

Life Expectancy Study Guide

Life Expectancy by Dean Koontz

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Contents

Life Expectancy Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part One: Chapters 1 - 4.....	4
Part Two: Chapters 5 - 7.....	6
Part Two: Chapters 8 - 10.....	8
Part Two: Chapters 11 - 14.....	10
Part Two: Chapters 15 - 19.....	12
Part Two: Chapters 20 -23.....	14
Part Three: Chapters 24 - 29.....	16
Part Three: Chapters 30 - 35.....	18
Part Three: Chapters 36 - 40.....	20
Part Four: Chapters 41 - 45.....	22
Part Four: Chapters 46 - 52.....	25
Part Five: Chapters 53 - 57.....	28
Part Five: Chapters 58 - 62.....	30
Part Six: Chapters 63 - 66.....	32
Part Six: Chapters 67 - 70.....	34
Characters.....	36
Objects/Places.....	43
Themes.....	45
Style.....	49
Quotes.....	52
Topics for Discussion.....	54



Plot Summary

Life Expectancy by Dean Koontz is a daring leap into the darker side of human nature. When Rudy Tock and his wife, Madelaine, go to the hospital to have their son, Jimmy, events coalesce that will affect this family for many years to come. Rudy's father, Josef, predicts five terrible days in Jimmy's life right before he dies, which happens just as Jimmy is being born. At the same time, Jimmy's father, Rudy Tock, meets another expectant father in the hospital - Konrad Beezo. Konrad is an unhappy clown from a traveling circus who believes that a group of aerialists are out to get him because he married one of their caste. Konrad's wife dies in childbirth at the same time as Jimmy is born, and Konrad loses touch with reality, shooting the doctor and one of the nurses involved in his wife's care before taking his new born son, Punchinello and disappearing from the hospital.

Jimmy lives with his mother, father and grandmother until the first of his five terrible days arrives but being taken hostage by a crazy gunman is the event that introduces him to his future wife. The gunman is revealed to be Punchinello Beezo who ends up in jail after killing his two cohorts. Jimmy and Lorrie get married and face the next four terrible days together, each one crazier than the one before. On the second of five terrible days as predicted, Konrad Beezo burns down their house, telling them they owe him a son but instead they have a daughter. On the third, Lorrie is shot by Konrad who returns insisting they give up their fourth child and first son, Andy, for training as a clown. Konrad is killed by Jimmy and Lorrie is told she can no longer have children as a result.

The fourth terrible day has Jimmy and Lorrie entwined with the Beezo family again, but this time in ways they could never have predicted. They discover the Tock's son Jimmy was actually stillborn and the child who lived his life is actually one of the Beezo twins born to Natalie Beezo and switched by a nurse after her death. Now they need Punchinello's kidney to save their daughter's life. He finally agrees, providing his brother Jimmy kills his arch nemesis, Virgilio Vivacamente - the aerialist. Jimmy agrees, never intending to do so. The fifth terrible day brings them face to face with Virgilio in a conclusion that is completely unexpected! Jimmy learns more about his lineage he never suspected, and decides that none of it matters. Good triumphs over evil, and love and laughter are unending. The conclusion is filled with unexpected revelations that finish a tale with many twists and turns and packed with surprises. Prepare to be enchanted!



Part One: Chapters 1 - 4

Part One: Chapters 1 - 4 Summary

Life Expectancy by Dean Koontz is a daring leap into the darker side of human nature. When Rudy Tock and his wife, Madelaine, go to the hospital to have their son, Jimmy, events coalesce that will affect this family for many years to come. Rudy's father, Josef, predicts five terrible days in Jimmy's life right before he dies, which happens just as Jimmy is being born. At the same time, Jimmy's father, Rudy Tock, meets another expectant father in the hospital - Konrad Beezo. Konrad is an unhappy clown from a traveling circus who believes that a group of aerialists are out to get him because he married one of their caste. Konrad's wife dies in childbirth at the same time as Jimmy is born, and Konrad loses touch with reality, shooting the doctor and one of the nurses involved in his wife's care before taking his new born son, Punchinello, and disappearing from the hospital.

At the same time as Rudy waits for his son to be born, his father Josef is in an intensive care ward having had a stroke and is dying. Rudy wanders from the intensive care ward to the delivery room and then to the waiting room where he sees Konrad Beezo for the first time. Nervous around Beezo, Rudy goes back to his grandfather's room, where Josef cites five terrible days and insists that Rudy write them down and prepare Jimmy. He also tells Rudy what his son Jimmy will weigh at birth, what length he will be and what his name will be - something he and Madelaine had never disclosed. The last prediction was that Jimmy would have a genetic condition that would cause either his fingers or toes be fused together. All of the birth predictions would be true, and Josef dies the very moment that Jimmy is born.

Beezo's wife Natalie is an aerialist, but Beezo is adamant that his son will not be. When Beezo's wife dies in childbirth, Beezo is inconsolable. He pulls out a gun and begins shooting all of the hospital staff that he considers to be responsible for his wife's death. He kills the doctor who delivers his son, and the nurse who brings his son to him. He allows Rudy to pass unharmed, and Rudy tells him that the rest fled when the shooting started. Beezo decides to escape and as he is leaving he tells Rudy he will never forget him. When he leaves, nurse Charlene Coleman comes out of the closet with Jimmy.

Now, years later, Jimmy is recording his autobiography. He has lived through four of the five terrible days that his grandfather Josef warned of, and they were indeed terrible and in some cases filled with tragedy, but Jimmy survived them. Now, he has one to go. The first of his five ordeals came to pass on September 15, 1994, just six weeks after his twentieth birthday.



Part One: Chapters 1 - 4 Analysis

Rudy Tock and Konrad Beezo are both expectant fathers in the waiting room at Snow Village Hospital in Colorado. Where Rudy is mostly calm, an amazing fact considering that at the same time as his wife Maddy is giving birth, his father Josef is dying, Beezo is anxious and irate. Both women are having difficulty in their labor. Beezo's wife, an aerialist in the same circus as Beezo works as a clown, is preeclamptic, and her condition has gone untreated. As a result, the problems she has during her labor also end her life. In a state of disbelief, Beezo hunts the hallways, seeking out a hospital employee that may have been involved. He first kills Dr. MacDonald and then Nurse Lois Hanson. Nurse Charlene Coleman had a bad feeling about Beezo, and taking young Jimmy right after his birth, she hid in a closet, saving both their lives. She is not the only one who has a bad feeling about Beezo. Josef warns his son to beware of the clown.

