

Justifiable Means Study Guide

Justifiable Means by Terri Blackstock

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



Contents

Justifiable Means Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-15.....	4
Chapters 16-30.....	8
Chapters 31-45.....	11
Chapters 46-Epilogue.....	14
Characters.....	16
Objects/Places.....	19
Themes.....	21
Style.....	24
Quotes.....	25
Topics for Discussion.....	26



Plot Summary

"Justifiable Means" is a Christian mystery novel by Terri Blackstock that follows the pursuits of Detective Larry Millsaps to bring justice against a murdering rapist.

Summoned to the scene of a rape, Detective Larry Millsaps and his partner, Tony Danks, are surprised to discover the victim, beautiful 23 year-old Melissa Nelson, is acting rationally and providing the police with all the information they need to arrest her assailant, Edward Soames. Tony is suspicious of Melissa, but Larry is smitten with her. Despite her rationality, Melissa is beside herself with fear, and she leans on Larry. Over time, the two develop romantic feelings for one another, which Tony believes is confusing Larry's objective clarity. Through an investigation, Larry and Tony discover that Melissa is trying to set up Soames, who has had his name changed from Edward Pendergrast because he has been accused of rape several times in the past. It is further revealed that Melissa's sister, Sandra, had been raped by Pendergrast, and had committed suicide when Pendergrast didn't go to jail.

Larry confronts Melissa with the truth and Melissa begs him to keep quiet. Larry, a devout Christian, wrestles with his faith and his morality, and prays to God, seeking help. Melissa, meanwhile, comes to the decision that she doesn't want to get Larry in trouble, and turns herself in. She is sentenced to six months in jail. Meanwhile, Larry and Tony stake out Pendergrast, and with the help of his next intended victim, Karen Anderson, set up a case against him. When Pendergrast kidnaps Karen, Larry and Tony spring to her rescue, and during a violent struggle, Pendergrast is killed. This helps compel the state to release Melissa on probation. Melissa and Larry begin dating.



Chapters 1-15

Chapters 1-15 Summary

In Chapter 1, detective Larry Millsaps and his partner, Tony Danks, arrive at the scene of a rape in the small town of St. Clair, Florida, a set of modest apartment buildings. Inside, the rape victim, Melissa Nelson, has already showered, making it more difficult to collect evidence. But Melissa names her attacker, her coworker, Edward Soames, who lives on the north side of town on Fresco Street. She and Edward Soames both work at Proffer Builders on Haynes Street, for Henry Proffer. Melissa explains that Edward had forced his way in after knocking on the door, threatening her with a switchblade. As Melissa is taken to the hospital, she is adamant about Larry and the other officers finding every shred of evidence they can. Tony feels as if something isn't right. Soames has so far managed to avoid detection, and Larry and Tony arranged a meeting with Proffer.

In Chapter 2, Larry and Tony meet up with Henry Proffer. Proffer is stunned that Soames, his best architect, is a rapist. Proffer reveals that Soames was a decent person, and that Melissa had only been working at the company for a month. Proffer gives Larry and Tony more information about Soame's habits and hangouts, as well as his license plate number, which Larry and Tony run. They discover that the plates belong to an Edward J. Pendergrast. Larry and Tony wonder whether the car is stolen or if Soames changed his name. They learn of several rape charges against Pedergrast, and realize that Soames changed his name. They then head to Steppin' Out, a young professionals bar. Larry, devoutly Christian, is amazed that young professionals would drink to relax in a bar, and Tony tells Larry to try it sometime. They spot Soames, and arrest him, but a lawyer with whom Larry has had run-ins before -Steve McRae- becomes Soames's lawyer on the spot.

Larry and Tony search Soames's car. They find a bloodied shirt and switchblade, and head to search his apartment. There, they find photographs of women Soames was stalking, as well as a large collection of pornographic materials.

In Chapter 3, Larry, with McRae present, questions Soames. Soames says that all of the accusations against him, in the past and in the present, are false. He claims the girls in the photographs are his friends, but he won't reveal their names. Soames continues protesting, declaring his innocence.

In Chapter 4, Melissa returns home the next morning, terrified that Soames might be released. Seeking consolation before the bond hearing at ten, Melissa calls up Larry, who reassures her that everything is in order. Larry invites Melissa to breakfast, sensing she needs someone she can trust.

In Chapter 5, when Larry picks Melissa up, it is as if she is a new person. She is radiantly beautiful, having cleaned herself up from the night before. As they leave, Larry



notices a woman -whom he dismisses as a nosy neighbor- peeking through her door at them. Melissa reveals her family lives in Pensacola, and she hasn't told them about the rape yet. Larry asks Melissa if she prays, but Melissa says she hasn't prayed in years out of anger for being unanswered. Larry asks if she wants him to talk to her family, but she refuses: she wants to handle things on her own. She asks to come to the precinct until the hearing, and Larry agrees.

In Chapter 6, Melissa sits at Larry's desk while he works. He realizes she is distrustful of the justice system, but does not know why. Tony says good morning to them both. To the side in the interrogation room, Tony cautions Larry against getting involved with a victim. He also reveals that Melissa had studied criminal justice in college, but ended up secretary instead. He wonders why. The District Attorney's office calls, saying that Soames will remain in jail. When Larry asks Melissa about college, she says she worked for the FBI for three months, then quit to find something better. On the defensive, she storms out.

