

# **Keeping Faith Study Guide**

## **Keeping Faith by Jodi Picoult**

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## Plot Summary

Mariah and her daughter, Faith, go to visit Mariah's mother, who has purchased a new "coffin table." The table is apparently a usable coffin that is to serve as a coffee table until it's needed as a casket. They leave and are nearing the ballet studio, when Faith realizes she's forgotten her leotard. They return to the house, find Colin is at home and rush upstairs only to discover that both Colin and another woman are showering.

Three days pass. Mariah pulls herself together only by realizing that she must - for Faith. She holds to the hope that Colin will return, until she's served with divorce papers. The divorce is fairly quick, but then Faith begins talking about an "imaginary friend." She refers to this friend as "her guard," and it a psychiatrist suggests that Faith is seeing God. Faith herself doesn't realize this until her grandmother, Millie, collapses while Mariah cries, "Oh, God."

Faith's psychiatrist takes the story of Faith - without using her name - to a psychiatric symposium. A reporter who is covering the event picks up on the story and prompts the attention of other media outlets, including Ian Fletcher, a self-proclaimed "anti-evangelist." Reporters, religious zealots and ill people hoping for a miracle healing converge on the White home. After Millie collapses, is pronounced dead and is "resurrected" by Faith, the attention becomes intense. When Colin hears of the situation, he sues for custody, and there follows a bitter custody battle. It's during this time that Mariah's self-doubts of her ability to be a good mother begin to dissipate as she realizes that the tie between herself and her daughter are strong. It's Mariah who says that she believes whatever Faith tells her she (Faith) feels and sees. And it's that belief in her child that eventually catches the attention of the judge who decides the case.

Through it all, Ian Fletcher remains a true skeptic - until the time he accidentally encounters Mariah and Faith on the run from both the media and Colin's threats to take custody of Faith. Though Ian maintains his disbelief, he comes to hope that Faith can perform a miracle, and that she will heal his autistic brother. When Ian has a moment with his brother as the lucid, teasing man he'd always hoped Michael would be, he comes to believe, though he won't admit fully to having a change of heart.

Through the horrors of a court trial, Mariah comes to understand that she doesn't have to be perfect in order to be a good mother. The attraction that she and Ian feel toward each other will eventually have the opportunity to grow. Faith holds onto her power for several months, but there comes a day when she is alone in her room - talking to nobody.



# Prologue, Chapters One and Two

## Prologue, Chapters One and Two Summary

Mariah and her daughter, Faith, go to visit Mariah's mother, Millie, who has purchased a new "coffin table." The table is apparently a usable coffin that is to serve as a coffee table until it's needed as a casket. They leave and are nearing the ballet studio when Faith realizes she's forgotten her leotard. They return home, find Colin is there and rush upstairs only to discover both Colin and another woman showering together.

Three days pass, and Mariah continues to cry, as her mother pushes her into making herself presentable for a visit with Faith. Mariah asks "What's wrong with me" and her mother says nothing, "in spite of what that cretin wants you to believe." Millie predicts that Mariah will get through the situation and that Faith will help.

Mariah builds elaborate doll houses of wood, including the furniture. She's built a replica of the White House for Chelsea Clinton. She will later note that she didn't want to play with dolls herself as a child. She says that when the dog bumped into the doll house and the baby tumbled down the stairs, she'd feel guilty.

After Colin leaves, Mariah begins to worry about Faith; the child refuses to talk, and Mariah worries that she isn't up to the challenge of trying to reach Faith. Six days after Colin leaves, Mariah is served with divorce papers. Up to that point, she seems to have held the hope he would return. Mariah contacts Joan Standish to represent her and one of the first things Joan asks is what will happen if Colin decides to return.

On August 17, 1999, Ian Fletcher is on the set of his television show. Ian is a television "anti-evangelist," who debunks claims of religious sightings and miracles. Ian has formed a company - Pagan Productions - and has a Ph.D. in theology from Harvard. He is handsome, which doesn't hurt his television show. Ian's show is floundering, and he's searching for a way to increase ratings. He comes up with the idea of going on the road, searching out religious claims around the country and debunking them. His producer, James agrees, and they begin making plans. Ian begins searching for a great story to feature on this new series.

Faith's understanding of things stretches from where a monarch butterfly lays its eggs to the fact that everyone is talking about her and her injuries sustained at the circus. Her back continues to seep blood, and she doesn't yet wear a shirt because of the sores. Faith, Millie and Mariah are at the dinner table when Colin arrives. Mariah invites him for dinner and Millie objects. Mariah tries to insist, but Colin says Jessica is waiting in the car, that he'd only wanted to check on Faith. Mariah and Millie argue, with Millie eventually going home. Later, Mariah knows she needs to do some things - including checking on Faith's injuries, but she only wants to lie down and cry. Faith knows her mother is crying and is afraid. She "dreams about a person wearing a long white nightgown," and Faith, knowing this is a stranger, shrinks away. Faith says, "Are you a



friend of my mom's?" The stranger replies, "I'm your guard." Two nights later, Mariah finds that Faith is not in her bed but is climbing on top of the swing set. Faith says her guard said it will be alright. She is sing-songing a Bible passage. Mariah makes arrangements for Faith to see a psychiatrist.

Meanwhile, Colin learns that Jessica is pregnant. Colin's initial reaction isn't what Jessica hoped for, but Colin quickly covers his surprise and promises that he's happy. He tries to imagine what the child will look like, but can only see Faith's face. Colin is a salesman of LED exit lights. He later interrupts a sale to ponder his role as father to this new child, promising that he'll do better this time, and that Faith will "reap the benefits" of his determination on this front.

As Faith and Mariah are leaving home one day, Faith insists that Mariah also fasten "her guard's" shoes, which she says buckles rather than tying. Faith says, "She says thank you." Mariah notes that Dr. Keller is very organized, making Mariah feel that she always needs to check to see if she herself has forgotten something. Dr. Keller says that Faith's imaginary friend is a healthy reaction to having dealt with the stress of divorce. She says that Faith isn't psychotic and that there's no real need for concern. On September 6, Millie points out that they should be glad Faith hasn't dreamed up a "British soldier with a big furry hat as a guard and then complained that he wouldn't fit in the back seat of the car." Mariah is concerned that Faith will be teased at school. Mariah and Millie briefly watch Ian Fletcher on television, Millie saying that she likes his southern accent. Mariah notes that Ian, who is in Maine attempting to debunk claims of a tree limb that looks like Jesus, is having the time of his life.

In fact, Ian is miserable. Ian notes that the tree sap and the rings do resemble the visage of Jesus, or Orville Redenbacher or Uncle Sam. Ian asks a priest if he can "accept the possibility" that the limb may not be what it appears to be. The priest responds by saying, "I can. Can you?" Ian continues the broadcast, saying he doesn't believe in the apparition and that it simply can't be proven either way. As Mariah and Millie continue to watch the show, Faith is playing. Faith mutters the words, "Ye shall surely die," just as Ian quotes a verse from Genesis that ends that way. Mariah notes that she and Colin had put off any religious training for Faith. Mariah is Jewish and Colin Episcopalian, but neither are religious themselves. She knows that Faith, having not been taught at home and having never attended church, couldn't have just heard this somewhere.

On the following Tuesday morning, Ian gets into a limo to go to the airport. He does this every Tuesday, though his destination is not yet revealed. It will later be learned that he is traveling to Kansas City, where he visits with his twin brother, Michael, who is autistic.

Faith tells Dr. Keller that she's learned that if she rubs her eyes with her fists, she sees colors and shapes. To her surprise, Dr. Keller does this. She then notes that no one else listens to her like Dr. Keller. Faith says that her guard has other friends, but the guard sees more of Faith right now. Faith recites the names of several of those others who see her guard, and that the guard doesn't know the word "pray." Later, Dr. Keller asks Mariah if Faith attended parochial school, and where Faith might have learned names



such as Herman Joseph, Elizabeth and Julianna, who are Catholic saints. Dr. Keller says she believes Faith might not be seeing a guard, but God.

## Prologue, Chapters One and Two Analysis

Mariah notes that she is compulsive about lists and schedules. She says that on any other Wednesday, she would not have been home at that time of day, but on this particular day, her schedule was interrupted by a water problem that prompted the market to close. She alludes to a prior episode of a nervous breakdown of some sort and then notes that Colin was able to look her in the eye while he said anything—that it didn't matter that she was the shy kid and he the football star, for example. She says that he even looked her in the eye while he was arranging to have her committed.

Mariah, Millie and Faith attend the circus. It's Millie's idea as a way to cheer Faith. Mariah had attended the circus with her parents as a child and though she was obedient, she slipped away and was later found with the elephant. Now, Mariah watches as Faith is invited onto the circus floor to participate in the finale. Suddenly, a dog runs past the elephant, and Faith is thrown to the floor. A clown rushes to Faith but bumps into the sword juggler who drops his swords around Faith. The injuries aren't serious, but Mariah blames herself for allowing the accident. Though Mariah says she has no religious upbringing, she seems to be praying aloud. When Faith wakes, she calls out for Mariah.