Rudy's father, Josef, is dying. Having had a stroke, he is paralyzed on one side, and is failing fast. He suddenly is lucid and a desperation of sorts seizes him as he regains his mobility on both sides long enough to communicate several things to Rudy. He tells Rudy all about the birth of his son, the time, the weight and the abnormalities his son will have. He also tells Rudy about five days that he should warn his son about. He makes Rudy write them down, and shortly after this task is completed, he dies - right at the exact moment that Jimmy is born. Rudy is a baker and has no idea how to stop Beezo. The only thing he can think of to do is to tell him that the police have been called and the rest of the hospital staff have already fled. Beezo believes him and leaves with his new born son, telling Rudy that he'll never forget him. Rudy isn't sure how to take that, but doesn't get the feeling that Beezo means it as a compliment or endearing comment.

After Beezo leaves, Rudy finds Maddy who asks where their son is, and for a terrible moment Rudy is convinced that Beezo left the hospital with their son. Just as he is ready to follow him in any way he can, Nurse Coleman arrives explaining how she had hidden, and giving Jimmy to Maddy. Rudy unwraps his feet and sees the fused feet, staring at them in wonder as he realizes that his grandfather's predictions have merit. Astounded, he can't even tell Maddy about it.

Now, six weeks after his twentieth birthday, the first 'terrible day' his grandfather predicted is approaching and Jimmy is trying to stay level headed. His mother Maddy has more than doubled her coffee intake, and his father Rudy can't seem to bake anything that doesn't flop. Jimmy is distracted to a point where he walks into doors and drops things, but he reminds himself that there are five terrible days and as this is only the first, he must survive it. It helps, but only a little.



Part Two: Chapters 5 - 7

Part Two: Chapters 5 - 7 Summary

On the first of grandfather Josef's five predicted terrible days in Jimmy's life, his mother prepares all of his favorite dishes. He eats, endures the warnings from his family who recommend he stay home and stay safe, and Grandma Rowena who thinks up every possible disaster that can befall him, along with a great many that are simply too far fetched. He reads for a while and then in keeping with his baker's schedule, goes to bed and sleeps until 1:30 p.m. He drives his Shelby Z into town to run errands. He goes into the bank first to cash his cheque, but not before being momentarily paralyzed by fear outside. A stranger snaps him out of it by inquiring as to whether or not he is OK. Embarrassed, he makes excuses before continuing his errands, but still watches everyone in the bank for signs of trouble. He goes to library next where the same stranger is standing at the desk. As Jimmy approaches, he shoots the librarian Lionel Davis in the head with no warning.

Jimmy is more shocked than afraid. In fact, he finds anger is his first response as he asks the killer what Lionel ever did to him. The killer almost looks confused for a minute, but Jimmy asks him again, and he realizes that Jimmy is talking about the librarian. He patiently explains that he had no intention of killing him. It only happened because Jimmy had come in. In fact, he had intended to have the librarian lock the back door and then the front, and act as his hostage. It was only as Jimmy entered that the killer realizes that he can't handle two hostages, and makes the snap decision that having met Jimmy briefly in the street, he might be a more interesting hostage than a stuffy librarian. It was just one of those quirks of fate, he explains to Jimmy as he could have just as easily shot him instead. He tosses a set of handcuffs to Jimmy and tells him to put one side on and lie on the floor so that he can secure the second side himself, but just as Jimmy is compelled to do so (prompted by the gun pointed at him again with the threat that the killer could always shoot him and wait for the next patron), a woman comes in with an armload of books.

Part Two: Chapters 5 - 7 Analysis

Jimmy sits down to eat the meal that contains his favorite food, and tries not to see it as the condemned man's last supper. He goes to town the next afternoon after sleeping baker's hours, and is wracked with indecision outside of Snow Village. Suddenly it seems foolish to have ventured from the relative safety of his home on a day that Grandpa Josef had predicted as terrible. All manner of disaster runs through his mind and he feels not only vulnerable, but targeted. Up until the first of those five days arrived, he had always believed that whatever befell him would be impersonal and now for the first time he is consumed with the feeling of being victimized by someone with malice of intention. A stranger snaps him out of it, and he begins his errands in the bank, still fearing everyone. Nothing happens there, but when he goes to the library



next, he encounters the stranger again, and without warning becomes that stranger's hostage.

Jimmy is horrified when the stranger shoots librarian Lionel Davis in the head. Instead of feeling fear he is confrontational, demanding to know what a good man like Lionel ever did to deserve the bullet in the head. The killer patiently explains that the librarian was simply a less interesting hostage than Jimmy seemed to be. Jimmy is horrified that he may be responsible for Lionel's death, but the killer explains that it is simply a quirk of fate that he came in at that moment. The defiance Jimmy feels and exhibits is quickly dimmed by the fear that finally surfaces when the killer threatens to shoot him in the head as well if he isn't compliant. Just as Jimmy makes the decision that the killer means what he says, and decides to put on the handcuffs as requested, another patron comes in the door with an armload of books. Jimmy is horrified. Now he knows the killer has to make another decision and fast. Jimmy doesn't want to be responsible for this woman's death as well.



Part Two: Chapters 8 - 10

Part Two: Chapters 8 - 10 Summary

Lorrie Hicks is beautiful, and captivating. It is clear from the start that the maniac likes her as he decides that he won't shoot her and instead has her cuff herself to Jimmy. Jimmy immediately reassures her, but the maniac is done talking. He tells them that things are taking too long and he has a lot of research to do before the explosions begin. He cuffs them to a chair and begins pulling out back issues of the local paper from the archives while Lorrie discusses ways that they may be able to overcome him if she can get access to her purse where she has a nail file. Something the maniac reads in the back issue makes him so mad that he lets out a yell, pounds his fists on the table and empties his magazine into the paper. Then he begins to weep. Jimmy suddenly has the feeling that Lorrie will be shot and nothing he can do will stop it.

The killer suddenly begins asking them about where they live. Admitting they are both locals, he asks how they like living there. Jimmy admits he's been there all his life and Lorrie only for the last year. They both tell him they like living there, but he tells him the town is evil, built on the evil acts of people, and he plans to make them all pay. Lorrie asks for her purse, feigning a female emergency which she has to explain to him, and he catches on quickly asking her if she has a gun in her purse. When she admits to the nail file, he questions her intentions with it, and she honestly tells him she intended to try to put his eye out with it. He laughs, telling her that she's a piece of work, and she returns the compliment. Jimmy is about to say something when a knock sounds at the door. The killer tells them that will be Honker and Crinkles with the explosives and insists that they'll like them.

