies in life and whether he is, in fact, a form of a god. D-boy, always wishing for Johnny to kill himself, continues to badger Johnny while Mr. Eff tries to keep him alive. It is only Nail Bunny who speaks as a voice of reason, and when this is noted by the dough boys, their attempts to kill him show their need for Johnny to remain under their control, foreshadowing events later in the novel. Johnny's belief he is protected, even as he himself admits he forgets important aspects of his suicide attempts, appears to show either his increase in insanity or the truth of his certainty that he is being protected. His writings in the end show his own increasing happiness.



## Part 4

### Part 4 Summary

This section begins with Johnny and Nail Bunny discussing whether or not Johnny can really be doing the things he is doing. Johnny has a difficult time believing he could have become a rampant killer. He realizes Nail Bunny's voice is simply the other side of his internal conversations. Johnny continues by lamenting that the world does not realize the lasting harm it causes when it torments individuals, and that everything eventually leaves. Nail Bunny points out Johnny tried to kill the one girl who cared for him, and that he must therefore like loneliness better than happiness. Johnny reveals he cannot remember his childhood, or even his motivations for his crimes, but only remembers being called Noodle Boy from time to time as a child. Nail Bunny reminds him that he used to draw detailed images, and spent his time drawing as opposed to fuming about the stupidity of mankind. Johnny notes he realizes that a demon is controlling him, and took him over during a period of weakness by pretending to be his own voice. He states he has lost control of his insanity. He realizes he has become what he is angry about, and Nail Bunny reminds him he used to be different, and did ghoulish things for different reasons. Nail Bunny also explains the dough boys are now self-aware, and are no longer a part of Johnny. Johnny wishes aloud someone would just switch him off and fix him, and admits he is unhappy. In the next strip, Johnny's latest captives, the ones from the movie theater, are pleading for their lives. The young woman asks to be set free to help her friend, but Johnny reminds her that her friend is cruel, even to her, and suggests she might be enjoying his pain. When she disagrees, Johnny informs her he needs the blood to cover the wall, as the creature is beginning to be angry at his refusal to obey. When the woman accuses Johnny of raping one of his victims, he reacts violently, as he could never rape someone, since he has spent his whole life wanting to avoid being touched. As he quotes "The Fly," he realizes he wants to be free from emotion, and free from his pain. He finds a bug he says he has killed many times, kills it again, and then electrocutes the young man. He says he will be back in an hour to do it again.

In the following strip, Johnny wakes Todd to ask for a bandage. He assures him he has not hurt anyone but himself, as he opened a can. He also tells him he has not been out all week, and that he will not be using the window anymore, since he has found a tunnel between their two houses. He leaves, telling Todd not to let the flesh-eating bed bugs bite. The next strip finds Devi and a friend discussing her refusal to leave the house after Johnny's attack. Devi claims she has seen Johnny following her, and he always appears about to cry. She has called the police several times to no avail. Her friend convinces her to call Johnny's house to see if he answers. She calls, and when someone picks up, she hears gun fire and shrieks. She hangs up, and reaffirms her decision to stay in.

In the next strip, a Public Service announcement, a small boy is addicted to drugs and is homeless. After leaving home at eight due to family problems, he began using drugs like



dope, and eventually moved to heroine, crack, and cocaine. He can barely afford his habit now, and lives off handouts from strangers. He states he injects anything to get high, including gas, "whino pee. junkee puke" and even spoiled sour cream. Suddenly he vomits and his eyeball pops out. The closing message reminds kids that drugs make you a "hideous little freak troll baby thing with exploding eyeballs".

In the following strip, Johnny is planning his suicide while D-boy and Mr. Eff take turns pushing him into it or talking him out of it. Again, D-boy belittles him and reminds him of his useless nature while Mr. Eff requests he hang on a little longer. Johnny lets them know he is aware of their plan to use him. He has attached a gun to the phone, so that when it rings and he answers and speaks, he will be shot in the head. D-boy notes no one ever calls, and accuses him of being a coward. Mr. Eff notes D-boy does not even care about being strong enough to be self-willed, but wants only to serve the master, and therefore wants Johnny dead, whereas he himself needs Johnny alive to gain his own power over the master. Johnny, angry, throws knives through both, and screams that he controls himself, that he will no longer feed the wall, and will also not kill himself. When he turns "off" the arm to the gun, however, D-boy notes in the background it was never on. The phone suddenly rings, and when Johnny answers it, he is shot through the head.

In Happy Noodle Boy, Noodle Boy is riding another individual and bothering him, screaming obscenities and spouting his usual illogical phrases. He sucks a dog into his mouth, and spits it out, asking it to become a cabbage. He then beats the man he was riding, and is stopped by police. The following day, Noodle Boy is riding the police officer. In the final frame of this section, Johnny writes to his die-ary that he appears to be dead.

## Part 4 Analysis

Part 4 shows the beginning of the end for Johnny. In the first strip, he begins to realize what he is becoming, and the reasons for his anger and frustration. Nail Bunny, the voice of Johnny's reasoning ability, shows him his own works of art, and proves to him that he has changed. His statement that he has lost control of his insanity not only foreshadows events later in the novel, but also shows his understanding not only of his initial state of mind, but also an understanding that his current state is not one of his own making. With Nail Bunny, aka Johnny, knowing the Dough Boys have become more aware, readers can sense the impending doom. As Johnny realizes his fantasies are becoming more real than himself, he can only have one option, and that is to remove their source of power, or himself, thereby foreshadowing his own suicide. In the following section, even Johnny's young captive realizes there is a method to his madness, in that she does enjoy seeing her cruel friend being held responsible for his treatment of others. While she may not agree with the methods, she, like many readers, sees the justice in the victim tormenting the assassin, thereby ensuring a changing of roles. This strip also shows a continued resentfulness from Johnny at the creature in the wall, and his continued disobeying of the creature. Finally, his lack of wishing to touch others leads Johnny to pursue his new goal, that of complete detachment from the



world. Again, while this shows his own depression, it also foreshadows his decision later in the novel to pursue emptiness. Even his conversation with Todd shows this new style of living.