In Chapter 7, Tony visits Larry with news. Tony reveals that Melissa had previously asked Soames to dinner. There is also a witness to the rape, Matilda Berkley, the woman who was peeking out of her door. Matilda reveals crashing sounds in Melissa's apartment came after a male left. Matilda also reveals Melissa is a sweet, kind, but lonely girl, who helps her out when she can. Larry and Tony realize something is wrong. Larry goes to visit Melissa later, apologizing for the way doing his job made her feel. She apologizes for storming out, and invites him in. Larry helps her clean up her apartment, and asks her about Mrs. Berkley. Melissa says Mrs. Berkley is a kind and sweet old woman who sometimes gets confused, as when she imagined a forty-eight year-old widow in apartment 2B had given birth to a baby boy. Larry feels rotten for doubting Melissa. Larry invites her to a movie, and as they leave, Mrs. Berkley asks if Melissa has found a sitter for her baby. Melissa says it was Mrs. Jasper's niece who had the baby, and Mrs. Berkley tells Larry and Melissa to have a good time.

After the movie, Larry and Melissa get coffee. Melissa recounts always spending Sundays at the movie with her sister, Sandy, who died three years before. Larry reveals that he plays softball for his church's team, and Melissa reveals she played while she worked for the FBI. She explains she didn't want to spend the rest of her life in the FBI, and to get a new start away from all the memories of her sister, moved to St. Clair. She is alone, and Larry suggests making friends at church, to which Melissa reveals that she doesn't belong in church, because she is sure God is disgusted with her. She wonders if she has moved too far away from God. After Larry drops Melissa off at home, Mrs. Berkley says good night to him, making him wonder if her clarity comes and goes.

In Chapter 8, Tony presses for details about Larry's date with Melissa. Tony decides to check up on Melissa's sister, to see if Melissa ever had a sister. Larry realizes that he needs to stop his feelings for Melissa, otherwise, he may lose objective clarity. The DA reveals later that Soames has been indicted, but released on bail. This prompts Melissa to pack and move at once.



In Chapter 9, Soames is fully aware of Melissa's move. He watches her from across the street in a phone booth, and calls Melissa Nelson's mother, Mrs. Nelson. He tells her to tell Melissa an old friend is looking for her, and that she can't hide, hangs up, and heads across the street to find a weakness in the building. Nancy and her husband, Jim, are suddenly horrified for their daughter's safety. They call the St. Clair police, and begin the 400-mile drive to St. Clair.

In Chapter 10, a few hours from St. Clair, the Nelsons check their answering machine to discover a message from Melissa, who sounds calm and relaxed, and they decide to return home. They speak on the phone later, and Nancy fills Melissa in on everything, which terrifies Melissa. She lies to her parents about everything, telling them she moved because of the sink not working. In the bathroom, Melissa discovers the message "Next time for real" written on her mirror in lipstick, and she flees her apartment.

In Chapter 11, Melissa goes to Larry's, who agrees to go to her apartment with her and Tony. But back at the apartment, the mirror is clean. Tony is skeptical. They discover the attic in the apartment, and the dust has been disturbed, including a place around a light to the bathroom. Larry decides to take her to a hotel for the night, and Soames is confronted by police. He is wearing shoes that match a print in the attic.

In Chapter 12, the police release Soames because the woman he is with says he has been with her for three hours. Larry threatens Soames, warning him to stay away from Melissa. Later, Larry and Tony go over Soame's file as Ed Pendergrast, which has a photo of an abused and raped married woman named Sandra Hayden. Because Soames is clean-cut, and there is no physical evidence, he was acquitted. Sandra's parents are Jim and Nancy Nelson. Sandra committed suicide thereafter, when she was twenty-three and Melissa was twenty. Tony begins theorizing that perhaps Melissa used the FBI as a vehicle to track down Soames, then quit to go after him and get revenge, perhaps by staging a rape. Larry decides to confront Melissa, hoping she will be honest with him.

In Chapter 13, Larry meets Melissa at the hotel. They go out to eat, and Larry confronts Melissa about Soames/Pendergrast. Melissa says she had no idea about them being the same person, that three years ago, Soames was heavier and bearded. She begins crying, and he and Larry go for a walk. Larry tells her that if she is a Christian, she shouldn't lie to him. Melissa says she is not lying, that she is scared to death of Soames, that if she had known he was the same person, she wouldn't have come within a hundred miles of him. She believes that Soames may have manipulated things to his advantage by somehow getting her to apply to the job. Melissa is worried that God hates her because she couldn't prevent her sister from committing suicide. Larry realizes that now, not only must he bring justice, but he must also bring Melissa back to God.

In Chapter 14, Larry and Tony argue, with Tony telling Larry he's losing his objective edge, and falling for Melissa's stories. Larry argues that his protecting her, that Soames is dangerous -and Tony accepts that. Melissa decides it is time to find a new job.



In Chapter 15, Soames stalks Melissa, vowing revenge.

Chapters 1-15 Analysis

Terry Blackstock begins her novel with characters who fall into three set ways: There is Larry, the morally upright Christian detective; there is Tony, the cynical, overly-rational skeptic; and there is Melissa, the fallen angel. On the surface, each of the characters appears to be cut-and-dried. Yet the characters that she has written are much more complexity and depth than first meets the eye, as the events of the novel will bear out.

At the same time, Melissa's case appears to be cut-and-dried on the surface as well: she has been ruthlessly raped and justice must be done. But through the course of the next several chapters, many inconsistencies begin arising with respect to Melissa's story -inconsistencies which the skeptical Tony picks up on immediately. Larry, on the other hand, quickly falls for Melissa.