Part Two: Chapters 8 - 10 Analysis

Lorrie is beautiful and confident, and takes the situation in quickly. She convinces the killer that two hostages are better than one, and quietly cuffs herself to Jimmy as instructed. Without so much as a whimper of fear, she immediately begins thinking of ways to overcome their captor while Jimmy plays the part of his grandmother, telling her why each of her ideas won't work. Lorrie is afraid that she is shackled to a pessimist at best and at worst perhaps a coward, but Jimmy assures her that isn't the case. He is just cautious. The killer thumbs through the archives, bringing out volumes of old papers, and at one point sees something so distressing that he empties his weapon into the paper before bursting into tears. Lorrie sees that as a vulnerability and winks at Jimmy as she tells him so, but Jimmy gets a sudden and clear picture that the killer will shoot her and there isn't anything he can do about it. He is desperate to find a way to protect her.

Jimmy manages to come off feeling like a lummock more than once in conversation, both with her and with the killer. He tries to cover up what he feels are embarrassing



statements, but only makes things steadily worse. Lorrie on the other hand is smooth and entertaining. She manages to amuse and captivate the killer to a degree where even Jimmy begins to worry that if a hostage is going to be killed it will be him as he is much less entertaining than she is. Even the killer admits that while they are both funny, she is much more amusing than Jimmy. Just as Jimmy is about to say something, hopefully redeeming, a knock at the door stops him. The killer announces that his cohorts have arrived with the explosives, sure that they'll like them.



Part Two: Chapters 11 - 14

Part Two: Chapters 11 - 14 Summary

The library is a source of surprise for both Jimmy and Lorrie as they watch while the killer searches the back room where the periodicals are kept. Finally, he finds what he is looking for and releases a catch that opens a section of bookshelves. An iron banded oak door is behind and he proceeds to participate in an overly complicated series of knocks with someone on the other side. When complete, a motor sounds from the other side, and a drill bit soon appears through the keyhole. When the door opens a tunnel is revealed, and Crinkles and Honker are admitted. Honker questions the reason that Jimmy and Lorrie are there and the killer explains his need for hostages in case anything goes wrong. Crinkles delights in the idea that once they've completed, they'll have to kill them as they have seen who they are and can identify them. Neither of the other two men argue the point. While Crinkles and Honker distribute the bricks of explosives throughout the subcellar, the killer synchronizes the clocks on several detonators. As soon as she can talk to him without giving herself away, Lorrie tells Jimmy that if they are left alone with Crinkles, she'll try to get her nail file again. Jimmy tries to discourage her. When the explosives all have detonators attached, and Honker and the killer have already left, Crinkles unlocks the cuffs that secure them to the chair and motions for them to head into the tunnel. Lorrie boldly picks up her purse on the way by, and Crinkles doesn't argue.

The tunnel was built by Cornelius Snow in the 1800s and connects the four assets he valued most - the library, the bank, the courthouse, and his mansion. Lorrie has managed to acquire her nail file, but as soon as she has it out of her purse, Jimmy takes it from her and puts it in his pocket. Crinkles is too busy extolling the faults of the former Cornelius Snow to notice. Lit by candles, they follow along until they are under the bank. Then Lorrie and Jimmy realize that this whole escapade is simply a bank robbery by any other name. When Lorrie calls them on it, they all have different ways of looking at the situation, seeing themselves as righting an ancient wrong (the killer), or making a political statement (Crinkles) but only one admits that it's all about the cash (Honker). When he tries to mollify the other two, Jimmy finally puts the pieces together and calls Punchinello Beezo by his name, surprising him.

Part Two: Chapters 11 - 14 Analysis

As the killer, Jimmy and Lorrie wait for his partners in crime to drill through the lock of the secret door behind the bookshelf, Jimmy finds himself wishing that he had met her under different circumstances. When Crinkles and Honker are admitted, Crinkles right away questions the need for hostages, insisting that he will have to get rid of them as soon as they are done. He takes absurd pleasure in the idea that he might get a chance to kill someone, and the gun he carries in his waistband is easy to see. They remind Jimmy of the Beagle Boys from the old Scrooge cartoons. Lorrie believes Crinkles is the



weakest link because she thinks he likes her. Jimmy believes that the fascination he has only extends to his desire to rape her, but Lorrie insists that she saw interest in him before he made his crude comments. Jimmy tries not to sound argumentative, slowing counting before each response. She gets frustrated with Jimmy because he won't concede that Crinkles might find her attractive, but Jimmy insists that he isn't arguing that she's gorgeous which mollifies her to a degree.

The explosives are meant simply as a distraction for the main event which is the robbery of the local bank. The killer says he doesn't want the money. He wants revenge. He wants to make the town pay for the lies they told surrounding the death of his mother so many years ago. He cites the newspaper report that claims his mother died in childbirth and afterward his father has lost his composure and killed the doctor and a nurse he felt was responsible. It is then that Jimmy realizes who the killer really is. He is the son of Konrad Beezo. Calling out the name of Punchinello Beezo, (once he looked again at the killer through new eyes) he surprises everyone.



Part Two: Chapters 15 - 19

Part Two: Chapters 15 - 19 Summary

Punchinello unpacks tools, welder's masks while Lorrie asks Jimmy how it is that he knows who Punchinello is. He glosses over the part where grandpa Josef makes the five predictions. A transformer somewhere else in town blows up, and the lights all go out with the exception of the lantern lit moments before in preparation. While Crinkles and Honker work on the door with the torches, Punch takes the time to tell Lorrie and Jimmy about the day of his birth, having had the story relayed to him many times by his father since that day. His story is skewed fantastically to make Konrad Beezo out to be the one that saved him from a doctor who was smothering him, and Rudy Tock a hero who killed the assassin masquerading as a nurse who was tasked with killing Konrad Beezo. All of this he told them with great feeling as he blamed the culprits as described by his father - the flying trapeze family Vivacamente and particularly their paterfamilias, Virgilio.

While the three clowns break through the remaining barrier, Lorrie tells Jimmy about her family. Her father is a storm chaser and her mother is a snake handler. Finally the clowns return carrying boxes and excited by their contents. Sixteen boxes are taken out of the bank in total, filled mostly with fatigued bills. The three clowns taken them up to the Snow Mansion through the underground tunnel and when all of the proceeds from the bank are in the kitchen, Punch shoots Crinkles and Honker dead. To their surprise and horror, he claims it to be their wedding gift. Lorrie feigns gratitude and offers to name their first born Konrad, asking Punch if he would consent to be the godfather. Punch takes the honor seriously, misting at the thought. He leads them out and removes the cuffs from them but then cuffs himself to Lorrie after asking Jimmy to wheel the cart to his van.