The next strip, with Devi as the main character, serves two purposes. First, the shooting heard at the end of the strip foreshadows Johnny's death in the following pages. Additionally, it shows that while Johnny would like not to care for others, it is clear he still cares for Devi. Further, her revelation that she has called the police several times further proves Johnny's own conviction that something is protecting him from being caught. The Public Service Announcement, at this point, seems interjected simply to lighten the storyline, but also shows Vasquez's opinions against drug use. His use of comedy to show a very young man so desperate for drugs that he injects spoiled sour cream is a bold, clear statement against the use of drugs.

The fight between D-boy and Mr. Eff again symbolize the roles of these characters are fractured portions of Johnny's own personality, but also show they now have their own motives. The suicide setup, foreshadowed in the previous strip, seems to be a useless device since not only is it off, but also since no one ever calls. One knows, from the previous strip, however, that Devi will call, thereby ending his life. Johnny's final decision to live his life as he wants, and to control himself, rather than allow the beast, D-boy or Mr. Eff to control him, is in vain. It is ironic that once Johnny decides to throw off insanity and live his own life, the "protection" he has encountered so far vanishes. It is only through death, then, that Johnny is free from outside influences. Happy Noodle Boy again shows Johnny's dwindling creativity and his own insanity as the cartoon becomes more random and illogical.





## Part 5

### Part 5 Summary

The first strip in part 5 finds the new captives frightened at something coming through the floor. However, the young woman soon realizes it is simply another captive, Kirk, who has freed himself after months of captivity on a floor ten floors down. They begin to hear sounds and feel vibrations as if something is shaking the house apart. Kirk helps Tess, the young woman, down, when suddenly a huge plant-type monster rips from the wall covered in blood, and begins to chase them. The creature rips Dillon, the other new captive, to pieces. Kirk and Tess begin to run, trying to find their way out. In the next strip, the two have been running for several floors, and Kirk asks to rest. Tess chastises him, and he responds rudely. Tess responds, telling him she is tired of his "manliness", and lets him know she almost understands why Johnny chose him in the first place. She asks how it happened, and Kirk admits he and his friends were shoving him around one night, when he suddenly shot laser beams from his eyes. Tess disbelieves him, but at that moment the monster catches up, and the two begin to run again. They enter a room full of captives hung in various positions who begin screaming to be set free. When one is rude to Tess, she and Kirk pass them by, allowing them to die at the hands of the monster. Tess, as they escape, laments that she is leaving a house full of cruelty to enter a world full of the same.

In the next strip, Kirk and Tess argue over why Tess is being so cruel to Kirk. She admits she was friends with people like him just to not be alone, but that now she sees their cruelty and would prefer to be alone. She wishes she had Dillons' death on tape, and begins to angrily call Kirk cruel names. Suddenly, D-boy and Mr. Eff arrive, and for the first time, D-boy is upbeat, while Mr. Eff is depressed, since D-boy believes he will be regenerated with his master, whereas Mr. Eff's hopes died with Johnny. Mr. Eff explains that the creature could only escape through the real world, so created he and D-boy to feed from Johnny's imagination to become strong enough to set him free. The two then begin to argue about whose plan would have worked out and mean freedom when the creature enters, and destroys them both.

The next strip introduces a temporary replacement for Johnny, that of Anne Gwish. Anne laments that her friends are uncool, her life is dark, but that she is not alone, as she knows several others who have great pain. She claims to go to a specific nightclub one night a week where people understand her, and notes that she practices her mysterious look before she goes. She claims her friends just want to be like her, and that her clove cigarettes calm her. In the final frame, she is amidst a crowd of individuals at the club dressed and looking exactly like her. She notes she can be appreciated here for her individuality. In the next strip, Noodle Boy is killed, and comes back as a ghost who haunts a little boy. He possesses the boy's dog, and as the dog, jumps in the boys mouth, forcing him to eat the dog. The boy becomes a servant of evil, president, and then "bad [things] happen."





In the next strip, Kirk and Tess come upon a dying Johnny. While Kirk threatens him, Johnny makes fun of him for threatening a dying man, and reminds him he is lucky, as death will be faster for him. Johnny admits he almost remembers his room outside of these walls, and berates himself for ever caring about the small, cruel people of the world. He claims, as Tess notes the darkness outside, that there are no more stars and no clouds, and wishes he knew something. Kirk finally begins to beat him up, but is thrown by the monster who comes up through the floor. Kirk opens the door to escape, but is killed by the monster, and the two are pulled out the door, into space, as the house is no longer seemingly on Earth. When Tess reaches the door, she disintegrates. Johnny is left alone on a small piece of his floor, floating through space. In the following Noodle Boy, several individuals shoot him after he again spouts his insanity. His wounds become infected, he is shot again, he is beat up, and finally, shot again. In the final strip, Johnny writes, in blood, of his new knowledge that one can scream and cry and pray to be released from something, but that it does no good. In the end, if a person is released, it is not from care of the torturer.

## Part 5 Analysis

This section shows what is believed to be the ending of Johnny, and serves as a transition to the beginning of the next section, where Johnny visits the afterlife. First, readers meet Kirk, who, like many of the others in the novel, spends much of his time being macho and acting as though he is king of the world. Dillon is killed, much to the relief of Tess, as she notes later, wishing she had a tape of the incident. Additionally, this section serves to introduce the monster in the novel, showing Johnny was not wrong about the monster hiding within his wall. This is also shown when Kirk admits Johnny shot laser beams from his eyes on the night of his capture. Tess proves in this section that she understands now why Johnny does what he does, and understands the wrongs she has committed. At the same time, she too begins to fall prey to what she despises as her own displeasure at society causes her to wish others harm, and to make fun of others. When Tess is shown rudeness by another prisoner, she too allows them to die. Tess' comments that she is leaving behind the same thing that exists in the world shows her own change to believe much as Johnny believes. However, there is a clear difference between Tess and Johnny, in that while Johnny is emotionally effected by the harm the world produces, Tess simply seems angered by it.