Ian refuses to publicly outline the events that led him to tout his atheism but will much later admit that it's because of his childhood. He has a twin who is autistic. His parents cared little for the boys and spent most of their time jet-setting around the world, leaving the boys in the care of a hired caregiver. Then his parents were killed, and the boys left destitute in the care of an uncaring aunt. He'll later admit that he can't believe in a God who would allow those things to happen.

On August 30, 1999, Colin is in a park watching a small girl play. He knows that approaching the child would make people suspect him of being a pedophile, but he can't resist watching the little girl as he thinks of Faith. It seems that Colin is beginning to worry about his absence from Faith.

During Faith's initial consultation with the psychiatrist, Dr. Keller, she plays with dolls. When Keller questions her, Faith says that there is one daddy and two mommies in the room. She then explains that one of them does all the kissing and the other - apparently representative of Mariah - "does all the crying." Mariah asks Dr. Keller if the imaginary friend could be something Faith is only hearing in her head, indicating her concern that Faith could be hallucinating.



# Chapters Three, Four and Five

## Chapters Three, Four and Five Summary

By September 20, Faith has started second grade but has missed days for a battery of tests to rule out medical problems associated with her visions. She begins taking Risperdal, but it will eventually prove ineffective and be discontinued. Mariah continues to hope the medication will work but then Faith says that "my guard says everyone has things to teach people," proving that she's still having the visions. Mariah, in an effort to reach Faith, tells her about her (Mariah's) suicide attempt and the resulting confinement. Faith is afraid and accuses Mariah of believing she's made up her "guard." Then Faith tells Mariah that her "guard" knows about Priscilla and that she is forgiven. Mariah will later relate the story to her mother, that she had a kitten named Priscilla, that she dressed in her clothes and treated as a baby doll, and that she drowned it while giving it a bath. Millie says she never knew that the drowning wasn't an accident. Neither can come up with an explanation for Faith's knowledge of Priscilla.

On September 23, the divorce is final. Later that day, Faith says that her guard told her of a book about her and asks to go to the library. Mariah agrees and the librarian helps figure out that I.I. Swerbeh is actually Hebrews, Chapter 11. Faith reads that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Mariah tells Faith to tell God that she believes. Mariah is then faced with what to do next. Millie suggests she not start at a church but recommends a Jewish Temple and Rabbi Marvin Weissman. They do visit the rabbi and then see Dr. Grady De Vries, an expert in childhood schizophrenia, who says that Faith doesn't appear schizophrenic or psychotic and that there's no apparent physical explanation. He does, however, say there is too much detailed knowledge to chalk it up to imagination. He asks Mariah for permission to present the case at a psychiatric symposium in order to seek out other opinions, and she agrees. On September 27, Dr. Keller tells of two instances of children having personal relationships with God. She describes Faith's case without mentioning her name. Dr. Keller then says that she was the other case. The symposium is being observed by a Boston Globe reporter, Allen McManus, who picks up on the story and immediately contacts his editor.

On the night of September 29, Faith wakes with a pain in her hands. Her guard tells her that it will only hurt for a little while. Earlier that day, Ian's employees find the story written by Allan McManus. The following day, another employee named Yvonne walks into the hospital, tells the MRI scheduling nurse that she's looking for the report on Dr. Keller's seven-year-old patient, and the nurse says that Faith White's report went out the previous week. Ian begins calling all the Whites in New Canaan and soon locates Faith's home. Ian isn't the only one looking for Faith. The members of the Order of the Great Passion have come from Sedona in search of Faith - the Messiah. They follow Ian to Faith's home.



Later that week, Mariah goes to pick up Faith at school but finds that her daughter is in the secretary's office, crying. She says that children are making fun of her for talking to her Guard. Mariah promises Faith that she can skip school the following day and that the two of them will have fun all day. They arrive home to find their yard crowded with people. Mariah calls her mother, asking her to come over. Meanwhile, Ian is holding an impromptu session on the lawn. He says that there is nothing, other than God, that people take for granted without proof. Millie arrives at the same time as the police chief. She tells Ian that her granddaughter is of no interest to him, and Ian says that sounds as if Millie doesn't believe Faith's claims. To everyone's horror, Millie falls down, clutching at her chest. Mariah rushes to her mother's side, saying "Oh, God" repeatedly. It's then that Faith realizes that her own phrase, "Oh, guard," is very similar and that "God" is what she should have been saying.

Mariah goes in the ambulance with her mother while the police chief follows with Faith. Another officer is left to stay with Faith in the ER. Ian is there as well. When the officer is called away, Faith goes to sit beside Ian. She says, "I don't like you," and Ian says she's "in good company." Mariah comes to the waiting room to get Faith, telling Ian to stay away from the child. A nurse confirms Ian's suspicion that Millie died.

Mariah and Faith enter the room where the doctors worked on Millie and where she now lies dead. Mariah asks Faith if she realizes what it is to be dead. Faith noisily pulls a chair to Millie's bedside and climbs up. Faith stands on the chair and hugs Millie, then kisses her on the mouth. Mariah's gaze is fixed on the pair as "Millie's arms rise stiff and slow and cling to her granddaughter for dear life." The doctors have no explanation but want to keep Millie overnight for observation. She refuses a wheelchair and marches through the ER waiting room, past a dumbfounded Ian Fletcher, which makes Mariah laugh.

Mariah and Faith talk about what happened. Faith says God told her what to do. Mariah notes that there's something wrong with Faith's hands, but she insists it's from the monkey bars. She says that it didn't hurt to heal her grandmother, but that it felt like a roller coaster. Mariah says that she's a little afraid of the fact that Faith seems to have performed a miracle, and Faith says it scares her a little, too. On October 1, the story of Millie's miraculous recovery is printed in the Boston Globe.

By October 3, there is police intervention keeping Ian Fletcher and the "fifty or so other gawkers" off the White's lawn though Mariah says keeping them only to the road isn't nearly far enough. Ian manages to get close enough to Mariah to say, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have." When Mariah asks "shouldn't have what?" he doesn't elaborate.

## Chapters Three, Four and Five Analysis

Mariah asks Millie if it's so impossible to believe Faith is talking to God, and Millie responds, "Ask Moses' mother." It's then that Mariah realizes Millie doesn't believe Faith's claims. Mariah says that her only conversation with Faith about God had been





when Faith asked about the Pledge of Allegiance phrase, "Under God." From Mariah's faltering description, Faith comes to the conclusion that God is like a big baby-sitter.

Faith refers to her "guard" as "she." This will continue to be a stumbling block for many, including some who will latch onto the discrepancy for one reason or another. Some women will use it to promote their own agendas. Others will use it to attempt to discredit Faith. It will be Father Joseph McReady who'll eventually suggest that perhaps Faith, having been raised in a traditional, conservative Connecticut town, misidentifies God's gender because of his appearance - a "dress," long hair and sandals.

When Mariah and Faith go to the temple, they encounter a couple who are in marriage counseling. The couple are bitter and Weissman later says that he felt their marriage was beyond saving. However, he'll be proven wrong when they reconcile without any explanation other than that they feel differently. Weissman will note that the event occurs after they meet Faith in the hallway.

On October 4, Millie agrees to let Ian film her stress test with the hope that he'll then lose interest and go away. Mariah says that Faith is not to be filmed at all and Ian agrees. Near the conclusion of the test, Ian's cameraman turns the lens on Faith anyway, prompting Mariah to step in front of the camera, yelling. Ian promises not to use the footage of Faith but that film will turn up in court when Colin sues for custody, his attorney saying it depicts a woman who isn't in control of herself or her emotions. Ian says that he understands Mariah's reaction and likens her to a lioness protecting her cub. Mariah realizes that she's been so busy protecting Faith that she hasn't had time to wonder if she's doing it right. Almost as an afterthought, she gets Ian's attention and slaps him.



# Chapters Six, Seven and Eight

## Chapters Six, Seven and Eight Summary

On October 6, Ian notes that his ratings are climbing but knows that it won't last unless he does something to continue the trend. He calls Allen McManus anonymously and suggests that the reporter find out who would benefit from Faith's popularity. Allen will much later say that he looked up the number and that the tip was made from a private cell phone assigned to Ian. Allen quickly comes to the conclusion that the person who would have something to gain would be Mariah.

In the early morning hours of October 7, Mariah wakes to find the front door open and Faith outside. She watches as Faith plays with a doll, only the doll is actually a small child. Mariah notes that there's a "wide, circular sore," below the hairline. A woman, apparently the baby's mother, stands nearby but doesn't attempt to take the child back from Faith. As cameramen begin snapping photos of Faith, Mariah rushes down and tells her daughter to return the child and go inside. Ian Fletcher watches and says that, having watched Faith play as any other child would and then "come to heel" once Mariah approached, he's now certain that Faith is not a healer and that Mariah is "the mastermind behind this show." He will also say that it "doesn't quite add up," and that Mariah seems to wish the entire situation wasn't happening. He reassures himself that Mariah is a good actress and that he's swayed by the fact that she's also attractive. The child is Rafael Civernos, and he is an AIDS patient, expected to die within the month. On October 11, Petra Saganoff, a television reporter for Hollywood Tonight records Rafael and his mother's claims of the child's healing at the hands of Faith.