Part Two: Chapters 15 - 19 Analysis

Though Jimmy is acutely aware of the absurdity of the situation, he is having a hard time finding the Tock family sense of humor. Punchinello can hardly believe that he is actually in the presence of Jimmy Tock, son of the great Rudy Tock - the hero that saved his father's life. This is a side of his birth that Jimmy certainly had never heard, and Punch sits down to share it with them. His version is a venomous tale of half truths and outright lies that weave a web of conspiracy against the Beezo family and particularly against his father for the crime he committed by marrying the daughter of an aerialist. Shunned and disowned by her aerial family, she had married for love, but her father plotted against them, finally hiring an assassin to kill the whole family while they performed on the night of his birth. In his version, their savior was Rudy Tock, and realizing for certain that Punch is out of his mind, they play into his dramatic recreation albeit a little tongue in cheek. At the end of his tale, he tells Jimmy to have no fear. No harm will come to any member of the revered Tock family. Lorrie, however, will have to



die. Thinking fast, Jimmy tells Punch they are engaged, and he is invited to their November wedding, providing of course that she is still alive then. He promises to work something out with Crinkles and Honker, congratulating them. When he walks away, Lorrie assures Jimmy that their first born will not be named either Konrad or Beezo.

When Lorrie reveals the occupations of her parents, Jimmy thinks she is putting him on at first. Her father catches storms and her mother wrangles snakes. It takes a minute or two before he realizes that she is quite serious. She wistfully proclaims that she wished her father was a clown instead so he would have been home more often. The clowns are polite and chatty on the way through the tunnels to the Snow Mansion. Punch explains how he finally made his father proud having been unable to do it by becoming the world's greatest clown. This is confirmed by the other two who agree that he has no talent for the craft. Now they are calling Lorrie 'Miss' and 'Lady' instead of 'it'. Both Jimmy and Lorrie are stunned when Punch shoots the clowns dead. Jimmy almost throws up. The biggest surprise is his claim to have more talent as an aerialist than a clown, but in such a small community Virgilio knew all aerialists and his hatred for the Beezo family would prevent him from fulfilling his dream. As such, he thought that he may as well die if he can't fly.



Part Two: Chapters 20 -23

Part Two: Chapters 20 -23 Summary

After loading all sixteen boxes and three million in cash into the van, Punch reveals his intention to make Jimmy drive and is going to throw him the keys but Jimmy stops him. If they fall down the drain, they'd all be in trouble. He approaches with one hand out to take the keys from him and with the other hand he drives the nail file into Punchinello's crotch, twisting it brutally. Jimmy tries to take the gun, but Punch hangs on. With her free hand, Lorrie pummels him in the face, but Punch still manages to shoot Jimmy twice despite his father being the great Rudy Tock. Though he and Punch are both writhing on the ground in pain, Lorrie manages to convey to Jimmy that they are running out of time. Jimmy crawls to Lorrie and she takes the gun to shoot the cuffs off. Jimmy is going into shock and asks her if they've been drinking. She frees herself and hounds him until he gets up. They head away from the library. A police car pulls up and Lorrie tells the officers Jimmy's been shot and Punch is injured but though she warns them about the bomb, they still go to Punch, presumably to arrest him. The four bombs went off at once.

Lorrie calls for help, choking on the dust and plaster in the air around them while Jimmy slips in and out of consciousness. He hears her call for help, and hears her say someone's been shot, but now fearful for her he wants to stay conscious. It isn't possible. His mind plays a reel of murders, aerialists and clowns, until he wakes again to partial consciousness in an ambulance. Someone tells them the leg can't be saved, but he assures them he needs both as he is a storm chaser, and slips away again.

Six weeks later, Lorrie comes to the Tock home for dinner. Jimmy is still in a fiberglass cast, but the leg was not removed to their relief. The following morning Punchinello is scheduled to attend a preliminary hearing to decide if he's fit to stand trial. The explosion killed two men in a cleaning crew at the courthouse and a hobo behind the library. An elderly widow living next door also died. Most of the damage was confined to the tunnel areas. The dinner is a raging success and the family loves her as much as she does them. She goes home and fifteen minutes later, Jimmy calls her to propose she turns him down.

Part Two: Chapters 20 -23 Analysis

Grinning like idiots, they pretend to go along with the insane clown as they head for the van. It seems obvious that it's unlikely he plans to let them go, as is exemplified by the act of him cuffing himself to Lorrie. He is stunned when the nail file goes into his crotch, but still manages to shoot Jimmy twice. At that moment he realizes he lacks the pain tolerance to be a real hero. Free from the cuffs after shooting them off, Lorrie pulls Jimmy to his feet but not before he tells her he loves her. He isn't coherent or thinking straight, and when she gets him to his feet, he has already forgotten he's been shot, still



convinced they are drunk and he needs to sleep it off. Then, leaning on her, he's convinced they are going on a picnic. Lorrie just agrees. Jimmy argues that it's too cold and too dark, but she is insistent.

The police who arrive first don't understand Lorrie when she tries to warn them about the bomb. They head towards Punch anyway. When the explosion goes off, the ground rocks and Jimmy goes down while Lorrie frantically calls for help. He wishes for unconsciousness but his brain keeps replaying murders and mayhem. He hears Lorrie calling out about someone being shot, and fearful for her safety, he tries to stay awake, but can't. He isn't able to open his eyes, but can tell he is in the ambulance when he hears that the leg can't be saved. Telling them he's a storm chaser, he insists he needs both before tipping over the edge again into black.

Though Jimmy loses his beloved Shelby, he doesn't mourn its loss for a moment, even though Lorrie would have looked great in it. Towards the end of the dinner, Madelaine told Lorrie that it felt as though she'd always been there. She kisses them all on the cheek before leaving. So afraid that his window of opportunity will close or someone else will whisk her away, he waits long enough for her to get home and then calls her and proposes. She turns him down claiming to be in love with someone else.



Part Three: Chapters 24 - 29

Part Three: Chapters 24 - 29 Summary

Jimmy takes Grandpa Josef's predictions more seriously now. The next date he gave was January 19, 1998 - over three years after the first date. Jimmy buys a pistol and the family has many suggestions, each different, about how the day should be handled. Complicating this issue is that their first baby is due to arrive on the 18th or 19th. Lorrie had accepted Jimmy's proposal after he had insisted on speaking to the man she was in love with, and she admitted it was him. On January 12th, Lorrie's contractions start. Five hours later, after she is sure this time it is the real thing, she tells Jimmy. Two hundred yards away, someone listens to their conversations via a carefully planted transmitter. As they are ready to leave, a Hummer pulls up to block their exit. A man gets out with a rifle. As he raises the rifle, Jimmy steps on the gas and he jumps out of the way. Then, driving around the Hummer they headed for the hospital.