D-boy and Mr. Eff's demise in this section fit well with the death of Johnny. With the monster free and Johnny dead, the two dough boys have no further use. Unable to be free on their own, since Johnny's death, and with the master no longer requiring their help to escape, the two are killed. This ending of the irrational components of Johnny suggest a change coming in his own mental state. Their explanations of the monster's feeding from Johnny's imagination also explain how Noodle Boy came to replace the more detailed drawings of Johnny's past. The introduction of Anne Gwish is a clear statement against conformity, even when hidden in non-conformity, by Vasquez. Anne likes to appear different and misunderstood, but in reality, her attempts to be different are a way of fitting in with the "darker" crowd. Her continuous comments against "normal" society, and her need to be accepted by those who "feel her pain" seem to



show her own shallow attempts to fit in. Unlike Johnny, who prefers loneliness and isolation, Anne simply likes to appear as though she prefers these things. Noodle Boy too, in this section, seems to imitate Johnny as he is killed and turned into a ghost.

The ending sequences of this section again show Kirk as just another cruel human being, as he kicks an already dying man. Johnny himself realizes the end is near for him, and in his clarity, knows he is now in a different plane of reality, whether only in his mind or as a result of his existence. His realization that he cared too much about others in the world foreshadows his discoveries in later chapters of his role in life, and his choice later to become immune to humanity. This detachment from the world is again symbolized by the movement of the house to space. However, the stabilization of Johnny's mind is symbolized by the death of the house, as well as of the creature who inhabited it. Noodle Boy again mimics reality as Noodle boy is shot several times. Johnny's last statements reflect the release of his insanity, not by his own doing, but by hands outside of his own.



## Part 6

### Part 6 Summary

In the first strip of the section, Johnny finds himself in heaven. He arrives at the gate to find he is not in the registry and finds heaven to be dirty and unkempt. When he asks the gate keeper, he is told the residents have better things to do than worry about appearances. The angel reads of Johnny's acts in life, and begins to vomit. Johnny moves away, and finds himself face to face with God. When he asks God why his life has become such a disaster, God responds that he is too tired to answer questions, since he created the universe, and falls asleep. Even after Johnny reminds him of all the horrible things happening on the planet, he continues to sleep. In the next strip, which the author admits is out of place, Johnny is alive again, and torturing another person. When the torture takes too long, he goes to make them sandwiches. The following strip shows Johnny being given a tour of heaven by Elize. She explains that the mess in front is a tribute to things left behind, but when she shows him the interior, all inhabitants seem comatose as they sit without moving or talking. Elize explains that in heaven, the people lived a life of contentment without desire and thus are content in heaven without any external stimuli. All individuals in heaven realize aggression is a negative power, and choose not to use their highly destructive powers of the mind. Elize explains that for some reason, Johnny seems to have such powers also, but warns him not to use them, since all negative effects in heaven are immediately reversed. Johnny immediately begins to explode the heads of other individuals, who then begin to become angry and do the same to others. Within minutes, the tranquility of heaven is destroyed. Elize screams angrily that Johnny has ruined everything, and he begins to lament that he cannot even die peacefully, and that he is still confused. He is suddenly removed from heaven. In the next strip, Johnny finds himself in hell where he meets the Devil. However, Satan informs him he cannot stay, since he does not belong in hell, either. Johnny, confused, explains that God did not want him either, and would not answer his questions. Satan explains that to question God is blasphemy, but that he himself has no problem answering questions. He informs Johnny that he is a waste-lock. The world, he explains, is full of violence and hurt and anger, but that these are products of humanity, not of the earth. He further notes that the harms of humanity leave an actual residue on the planet, almost a slime. This slime accumulates in given areas, and each area, or cell, is given a lock to stabilize the waste. These persons or animals, whether sane or insane from the beginning, are quiet, harmless and introverted, but eventually degenerate as a result of their positions in the world. Satan explains that Johnny was a poor choice for a waste-lock, since he was deranged to begin with, and therefore simply became a larger extension of the violence he was charged to maintain. Satan concludes by noting that the system worked, in that Johnny expired, thereby flushing the waste of the world.

In the following strip, Johnny is being shown around by a young man. On the course of the tour, the man realizes Johnny was his killer in life. After whining for several minutes, Johnny kicks him from the car, but ends up crashing into a store. He wants new clothes,



but the store keeper tells him he must have money, since all things to make one look good cost money. Johnny kills the woman, and finds new clothing. Outside the store, he meets an older individual who offers to buy him a bagel. Johnny and the new person speak for a while, and Johnny determines the person should not be in hell, as she is too nice. When her bagel does not have enough cream cheese, however, she goes into an over the top display of grief, which ends up getting her struck by a car. Johnny then meets a young man who consistently rubs his eyes, and Johnny hears him screaming that he will not wear glasses. A woman soon informs him everyone acts as they do because a giant eyeball in the sky makes them think they are always being watched, so always must look and act their best. She suddenly panics about lint on her coat, and Johnny kicks her. He screams about the stupidity of hell, when Satan arrives to inform him he is being sent back to Earth. He reminds Johnny he now has control, and offers to divulge the mysteries of his existence, but Johnny is too busy worrying about whether or not he gets to keep his new clothes. Johnny disappears. Johnny awakens to find himself alive, and feeling renewed and in control. Although he hears voices stemming from a burger boy statue, and knows he is still insane, he does feel things can be different. At the end of the panel, he sits watching television and laughing. In the following strip, Johnny is in a convenience store when it is robbed, and the clerk is shot. Johnny sits and ponders the moral dilemma of whether he should still pay for his Popsicle. In Happy Noodle Boy, a dog dies and Noodle Boy attempts to resurrect him, but is hit by a car. He breaks through the roof of the vehicle to demand tacos, but is thrown when the driver slams on the breaks. He screams his illogical phrases as he flies through the air, and is shot. In the final strip, Johnny tells his die-ary he has been to hell and back, and still does not know if there is a God or Satan, but that it provides something to write about.