On October 8, Rabbi Weissman visits with Rabbi Daniel Solomon in tow. Daniel says he believes. The following day, Sunday, Father Joseph McReady prepares for a full house for mass, but there are only eight there. Following the service, he learns that most are at the White's house. He goes there himself and gains entry through an officer standing guard, who is a parishioner. He immediately gains Mariah's trust, but she refuses to allow him to see Faith. She says that there's really no proof of any miracles. Father Joseph says that "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were just telling what they saw as well." Mariah counters with the question, why would God speak through a Jewish child. Father Joseph points out that it's happened before.

On October 13, Faith carefully packs a bag of essentials as she prepares to run away. Ian, who is never able to sleep more than a few hours at a time, sees her slip away from the house and follows. Faith says she isn't running away, that she's getting away from the house with the intention of calling her mother to join her. Ian quickly catches up with her and debates what he should ask. Faith is wearing gloves and refuses to take them off. Just as she tells Ian to ask any question he wants, she says, "God," and then faints. Ian discovers blood on Faith's hands, gathers her up and runs to Mariah. He sits in the back seat and Mariah drives to the hospital. Faith cries out as the hospital staff work on her. She denies that she hurt her hands, and the attending physician calls for a



consultation with a hand specialist. Later, Ian and Mariah talk with Ian saying the difference between this is that Mariah, given the choice, would believe in Faith's story, while Ian wouldn't. Ian says he was raised Southern Baptist but doesn't believe because he can't imagine a God who would stand by while His own Son died.

On October 15, Faith is still in the hospital and Mariah says that she seems much better, except for holes in each of her palms. Ian arrives with roses and asks to speak to Mariah but before he can begin, Dr. Blumburg, the hand specialist, asks to talk to Mariah. Mariah invites Ian along. As an example of what's happened to Faith's hand, Dr. Blumburg spears a cheese Danish. He says this exhibits what happens with a puncture - ragged edges and tearing. Faith's wounds show none of those signs. He says he and several colleagues wonder whether Faith injured her hands or "just started to bleed." When Ian says that is tantamount to "authenticating stigmata," the doctor says he can't "conclusively" say that. Mariah objects to the possibility. Dr. Blumburg says it's also possible that a mind can cause physical manifestations, and that he wants a psychiatrist evaluation. Ian tells Mariah that he once interviewed a nun who claimed stigmata, but it was eventually proven that she was stabbing herself with a sewing hook. He says those wounds look nothing like Faith's.

While Faith is recovering, Allen McManus is continuing his research. A young man named Henry helps Allen search for information and finds that Faith had been hospitalized. On October 17, the story runs in the Boston Globe. Mariah is at home by the time the story is published and Rabbi Daniel Solomon brings her a copy. Word gets around the hospital about the possibility of Faith's experiencing the stigmata, and many nurses make time and excuses to see her. Father Joseph visits. Over the course of the conversation, Faith asks him if God makes his hands hurt as well. Mariah notes that she hasn't thought to ask about that possibility. When Father Joseph returns to the rectory, he makes the decision to contact the Catholic officials, justifying it by saying that he's not doing anything "to" the Whites but is doing it "for" everyone else. Monsignor O'Shaughnessy hears Father Joseph's information - that Faith is a child professing visions and that there is talk of stigmata - but cuts the conversation short before Father Joseph can add that Faith refers to God as "she." It's in the late hours of October 17, that Colin White, in Las Vegas with his new wife, can't sleep and sees Petra Saganoff on Hollywood Tonight, talking about Faith.

Faith is soon examined by the Catholic "pastoral psychologist," Father Rourke, who declares that Faith isn't psychotic and then learns that Faith claims God is "a lady." Then Colin arrives but Mariah immediately refuses to allow him inside. He says that he'd never expected anything like this because Mariah is ultimately a fair person and even when she isn't, she's a "pushover." Mariah says that she knows Colin's ultimate purpose is to take Faith. After he leaves, Faith asks if they'll see him again the following day, but Mariah says they won't be home. On October 19, Millie again voices her objections as Mariah and Faith travel to the mall, change clothes in a public restroom and go to the airport. Faith objects to leaving her grandmother, behind but Millie promises she'll watch over their house and that she'll join them soon. Meanwhile, Colin is hiring Malcolm Mertz to gain custody of Faith at all costs.



Mariah and Faith choose a flight at random, and it happens to be Flight 5456 to Kansas City, the same flight Ian has taken. When they see each other, Mariah supposes Ian has followed them. Ian decides to allow Mariah to think that. He convinces them that staying with him would be safer than being on their own, rents a cabin at Camp Perry, introducing himself as Brother Harry Walters of Louisville, Faith as Frances and Mariah as Maybelle. When Mariah asks if he wasn't afraid the owner would recognize him, he says that he felt confident because of the lack of cable at the remote spot.

Ian's brother, Michael, is severely autistic. When Ian arrives more than an hour late, Michael is agitated repeatedly yelling that Ian visits at three-thirty on Tuesday, and Ian winds up leaving soon after his arrival. Ian decides that he has a week to try to convince Faith and Mariah to accompany him back to visit Michael. That night, he has a nightmare about smoke and towers of fire and reaching for his parents but encountering only the hand of his brother. Mariah wakes to his cries and helps him calm down by offering a drink of water. The next day, Ian leaves, saying only that he has to make a living. He is actually shopping for clothing for all of them, but after he leaves Mariah begins to consider his possible motives. She and Faith walk to a nearby gas station where she calls Millie and a taxi. While they wait, Ian arrives, and Mariah and Faith return to the cabin with him.

On October 22, Mariah slips off to sleep while Ian and Faith play cards. Ian invites Faith to go fishing. Though she worries that her mother will be angry, she is so tired of being cooped up inside she agrees. They are on a dock, Ian having dug worms for bait and taught her to cast, when he asks Faith if her dad ever took her fishing. To her negative response, he says his never did either. Ian asks her about being "fishers of men," and waits for Faith's reply, but she gets a bite and pulls in a three-pound bass. As Faith is holding the fish, she slips from the dock and falls in. Mariah awakes, finds Ian and Faith gone, runs outside and sees them on the dock just as Faith falls in. Ian jumps in after her, pulls her from under the dock and pushes her out of the water. Mariah is angry and immediately yells at Ian for taking Faith without her permission. She will later apologize, saying it was the heat of the moment that made her yell, but at this instant she tells Ian that Faith wouldn't have been in danger if not for his actions. She goes so far as to say she can't be sure that Ian didn't push her. He responds that "For all I know, she might have walked on water." On the morning of October 23, Ian, Mariah and Faith are having Cheerios for breakfast when Faith insists on another bowl for God. The following day, Mariah builds a house out of toothpicks and notes that she's probably lost all her current clients. She asks Ian if he would tell her what he plans to say about Faith, and he says he doesn't know for sure. It's later that day that Joan Standish tells Millie that Mariah has been served with custody papers, and she should return to face the court hearing immediately.

In the early morning hours of October 24, Mariah and Ian discover that both are awake in the middle of the night, apparently unable to sleep. That same day, Rabbi Daniel Solomon and Father Cullen Mulrooney are guests on Larry King's television show, arguing about Faith. The rabbi believes that she is not the Jewish Messiah but that she is "more skilled at opening herself up to God than the rest of us." One caller says that Faith is "the devil's handmaiden," but King cuts him off. Another caller says that even if Faith is



making it up, "it's about time someone suggested God might be a woman." The argument grows heated with the priest deriding the rabbi's suggestion that Jewish religious words could be referring to females.

Mariah agrees that she and Faith will go to Lockwood with Ian, and they make the trip on October 26. Michael is turning over cards, as he is doing every week when Ian arrives. Faith approaches the table and asks to play. Michael begins yelling and throws the cards. Faith begins picking up cards, though Mariah urges her to leave. The attendant tells Ian that he should leave and he rushes out, leaving Mariah and Faith to find their own way back to the cabin. He will soon admit to himself that though he professionally wanted to reveal Faith as a hoax, he personally wanted her to succeed with Michael. When he returns to the cabin, he tells Mariah that it's all an act. She kisses him gently, saying that it's not an act and that she, too, wishes she could understand why Faith could heal her mother but not Michael.

Ian was born two and a half minutes after his twin, stronger and healthier and always felt responsible for Michael's ill health. His parents were jet-setters and seldom home, and hired help raised the boys. His parents were killed in a plane crash, but it was then discovered that they had lived off credit and that the boys were actually destitute. They lived with an aunt and her "Bible-thumping husband" in Kansas, where Michael was sent to an institution. Ian's drive to succeed was fueled by his need to provide a better place for Michael. That night, Ian and Mariah have sex, and Mariah realizes that she's waited her entire life for this "perfect fit." At five the next morning, Ian slips away from the cabin to visit Michael. Though he knows any deviation from routine upsets his brother, he is anxious because of the abrupt departure the day before. He hopes to simply see Michael sleeping so that he'll know he is alright. He stands at Michael's bedside but then Michael awakes. He looks at Ian and asks why Ian is there so early. He then teases, "What, you've got nowhere better to go?" As Ian stares, Michael continues, "Gee, and they say you're the smart one." The brothers hug and the change lasts only another moment. Ian, recognizing that his brother will soon erupt into a full-blown tantrum, leaves, but discovers the jack of hearts in his shirt pocket.