Jimmy encourages Lorrie to call 911 as the Hummer pulls out behind them, but there is no cell service. A fresh six inches of snow on the ground makes it hard to drive too fast. Lorrie's contractions are coming hard and fast, and Lorrie tries repeatedly but still has no success with the phone. Behind them, the Hummer turns on spotlights, illuminating them from behind. Wind from the east creates a three foot drift that Jimmy doesn't see until just before he plows into it. They almost make it, but then the engine stalls. By the time Jimmy starts it again, the Hummer has pulled up along side them at an angle, and begins to push them off the road. Jimmy does all that he can, but their Explorer is no match for the weight of the Hummer. Before he can push them sideways off the edge, as the Hummer backs up to get a run at them, Jimmy drives over the edge under his own steam. Jimmy manages to avoid trees, stumps, boulders and other obstacles, but a small herd of deer are startled into his path and he locks up the brakes. Unable to unlock them, they are now at the mercy of gravity and the hillside.

Part Three: Chapters 24 - 29 Analysis

Being in his early thirties, and having a full leg of metal as a result of his encounter and struggle with Punchinello Beezo has taught Jimmy to see Grandpa Josef's predictions in a much more serious light. Jimmy and Lorrie are sure that their first child will be born on the nineteenth which scares them both witless. Lorrie had accepted Jimmy's proposal, but not before she made it clear that she wanted nothing to do with the Jimmy who called himself plain, boring and witless. Her Jimmy was charming and talented and full of possibilities. They were married two Saturdays before Christmas. Since the wedding, Lorrie became a web designer and Jimmy became a pastry chef. When Lorrie goes into labor on the twelfth of January, Jimmy is as first fearful, but then almost immediately afterward, excited at the prospect of becoming a father.



He gets her bag and helps her out to the Explorer only to be stopped by a man with a gun who blocks their exit with his Hummer. Without waiting to see what he wants, or to find out if his intention is to shoot them, Jimmy drives the Explorer straight for him leaving him no choice but to jump out of the way. They head for the hospital, driving as fast as they dare in the fresh half foot of snow. Jimmy is trying not to go too fast, but wants to go fast enough to avoid the Hummer. He worries about Lorrie, and envisions all the things that could go wrong. He doesn't want to strand them somewhere that she can't walk from, and he certainly doesn't want an accident to complicate things. Dangerous from all sides, he increases his speed carefully as the Hummer approaches from behind. When Jimmy hits the snow drift, he only does so because he doesn't see it until the very last moment. With chains on, he almost drives right over it, but at the last moment the engine stalls. Like something out of a bad movie, Jimmy struggles to get it started as the Hummer pulls up on an angle and begins pushing the Explorer sideways off the road. Rather than roll down the embankment, Jimmy chooses to control his descent and drives off the edge. He is doing very well until a herd of deer is startled into his path. His mind is still playing out all of the options as they continue down the hill, now out of control.



Part Three: Chapters 30 - 35

Part Three: Chapters 30 - 35 Summary

They finally come to a stop between two trees at the bottom after having descended four hundred yards. Jimmy switches off the engine and heads up the slope to confront the rifleman hoping to get at least two-thirds of the way up before spotting him coming down. When he reaches that approximate point he waits, still seeing nothing. A rushing sound from overhead makes him look up. The owl scares him so badly he cries out in surprise. It sails past him and past the man who was less than thirty feet to his north. He immediately begins to fire. Jimmy begins to run south, trips and tumbles. He finally finds his feet again, hoping the gunman has lost track of him, but immediately hears him closing in. He runs again, dodges left, and in the darkness runs right off an embankment, dropping fifteen feet. He screams and then works his way ten feet uphill to wait. Pebbles dropping down from above his head tell him the gunman is standing above him. Jimmy waits, counting seconds for what seems like a long time, but nothing more happens. Finally, convinced the gunman is gone, he pulls himself out of the concavity and heads back in the direction of the car and Lorrie who is now certainly the main target.

The gunman approaches Lorrie in the car, smiling. He gestures for her to open the door, promising he has no intentions of harming her. He only wants what is owed to him - the baby. Lorrie has no intention of letting him in. He circles the car to the driver's side and Lorrie blasts the horn a few times. He just shakes his head and still smiling uses the butt of the rifle to break the window. He opens the door and gets in. Again he explains that he means her no harm. He just wants the child they owe him. Lorrie doesn't understand until he explains that he is Konrad Beezo and that when they jabbed Punchinello in the scrotum with a nail file they rendered him unable to have children and his arrest had taken him from Konrad. As such, he figured they owed him their first born son and as soon as he had it, he would leave and never return. He doesn't see Jimmy come up behind him with a rock, and hit him across the head. He slumps unconscious and though Jimmy has to hit him again to keep him that way, it appears the immediate danger is taken care of. They use cable from the trunk to chain him to a tree, with the intention of sending police back to collect him. Now, all they have to do is drive out as Lorrie's contractions are stronger and the baby won't be long.

Part Three: Chapters 30 - 35 Analysis

Jimmy tries to ignore his fear, and doesn't waste time thinking about who the rifleman might be. Instead, he concentrates on ensuring Lorrie's contractions are still irregular, the car will not continue to slide, and then going after him before he comes for them. Knowing full well he is no James Bond, he is unable to think of another plan and the winter cold is letting him know where ever pin and plate in his leg is. When an owl swooping overhead startles Jimmy, he draws the attention of the riflemen only thirty



yards away, and suddenly the fact that this is not one of the five terrible days that Grandpa Josef predicted doesn't matter. He is astonished that the bullets that follow miss him. He races down the hill, dodging, falling and after running off a fifteen foot drop off, he has a plan. The assault rifle had been firing when he stepped off into air and cried out in surprise. Now he screeches in pain, hoping the gunman will think he has hit his target. His ploy works, but the gunman doesn't seem overly interested in making certain that Jimmy is dead. He seems content to have merely looked down at the rushing water and then left. It occurs to Jimmy that the main target is Lorrie, not him, so he hurries back in the direction of the car. Somehow, he gets turned around, and despite knowing where he is, he finds himself going in circles, remembering all the stories he's heard over the years of hikers who had been lost for days, and found just half a mile from the main road.