## Part 6 Analysis

This section, the new beginning for Johnny, has been foreshadowed since nearly the beginning of the book. Johnny's trip to heaven is a clear knock against complacency in life, as God himself has stopped caring about the world, and those in heaven appear completely catatonic, without passion or emotion. It is only when Johnny forces them from their complacency that they show any passions. The character of God, whom Johnny hoped would help save him from his own insanity, is a disinterested individual, clearly showing why the world has become the pool of disease and hate it is. However, Elize's admission that Johnny holds some powers leads to his destruction of heaven, showing he is not content, and that such powers do lead, in him, to a desire to destroy. Satan, on the other hand, is a slightly more willing conversationalist, and it is here that reader's learn of Johnny's true reason for his miserable life. Vasquez's idea of a waste plug is highly entertaining, but also symbolizes those individuals in the real world who simply seem to exist to take the garbage of others. As in reality, these individuals often snap, leaving nothing behind and allowing the world to flush such hatred and animosity without effect. Such poor creatures do exist in the world, and their demise is often, as in the story, the work of others in the world.



Johnny's trip into hell is again a clear statement by Vasquez against conformity and materialism. Everyone in hell is vain, and cares more for their looks than their own happiness or the happiness of others. Their selfishness and materialism has led them to hell, and there they remain, unchanged, but unable to change their ways. Johnny's inability to be accepted here, as well, however, shows him again to be different from the rest of society. At the end of the strip, Satan notes that Johnny can now be free, foreshadowing a change in Johnny in the upcoming section.

This renewed self is shown in the following strip as Johnny's new lease on life allows him to avoid the depression he has so long dealt with. No longer the waste plug of humanity, Johnny realizes he is still insane, but now without the emotional attachment to mankind. His dilemma in the store of whether to pay for his purchase and his decision to steal Popsicles from a dead clerk bothers him, but in a different way than previously. Additionally, his comments at the end of the novel about his trips to heaven and hell show a decrease in his manic psychological ramblings from before, and an increase in creative thinking.



## Part 7

### Part 7 Summary

In part 7, Johnny begins by realizing his new found freedom and its potential dangers. Soon, however, a knock on the door brings an admirer who knows of Johnny's killing sprees. However, when the two start to talk, the new comer, Jimmy, is put off by Johnny's change in hair and clothing. Johnny asks him to leave, but Jimmy continues to brag of his own killings, and compare himself to Johnny. He admits he liked it better when Johnny just killed without words, since it is only the blood that matters. Jimmy then tells of his own rape and murder of a young woman, and Johnny again asks him to leave. When he does not, Johnny stabs him, and reminds him that to admire someone is flattery, but to mimic their art and create monstrosity is a tragedy. As he tortures Jimmy, he tells him to be a better character and of his disgust at rape. In the end, Johnny kills Jimmy. In the next strip, Johnny phones Devi, and places a prerecorded message next to the phone. The message apologizes for his actions in the past, and lets her know he hopes for change. He gives her his nothing, which to him is the ultimate of happiness, in that with silence and complete obliteration of emotion, one can exist without pain. Devi realizes Johnny is live on the phone, and begins screaming at him, blaming him for her missing good things due to her fear of him. She informs him she will be the source of her own happiness, and that she will kill him if he comes near. Johnny hangs up and realizes things could have gone better.

In the next strip, Anne Gwish is back. She and a friend attend a club where they spend the evening bashing how other people look and behave. That evening, she writes in her diary how she longs not to be persecuted for her looks. In the next strip, Johnny studies a bug to understand how to completely detach. The burger boy statue warns him that his pursuit of detachment will take away even his desire for self-gratification, and that emotion does not equal weakness. Johnny disagrees and expresses that he will remove any parts that seek gratification and that to clean his mind he must give up all distractions. Johnny screams that he is no longer a slave, and burger boy responds that everyone is a slave to something. In the following strip, Johnny shoots an arrow through a beggar with a sign that says kick me.

Johnny goes to visit Todd one final time, and tells him he is leaving for a while. When his father comes in, Johnny hides under the bed. His father begins telling him he resents his birth, he blames him for his own miserable life, and that he should not exist. Johnny knocks him unconscious, possibly blinding him. He continues to note he would have killed the father, but that kids need a dad. Johnny reminds him to keep in control of his fears and anger and leaves via the window. Todd dreams of the monster in Johnny's house. In Happy Noodle Boy, Noodle Boy screams at a young man until the police arrive. He urinates on them, and is shot. In the final strip, Johnny writes to his die-ary that he is doing away with hope and desire and urges, and plans to become cold.



At the ending of the novel, there are several additional strips of Johnny. The author shows original sketches of the various characters in the novel, and includes a brief biography of each. Additionally, he writes a summary of his feelings about and motivations for each part of the novel. A series of Johnny comics are then given, with commentary by the artist noting the development of Johnny as a character, both in his actions and in his appearance. A false interview with Vasquez is next, where he discusses aspects of his drawings and Johnny as a character. In the final page of the novel, Johnny himself notes that while he may not like where his life is, he looks forward to where it will go.