Larry, however, cannot stop his nagging doubts, and so he confronts Melissa with the inconsistencies, and Melissa explains that she had no idea that Edward Pendergrast was the same person as Edward Soames. Tony also confronts Larry, telling him that he is losing his objective edge. Indeed, this can be seen as a violation of Larry's moral standing, choosing to become involved with a victim whose case he is working on. Yet, oppositely, it can be argued that Larry's personal involvement in the case is an extension of his Christian compassion. Regardless, the romantic attachment to Melissa puts a wedge between Larry and Tony.



Chapters 16-30

Chapters 16-30 Summary

In Chapter 16, securing a job with an employment agency, Melissa goes to the mall, only to see Soames there. She rushes back to her car, and drives over to the precinct. She then goes to an electronics store to buy a called ID device for her phone. Larry calls later, and offers to go scare Soames again. He and Tony then head to Soame's house. Melissa, meanwhile, talks to her parents, who see the same thing happening with Melissa s they did with Sandy. Soames then calls Melissa, and tries to break in. Melissa calls Larry's cell phone, who tells her to call 911, and tells her he is on his way.

In Chapter 17, Larry and Tony arrive, but Soames is gone. Larry tells Melissa she should head home, but Melissa refuses, because Soames knows where her parents live. They decide to see if Lynda Barrett, another stalker victim who went through a plane crash, will let Melissa stay with her. There, she meets Lynda and her boyfriend, Jake, who was also in the plane crash. Lynda agrees to take in Melissa. Melissa finally feels safe with Lynda and Jake, and she hugs and holds onto Larry, who feels moved by the act. Larry offers to take Melissa to church, but she says she isn't ready to go back yet. After larry leaves, Lynda explains the secluded house once belonged to her parents.

Melissa and Lynda become friends quickly. Melissa begins rethinking her avoiding church, and her faith in God, and whether or not God has lost faith in her.

In Chapter 18, Soames continues stalking Melissa. He is determined to find out where she lives, and make her pay.

In Chapter 19, in the morning, Jake's mother, Doris, visits. She and Jake are working their bad relationship out. As Melissa heads out, Lynda and Jake both tell her to call if she needs anything.

At the police station, Tony reveals to Larry he's been on the phone with all of Melissa's past associates. Her professors at college say she is obsessed with finding her sister's rapist. Melissa's FBI job was entry-level, and used someone's computer to track down Soame's social security number. Melissa applied for the job at the construction business, claiming to have responded to an ad that the owner can't remember placing. Tony offers to handle things if Larry is too emotionally invested, but Larry says he is fine.

In Chapter 20, Melissa does temp work as a secretary at an insurance agency, stapling together booklets. Larry shows up to see her and confronts her with all of Tony's evidence. Melissa comes clean at last. Larry tells her that if she is setting him up, she is breaking a law and denying Soames his civil rights. She says that Soames needs to be in jail, and she leaves Larry to go back to work.



In Chapter 21, Larry and Tony discuss what to do about Melissa. Larry wonders if, perhaps, Melissa is working as her own private detective. She hasn't committed any crimes, because she hasn't lied under oath or speaking to them in official capacity as police officers. Tony believes Larry has gone over the edge because of his feelings for Melissa, and this causes a fight between them, and they both drive off.

Later, Melissa calls Larry, and asks him to come over, which he does. Melissa confesses that she wants justice for her sister, so she tracks down Soames to set him up. Melissa wants Larry to remain quiet while she goes ahead with things, not to cover anything up for him. Larry is at once plagued with guilt and horror, for his Christian morality is totally contrary to lies of any kind. Larry leaves, because he says he has a lot of thinking to do.

In Chapter 22, Larry begins attempting to sift through the facts and his emotions. He prays to God for help, that God would give Him insight and lead him to a just conclusion. Larry knows he is consciously turning away from God as he decides to do what he can for Melissa.

In Chapter 23, Melissa is sick to her stomach that night, and prays to God for help. She realizes she has to set things right, to protect Larry. Melissa asks Lynda if Lynda will be her lawyer.

In Chapter 24, Larry calls the house, and Jake tells him that Melissa and Lynda have gone out for breakfast. Larry is determined to protect Melissa, but Melissa beats him to the station, and makes a confession to Tony. Larry tells Melissa he is in love with her. Lynda explains to Tony that Melissa's decision was out of respect and concern for both Larry and God. It is possible that Melissa may not go to jail, but she is ready for the consequences, no matter what they are.

In Chapter 25, Larry drives toward St. Petersburg, toward the beach, distraught. He feels forsaken, and feels as though all his peace has been shattered.

In Chapter 26, the state decides to prosecute Melissa. Lynda tells Melissa to have faith, because she may not go to jail in the end. Lynda also believes that Larry won't cut Melissa out of his life. Larry is waiting for them at Lynda's, and he tells Melissa he is going to see her through things.

In Chapter 27, Larry begins driving by Soame's house regularly, making sure his cars are still there. If one is missing, he calls Melissa to make sure everything is okay. Melissa's parents come in, and Larry drives them to Melissa's. She confesses everything to her parents, and explains that her sentencing is scheduled for Friday.

In Chapter 28, Thursday rolls around, and Melissa believes she will be going to jail. Lynda decides to contact her friend, Mike Morgan, who runs the St. Clair airport, to rent a plane for the day to go flying with Jake, Melissa, and Larry.