Lorrie is running through her options. She considers hiding under the Explorer until she can see who returns but when she opens the door she realizes it is too cold. She pulls it shut again and thinking she heard gunshots, she opens the window a bit to listen. Sure enough, more gunshots follow. She is terrified at first that Jimmy has been killed, but then she remembers that she is an optimist, and if the gunman is still firing, Jimmy must still be evading him. Then she sees the gunman walking towards her smiling. He calls her Missy, and patiently explains that she shouldn't be afraid. She is surprised to learn that he is Konrad Beezo, and even more surprised when he explains that he wants her baby. Since she and Jimmy robbed him of his chance to have grandchildren, they owe him one and when the baby is born he'll disappear and they'll never hear from him again, he promises her. Lorrie realizes that this clown is as far off the rails as his son was. When he begins to fill a hypodermic needle, she tries not to panic. He wants to render her a bit more amenable before dragging her up the slope to his Hummer in a sling made from the seat belts. It seems he has thought of everything. The only thing he didn't count on was Jimmy's survival. He never sees him coming, and doesn't see the rock that renders him unconscious. Though it is very cold, and Konrad likely has a concussion, Lorrie refuses to ride with him in the vehicle, so Jimmy chains him to tree for the police.



Part Three: Chapters 36 - 40

Part Three: Chapters 36 - 40 Summary

The Explorer starts on the second try. Though it takes a bit of rocking back and forth, Jimmy manages to get them going and starts picking his way up the hill. Lorrie chooses this time to confess how she feels about family - hers, his and theirs, and before Jimmy can digest the love she describes, they are on the road. The contractions are closer together and stronger by the time they get to the hospital. Jimmy does the paperwork and calls the police to let them know where Konrad Beezo is chained. He calls home and the family says they are on their way. Then he goes in to see Lorrie. Dr Mello Melodeon and Jimmy discuss recipes while Lorrie struggles through contractions between them. Just as Lorrie's water breaks, a nurse comes in and tells Jimmy there is an important call for him. He tells Lorrie to wait and goes to the phone. Captain Huey Foster of the Snow Village Police Department regretfully informs Jimmy that Konrad was gone when they got there. His coat had been torn and was left behind along with the tow cable and the Hummer. Foster tells Jimmy to be vigilant at the hospital until his men can get there. Now, twenty four years after his first visit, Jimmy is convinced that Konrad is on his way to the hospital again.

Jimmy goes to the expectant father's room instead of back to Lorrie, hoping to intercept Konrad before he can get to her. When the elevator sounds as it arrives on his floor, his heart is in his throat but to his surprise, it is his mother, father and grandmother. It takes a minute to break through their excited questions and tell them that Konrad Beezo is on the loose. Though the family shows no signs of fear, Jimmy is still greatly relieved when the police arrive. He leaves them to check on Lorrie but a nurse intercepts him with a phone call. Captain Foster is barely in control of his emotions as he describes the condition they found Nedra in, and Jimmy is even more convinced that the deranged clown is headed for the hospital, however Konrad does not make an appearance. Annie Tock comes into the world, a perfect little girl who brings tears to her father's eyes. She is born on January 12th, 1998, exactly one week before the second of five terrible days predicted by Josef Tock. As the day draws near, Jimmy packs up his family and takes them to stay with his parents until it passes. Captain Foster, knowing all about the predictions and their accuracy to date, provides them with around the clock police presence and although Rudy goes to work, Jimmy does not. Finally, the terrible day arrives and the tension is palpable but there is still no sign of Konrad Beezo. At seven o'clock, Captain Huey Foster calls to inform Jimmy and Lorrie that their house on Hawksbill Road is on fire and all indications point to arson. One hour later, having burned with a fury, there is nothing left. By eleven o'clock, the Tock family is feeling as though another of the terrible days has been survived. The firemen who cleaned up after the fire at Hawksbill Road find a mason jar with a note from Konrad Beezo inside promising that if they ever have a son, he'll be back for him.



Part Three: Chapters 36 - 40 Analysis

As they carefully work their way back up to the road, Lorrie confesses that she wants to tell him something and she would have been horrified not to have had the chance, so now she tells him that his family is to her what an ideal family should be. His parents and grandmother so obviously love him, and their home is filled with an open and honest family connection that was lacking in her own childhood. She is very emotional when she thanks him for bringing her into his family and allowing her to become part of that magic and that she looks forward to bringing their children up in that environment. Jimmy is afraid to speak for fear that doing so will bring him to tears, but he tells her that she is a treasure, and before he has had much time to panic or think about the consequences of failing, they are on the road again.

A snow plow is going by and they fall in behind it, knowing it would be the fastest route to the hospital. Lorrie is checked in while Jimmy deals with the details, calls home, and calls the police to give them Beezo's location. Just as Lorrie's water breaks, Jimmy learns that Konrad has escaped again. Filled with fear and the certainty that Konrad is on his way to the hospital again, Jimmy isn't sure what to do. He doesn't go back to Lorrie, knowing that she will see his anxiety immediately. Instead, he paces near the expectant father's waiting room, sure that he can intercept Konrad if he shows up. The elevator arriving on the maternity ward floor puts his heart into overdrive, but the doors open to reveal his family. They have arrived much earlier than expected and for a moment he has the crazy thought that everyone he loves is now in one place and if Konrad went on a rampage he could empty his life of everything important in one sweep.

The arrival of the police shortly afterward put him at ease enough that he goes to check on Lorrie. She has delivered their first child - a baby girl they name Annie. Annie is born on the twelfth of January and the next seven days are torturous. Feeling too isolated in their home on Hawksbill Road, Jimmy packs up his family and takes them to his parents home in town until the second terrible day predicted by Grandpa Josef is done. The day dawns and tension is high. Police protection is provided, but Konrad does not make an appearance. Instead, he uses gasoline to start a fire at the Hawksbill home, burning it to the ground. Though Jimmy and Lorrie lose their possessions, it seems inconsequential compared to what could have been. A note is found, and verified as being in Konrad's handwriting that threatens his return should they ever give birth to a son.