## Part 7 Analysis

The last part of the novel shows the rebirth of Johnny as an emotionless individual who seeks only coldness. It is clear from his slow murder of Jimmy that Johnny is still insane, but his general overall feeling of sadness and misery has been replaced with a desire for distance. Jimmy, on the other hand, symbolizes those in society who miss the point of purposeful acts and look only to blood and violence. Jimmy worships Johnny not for his beliefs or his motives, but for his killing ability, and only attempts to mimic his acts, without the underlying passions. Johnny's call to Devi further shows his desires to change, and to distance himself from emotion. Devi, on the other hand, clearly blames Johnny for her recent life as a captive in her own home, and it is his call that allows her to break free from her fear. Anne again serves as an opposite for Johnny as she seeks conformity among non-conformists, whereas Johnny seeks only silence and self-acceptance.

The appearance of Burger Boy shows Johnny is still fragmented internally. He understands that to give up emotion is to give up pleasure, but also longs for salvation from pain. His final visit to Todd shows he still cares, in that he attempts in his own way to teach Todd a lesson about staying in control. It is clear from the ways Todd's father speaks to him that Todd has a high chance of becoming deeply disturbed in life, and Johnny warns him to stay in control of his anger. However, Todd's dream of Johnny's monster signifies Todd's own internal demons. In the end, Johnny's final revelations further show his need for nothingness, and show his transformation is nearly complete.

The ending of the novel brings insight into Johnny, as well as the rest of the characters. Reading the author's biography of each character lends understanding to their motives and their significance in the novel. Additionally, the author's presentation of the development of Johnny shows a clear progression, and helps readers understand him more completely. Vasquez's own comments about his work show his identification with Johnny as well as his distance from his crimes. The final panel of Johnny indicates a brighter future for him as he looks forward to where his life will take him.





# Characters

## Johnny C.

Johnny is the main character of the story and is highly insane. Johnny is a mass murderer, in that he kidnaps individuals in order to torture them in his home, or kills them outright on the street or in businesses. Johnny kills because he despises the way some individuals treat others and wishes to rid the world of these people. Johnny is often made fun of, because he is of smaller stature and chooses not to be materialistic or a conformist. Those who make fun of him, however, are killed, maimed, and tortured. Johnny hears several voices in his head, and has attributed those voices to various creatures within his home, such as a rabbit he nailed to the wall and two statues he stole. Johnny is often depressed and suicidal, but has manic moments where his urge to kill causes him happiness and joy. Johnny has no memory of his childhood or his family, but is an adept artist. His artwork consists of a comic character known as Happy Noodle Boy, whose life resembles the insanity of Johnny's own inner being. Johnny eventually realizes he has served humanity as a dumping ground for their waste for many years, and chooses instead to seek a life without emotion or attachment. Johnny is portrayed in the novel not as a evil individual, but as a lost soul who seeks only to find some form of happiness, or, lacking that, some life that exists without depression and pain.

## Todd (Squee)

Squee, or Todd, is the new neighbor of Johnny. His first meeting with Johnny occurs when Johnny breaks into his home to steal antiseptic for wounds caused by his latest victims. Todd's mother ignores his existence, and generally pretends she has no children. On the other hand, Todd's father resents his existence and often tells him so. As a result, Todd feels very isolated, and has only his teddy bear, Shmee, to rely on. His meetings with Johnny cause him great distress, but he is aware his father and mother do not care. Todd experiences several horrors as a result of Johnny's violence. He sees a surveyor killed and thrown from a window, sees his own father beat in the head, and hears people screaming nearly every night. However, Todd is also saved by Johnny one day. Todd, after losing his mother in a mall, is nearly taken by a child molester, but Johnny arrives and kills the man. To prove the man is nothing more than a bad person, Johnny rips him apart before Todd's eyes. In the end, Todd is warned by Johnny to stay in control of his anger, and not to explode, as Johnny does.

## D-Boy

Psycho-doughboy, or D-Boy, serves as another voice of Johnny, and is a statue of styrofoam. D-Boy, unlike Nail Bunny and Mr. Eff, serves to push Johnny further into depression. As the voice of Johnny's lowest points in life, D-boy makes every effort to





remove any possibility of Johnny being happy. He dwells constantly on the ending of things and on death and urges Johnny to commit suicide, often chiding him when his attempts fail or seem badly planned out. To D-Boy, pain is something one should inflict on oneself and, thus, he despises Mr. Eff, or Johnny, when he is in his happy killing mode. D-Boy wishes nothing more than to simply stop existing and, as a result, is strongest when Johnny is near killing himself. In the end, D-Boy is killed when Johnny dies or, in reality, when Johnny throws off his depression for a life without emotion.

## Mr. Eff

Mr. Eff is a statue made of styrofoam that acts as one of the voices of insanity in Johnny's head. Unlike Nail Bunny, who serves as the voice of reason, and D-boy, who serves to feed Johnny's depression, Mr. Eff represents the high point of Johnny's manic behaviors. Mr. Eff loves Johnny's insanity and feeds off of his acts of violence. Mr. Eff likes anything profane, violent, or cruel and urges Johnny on throughout the novel to continue to commit his crimes. Mr. Eff wants to exist outside of Johnny and thus attempts to push Johnny further and further into madness. He argues often with D-boy, since his desires rest solely on Johnny's insane "up" moments when his violence and rage are positive aspects. In the end, he is killed by the monster in Johnny's home or, in all likelihood, by the death of Johnny's insanity.

## Nail Bunny

Nail Bunny is a character in the novel that represents the sane voice of Johnny. Actually the head of a pet bunny Johnny once had that he has nailed to the wall, Nail Bunny speaks only as a figment of Johnny's mind. It is Nail Bunny who warns Johnny that the dough boys are not what they seem and it is Nail Bunny who forces Johnny to look at himself in the mirror and realize there is something wrong. Nail Bunny can remember a past Johnny has forgotten, such as his detailed art work and his history before his current condition. Nail Bunny is concerned about Johnny and wants him to free himself from the dough boys before they can take over.