In Chapter 29, Melissa's court date arrives. Soames/Pendergrast arrives to witness the episode. He is smug and waves to Melissa and her family, and Larry goes over to him to



tell him that he is going to get him one day. Despite all of the evidence against Soames, the judge sentences Melissa to six months in the women's correctional facility of Pinellas County.

In Chapter 30, Larry, Melissa, and her family are all horrified. Larry vows to get Soames.

Chapters 16-30 Analysis

Melissa begins attempting to reorganize her life, but Pendergrast/Soames will not leave her alone. As time goes on, Tony begins to discover more and more flaws in Melissa's story. When she confesses the truth -that she has attempted to frame Pendergrast/Soames, Larry is beside himself and wracked with guilt. Melissa thus emerges as a character who is not totally helpless, and not the victim of a rape at all. Instead, she is calculating -but not self-confident. Indeed, her turn toward God is a turn away from her scheme to frame Pendergrast/Soames, and to protect the man she has come to love -Larry.

Larry's character also undergoes significant transformation. For the first time in the novel, Larry makes a conscious decision to turn away from God in the determination of helping Melissa somehow escape imprisonment. Yet, Larry's faith in God also means that God will work through Melissa, stirring her conscience, and causing her to act to protect Larry, who was willing to violate his most fundamental beliefs to protect her.

Despite their best efforts, Lynda and Larry are powerless to stop Melissa from going to jail. Although she is wrong for having attempted to frame Pendergrast/Soames, her motives were right and just. Now she must deal with the consequences of breaking state law. It also dedoubles Larry's determination to make sure Pendergrast/Soames faces justice.



Chapters 31-45

Chapters 31-45 Summary

In Chapter 31, the Pinellas County Women's Correctional Facility in Clearwater is only a few months old. Melissa's cellmate is Chloe, a thuggish woman who likes to fight. Chloe seems to like Melissa right away, and begins giving her the run-down on how things work.

In Chapter 32, Lynda and Jack come to visit Larry to make sure he is alright. They talk about God, and the purpose of human lives such as Melissa's. Lynda and Jake invite Larry over for popcorn and a movie, but Larry says no thank you, that he has plans. Secretly, the plans are to watch Pendergrast/Soames.

In Chapter 33, Chloe watches out for Melissa by stopping the other inmates from harassing her. Melissa believes that God is somehow working through Chloe to protect her. Nevertheless, Melissa is still haunted by the fact that she is in prison.

In Chapter 34, Larry continues trailing Pendergrast. Tony calls Larry, trying to get him to let things go, but Larry refuses to do so. Larry continues trailing Pendergrast, waiting to serve him with some kind of justice.

In Chapter 35, Larry follows Pendergrast to a Dillard's, where he watches the employees close up for the night, taking photos of them. Larry then follows Pendergrast, who follows one of the young female employees. Larry knows Pendergrast is seeking to make a move, and Larry steadies himself with the understanding that he will be there to stop Pendergrast. Larry recounts this to Tony, who urges Larry to get some sleep. Tony then goes to talk to Captain Sam Richter to get a twenty-four hour watch put on the girl. Richter is beside himself with anger over Larry's distress, and threatens to put him on suspension. Larry storms out.

In Chapter 36, Melissa is working in the laundry department of the prison, doing her best to handle her time in jail. With five days down, Melissa realizes she has 177 days to go.

In Chapter 37, Larry goes to church, and prays for God's forgiveness. He feels a remarkable sense of forgiveness through Jesus. While out with Tony at the beach where a missing 17 year-old girl's body had washed up on shore, Tony reveals to Larry that many in the precinct think Larry has cracked up and lost his edge. Larry entreats Tony to join him on the stakeout, and Tony reluctantly agrees. They comb the beach for evidence. The girl had been raped, beaten, and murdered before being dumped into the Gulf.

Larry and Tony follow Pendergrast to the mall, and Larry follows Pendergrast inside. Tony sees that Larry has a point, and he agrees to talk to the captain.



In Chapter 38, Larry and Tony continue staking out Pendergrast, whose obsession with the young, blonde girl -Karen Anderson- at Dillard's continues. Tony is convinced that Larry is right about Pendergrast, that Pendergrast will strike again. There is a shovel and trash bags in Pendergrast's car that Larry believes implicates him. They watch as the store closes, and Karen gives another man a ride home and Pendergrast drives off angrily to a secluded spot down a dirt road, then returns to his apartment. Larry and Tony believe that something is about to happen.

In Chapter 39, Larry and Tony go back to the dirt road the next day, which is a construction site. There is a canal that feeds into the Gulf nearby, and is where Pendergrast had driven. Close by, there is a six-foot deep hole with dirt to the side, ready to be shoved back in. Larry and Tony realize that Pendergrast is preparing to bury something. They decide to go to the captain, who agrees to put Larry and Tony on the case. They suggest getting Karen to go in on things, too. The captain also apologizes to Larry for the confrontation before, and for the threat of suspension.

In Chapter 40, Melissa is put into isolation for the night after one of the women, a redhead, tries to start a fight with her, then pretends as if Melissa has beaten her up. Melissa wants revenge, but then prays, seeking to ask for strength to forgive.

In Chapter 41, Larry and Tony go to see Karen Anderson, and explain the situation to her. Karen is horrified, and wants to know why she, a twenty-one year-old college student who works and lives would attract the attention of a criminal. Karen says she can't do it, and Tony and Larry leave, hoping Karen might change her mind.