Part Four: Chapters 41 - 45

Part Four: Chapters 41 - 45 Summary

Only three things survive the fire that Konrad Beezo set at Jimmy and Lorrie's house. An ornament, a cameo pendant and the circus pass with the five terrible dates written on it. Jimmy, Lorrie and Annie stay with his parents for a month and when the house next door comes up for sale, they see it as an omen. They make a good offer which is accepted. Their family is not one to live under the shadow of fear and though cautious, their lives bloom. First came Lucy Jean, born fourteen months after Annie, and on July 14th, 2000 Andy came into the world. Mello Melodeon delivers each one. Huey Foster becomes Chief of Police, and is quick to provide them with around the clock protection just in case Konrad Beezo shows up. After a week, he can no longer justify the cost, but for the remainder of the first month, the entire family moves in with Jimmy, Lorrie and the children seeking safety in numbers. Days turn to weeks and nothing happens. Life begins to go back to normal. Andy celebrates his first birthday Beezo free. Annie and Lucy both develop a fear of monsters in the closet but for reasons no one can explain, just after Andy turns two, he becomes convinced that a child eating clown resides in his. They install deadbolts, a security monitoring system, buy pepper spray and tasers to distribute in high places around the house. The third of five dates approaches - December 23rd, 2002.

On the eve of the twenty second of December, Lorrie prepares a meal for the whole family, feeling safety in numbers. While she is preparing it, Huey Foster calls with news he claims they will be happy to receive regarding their old nemesis, Konrad Beezo. He tells them he is sending over an FBI agent to talk to them, and Jimmy dares to hope that perhaps Beezo is dead. The agent, Porter Carson, arrives, shows his identification and comes in. Anticipating a conversation they don't want children to hear, Jimmy and Lorrie send the children upstairs while they have coffee with the agent and listen to his news. He tells them that Konrad had taken a page from his son's book and began robbing banks with two roustabouts and another bank robber. They hit seven banks and then two armored cars, the second of which nets six million. Greed overcomes them and Beezo and the other bank robber, Ornwall kill the two roustabouts to increase their own shares. The agent tells them that Beezo was the brains of the operation. Emory Ornwall was arrested, but Konrad eluded them still and was hiding out in Venezuela where extradition was still a problem. Lorrie tells the agent that there is no doubt in her mind that the following day Beezo would show up at their home. The agent assures her that it simply isn't possible. When Lorrie is adamant, Porter Carson tells Lorrie word for word what Huey had said on the phone. He even did it in Huey's voice. He then takes out a pistol fitted with a silencer and the truth becomes clear to them both. Konrad Beezo is already there.



Part Four: Chapters 41 - 45 Analysis

Of the three items that survive the fire, Jimmy is most surprised that the circus pass is still legible. The five dates are all still clear and he is filled with a sense of foreboding because of it. Still, Jimmy and Lorrie try to move on. They don't want their lives to be dominated by fear, and they especially don't want their children to grow up in a home to fearful to live a normal life. For the most part, they go about the business of living. They purchase the house next door to Jimmy's parents which gives them an added feeling of security, and Jimmy sometimes struggles with the desire to put a wall up around both properties to shut the world out. Lucy Jean is born and Mello Melodeon delivers her easily, and the Tock family thrives. Then comes Andy. Watchful and extra vigilant, they accept police protection for the first week but nothing out of the ordinary occurs. By the time Andy has had his first birthday, Jimmy is beginning to hope that perhaps the lunatic Beezo has found someone else to terrorize, or has died himself. Though they take precautions that include an updated alarm and monitoring system for the house, and stashes of pepper spray and tasers hidden in places the children can't reach, they try to behave normally. Still, as the next terrible date arrives, their vigilance increases. The children are never without one or both of them and life is a carefully monitored event. As December 23rd draws near, they arrange for a large family dinner the night before and plan to bring in the following day together - strength in numbers is the theory.

When Huey Foster calls, Jimmy feels a glimmer of hope that the worst is finally over. Despite the fact that there are a myriad of terrible things that can happen to a person, the only one that Jimmy feels truly threatened by is Beezo. Huey says he has news and is sending over an FBI agent to tell them about it. Had Jimmy given this any thought, he would have realized that something wasn't right, especially when Huey himself said he couldn't come because they were handing out bonuses at the Christmas party. All Jimmy could think about was that it might finally be over. He had visions of news that Beezo was dead, or in jail. The agent, Porter Carson, knowing they have a more advanced security system than most, presents his identification for Jimmy to see before he opens the door, and satisfied, Jimmy lets him in. Carson tells an elaborate story about how Beezo had taken up a life of crime, robbing banks with three other men and then double crossing two of them to increase his share. He tells them that Konrad was the leader and master tactician who planned these elaborate heists that went off without a hitch.

Still, Jimmy and Lorrie weren't alarmed. He tells them that Beezo is hiding in Venezuela where extradition is a problem, but that they will get him. Lorrie finally tells Carson that she knows where Beezo is going to be. There is no doubt in her mind that Beezo will be at their home the following day, but she can't bring herself to tell him why without making herself sound superstitious or just silly. She exchanges a look with Jimmy and he knows that she is thinking about sharing the reasons for her assertions, but before she can do so, Carson asks Jimmy exactly what Huey had said on the phone. Before Jimmy can reply, Carson replays the conversation, even using Huey's voice, mimicking the conversation exactly. When Carson pulls out his revolver with a silencer attached, it

becomes clear why he was so adamant that Beezo would not be there the next day. He was there now!



Part Four: Chapters 46 - 52

Part Four: Chapters 46 - 52 Summary

Looking at Carson, comprehension slowly dawns. Though the eyes are a different color, contacts are available, and though the face is different, so were plastic surgeons to someone who truly wanted revenge and was crazy enough to plan. Jimmy remembers how easily he had mimicked his father's voice and Beezo calmly announces that he's come for his recompense. He wants them to turn over Andy so that he can make him into the greatest clown alive. Lorrie looks at him and quietly says no. She tells him to find some desperate and degenerate woman to father a child of his own. She is so firm that his resolve seems to falter. He turns to Jimmy to repeat his demand, and when he does, Lorrie pulls a container of pepper spray out of her apron and sprays him in the face. He howls, and begins firing. Six shots are fired in the struggle that ensues and when Beezo stumbles out into the dining room, Jimmy sees Lorrie on the floor. One of the bullets hit her. Unable to stay with her, Jimmy follows Beezo out to protect Andy from him. Beezo fires at him just missing his head. Heedless of the danger, Jimmy follows him up the stairs trying to put him in a choke hold. He drops the gun and it tumbles down the stairs while Beezo claws at Jimmy's head to ease the hold. His hand finds Jimmy's partially shot ear and twists it creating such pain that Jimmy is almost blinded by it. Beezo feels the hold ease up just a little and seeing the blood on his hand he knows Jimmy's weak point. Before he can exploit it, Jimmy sees the gun, lets go and tumbles down the stairs to pick it up. He turns and fires, putting a round right through Beezo's neck.