## Chapters Six, Seven and Eight Analysis

On October 8, Rabbi Weissman brings Rabbi Daniel Solomon to the White home. Solomon is the leader of the Beit Am Hadash, or "House of a New People." He has a ponytail and wears a tie-dyed shirt. He notes that his congregation draws on Native American traditions, Buddhism and other spiritual traditions. His willingness to accept alternative religions as possibilities seems to make him a prime candidate to consider Faith's story without automatically dismissing it. Daniel says that he believes Faith, and that God doesn't go somewhere unless He is wanted and needed. Faith corrects him, saying that God is a "she." Daniel accepts that as well. Daniel asks Mariah to allow Faith to go to Boulder with him. Mariah refuses. She says that she doesn't see divine light in her daughter, that she only sees someone who is "getting more and more upset with what's going on around her." Daniel says "That's what many Jews said two thousand years ago about Jesus."



Ian is on his way to Kansas City to visit Michael when he hears the newscast of Hollywood Tonight, in which the young mother tells of Faith healing Rafael. Ian finds himself wondering - for the first time in many years - about his dedication to debunking all cases of faith and religious miracles. He wonders, "What if, this time, I'm wrong?"

Stigmata is a word with which Mariah doesn't seem familiar. Dr. Blumburg says that stigmata is "medically inexplicable instances where people bleed from the hands, feet and side without any actual trauma to the body." He says some patients report "religious ecstasy," while sometimes the wounds are chronic or vanish quickly. Mariah seems equally upset by the possibilities that Faith is experiencing stigmata, or that she's experiencing some sort of psychotic episode.

When Ian discovers that Faith and Mariah are on his plane, he decides to pretend that he was following them with the idea that he can eventually gain their confidence. He plans to have Faith attempt to heal his brother, Michael, with the idea that he'll then have proof of her false claims. The interesting thing about this plan is that Ian has kept his brother completely out of the limelight of his career. No one knows that Michael even exists. What Ian will eventually admit is that he's somehow begun to hope that Faith would succeed. After they've been at the cabin for several days, Ian is sitting on the porch when Mariah comes outside. There's a Bible near where he's sitting. He tells Mariah what seems to be a mixture of truth and lies, with the ultimate goal to have Faith see Michael. He tells her that he was reading the Bible as research but that he believes it to be fiction. Then he says that was a lie and that he's begun to hope that Faith is real. He tells her about Michael and that he didn't follow them to Kansas City, but had come to hope that Faith might be able to cure his brother. As he's telling Mariah all this, he considers, the "what if?"





# Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve

## Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve Summary

Mariah is asleep on the couch the following morning when Faith wakes her. Mariah had just dreamed of marrying Ian though the dream ends with Mariah standing in front of Jesus on the cross. She tells Faith she slept on the couch to escape her daughter's snoring and that she's naked because she was hot. When Ian returns, Mariah uses his cell phone to call Millie who informs her of the custody issue. Mariah returns to the living room with the news that they have to return.

Meanwhile, Father Rampini - Promoter of the Faith for the Catholic Church - is preparing to travel to New Canaan. It's noted that his position is irreverently referred to as "Devil's Advocate." Father Rampini arrives at the rectory and tells Father Joseph that he doesn't expect he'll need to stay long. Father Joseph will soon tell Rampini that he sounds "an awful lot like a Pharisee. He arrives before Faith returns and encounters Millie. Her greeting is, "What are they doing in Rome? Cloning you fellows?" Millie refuses to set a time for him to visit with Faith but asks for "that nice priest," referring to Father Joseph.

On the way back to New Canaan, Ian admits - to himself and to Mariah - that he'd lied about wanting Faith to fail with Michael. He then tells Mariah about his moments with Michael. He assures Mariah that they'll work it all out, that he's not going to reveal Faith as a fraud because he knows that she isn't, and that he and Mariah will look back on this years from now together. They arrive separately. As soon as Mariah walks inside, she walks back out with Joan Standish.

The judge handling the custody issue is A. Warren Rothbottom. He likes show tunes and is listening to a new soundtrack when Mertz arrives with an emergency motion to remove Faith from Mariah's custody immediately on the grounds that the child is in danger. Rothbottom, learning that Faith is the child who has garnered all the recent media attention, agrees to hear the motion but changes the soundtrack to "Jesus Christ, Superstar." He hears the motion on October 27, shortly after Mariah returns with Faith. Rothbottom refuses to remove Faith, appoints a psychiatrist and sets a court date in six weeks. That night, Mariah admits to her mother that she and Faith were with Ian in Kansas City but doesn't give the details of her relationship. That night, Faith wakes - afraid of what might be under her bed - and cries out. Mariah arrives and Faith, enjoying the attention, says her hands hurt, prompting Mariah to remain with her. The following day, Mariah goes for groceries and Ian follows. They talk briefly in a grocery store with Ian saying that he'll do whatever he can to make it right for Mariah and Faith, though they are careful to quickly separate lest someone should recognize them. Ian later says it was difficult to let her walk away from him.

That night, Father Joseph calls Mariah and during the course of the conversation, Mariah points out that Faith isn't Catholic. Father Joseph says that neither was Jesus.



By October 29, Father Rampini is certain that Faith White "is full of crap," though he admits that there are some issues to be explained - such as why she isn't trying to profit from her claims. Through Father Joseph, he is allowed a visit with Faith. When she leads him upstairs, he's immediately aware of the Band-aids on her hands. He learns that Faith had wished fervently on a star for a friend, that this friend said, "I am your God," that Faith's hands don't hurt now and that she describes this friend as Jesus wearing the traditional garb of his day though she isn't familiar with the name, "Jesus." Rampini will soon decide that Faith is actually describing God as "she" because she's never encountered a man wearing "a dress" or sandals or with long hair. While he is investigating Faith, the Bishop of Manchester issues a notice denouncing the MotherGod Society for their claims of God as a woman on the grounds that it is against the Catholic dogman. Meanwhile, Mertz hires Lacy Rodriguez to investigate Mariah and Faith.

That night, Colin is featured on Hollywood Tonight and Ian will tell Mariah that she should do the same. Father Rampini sends his report to the Catholic officials. Rampini and Father Joseph talk at length about Faith and religion and Rampini says there's a theory that a child's earliest ideals of God are tied to a loving parent and that might account for Faith's insistence that God is a "she." It's Father McReady who suggests that Faith is referring to God as a woman because of the dress and long hair. Father Rampini calls to change the findings of his official report.

Mariah recounts her learning of hell. She says that she was about seven, that a girl named Ursula Padrewski told her that anyone not baptized would go to hell, that her mother said it didn't apply to them because they are Jewish, and that Mariah dunked her favorite Barbie and then herself in the bathtub, just to be safe. On October 30, Joan says that Mariah shouldn't try her case in the media but later agrees to allow filming of Faith, though without any interviews and only allowing taping in certain parts of the house. Meanwhile, Lacy Rodriguez has learned that Millie's stress test was filmed. She'll later make a deal for the tape which will be aired in court in an effort to make Mariah look unhinged but that actually makes her appear the protective mother.

Kenzie van der Hoven is the only daughter in a family of boys, all with legal careers. She has been appointed Faith attorney ad litem. On November 2, she arrives at Mariah's, shoves her way through the bodies to reach the door. Before she can arrive, Petra Saganoff knocks at the door but quickly retreats when Millie appears, asking Mariah what she should do with a rifle - the gun is actually an antique but Millie points out that it did make the reporter leave. Just then Kenzie arrives, introduces herself and spends time first with Mariah and then Faith. Mariah tells of her time in the hospital and after the interview tells her mother that she knows she'll lose Faith. Kenzie talks to Faith only for a few minutes then asks if she wants to go outside. Faith fears her mother won't let her but then agrees to go. Kenzie tells her to ignore the media who begin taking photos immediately. Mariah fears the additional attention then realizes that photographers reporting on Faith playing - like any child would play - can't possibly hurt her case and that the time outside is doing wonders for Faith. Kenzie later interviews Colin, says that she feels she's stepped into a catalogue when she walked into their home, and that Colin was either a liar or a dad who wanted to protect his child.





On November 10, Ian meets with Metz, agrees to testify for Colin hinting that he has "some decent hidden-camera footage of Mariah White coaching the kid before she bows and scrapes for the crowd," and that he has proof the stigmata is an optical illusion. He refuses "coaching" and says he'll only meet once with Metz to go over testimony. It's that same day that Faith tells Kenzie that God smells of oranges and that her mother is not hurting her, then Kenzie notes that Mariah smells of citrus shampoo. Later, Faith tells Kenzie that she fears it's her fault that her father left. She is on the verge of telling her that she's been to Kansas City but Mariah interrupts, saying that she'd wanted to get Faith away from the media and that they'd selected Kansas City because it was the first plane leaving the airport. Later, Mariah tells Ian that Kenzie knows she ran away with Faith but Ian says her best defense is that she returned to face the custody battle. Over the coming days, Kenzie visits with Millie and with Rabbi Weissman who says that the question isn't why Faith was chosen, but why not.

## Chapters Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve Analysis

Mariah recalls the first time Colin kissed her as they were studying French. There were catcalls immediately and it's later that Mariah discovers that Colin had been dared. It's interesting that Mariah - though she knows this - continues to fall in love with Colin and works so hard at becoming what he wants. As they begin dating, he once breaks a date because he's ill. She makes chicken soup and takes it to his room, only to find that he's at the party with another girl. He tells her that he'd felt better and decided to go, but that Mariah wasn't in her room when he called her. It's then that Colin says he wants to be with Mariah because she is better than most people and makes him want to be better as well.