## Devi

Devi is the love interest of Johnny in the novel. Devi first asks Johnny out after they meet several times in the bookstore. Devi is a strong person who, like Johnny, hates the judgmental people of the world and prefers the company of those she particularly cares for. After the date, she and Johnny return to his home, but to her surprise, Johnny wishes to capture the happiness he feels by killing her, thereby ensuring she can never hurt him. Unlike Johnny's other characters, however, Devi fights back intelligently, and gets away. Frightened for her life, she calls the police several times, but to no avail. Left with fear, she imprisons herself in her own home, afraid to leave as Johnny may hunt her down. After Johnny calls to apologize to her, however, Devi finds her strength, and screams at him for making her afraid. She admits to a friend that she has bad choice in



men, but that she did particularly like Johnny. In the end, she frees herself from her prison through her anger.

## Tess

Tess is captured in the novel as she and her boyfriend Dillon leave a movie theater. Tess reveals herself to be a judgmental conformist who, when seeking friends, chooses to berate others in an effort to be accepted by people in her new neighborhood. Even before her capture, she finds herself questioning why she and Dillon put down other people, and yet complains when others do the same to them. When reminded, however, that to stop would be to admit their own lesser status, Tess joins in, thereby ensuring her demise. It is only after her capture by Johnny and the death of Dillon that she is able to see herself in a new light. This new light, however, appears to be just as judgmental, as she berates co-captive Kirk. In the end, Tess is killed by the nothingness that has become the world outside of Johnny's home.

## Anne Gwish

Anne Gwish is a side character in the novel and her story is independent from Johnny's. At the same time, however, Anne presents a perfect specimen for the reader to understand the people of the world Johnny wants to kill. Anne is a Gothic character who spends much of her time brooding about how others judge her, and how her friends simply want to copy her unique identity. However, she proves, throughout her strips, to be just as hurtful in her words against others around her. She judges everyone near her negatively, and claims individuality only amongst people who act, dress, and speak exactly as she does. It is this false sense of self and this double standard that Johnny fights throughout the entire novel.

## Noodle Boy

Happy Noodle Boy is the cartoon representation of Johnny; Johnny himself creates the cartoon. Happy Noodle Boy is highly insane, and has a tendency towards meaningless violence, as well as toward screaming random sentences at individuals on the street. His words, however, often convey that Happy Noodle Boy, or Johnny, feels a conspiracy is taking place, and that the human population is a waste of air. Noodle Boy is killed several times in his cartoons, representing Johnny's own desire for self-destruction. At the same time, Noodle Boy's own rages are mild compared to those of Johnny. The artwork, which is often fragmented and unskilled, shows clearly the decay of Johnny's imagination as the creature steals energy from his creativity.

## Burger Boy

Burger Boy appears toward the end of the novel, after the deaths of Mr. Eff and D-boy, as yet another personification of the voice of Johnny. Unlike the dough boys, Burger



Boy acts more like Nail Bunny, in that he seems to represent the sane part of Johnny, the part that wishes Johnny would remain a part of the emotional aspect of the world. Burger Boy represents the inputs of the world that result in emotion or feeling, which Johnny is trying desperately to shrug off. His appearance in the novel signifies Johnny's own internal struggle between putting an end to his pain through withdrawal, and remaining a feeling, emotional human being. In the end, Johnny wins and Burger Boy is left behind.

## God

God's character in the novel helps to portray the uselessness of faith in Johnny's life. When Johnny questions God about his miserable existence, God seems less than willing to assist. When told of the horrors of the modern world, God claims to still be tired from his role in creating the Universe. In the end, God falls asleep, proving to Johnny that he is useless to individuals seeking answers.

## Satan

Satan's character in the novel helps to portray Hell as a place filled with gluttony, greed, and vanity. Satan explains to Johnny about his plight as a waste plug for humanity, and helps to free him from it. His role, then, is as a type of savior to Johnny's sanity, and as a point of fear and misery for the materialistic conformists of hell's population.



# Objects/Places

## Fiz-Wiz

Fiz-Wiz is the name of Johnny's favorite soda.

## Maniac

Maniac is a part of the title of the novel, and indicates an insane individual. Such a description clearly identifies Johnny.

## Todd's House

Todd's House is the house next to Johnny's, where little Todd and his family live. Johnny breaks into the home several times and speaks with Todd.

## The Cafe

The Cafe is a local hot spot for the "cool" kids. Johnny stops there one evening and kills everyone in it.

## Brain-Freezy

Brain-Freezy's are Johnny's favorite drink; they are sugared, flavored water and ice.

## Shmee

Shmee is the teddy bear of Todd.

## Heaven

Heaven is the area individuals go when they die if they are content with their lives, and have no desires, wants or needs. In heaven, no one moves or even speaks since they are content.

## Hell

Hell is the area individuals go when they die if they still have desires, wants, and needs. Everyone in hell is led to believe that a giant eye in the sky watches them at all times, thereby ensuring they are in a continuous state of preening.

## **Bookstore**

The bookstore is where Johnny meets Devi.

## **Mall**

The mall is where Johnny goes often to find his latest victims and where he saves Todd from a child molester.



# Themes

## Depression

Depression is the primary theme throughout the novel as Johnny battles his own depression and self-loathing. Johnny's depression, in the beginning, appears to stem only from the treatment of others toward him. However, as the novel proceeds, it is clear Johnny's problems stem beyond such trivialities. Johnny's alter egos begin to explain that Johnny cannot remember his own past nor his current situation. He recalls recent events, but only so far as they serve his current situation. His drawings of the past, highly detailed, vary drastically from his current work of Happy Noodle Boy, representing his decline. His urges to commit suicide, however futile, show his unhappiness with the state of his life. His inability to accept relationships, and his desire to kill loved ones to avoid the pain of losing them only further show his depressed state. Johnny himself admits that when he looks inside, he does not like what he sees. Several times he admits he cannot believe what he has become and would like to simply vanish or have someone step in to fix him. It is only when Johnny is finally killed by his own hand, accidentally, that he discovers the reason for his depression. As a waste plug for humanity, Johnny exists only to absorb the outpouring of waste from the Earth population. When he is killed, such waste is removed from the world, thereby helping to cleanse it. As Johnny is reborn, he seeks freedom from his depression by letting go of emotional attachment.