In Chapter 42, Larry goes to see Melissa on visitor's day. He reflects on Karen's disappearance, and Pendergrast's frustration that he cannot find her. Larry explains the situation to Melissa. They talk about God and having faith, and the idea from the Book of James that trials strengthen people.

In Chapter 43, Melissa goes to worship at the prison chapel, to find it full of people. The Chaplain, Doug, and his wife, Tina, stay after the service for prayer time, and invite the others to stay, but only a few do. Among them is Melissa. Melissa, and the other girls who have stayed, have all been imprisoned wrongly in some way. Later, Melissa asks Chloe about her husband, and Chloe says her husband is a good man. They talk about how stupid some of the women in jail are, and both Chloe and Melissa end up laughing. Chloe reveals she is in prison for forging checks. Chloe agrees to help watch out for Melissa.

In Chapter 44, Karen Anderson wakes up in the middle of the night at her mother's house, panicked and afraid. The terror that someone is stalking her is too much to bear, and she doesn't get much sleep.

In Chapter 45, Melissa is attacked by the redheaded woman in the showers, and Chloe comes to her defense. Chloe pins the redheaded woman against the wall, and tells all the women around her that they are never to mess with Melissa, or they will have to answer to her.



Chapters 31-45 Analysis

The irony of Melissa's committal to prison is that she is now safe from the dangers of Pendergrast/Soames, although she is now fair game for the other female prisoners and their violent tendencies. Melissa's new-found faith is now severely tested by her ordeal in prison, and her prayers to God appear to be answered through the person of Chloe, Melissa's cellmate, who takes her under her wing.

Meanwhile, Larry and Tony patch up their partnership and friendship, but Tony is still the skeptic. He isn't totally sold on Melissa's story. Yet, the doubting Tony reluctantly consents to a stakeout of Pendergrast/Soames -on faith. It is this act of faith which pays off for both men, as they discover Pendergrast/Soames is up to no good.

Interestingly enough, just as Chloe is a blessing in disguise for Melissa, Melissa proves to be a blessing in clear view for the rest of the prisoners. She appears as a rock with her new Christian faith, something which the other women take notice of -and which will have positive and profound consequences in the future.

The ways in which normal people are called upon to do extraordinary things (see the Style section) is a concept presented through the character of Karen Anderson, a hapless, beautiful twenty-one year old who simply wants to finish up school and begin her life. When she becomes the next target of Pendergrast/Soames, she flees to her mother's house, hoping to escape the terrible danger that she is in.



Chapters 46-Epilogue

Chapters 46-Epilogue Summary

In Chapter 46, Karen Anderson agrees to work with Larry and Tony. She calls up Larry to let him know, and asks what she must do/

In Chapter 47, while on the phone with her mother, Melissa's call is interrupted by the redheaded woman, Jean, who needs to make an emergency call to find out where her kid is. Her son, Johnny, has been killed. Red leaves for the day to go to the funeral, and Melissa prays for her. Melissa manages to get both Jean and Chloe to come to prayer time.

In Chapter 48, Karen wears a hidden microphone under her blouse. Helping her prepare is Lieutenant Pam Darby, a female police officer. Karen returns to her apartment, under the guise she has just returned from a trip. The captain, and a surveillance van, as well as Larry, Tony, and other officers, are all on hand.

In Chapter 49, Melissa is horrified to learn that Larry has not come for visitation. She prays to God, asking His help in getting her through the loneliness she felt, and the realization that Larry may have simply cut her out of his life.

In Chapter 50, everyone watches as Pendergrast stab's Karen's tire outside the store, to deflate it. Pendergrast offers to give Karen a ride, and Karen fearfully accepts. He takes her down the dirt road, and the officers follow. Larry follows on foot so as not to arouse suspicion. Karen begins screaming, and Pendergrast is armed to the teeth. Larry attempts to apprehend him, but Pendergrast takes Karen hostage, telling Larry to drop his gun. Tony shoots Pendergrast's hand, and Pendergrast goes for Larry's gun. The two wrestle, and Larry shoots and kills Pendergrast. Karen is taken to a hospital to make sure she is alright. In a nearby hole, they discover the body of the other teenage runaway.

In Chapter 51, Lynda and Larry come to see Melissa in jail, telling her that Pendergrast is dead. Melissa is overjoyed. Lynda will be appealing to the governor, and Melissa happily explains she has begun a Bible study in the prison.

In Chapter 52, Larry goes to visit Karen, and has a thank you note for her from Melissa. Karen is happy to learn about the justice she has helped bring about, and all of the lives she has saved.

In Epilogue, the governor intervenes and following a 20/20 interview, Melissa is released on probation. Melissa tells Dough and Chloe she will keep coming back for Sunday services. Melissa even tells Chloe that Chloe was her guardian angel. Chloe is pleased to hear this, and to hear that God was using her. Melissa rushes into Larry's arms when she is released. They determine to start anew, with each other, and with God.



Chapters 46-Epilogue Analysis

By the end of the novel, Larry, Melissa, Tony, and Pendergrast/Soames have all experienced a change, in some way or another. Melissa has grown in faith and devotion; Larry's faith has been tested, and he has come through; Tony's skepticism has given way to temporary faith in his friend; and Pendergrast/Soames has finally met justice in the form of death.