Ian has taken to calling Mariah at night. He's repositioned his Winnebago, so that he faces her window and can see when she turns out the light. They talk often over the coming days, and Ian will sometimes tell her not to cry when he can't be near to comfort her.

Mariah's reaction to Kenzie is interesting. She doesn't object to Kenzie spending time with Faith but absents herself from the situation as often as possible. It will become evident that she fears saying or doing something that will make Kenzie think she's crazy or an inept parent, prompting a recommendation to terminate her parental rights.

Ian is in a quandary when Mariah and Faith go outside. He knows that he should be filming the child but doesn't want to. He finally comes to a conclusion, tells the cameraman to start filming, jumps the fence and runs up to Mariah, grabbing her by the arm and telling her to act like she's trying to pull away. Ian later calls Mariah, says that his producer expected him to do something and that he knew if he jumped the fence he'd at least get to touch her. He reminds her that "I'm with you."



# Chapters Thirteen through Eighteen

## Chapters Thirteen through Eighteen Summary

Joan says that she's met with Ian and Mertz to depose Ian, and that Ian continually "pled the fifth." It will later be revealed that he's going to testify that Mariah is a good mother and that he's seen no signs of fraud with regard to Faith's claims. He refuses to answer during deposition because he knows he has to tell the truth both in the deposition and in court or be found guilty of perjury. Hollywood Tonight film crews arrive, take forever to set up the equipment, and Faith insists on lunch before the allotted film time finishes. Petra goes to the kitchen with Mariah and laughs when Mariah invites her to join them for lunch, saying that they're having fishes and loaves. The show airs on November 24. Mariah is nervous wondering what Petra will say. Just before broadcast time, Millie says she forgot her glasses at her own home and insists that Mariah go get them. Mariah gets there to find Ian waiting and that her mother had arranged for the two to have some time alone. They watch the broadcast and then make love. Mertz realizes that Mariah's tactic has worked and that viewers have now seen her as a mother trying to make the best home possible for her child while there's "a maelstrom outside." On December 2, Colin arrives at Mariah's house. When Mariah fails to fold under his demands, he says she's changed. Their argument becomes heated and Faith arrives in the room, then she falls to the floor, writhing in pain with blood gushing from her hands and her side. When Faith awakes in the hospital, Colin asks if someone is hurting her. Mariah says that he'll next be accusing her and he simply raises his eyebrows.

While Faith is in the hospital, a woman named Mamie Richardson, eighty-two, is dying on the floor below. Though the family is being urged to turn off the machines, Mamie suddenly wakes and is fully recovered. That night, Faith's temperature soars despite attempts to get it down. When Mertz finds out, he makes plans for another emergency hearing with plans to cite Munchausen by Proxy. Rothbottom grants the request. As the official custody hearing begins, Rothbottom insists that Mariah come to court and grants a motion to keep her from Faith during the trial to test the theory that she's harming Faith. The following day, a man named Mr. Eversly dies after a heart attack, then revives, though his chest is cut open. No one noticed that his arm - dangling from the gurney - touched Faith as she was being taken for a test.

In court, Colin takes the stand, talking at length about Mariah's fragile mental health and justifying his affair by pointing out that he loves Jessica, had married her and is expecting a child. Joan asks about some additional women - others who Colin had affairs with over the course of his marriage to Mariah. Next, the psychiatrist Dr. Newton Ort takes the stand, saying that he found Colin to be well-adjusted and capable of providing a stable home for Faith. He says that Mariah is currently on medication for depression and suggests that she might be enforcing behavior in Faith that would alienate her from her father. Under Joan's questioning, Colin admits that Mariah has been a constant in Faith's life since the divorce. Next is Dr. DeSantis, who Joan points



out is hired by Mertz, and so it is not surprising that she finds Colin the more stable parent.

In the hospital, Millie is faced with a medical decision and agrees to allow Faith to begin dialysis. Just then, Ian is taking the stand in court. Mertz expects Ian to testify about the proof he found of fraudulent claims, but Ian says he's seen nothing to prove that Faith is "a charlatan." Mertz realizes that he shouldn't have allowed Ian on the stand without nailing down his testimony. Mertz asks Ian about Kansas City but Ian says only that he was visiting friends. Joan asks Mariah what she knows about Ian's testimony, and Mariah says that Ian wanted to help her. Joan asks how far he's willing to go, then goes to question Ian. He says that he's seen Mariah protecting her young just as a mama bear would. Mertz then has Allen McManus called to the stand, who testifies that Ian had called him with the tip about searching for someone who would benefit from Faith's claims. Joan asks Allen if he'd done any additional research, such as talking to the doctor who actually cared for Mariah, finding out the reason for her depression or other basic facts before printing the story. Ian is called back to the stand and tells Joan that he stopped digging into Mariah's past once he got to know her. Mertz asks if he believes Faith's visions are real, and Ian says only that the "jury's still out."

When Mariah plans to go to the hospital later that day, Joan tells her about the restraining order. She says that the fear is that she'll eventually kill Faith if allowed to be with her. Later that day, Dr. Celestine Birch, takes the stand to describe Factitious Disorder by Proxy, sometimes called Munchausen by Proxy. Dr. Birch says women who suffer the disease seek attention by harming their children, taking them to the doctor and basking in the glow of praise for being such a good caregiver. Dr. Birch says that he won't be at all surprised to see Faith bounce back to good health, now that Mariah is separated from her daughter.

When the courtroom empties on December 3, Mariah excuses herself from spending time with Joan, pleading the opportunity to simply go home. Ian tries to talk to her, but she pushes him away. Meanwhile, Faith's condition is deteriorating. Colin spends some time with his daughter, but she is unresponsive. Mariah talks to her mother, who lies, saying Faith is stable with no change. Later, Colin comes to Mariah's house and tells her that Faith is near death. They cry together. When Mariah next talks to her mother, Mariah yells at her.

On December 4, Joan finds Ian in her office, already doing research toward Mariah's defense. Later that day, there's a commotion in the hospital as a number of AIDS patients suddenly have normal blood counts. As Faith's condition continues to deteriorate, the doctors tell Millie and Kenzie that family who want to say good-bye should be called. Kenzie calls Mariah, who disguises herself in a wig and is slipped into Faith's room. Mariah leans over Faith's bed, saying that she's sorry for all the times she was so busy with herself that there wasn't time left for Faith. She tells Faith to take her time but not to worry, that Mariah is with her and will always be right behind her. A piece of the bedside medical equipment begins to beep; the doctor is called in and Faith opens her eyes, then says, "Mommy."



On December 6, Dr. Birch takes the stand again, saying that he hasn't interviewed Faith because she was comatose. Joan questions him about his background and qualifications, then asks the judge for permission for a "live exhibit," which the judge allows. Faith is brought into the courtroom. Dr. Birch attributes the miraculous healing to the fact that Faith was separated from her mother. It's not until Kenzie takes the stand that it will be revealed that Mariah was actually at the hospital when Faith regained consciousness. Before that, Dr. Keller testifies that Faith had been on medication but that her "visions" continued, that Faith is not psychotic and that it was presenting the case at a symposium that created the media attention. Dr. Blumburg says he cared for Faith's hand trauma and that he saw nothing to make him believe it was child abuse. Dr. Johansen says that Mariah had a breakdown the first time she caught Colin cheating, but that she took time to be certain Faith was cared for by Millie and then to call on him for medication to help her get through it the second time.

When Millie takes the stand, she tells Joan that Mariah never hurts Faith, not even a smack on the bottom for discipline. Mertz points out that Millie would do anything for Mariah, including lie. Then Rothbottom questions Millie. She says that she was "dead" for about an hour, and that there's no medical explanation for her recovery and that she believes Faith performed a miracle. Next on the stand is Dr. Alvin Fitzgerald. Ian discovered him and arranged for his testimony. He says that there are other disorders that could appear like Munchausen by Proxy and that there's no way to distinguish between them without study and evaluation. Mertz questions him and he admits that if it's not one of the other disorders he's presented - such as a person making himself ill because of major stressors - it could simply be a seven-year-old girl who is actually seeing God.

When Joan has rested her case, Ian and Mariah have a few minutes together in a conference room. She thanks him for finding the rebuttal doctor, and he thanks her for keeping his secret about Michael. Mariah notes that Ian will be with her and that for now, that's enough. When they return, Kenzie takes the stand. She tells the judge about Mariah's visit to the hospital and her role in that. She also says that she had initially recommended that Faith live with her father but has changed her mind and recommends Mariah as custodial parent. Judge Rothbottom then says that there's one more person he'd like to talk to and invites Faith for lunch. She asks if he has any Disney music and he plays "The Lion King." He asks Faith how he's supposed to decide if she's telling the truth about her visions, and she asks how he tells the truth about anyone testifying in court. He then says that people have always believed God to be a man, and Faith counters with the fact that people have believed other things that were proven untrue - that baths made a person sick, for example. Faith says that it's possible to believe something "really hard," and that it be wrong anyway. Rothbottom wonders if Faith might not truly be a prophet.