## Conformity

Throughout the novel, conformity is shown in a very negative light. Johnny himself kills and tortures those who conform to society and her ways. To Johnny, conformity is a sign of weakness, and shows a lack of character. Individuals like Tess and Dillon, themselves outcasts from society, feel pressure to conform within their own social group and to put down others. Tess admits she simply wanted friends, but found herself having to degrade others in an effort to gain them, doing so despite her own beliefs. Anne Gwish, who complains throughout the novel of being unaccepted and unique, proves herself to be conforming to her own social circle, even though that circle is outside of the norm. She hails her friends as accepting her uniqueness, but at the same time complains about them dressing and acting like her. This theme is particularly shown in hell, however, when each individual Johnny meets aims solely for material possessions and physical appearances. Satan explains that these individuals are in hell primarily because they are too stupid and too vain to overcome these needs for conformity. Even Johnny himself proves to be a partial conformist as his largest concern in leaving hell is whether he is allowed to keep his new clothing. It is only when Johnny is able to free himself from any human emotion that he finds himself free from conformity.



## Vengeance

Vengeance plays a vital role in the novel as one of the primary themes in nearly all strips. First, Johnny spends much of the novel seeking vengeance against those who have treated him badly over the course of his life. While it is unclear what happened to his parents, Johnny kills strangers, friends, and acquaintances in an effort to stop the pain he feels after years of abuse by humanity. His vengeance is violent, cruel, and often involves severe torture. Additionally, his victims often threaten vengeance against Johnny as they wait to die, wanting to inflict pain on him for the fear he has caused in them. However, his victims also, during their lives, wreak havoc on society as they seek their own forms of vengeance against a society they feel oppresses and judges them unfairly. Kirk, a captive, seeks vengeance on Johnny even as he lies dying, showing the true depth of his anger, hatred, and frustration. Devi, one of the kindest characters in the novel, also shows a desire for vengeance as she seeks to cause fear and harm in Johnny after he has caused her to become a captive in her own home. Mr. Eff and D-boy seek vengeance on the monster and on Johnny after both leave them without the power to either exist on their own or to continue to exist through Johnny. Happy Noodle Boy, a creation dedicated to a pursuit of vengeance, shows Johnny's depth of hatred as well.

Clearly, vengeance plays a vital role in the novel, but it is the cycle of this vengeance that creates the basic plot of Johnny the Homicidal Maniac. Johnny has been persecuted all of his life for his differences. His persecutors, however, are not strangers to such cruel treatment as others outside of their own circles treat them with the same disrespect. Thus, they lash out against others, creating a creature such as Johnny, who in turn, kills them. This cycle simply shows Johnny's point early in the novel that mankind is the end of mankind, and that salvation is an impossible concept, since the perpetuation of this cycle is a part of nature.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in the novel is first-person. This point of view is necessary, since the novel is a graphic novel and relies on images rather than words in many areas of the story. In addition, this viewpoint is reliable because the story revolves around Johnny himself in most cases and having Johnny explain his own actions and motivations is vital to understanding his character. In addition, other sections pertaining to other individuals, such as Anne and Noodle Boy, would be less entertaining if not told from the viewpoint of the character. This is important to the novel since all the themes revolve around the motivations of the characters, and without a first person viewpoint, such motivations would be lost.

The story is told with both images and dialogue, with little to no description other than those provided by the author for humor or clarification. This method is used in order to keep the flow of the storyline entertaining and personal and to make the characters more believable. Johnny spends much of the novel conversing with himself, but with the author's use of additional characters to portray Johnny's several personality aspects, he ensures a clearer understanding of the inner workings of Johnny. However, it is through the drawings themselves that readers can truly see the graphic murders Johnny creates, which further show his split character.

## Setting

The novel has several settings, as it has several subplots within the main storyline. The novel begins in Todd's home, and returns there several times in the novel. Positioned next to the home of a mass murderer, Todd's home is frightening enough, but with the addition of Todd's hopeless parents, Todd's surroundings clearly leave something to be desired. Next door is the home of Johnny. With at least thirteen floors, most of which are underground, Johnny's home is clearly an expanded torture chamber. Several of the lower floors contain machines of intense torture, while the only upper floor is the main living area of Johnny. Within his underground levels, there is also a tunnel leading directly to Todd's home.

The town these homes reside in remains unnamed but there are several settings within the town used as well. The mall, a place of anger for Johnny, proves to be a location of fear for Todd as he is nearly harmed by a child molester when he loses his mother. The cafe, a local hangout for the "cool" people, is a place of mayhem when Johnny kills everyone inside. The movie theater is another area of concern, as Johnny chooses victims from the patrons. A cliff overlooking the town is referenced several times as a place to go to look down on the city and a place for Johnny to go to be at peace.





In addition, Heaven and Hell are also used as settings in the novel. Heaven, a place of contentment, is a place of rejection for Johnny. Hell, a place for individuals to realize their passions and their desires, is also a place of rejection for Johnny, as he learns he does not belong anywhere.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is highly adult in content, but is very relaxed and full of modern slang. The sentences are incomplete, as many of them are simply parts or fragments of thoughts. There is much profanity, and those easily offended will have a difficult time with the language. However, for others, the writing style is not a drawback, but actually adds to the impression of Johnny as an insane maniac. It adds a layer of information to the world of Johnny that would otherwise be missed. In addition, the phrases located within the borders of the strips add additional information to each strip. The dialogue is not descriptive, in that the drawings are used to convey visual concepts and scene information. Instead, the dialog is used to show the inner thoughts of characters, and their emotional states. This is vital, in that without such dialog, these inner thoughts would be lost, and the novel would be only visual.