God's influence can also be seen in many places. The personal involvement of Larry into Melissa's case, for example, means that Larry had been that much more invested in seeing the case through to conclusion -justice. Indeed, Larry's courage and bravery on behalf of Melissa and Karen mean that Pendergrast/Soames will claim no more victims. Indeed, Melissa's time in prison has also had its effects in the form of expanded Christian services in the prison, which many women -including Chloe- have become a part of. In this fashion, the lives that God can now touch through the Bible Study group -and what effects He will have on those who come into contact with the women who attend the Bible Study -are unfathomable and limitless.

The relationship between Larry and Melissa can also be viewed as a product of God's handiwork. Both characters have gone through fires of their own to find God, and to find one another, and they have a relationship that is overseen by the Creator. The consequences of this relationship, like the Bible Study group, are unfathomable and limitless.



Characters

Larry Milsaps

Larry Milsaps is the protagonist in the novel "Justifiable Means" by Terri Blackstock. A detective on the police force of St. Claire, Florida, Larry is a man driven by his morals and deference to the law. He is a devout Christian, and his faith in God guides his every thought and action. He works on the police with his partner, Tony Danks. He and Tony are not just partners, but friends as well.

Larry and Tony respond to the rape call made by Melissa Nelson. Larry becomes a shoulder for Melissa to cry on, and he quickly falls in love with her. Tony insists Larry is going to lose his objective clarity, but Larry disagrees. When Larry discovers Melissa has set up the entire rape story in revenge for what was done to her sister by Edward Pendergrast/Soames, he is horrified, and then agrees to help her. But he is saved when Melissa's conscience catches up to her, and she turns herself in. She is sentenced to six months in jail.

Larry and Tony, meanwhile, stake out Pendergrast/Soames, and enlist the help of his intended next victim to organize a sting operation. During the ensuing operation, Larry wrestles and kills Pendergrast/Saome. The events help lead to Melissa's release from jail, during which time Larry and Melissa reunite and begin a relationship.

Tony Danks

Tony Danks is a detective with the St. Clair, Florida, police department. He is mildly cynical and very skeptical, and is the working partner and friend of Larry Milsap. When Larry becomes romantically involved with Melissa, Tony worries that Larry will lose his objective clarity in the case, which occurs. Yet, Tony sticks by his partner, agreeing to help Larry with the staking out of Pendergrast/Soames. During the sting operation, Tony shoots Pendergrast/Soames in the hand.

Melissa Nelson

Something of an antihero in the novel, Melissa Nelson is one of the main characters of Terri Blackstock's novel "Justified Means". At twenty-three years old, Melissa is beautiful and courageous, but without much faith in herself, or in God. She believes God hates her for failing to stop her sister, Sandy, from committing suicide after being raped by Edward Pendergrast/Soames. Melissa therefore sets out on a path of revenge, obtaining a degree in criminal justice from college, and going to work for the FBI to track down, and set up Pendergrast/Soames.

Larry offers her a shoulder to cry on. and she becomes romantically involved with him. Larry also begins putting her on a path that will lead her back to God. Unfortunately,



Larry and Tony uncover her plan to frame Pendergrast/Soames. Melissa hopes that Larry will be quiet and not say anything about it, but her conscience prevails, and after consulting God, she knows she cannot drag Larry down with her, so she confesses. She is sentenced to six months in jail, where she befriends many of the women, beginning a Bible Study there. When Pendergrast/Soames is killed during a sting operation, Melissa is released from jail on probation. There, she renews her romance with Larry.

Edward Pendergrast/Soames

Edward Pendergrast/Soames is the foil and main antagonist in the novel "Justifiable Means" by Terry Blackstock. He is cold, calculating, and conniving, and responsible for the brutal rapes and murders of innumerable young girls, some as young as seventeen. Pendergrast/Soames is also responsible for the rape of Melissa's sister, Sandra, three years before. It is Sandra's subsequent suicide that compels Melissa to attempt to frame Pendergrast/Soames, but she goes to jail for it instead. When Pendergrast/Soames continues hunting women, he is caught and killed in a sting operation by Larry Millsaps.

Henry Proffer

Henry Proffer is the owner and operator of Proffer Construction, where Edward Pendergrast/Soames worked as an architect, and Melissa Nelson worked as a secretary.

Lynda Barrett

The victim of a stalker, and the survivor of a plane crash, Lynda Barrett is a lawyer and a devout Christian. She is in a relationship with Jake, and the two of them live at her old family home in a secluded wooded area. Lynda opens up her home to Melissa, for she is good friends with Larry. Lynda becomes Melissa's lawyer, and guides her through the trial and jail.

Jake

Jake is the boyfriend of Lynda Barrett, and lives with her at her secluded family home. He is still recovering from his plane crash injuries.

Chloe

Chloe is the thuggish female cellmate of Melissa in prison. Chloe takes Melissa under her wing, watching out for her from time to time, and the two become something like friends. Chloe defends Melissa several times, and agrees to attend Bible Study with her.



Captain Sam Richter

Sam Richter is the no-nonsense captain of the St. Claire police force. He is constantly under pressure from the mayor to combat drugs, and eventually supports the efforts of Larry and Tony to catch Pendergrast/Soames in a sting operation.

Karen Anderson

Karen Anderson is a beautiful twenty-one year old girl who works at Dillard's, and is the next intended victim of Edward Pendergrast/Soames. She ultimately finds the courage in herself to agree to be part of the sting operation against Pendergrast/Soames. Afterwards, she receives a letter from Melissa, thanking her; and a letter from Larry, detailing all the women she helped bring justice to, and potentially saved.



Objects/Places

Florida

Located in the American south on the eastern seaboard, Florida is a state in the United States of America. It is the setting for the novel, and the location of the town of St. Clair.