On the bench again, Judge Rothbottom says that he doesn't believe Mariah has been hurting Faith. He says that he doesn't believe it's the court's job to determine whether God has something to say to Faith. He says the more important question is who listened when Faith had something to say. He says that person is Mariah. On December 6, Ian holds a town hall meeting, and says that he's changing his focus. He asks whether Faith



White is really what she says she is and answers that he doesn't know, but more importantly that it's not up to the media to decide, and that it's up to individuals to decide for themselves.

Outside the courthouse, Colin says good-bye to Faith, saying that he'll see her the following weekend for his visitation days. Mariah says that it could as easily have been her in that position. Mertz arrives at his office to find he's been invited to appear on a number of television shows and wonders if they always invite the losers - having seldom lost himself and never on a high-profile case such as this. Mariah, Faith and Millie arrive home to a throng of people, and Millie says she'd somehow thought they might just all go away. Ian arrives later and tells Mariah that he doesn't really know what turn his career is going to take, but that he's going to "be with you." Meanwhile, Faith is in bed. She looks carefully at her side, at the bruises where all the tubes were connected, and at her hands, now healed. She whispers the name, "God," several times but gets no response. She knows that she's is "alone inside these white walls." She wonders about the fact that everyone asked so many questions but justifies the curiosity with the fact that they've never seen God. Then, "Faith continues to talk to no one at all, until she hears her mother's voice again downstairs, until she is certain that nobody is listening."

## Chapters Thirteen through Eighteen Analysis

While Mariah is in Faith's room, Father Joseph enters. Mariah is immediately afraid he's been summoned to administer last rites. She tells him of the events that brought them to the hospital this time and says Faith was saying something about "Eli," which Father Joseph quickly determines to be the Hebrew words for, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" Father Joseph is later in the hospital chapel when he meets Rabbi Daniel Solomon. The rabbi says he's been to pediatrics but wasn't allowed in. The two men sit together and pray.

When Mariah learns that Ian had sent Allen McManus on the quest for her background, she is angry at him. Her immediate reaction is that she's been duped again. Ian wishes he had told Mariah himself and says that if he had told her she would have forgiven him. However, while Ian is on the stand, he's asked if he believes in God now. He notes that he has to say "yes" to get back into Mariah's good graces but that's not what his fans expect. He eventually plays into the audience.

Mariah says that when she was first pregnant, she was on medications for depression. After her pregnancy was discovered, the doctors continued the medication on the grounds that Mariah had to be treated regardless of the impact on the baby. She says that once she was again stable, she worried about what she'd done and that when Faith was born healthy she felt she was "off the hook."

Mariah is elated with Dr. Fitzgerald, and Joan tells Mariah that she (Joan) would have "flown by the seat of her pants" without Ian's help. She tells Mariah that Ian was responsible for Dr. Fitzgerald, and that Ian would "do anything" for Mariah. When Kenzie tells the judge that she called Mariah to the hospital, Mertz demands that she be held in



contempt of court for violating the court order. Joan turns on Mertz, pointing out that the doctors felt Faith was dying. It's interesting that Joan was unwilling to reveal that Mariah was at the hospital when the Munchausen specialist was on the stand but was later willing to do so.

Mariah has practiced her testimony. She says that she should know exactly what to say but when Joan asks if she's a good mother, Mariah whispers, "no." She then says that she'd always watched other mothers, juggling babies and strollers and bottles, and that they'd made it look so easy that she always felt she wasn't measuring up to the standard for mothers. She then says that she also can't say why she deserves to have custody of Faith, but that she knows she does. When Mertz begins questioning Mariah, he expects that she'll soon fold. He says he's been led to believe that she's not good at standing up for herself. However, Mariah in this case is unshakable. She answers the questions posed to her calmly and without admitting that she has had anything other than Faith's best interests in mind. When Mertz asks Mariah, "What happened in Kansas City," she knows that she now has a way to get even with Ian. Ian knows it as well. If Mariah had wanted, she could tell about Michael, but she doesn't.

Once the court case is settled, Mariah and Millie return home with Faith. It's Millie who realizes that all the people are still at their house and that nothing has really changed on that front. She says she doesn't really know why she had expected that they wouldn't be around anymore, but that she had. When Faith is alone in her room, she seems to sense that God is no longer with her. She once told a psychiatrist that God had lots of friends but that "she" didn't see so much of them now because of spending time with Faith. She didn't indicate that God never visited those people. Now, Faith says that she's alone in her room and that when she calls out for God, there's no answer. It's interesting that she also seems to connect the fact of God's listening with that of her mother listening. She says that she continues to talk to no one at all, until she hears her mother downstairs, "until she is certain that nobody is listening." It's left to the reader to determine the significance.





# Characters

## Mariah White

Faith's mother. Mariah was the shy, studious student, who helped tutor Colin in French, while he was the popular football star. When Colin paid her a bit of attention, she dropped everything to be with him. It's many years before she notes that she thought he wanted to be with her but that it was actually the challenge of remaking her into the woman with whom he wanted to be. Mariah has a lack of confidence and tries very hard to be perfect at everything she does. This is evidenced by the fact that she notes that a table leg for a miniature table for her doll house is two millimeters off in size, prompting her to throw it away and begin again. Mariah's mother says that Mariah needs to "loosen up," and Mariah notes that her mother has been saying this in one form or another for Mariah's entire life.

Mariah is an only child and admits that her two best friends are her mother and her daughter. She is completely involved in her routine - shopping on a specific day and another day set aside for "emergencies" that might crop up over the course of the week. It's a deviation from this routine that prompts her discovery of Colin's affair. Though Mariah has a temporary breakdown over the situation, she's prompted back to the demands of her life by the need to care for her daughter. She is willing to hand those duties over to her mother briefly, but when confronted with Faith's presence, Mariah manages to pull herself together for her daughter's sake. Through all the publicity surrounding Faith, Mariah wants only what's best for Faith.

Mariah spent four months in a psychiatric facility and cites this as a source of shame. On the witness stand during court, she notes that her husband never seemed interested in what she wanted at that time. She says that he might not have done what she wanted, and she might not have even been able to articulate her wishes, but that it would have been nice had he at least tried to listen. This seems an important point to Mariah - that she hasn't had the attention of her husband.

## Faith White

Faith is seven and the only child of Mariah and Colin White. She is very close to her grandmother and her mother. On a particular afternoon, she and her mother visit Millie before heading out for Faith's ballet lesson. When Faith realizes that her mother hadn't intended to return home before the lesson, Faith announces that she forgot her leotard. Faith and Mariah walk in on Colin and his mistress. Faith later says that her father left immediately after the episode, and that she thought she'd done something to prompt his leaving.

Soon after the divorce, Faith begins talking to an imaginary friend. Mariah is concerned, citing her own unstable emotional background, and takes Faith to a psychiatrist. Faith



refers to this friend as her "guard," and it's not until Mariah is calling out, "oh God" as her mother is dying that Faith realizes her friend's name is actually "God." Faith seems largely aware of what's going on around her, though she sometimes seems unable to understand why. She seems to know what to do when her grandmother has died and later steps out of her car into a crowd of people waiting to see her. Faith herself doesn't offer any explanation for how the visions began and admits to being afraid once God had left her and she's alone.

## Millie Epstein

Mariah's mother. Millie lives in Arizona when Mariah attempted suicide and returns for a short while until she is certain Mariah is alright. She is again in Arizona when she discovers that Colin had had Mariah committed, and it's Millie who petitions for Mariah's release. When Mariah's home is surrounded by reporters and religious zealots hoping for a glimpse of Faith, Mariah calls Millie. When Millie arrives, she has an argument with Ian Fletcher, which prompts a heart attack. Millie dies in the emergency room but is "resurrected" by Faith. Millie and Faith have a close bond, and when Millie is asked if she believes in Faith's power, she says she would either be stupid or dead if she didn't.

## Ian Fletcher

The television "anti-evangelist." He is a television personality, and when his ratings are in the bottom third of all television shows, he sets out to improve the ratings by taking his show "on the road." His plan is to find miracles and debunk them by offering rational explanations. Ian arrives at Mariah's home, which causes an increase in the media frenzy. It's Ian's argument with Millie Epstein that prompts Millie's heart attack, death and resurrection. Ian pledges to reveal Mariah as a hypocrite and goes to a Boston Globe reporter with a "tip" that he believes will reveal Mariah's involvement in the ploy.

Ian then comes to know Faith, Mariah and Millie and finds himself falling for the family. When he meets up with Faith and Mariah on a plane bound for Kansas City, he convinces them that he's followed them. He plans to have Faith meet his brother, Michael, who is autistic, and then when Faith is unable to heal Michael - as Ian predicts will happen - he'll know that she's a fake. What happens is that Ian actually comes to hope that Faith is able to heal his brother. When Michael has a brief, clear moment, Ian realizes that it is a miracle and that it's because of Faith. While he doesn't publicly say that Faith is a healer, he does admit to a change of heart. He tells Mariah that he doesn't have long-term plans other than to be with her.