## Structure

The novel contains a short introduction by the author, seven parts, or chapters, a character analysis of sorts, a historic lesson on Johnny's past, and a false interview of the author. Each part of the novel is of unequal length, but contains at least two Johnny strips, and at least one Happy Noodle Boy strip. There are also Public Service Announcements in some sections, as well as Anne Gwish strips. Each section is named only by part number. The sections break at parts in the story where Johnny appears to be entering a new area of his life.

The plot of the novel is straightforward, with several subplots intertwined. The main storyline revolves around Johnny and his descent into madness and his rise into detachment. His life intersects with Todd, as well as with Tess, Devi, and Kirk, providing several areas of interest for subplots. In addition, Happy Noodle Boy, as the artistic rendering of Johnny, produces yet another subplot. In addition, however, there are completely unrelated strips revolving around social issues, called Public Service Announcements, and a strip about Anne Gwish. The pace of the novel is steady; Johnny's fall and rise is consistent. There is very little back story to work through, there are no flashbacks, and the story is linear in nature.



## Quotes

"That's all I seem to do now. I have to work to keep you alive, to feed you. I haven't smiled once since you were born. Go to sleep." — Part 1, page 9.

"Damn! That one really put up a struggle! Scraped me up like he was a cat on crack! Nothing quite brings out the zest for life in a person like the thought of their impending death." — Part 1, page 11.

"Whether in a suit or in a loincloth, people are ignorant, little thorns, cutting into one another." — Part 1, page 15.

"Such amusing fiction, these stories they tell. It always comes to this. If they really had a desire to live, they would've been more aware of how easy it is to die, would've chosen their actions more wisely. In these moments, you can tell they're not regretting having hurt you, they regret doing it to your face." — Part 2, page 31.

"Not a monster, not a bogeyman, nothing but another reason to feel better about yourself. Understand that it's just a person—not worth devoting any nightmares to." — Part 3, page 54.

"Dillon? Why is it whenever we're not talking about being discriminated by people for the way we look, we make fun of other people? I mean what makes you any different from those jock-holes who were laughing at your hair that one time?" — Part 3, page 57.

"You think that the only thing keeping this reality from collapsing is my awareness of it?" — Part 3, page 61.

"You know what goes on in that world, they don't understand, they don't see that long after their laughter subsides, in search of the next cheap thrill, their victims are still hearing the taunts in their heads. A cacophony of degrading noise, poisoning perception." — Part 4, page 70.

"Killing someone whose bleeding to death, fff...fuck, you people...you...how stupid you are. Resorting to the same old monkey brutality, afraid to look up from your bloody dicks. Afraid of transcendence." — Part 5, page 103.

"Sometimes...you can cry until there is nothing wet in you. You can scream and curse to where your throat rebels and ruptures. You can pray all you want, to whatever God you think will listen, and still it makes no difference. It goes on with no sign as to when it might release you. And you know that if it ever did relent...it would not be because it cared." — Part 5, page 108.

"Of course not, this is heaven, they're not bored as you may think, there is no need to do anything. No vices to feed, no urges to succumb to, freedom from need, and no need



to desire. In life, the only desire of these people was the desire to be content. " — Part 6, page 115.

"...systematic detachment from emotional reaction. Terrifying to realize how easy it is to be affected." — Part 7, page 134.

"There is no choice. You're always a slave to something." — Part 7, page 145.

"Dear diary...There's nothing terribly wrong with feeling lost, so long as that feeling precedes some plan on your part to actually do something about it. Too often a person grows complacent with their disillusionment, perpetually wearing their "discomfort" like a favorite shirt. I can't say I'm very pleased with where my life is just now...but I can't help but look forward to where it's going." — Ending, page 174.



## Topics for Discussion

Throughout the novel, Johnny appears to be homicidal, in that he kills several individuals. Based on the entirety of the novel, do you believe Johnny actually committed these acts, or is Johnny simply insane and imagining his vengeance on the world? Why do you believe this? Be sure to support your answer using information from the novel.

There are four main voices outside of Johnny's in the novel that appear to be parts of his own mind. These characters are Mr. Eff, Nail bunny, D-boy, and Burger Boy. Explain which and how each of these characters represents a different part of Johnny's own personality, and explain why you believe each matches their specific personality concept.

Johnny makes several points regarding conformity in the novel. How does Johnny feel about those who conform to society, even if this harms others? Why does he feel this way? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Towards the beginning of the novel, Johnny tells a surveyor that he believes individual people create criminals and thus protecting them from their own creation seems a paradox. Do you believe Johnny has a point? Why or why not? Do you think he is correct about the creation of criminal behaviors as a social problem? Why or why not?

Little Todd, in the book, has several strikes against him, including the lack of attention or love from his parents, as well as his new experiences with Johnny. Based on this information, do you believe Johnny is right in explaining the world to him and in attempting to show him that controlling anger is better than allowing it to be set free? Why? Do you believe Todd is at risk for becoming like Johnny? Why or why not?

In the book, Johnny's role in the world is as a human waste plug, or an individual who absorbs the horrors of the world so that they do not simply remain on the planet. What do you think the author is trying to say about individuals like Johnny? Why? Do you think there are people in the world like this? Why or why not? What is their role in our own society?

While in Heaven, Johnny screams at God to do something about the world, since it is clear the Earth is falling apart. Do you believe this is true in our own world? Why or why not? What do you think the author was trying to say about the position of God in terms of the state of the world?

In the novel, Johnny takes his vengeance on nearly everyone in society, including those he really does not even know, and those he has never had contact with. Why do you think Johnny believes he has this right? Do you think this happens in real society? Why or why not? What is the cause of vengeful behaviors?



Depression is a major topic throughout the entire novel as Johnny battles his own demons as well as those he believes are outside of his own existence. Why is Johnny depressed? What causes his emotional state? Do you believe depression can cause the problems Johnny experiences? Why or why not?