St. Clair

St. Clair is the main setting for the novel. It is a seemingly middle-class town, located near the Gulf of Mexico in the western half of Florida. It is the home of Larry, Melissa, Lynda, Jake, Tony, and Edward Pendergrast.

St. Clair Police Station

The St. Clair police station is where Larry and Tony do much of their police work, making calls and working on investigations.

Lynda Barret's House

Lynda Barrett's house is in a wooded, secluded area, and has been in her family for years. It is where she and her boyfriend Jake live, and it becomes Melissa's refuge.

The Bible

The Bible is a collection of books and texts that pertains to the Christian faith. It contains the Old Testament of the Jewish people, and the New Testament which focuses around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, as well as life after He ascends to Heaven.

The Bible is consulted on numerous occasions for advice and strength by Larry, Melissa, and Lynda.

Binoculars

Binoculars are in the possession of Edward Pendergrast/Soames, and are used to spy on unsuspecting young girls.

Shovel

A shovel is what Edward Pendergrast/Soames keeps in his car. He uses it to dig holes to bury the bodies of his victims.



Photographs

Edward Pendergrast/Soames has a massive collection of photographs. The photographs depict the young girls that he is stalking.

Camera

A camera is what is used by Edward Pendergrast/Soames to take photographs of the girls that he is stalking.

Gun

Guns are carried by Edward Pendergrast/Soames, and members of the St. Clair police. Larry uses a gun to shoot and kill Pendergrast/Soames.

Themes

Justice

The age-old concept of justice is one of the three major, dominant, and overarching themes in Terri Blackstock's novel, "Justifiable Means". Justice pertains to the administering of punishment for wrong actions and crime. Justice factors into the lives of the two main characters, Larry Millsaps and Melissa Nelson, each in different ways and for different reasons. Both characters struggle with the concept of justice throughout the novel, and each finally comes around to accepting justice in the end.

For Larry, who is a police detective, justice is something handled by the law, and by the criminal justice system of the state of Florida, and United States federal law. Larry believes in a legally-warranted and mandated justice, from probation to prison terms to execution, depending on the severity of the crime. Larry has faith in the justice system, but he questions everything when he meets Melissa, and learns about her life, and becomes a part of her struggles. Indeed, Larry's own Christian faith and morality cause him to question his allegiance to, and deviance from, the law in the attempt that he might somehow be able to protect Melissa, who, despite her own crimes, is innocent of malicious intent.

Melissa, on the other hand, feels as though the criminal justice system has let her and her family down, because Edward Pendergrast/Soames is not in prison for the brutal rape of her sister, Sandra. Melissa studies criminal justice and works for the FBI, so that she can track down Soames/Pendergrast, and administer justice to him where the justice system has failed. She intends to make herself a sacrificial lamb, and to set up Pendergrast./Soames. Unfortunately, her deception and plans are uncovered by Larry and Tony. Through prayer to God, and through the idea that Larry would be wrongfully harmed if he were to go along with her, there would not be any justice in that and so she decides to turn herself in.

God, and the law, have a way of working things out, as Blackstock illustrates through Pendergrast/Soame's insatiable appetite for young girls. When Pendergrast/Soames strikes again, the police are there to stop him, and he is killed in a fight with Larry. A dangerous rapist and murderer is now gone, and Melissa feels easier, knowing that justice has at last been done.

Christianity

Christianity is the major, dominant, and overarching thematic element of the novel "Justifiable Means" by Terry Blackstock. Christianity is the singular, largest global religion, and the single, largest religion in the United States. Christian faith includes a belief in God, and a belief in His son, Jesus Christ's self-sacrifice and resurrection, through which all mankind is saved. Christian faith also implements moral



commandments and beliefs, and heavily informs Western culture and concepts. Christianity affects the two main characters in the novel -Larry and Melissa- in different ways, but with the same positive consequences.

Detective Larry Millsaps is a devout Christian who lives by his faith, and trusts God in every movement of his life. He prays frequently, asking God for guidance and help, and lives his life by the morality that emanates from the Bible. It is his genuine nature as a Christian human being which causes him to reach out to Melissa in the first place, offering her a shoulder to cry on. It is also his strong faith which compels him to carry out justice, legally, through his career as a police detective. Indeed, even in the darkest and most trying times, Larry reaches out to God for help. Just as God serves as a rock for Larry, Larry serves as a rock to others.

Among those to whom Larry serves as a rock is Melissa. Melissa is a dispassionate believer, who has turned away from God after the suicide of her sister. Melissa believes God hates her, and she feels as if she doesn't belong in a church. Larry begins leading Melissa on the path back toward God, by getting her to talk about faith and religion. Lynda also does the same. This in turn helps compel Melissa to seek out God in her darkest moments, including while she is in jail. While in jail, Melissa becomes a rock for the other prisoners, with whom she begins a Bible study group. It is her Christian faith which makes Melissa a better person, and helps her to cope with her struggle on the path to redemption and justice.

Courage

Courage is one of the three major themes in Terri Blackstock's novel "Justifiable Means". Courage -a quality which enables people to confront and handle challenges of various kinds- is predominant among many of the characters, and in particular, is predominant among the characters of Larry, Melissa, and Karen.

For Larry, courage means two things: Defending his Christian faith, and defending the law. Larry has the courage to speak about God and religion, and to make decisions based on his Christian faith, even when those decisions are unpopular with others. When it comes to defending the law, Larry has the courage to determine that he will uphold the law, because it is the right thing to do -and perhaps to defy the law to help out Melissa. Fortunately, Larry is not forced to make a choice, as Melissa exhibits her own courage by turning herself in.