## Colin White

Faith's father. Colin meets Mariah in college and admits to having kissed her the first time on a dare. Though he never exhibits the traits of a faithful lover, Mariah excuses him, while she remains faithful. When she discovers him in the midst of an affair, she tries to kill herself. She later admits that she hadn't considered what impact her actions





had on Colin and that he must have been afraid. Colin is just getting out of the shower with another woman when Mariah interrupts them. In court, he says that these two instances were his only indiscretions, but Mariah's attorney says otherwise. Mariah notes that Colin loves Faith but that he hasn't been close to their daughter. Colin himself worries that he's let Faith down, and his attempts to gain custody seem almost to be motivated by guilt for his own failure as a father.

## **Doctor Keller**

The psychiatrist Faith begins seeing after her parents' breakup. Keller presents the story of Faith's case at a psychiatric symposium, prompting the media interest in the child. As Keller addresses her colleagues, she says that there are two cases of children who talk to and interact with God. She then says that she was one of those and that she knows her own story to be true. Keller's question to her colleagues is simple: If a child's stories can't be proven to be delusions, could they be true? Though the reaction among the medical community isn't immediately detailed, Allen McManus - covering the symposium for the Boston Globe - notes that Keller is committing professional suicide.

## **Allen McManus**

The obituary writer and stringer for the Boston Globe. It's Allen who first hears of Faith from her psychiatrist, who is presenting the case at a symposium. Though the doctor doesn't include Faith by name, Allen's story will prompt Ian Fleming's presence in Faith's life as he tries to debunk her story. Ian later contacts Allen, telling him that if he wants to find out the truth behind Faith's story, he should look for the person with something to gain. Ian's contact is "anonymous," but Allen tracks Ian down through caller ID. Allen does follow up on the tip and is the reporter who breaks the story that Mariah has been hospitalized for depression.

## **Father Joseph McReady**

A Catholic priest in New Canaan. Father Joseph is prepared for some eighty parishioners for the early Sunday mass but has only eight because the rest are at the White's house. Father Joseph decides to go himself and talks to Mariah. He is one of the first to come to believe in Faith. When others from the Catholic Church arrive to question Faith, McReady watches but often seems to be laughing at the bumbling efforts to prove Faith is a fraud.

## **Dr. Bloomberg**

The physician who oversees Faith's recovery in the hospital after her episode of stigmata. It's Bloomberg who calls in consultants and eventually says that he won't rule the case officially stigmata, but that he won't rule it out because he has no other



explanation. It's Bloomberg who says that Faith may be dying and that the court order keeping Mariah away is cruel.

## **Dr. Alvin Fitzgerald**

The psychiatrist Ian Fletcher finds through his research. Fitzgerald testifies at the trial, saying that the previous testimony that Mariah must be suffering from a disease that causes her to harm her own child might not be correct. He says that there are several other explanations- including that Faith is making herself ill as a result of the stress of the divorce. Fitzgerald is questioned by Colin's attorney as to possibilities, and when he is asked what else could be to blame, he says that it could be simply that a seven-year-old girl is talking to God.

## **Kenzie van der Hoven**

The attorney ad litem assigned to represent Faith in the custody hearing. Kenzie first meets Faith and Mariah, then meets with Colin and Jessica. It's Kenzie who takes Faith outside, plays with her on the swings and allows her to play without fearing the reporters and religious zealots camped out at her driveway. Kenzie later acknowledges the fact that she'd prepared to hate Colin out of sympathy for Mariah but that he could simply be a dad trying to make things right for his daughter. Kenzie writes a report indicating that she believes Colin would be the better parent but later says she was wrong. On the witness stand, she tells the judge that she's the one who broke the court order by allowing Mariah to be with Faith in the hospital, and that she saw the bond between the two that apparently prompted Faith to return from the edge of death.



## **Objects/Places**

### **New Canaan**

Where Faith and her family live.

### **Gingerbread Cape**

What everyone calls the house where Faith's grandmother lives.

### **Dulles**

Where Colin is when he calls Mariah after a two-day training trip.

### **Greenhaven**

Where Colin has Mariah committed to after her suicide attempt.

### **Boston Garden**

Where Mariah, Faith and Millie go to see the Ringling Brother's Circus.

### **Kansas City**

Where Mariah and Faith go while running from the media attention at their home. It's also where Ian Fletcher is headed for his weekly visit to his brother.

### **Lockwood**

Where Michael Fletcher lives. It's a residential facility and is just one step from a group home.

### **Vienna, Virginia**

Where Colin White is from.

### **Boston**

Where Father Paul Rampini teaches seminary.



## **North Haverhill, New Hampshire**

Where A. Warren Rothbottam oversees court proceedings at the Grafton County Courthouse, including the divorce and custody hearing of Colin and Mariah.

## **Connecticut Valley Medical Center**

Where Faith is hospitalized after bleeding from wounds on her hands and side.

# Themes

## The Need to Believe in Something

The need to believe in something or someone is not unique to this book, but has been a desire of the world throughout history. This is quickly evidenced in Faith's story by the number of people who flock to her house. Though many of these are reporters, there are also members of the clergy, sick people who hope for the opportunity to touch Faith and thereby be healed, and those religious zealots who simply want the chance to see Faith. While there is little doubt that the media circus surrounding Faith is part of the issue, there's even less doubt that many of those who gather at the White house are there only to see Faith.

Among those who gather is the mother of a boy named Rafael, who is infected with AIDS. The child is very sick, but his mother has traveled to New Canaan anyway. She notes that she doesn't think it would hurt anything. It's said that others are in wheelchairs or have IV lines stretched from their bodies. Despite the fact that it's fall and the weather is cooling and these people must remain outside and are part of a huge throng, they do wait with the hope that they'll have the chance to see or touch Faith. As Faith enters or leaves home, the people rush the car, touching the windows in an apparent effort to get nearer to Faith.

While Ian is not one of those who believes in Faith, there is an eventual connection between the "anti-evangelist" and the child. He begins with an attempt to debunk Faith's claims. When they meet up in Kansas City, Ian comes up with a plan that he believes will eliminate Faith's claims. He plans to bring Faith together with Michael, who is autistic. When Faith can't heal Michael, Faith will be proven as a fraud. Ian would never expose Michael to media attention, and this seems to prove that his true objective is to heal Michael. He says later that he had hoped Michael would be healed. It seems that Ian also want to believe, though he's spent his entire career saying there's nothing to believe in.

## Tolerance

One of the overriding themes of this story is tolerance. There are many instances of tolerance; those who exhibit the trait most are Faith, Mariah, Millie and Father Joseph McReady. Ironically, it's Ian Fletcher who learns the lesson of tolerance. Ian is a self-proclaimed skeptic, who swears by his atheism and sets out to prove that Faith's claims of communing with God are a hoax. The fact that Faith has "resurrected" her grandmother and healed a small boy of AIDS is nothing less than a miracle, but Ian contends that there are ways to fake the events, and that there's absolutely no chance that Faith might be telling the truth. It takes some time for him to make any real changes, but he does admit to himself fairly early in the story that he hopes he is wrong.



It seems that his heart is beginning to exhibit some tolerance, even though he continues to adhere to his claims that it's all a hoax and that his goal is to debunk her claims.

Father Joseph McReady is also tolerant and soon comes to the point of calling himself a friend of the family. He is willing to admit that Faith's claims might be true, despite the fact that the girl is Jewish, rather than Catholic. When the Catholic Church sends others to evaluate Faith and her claims, it's Father McReady who seems to believe when others continue to remain skeptical.

## Coming of Age

Ironically, it's not the child in this story who exhibits the classic "coming of age" theme; instead, two adults - Mariah White and Ian Fletcher - undergo serious changes in their thoughts and ideas. Mariah is the shy, studious student at college when she meets Colin. She quickly falls for him, reveling under his attention and changing whatever he suggests she needs to change. She says that he'd told her that he wanted to be with her on the hope that he would become more like her, and it's years before Mariah admits that's what she wanted to hear, but that it wasn't the truth. When Mariah catches Colin for the second time in the midst of an affair, Mariah falls apart. She notes that the first time she caught him with another woman, she tried to kill herself. The second time, she says that she has Faith and that prompts her to begin pulling herself together. After the break-up, Mariah longs for Colin. She says that her body longs for his presence, even though she's been hurt so badly. It takes months before Mariah realizes that she's no longer wanting to hold onto Colin. Colin himself notes the change in Mariah. Later, Colin's attorney wonders at her self-control, which is not what he's been led to expect.

Ian Fletcher is largely self-absorbed in his grandstanding television career. His one exception is his twin brother, Michael. Ian visits Michael each week, regardless of what else is going on in his life. Otherwise, Ian spends his time degrading the beliefs of others and ridiculing faith in general. He goes to the Whites with the intention of debunking Faith's claims of a personal relationship with God. It's Ian who finds Faith the night she passes out after the first episode of stigmata.

Ian's first encounter with Millie results in Millie's heart attack. Ian is at the hospital while the doctors work on the woman, and he admits that he feels bad about his role in the situation, even more so when he learns that Millie has been pronounced dead. Despite this brief episode of caring, Ian continues to work at debunking Faith's claims, to the extent of tipping off another journalist that Mariah might have something to gain from the situation. It takes time with Faith and Mariah before Ian comes to make changes in his own life. The first sign of this is when Ian admits that he hopes Faith can heal his brother, Michael. Though he feels that Faith's failure to help his brother would prove that Faith hasn't any power, he still hopes. He will later effectively end his career as a television "anti-evangelist" by saying that it's no one's business whether Faith White has the power to heal or not.



# Style

## Point of View

The book is divided between first and third person, and between limited and omniscient points of view. The method may seem confusing, but the author uses this well and further emphasizes the differences by also changing between past and present tense. Each time the storyline is written from an omniscient view in third person, past tense is used. However, when the author switches to first person with a limited view—only of Mariah's thoughts and actions—the tense changes to present tense. The changes emphasizes Mariah's point of view and is actually very effective.

The book is divided between dialogue and exposition. Both descriptions and conversations are believable, to the extent the reader can - and will - believe in the religious happenings that occur. For example, Millie's "resurrection" is described from Mariah's point of view in third person. Mariah watches as her daughter drags a chair to Millie's bedside and continues to watch as her Millie's arms reach up to hug Faith. The facts of Mariah's observations are presented in such a way that the reader can believe this is what Mariah saw. Whether the reader actually believes that a seven-year-old child could have this power and this relationship with God becomes an issue for the individual reader.

## Setting

The story is set in a town called New Canaan. The setting is appropriate to the story because of the Biblical references to the city of Canaan. New Canaan, Connecticut, does exist. Though there are few detailed descriptions of the town included in the book, it seems reasonable that the general descriptions offered could be of New Canaan, Connecticut. The fact that the town is real adds some credence to the story.

The story is set in 1999. Happenings are outlined by date and the story generally follows a chronological order with historic details offered through exposition and dialogue. The fact that the story is set just prior to the millennium is also appropriate. The public fears and concerns over this time period make a perfect setting for the coming of a child who is somehow ordained by God.

## Language and Meaning

The book is written in a straight-forward style and is easy to read. The story line flows quickly with only a few words that would not be easily understood by an average reader. There are nuances that some readers may overlook. These begin with the title, "Keeping Faith." The young girl in the book is named Faith, and the story outlines her mother's quest to "keep Faith" during a bitter custody dispute.



There are some Biblical and religious references, but these are adequately explained for those readers without Biblical or religious backgrounds. The fact that Faith evidences signs of stigmata may prompt questions for those not familiar with the word, but as Faith's doctors treat her, the medical professionals and others make explanations to Mariah. Through this method, the author also effectively explains stigmata and the controversy surrounding the situation.

The book has an epiphany ending and that may be a disappointment for some readers. Faith's situation - her personal relationship with the entity she calls "God" - simply seems to resolve itself. She is in her bed that night when she realizes that she's alone. She searches the room but doesn't get an answer from God. She continues to talk out loud until she is certain "nobody is listening." The reader is left to determine the significance and to imagine the eventual outcome.

## Structure

The book begins with a prologue, which is vital to the storyline. This section, which is only a few pages in length, effectively sets the stage for Mariah's story. The important details revealed in the prologue include the fact that Faith is seven, that Mariah's mother is facing some health issues so that mortality is apparently on the minds of the family members, and that Mariah catches her husband in an affair with another woman, though she's just finished saying how secure her marriage really is. There are also some hints that will not be fully revealed until much later. For example, Mariah's mother tells Faith that Mariah should learn to loosen up. Mariah notes that her mother has been telling her that for years, but says that everyone knows what happened the last time Mariah loosened up.

Each chapter begins with a quote. They range from John Milton to John the Baptist and cover an array of topics. The quotes seem to offer at least some foreshadowing of what's to come in that particular chapter. Some of the quotes are concocted by the writer specifically for this book. For example, there is a quote that is attributed to the opinion page of the New York Times, but Ian Fletcher is the subject of the quote, meaning it's not truly from the Times but was made up for the book. Nonetheless, these add a level of credence to the book - even though some are not actual quotes.





## Quotes

"Years ago when I found Colin in bed with another woman, I waited three nights and then tried to kill myself. Colin found me and got me to the hospital. The ER doctors told him they had been able to save me, but that isn't true. Somehow that night, I got lost. I become another person, one I do not like to hear about, one I would certainly not recognize." Chapter One, Page 13

"Faith can't be talking to God; I know this. But in the next breath I wonder, Why not? Things have happened before without precedent. And a good mother would stick up for her child, no matter how bizarre the story. But then again, if I start saying that Faith is seeing God, that she isn't crazy - well, everyone will think I am. Again." Chapter Three, Page 53

"So if she was seeing Abraham Lincoln, or Cleopatra, that would make a difference? God's not a four-letter word, Ma." Chapter Three, Page 58

"But her gaze never wavers from Faith - not when Faith lifts herself up on her elbows, not when Faith places her hands on either side of Millie's face and kisses her full on the mouth, not when Millie's arms rise stiff and slow and cling to her granddaughter for dear life." - Mariah's observation of her mother's resurrection, Chapter Four, Page 82

"I bow my head and stare at my daughter's sneakers. One is untied, the laces straggling on the linoleum like any other kid's. But my child has been talking to God. My child has apparently just performed a miracle." Chapter Five, Page 85

"This man, this horrible man who's barreled - uninvited - into our life, this man who does not know me from Eve, has imagined me as the person I've always wanted to be - a fiercely loyal lioness, a natural mother." Chapter Five, Page 91

"The question is only in his mind for a moment before it's squelched. And yet Ian can still hear it ringing in his ears, as joyful and resonant as a long note that a choir has stopped singing: What if, this time, I'm wrong?" Chapter Six, Page 107

"His brother, who has not spoken about anything but cards for the past three years, is teasing him. Ian narrows his eyes, taking in the spark of understanding, of connection, in his brother's eyes. 'God, Ian. And they say you're the smart one.'" Chapter Eight, Page 196



"Father Rampini knows many ways to make a statue weep, none of which have anything to do with Jesus. You can rub the marble face with calcium chloride, which makes water condense from the air in false tears. You can press small balls of lard into the eyes, which melt when they warm to room temperature. You can even use sleight of hand, dabbing at the statue with a sponge to make moisture when your audience is distracted. He's seen face magician's blood hidden up a sleeve, stigmata spontaneously bursting with a flick of the wrist. He's watched rosaries go from silver to gold, scientifically explicable metallurgic reaction. His gut feeling? Little Faith White is full of crap." Chapter Ten, Page 229

"She remembers, suddenly, why as a child she never had people in her dollhouses. The family dog would butt up against the house and the miniature baby would tumble down the stairs before Mariah had a chance to grab him. Or the mother figurine would be facedown on the bed, and Mariah would think that the doll had been sobbing her heart out all night while she herself slept. It made her feel guilty - she couldn't play with all of the dolls at once, couldn't take care of all their needs. It was no great bargain to be doglike, to have all the power to help and soothe and comfort and know that she couldn't save everyone all the time." Chapter Ten, Page 237

"That time can be turned back. That nightmares stop. That Colin never entered my daughter's life. 'I want to believe there's a God,' Millie says clearly. 'Because I sure as hell know there's a devil.'" — Millie Epstein answering the question, What do you believe? Chapter Twelve, Page 283

"'Let's just leave it at that, okay?' I grin. 'You are my mother.' She cups my cheek. It tingles, as if she were holding my childhood right there in her palm. 'But somewhere along the way, I also became your friend.'" Chapter Thirteen, Page 301

"Motherhood isn't a test, but a religion; a covenant entered into, a promise to be kept. It comes one-size-fits-all, and it camouflages flaws like nothing else. How could it have taken this to make me see that Faith is the one thing in my life I got right on the very first try." Chapter Fifteen, Page 369

"'I believe her. Goodness, if I didn't believe her now, I'd be an idiot, wouldn't I?' She smiles. 'Or worse - I'd be dead.'" - Millie answering the judge's question as to whether she believes in Faith, Chapter Sixteen, Page 393

"Faith's performing miracles. Taking her away from me won't change that. And it won't change the fact that wherever she goes, people are going to follow her, or want a piece of her." Chapter Seventeen, Page 405

"With her heart pounding and her fists clutching the comforter, Faith continues to talk to no one at all, until she hears her mother's voice again downstairs, until she is certain that nobody is listening." Chapter Eighteen, Page 422

## Topics for Discussion

What kind of person is Mariah White? Colin White? How do the two come to be together? What does this say about each?

What is Faith's relationship with her mother? her father? her grandmother? When Faith and Mariah walk in on Colin and Jessica, what is Faith's reaction? Mariah's? Colin's? What does Faith come to believe about the incident? Why?

When does Mariah first realize that Faith has an "imaginary friend?" What is Mariah's initial reaction? What does she eventually come to believe?

What prompts the media attention around Faith? How does Faith react? Mariah? Millie?

Describe at least two instances in which Faith talks about God. How does she go about healing Millie? Rafael? Are there others?

What does Millie say on the witness stand about Faith's power? What does Kenzie van der Hoven say? How does this differ from her initial report? What do you consider the most significant point in the trial? Why?

What are the attitudes of the religious leaders regarding Faith? What kinds of people are camped out at the White home? Why? What is Faith's attitude about those who are gathered? Mariah's? How does Mariah go about protecting her daughter from the attention? What does Kenzie do differently? What does Mariah eventually come to understand?

In your opinion, what prompts Colin's quest for custody? What does Faith tell the judge she wants to happen?