Melissa's courage comes in three important ways. In the first way, Melissa has courage to track down the rapist who brutalized her sister, Sandra, risking her own life in the process to see justice done. In the second way, Melissa exhibits courage by recognizing that she needs help, both spiritually and physically, and she turns to God for consolation. In the third way, Melissa shows courage by turning herself in, rather than allowing Larry to become a victim of her illegal form of securing justice for Sandra.



Karen's courage is as equally as impressive as that of Larry's and Melissa's. Against her will, and without her knowledge, she becomes the next potential victim of Edward Pedergrast/Soames. She is terrified that she may end up killed, but ultimately has the courage to consent to being a part of the sting operation the police set up. She shows even more courage when Pendergrast/Soames tries to kill her, and she struggles to help Larry.



Style

Point of View

Terri Blackstock tells her novel "Justifiable Means" in the third-person and omniscient point of view, with the intent of allowing the reader to see all sides of the mystery as it unfolds. The reader, from the position of an objective and omniscient third party, is able to follow developments among each of the major characters, including Larry and Melissa, and including the movements of the criminal, Soames and Pendergrast. Choosing to tell the novel in the third person as opposed to the first person is beneficial to the novel, because otherwise, the novel would be confined to the point of view of one of the major characters, rendering all other major and important developments obsolete until they are learned by the character and the reader.

Setting

The setting of Terri Blackstock's novel "Justifiable Means" is that of the town of St. Clair, Florida. The town is typical of any American town: mostly middle-class, with some poorer areas, some stores, and an overworked police force. Because there is nothing grandiose about the setting, and because the people involved are ordinary people, the novel is that much more believable and relatable to the average reader. Ordinary people in ordinary places see extraordinary things, and are called on to do extraordinary things- and in so doing, become poignant and admirable in how they handle their tests. This is the formula for Blackstone's novel.

Language and Meaning

Terri Blackstock chooses to tell her novel "Justifiable Means" in language that is straightforward, thereby making the prose brisk and easy to traverse. Because the novel is full of mystery and suspense, the fast-pace of the novel lends urgency to the reader to continue reading and understanding the plot as things unfold. Blackstone doesn't craft unnecessarily verbose language to make her points -she simply makes them- and her prose therefore resonates better with readers of all backgrounds.

Structure

Terri Blackstock divides her novel "Justifiable Means" into fifty-two chronological chapters, with an epilogue. Between the setting, the language used, and the point of view employed, Blackstone gives her novel a lineal format in order to help progress the events of the plot. In doing so, she does not confuse the reader, nor does she force the reader's attention away from the plot to focus on the order of the book. Instead, the reader is wholly free to commit to the novel itself, and the points that Blackstone wishes to make.



Quotes

"It's kind of a hobby of mine, shooting stories like this all to pieces" (Chapter 3, p. 29).

"I don't belong in church. Sometimes I'm pretty sure that God is disgusted with me" (Chapter 7, p. 59).

"You said you were a Christian, Melissa. I want to trust your honesty. I really believe that God put me on this case because you needed someone who wouldn't shoot first and ask questions later" (Chapter 13, p. 94).

"I'm not going to let him get away with it, Sandy, she promised. Even if it costs me everything it cost you, I'm not letting him get away with it" (Chapter 16, p. 104).

"I need you anyway, Lord, her heart cried out. Can you forgive me if I don't repent" (Chapter 21, p. 138).

"'I'm a Christian,' he said. 'I don't know if that means a whole lot to you, but it does to me'" (Chapter 21, p. 143).

"He had trusted his own solutions rather than God's. He had taken things out of his Father's hands, and with his own limited vision, had decided how things should go. "Please forgive me, Lord. Forgive me for not trusting you" (Chapter 37, p. 218).

"This is it, Lord, he thought. Please help us. Don't let anybody get hurt" (Chapter 48, p. 279).

"For most of the time that I've been in here, I've considered you my personal angel, sent by God. Did you even realize you were being used by God" (Epilogue, p. 300).

"Larry was a gift from God, something she hadn't earned, but she wouldn't refuse, either" (Epilogue, p. 302).



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the style elements of Terri Blackstock's novel "Justifiable Means." What is the importance of the way that Blackstone has created her novel in terms of the point of view, setting, language, and structure? How do these elements of style add to or detract from the plot?

Discuss the theme of justice in the novel "Justifiable Means" by Terri Blackstock with respect to the understanding of justice that both Larry and Melissa hold. What is justice to each of these characters? Do they agree or disagree? Why? How does each of them come around to securing justice by the end of the novel?

Discuss the ways in which Larry's Christian faith affects his thoughts, words, and actions. Where does his Christian worldview cause him to do unpopular things? Is he right to stand by his faith and his morality, even when his decisions are unpopular? Explain your answer.

Discuss the theme of Christianity in the novel "Justifiable Means" by Terri Blackstock. In what ways does Christian faith bear in on the novel? Which characters are influenced by God and Christianity, and in what ways? How does belief in Christianity affect the actions and lives of those characters who profess belief?

Discuss the theme of courage in Terri Blackstock's novel "Justifiable Means". What does it mean to have courage? Which of the characters show courage in the novel? In which ways do these characters show courage? Make a list for comparison. Are any of the characters more courageous than the others? Are all of the characters equally courageous? Why?