At the top of the stairs Jimmy can hear Annie and Lucy calling out fearfully. He calls out to them telling them to get into their room and telling them a monster is downstairs. They didn't wait to see, and ran. Monsters was something Lorrie and Jimmy never teased the children about. Jimmy runs to the kitchen, finds the phone and calls 911, then drops the phone and goes to her. Though unconscious, she is still breathing and he sobs with relief. She is shot in the stomach and there is a great amount of blood. He elevates her head and races to get coats to cover her as she is cold and clammy with shock and loss of blood. Jimmy and his father follow the ambulance to the hospital while Madelaine and Grandma Rowena stay with the children, keeping them from looking out the window and seeing their mother.

At the hospital they wait while surgery is performed to remove two bullets. Lorrie in surgery until 1:33am and comes out stable but critical. Madelaine and Rowena come and wait with them, but go again once Lorrie is out of surgery and it is plain that there is nothing they can do. Rudy stays with his son. The next morning her first conscious thought is of Jimmy. He goes to her and she asks about Andy and the girls first. He assures her they are fine and that Beezo is dead. Still, there is a whole day left of Josef's warning and she begs him not to let his guard down. Dr. Cornell comes to speak with Jimmy soon after and delivers the news that Lorrie will not be able to have any more children. While tragic, Jimmy is relieved, knowing that as long as she is alive and



their three children are fine, it seems like less of a tragedy than it might have under other circumstances. The true tragedy surrounding that day would not reveal itself for months to come. On January 11th, Lorrie is home and well enough for the family to celebrate a belated Christmas, and the table is piled to excess with delectable food of every description.

Part Four: Chapters 46 - 52 Analysis

Porter Carson is very sincere and rightfully so. He hasn't come to warn them. Beezo was already inside their home. He was also confident that Beezo wouldn't be there the following day because he was there now. Being paranoid and obsessed with vengeance, believing he was destined for greatness, he was motivated to endure the plastic surgeries and had the patience to plan his revenge. Nearly three decades after Beezo told his father that he had talents beyond imagining, Jimmy hears it for the threat it was and sees the vicious madness and exultation in his eyes. Lorrie and Jimmy feign ignorance, buying time. Then Lorrie gets angry. Jimmy is mute with terror, but Lorrie is firm and definite despite Beezo's promises to treat her son well and lead him to greatness in the world of clowns. She insists that he father a child of his own. Instead of provoking Beezo with her anger, Beezo seems clearly disconcerted, shifting his attention to Jimmy. When she sees her opening and sprays him with her pepper spray, he responds like a rat that is cornered, becoming a tiger filled with aggression. When Lorrie is shot in the process, Jimmy is almost rooted in indecision. Does he stay to help her, or follow Beezo to protect his children. There really is no choice. Filled with fear for his family, and terror at the thought of being alone again, Jimmy fights with courage that is unparalleled. When Jimmy shoots Beezo, and follows it up by shooting him twice more to empty the magazine, it is without mercy. His children are coming, summoned by the noise, and Jimmy roars at them that a monster is in the house, sending them back to their room.

Jimmy's love for Lorrie is so strong that he simply will not believe that she won't survive. He can't believe it because if he did so, he fears he would cease to exist as well. For her sake, he maintains control. He keeps whispering the greatest truth he knows in her ear - he loves her. Jimmy quietly pleads with God for her life, and at the hospital, he cries in his father's arms for the first time since he was a child. When Lorrie wakes after surgery, she asks for Jimmy immediately. He goes to her, feeling a mixture of relief, intense love and knowing the fragility of life. She is still worried after asking the date and knowing that the day Grandpa Josef predicted is only just beginning. She begs Jimmy to be vigilant. Jimmy stays with Lorrie, although the rest of the family goes home when it is certain that she is out of the woods, but when Dr. Cornell comes to him looking serious and wants to talk, the worst case scenarios jump to mind.

At first Jimmy is terrified that she is paralyzed but Dr. Cornell quickly assures him it is nothing like that. When he tells Jimmy she won't be able to have any more children, it seems like such a small thing in the scheme of things that he is relieved. He wants to tell her himself and Cornell agrees. All the while, he is thinking about how every day he will thank God for Lorrie and their three children. He is beyond mere gratitude. Though



he keeps up his vigilance all of that day, it will be several months before the impact of the day Grandpa Josef predicted will reveal itself. Going back to her room, he apologizes to Lorrie for getting her into the situation they are in, but she won't hear of it, ever sensible and realistic.



Part Five: Chapters 53 - 57

Part Five: Chapters 53 - 57 Summary

On November 26th, which is the fourth of Jimmy's five fateful days, Lorrie and Jimmy go to the Rocky Mountain Federal Penitentiary where Punchinello Beezo is housed. Since Huey Foster helped to arrange the visit, they are given the VIP treatment and the assistant warden himself escorts them. Punchinello is chained to the side of the table, the legs of which are bolted to the floor. Beezo tells them he has earned a correspondence degree in law, although he'll never be permitted to the bar. He puts it to use by helping other prisoners with appeals and wrongful convictions. He has also learned to speak German, Swedish, and Norwegian and is working on writing a novel. They finally get around to the subject of blame and Beezo assures him there is enough to go around and that he feels no animosity towards them, despite his father's death. He does however have terms and conditions that he sets out for them in exchange for whatever it is that they want. He asks for a birthday card each year, any new Constance Hammersmith books, and forty or fifty dollars a month for the commissary. Then Jimmy reveals the reason for their visit - Syndactyly. They listen, but once Beezo has control of himself again he admits that he lived a loveless childhood and at eight he had strep throat and while seen at a hospital, a doctor told him he could have the surgery to fix his fused fingers and toes. He told his father he would refuse all instruction to be a clown until it was done, so the surgery was performed. Afterward, he tried but it was soon obvious that he had no talent in the clown department. Finally Jimmy tells him that he also has Syndactyly and for a moment, Beezo blames the hospital, thinking it had something to do with them, but Jimmy tells him it wasn't their fault. They both had it because they are fraternal twins. Brothers.

Thinking Punch might be hard to convince, they had brought the maternity ward nurse Charlene Coleman with them. Jimmy still had trouble believing that the lovely people who raised him were not his natural mother and father, but Charlene sat between them at the table and described how on the night of their births, the child Madelaine and Rudy had was stillborn. Madelaine tells Punchinello that he turned out to be a handsome man and that his mother was beautiful but fragile. She sets Punch straight on his father's version of what happened in the hospital that night. She explains how she realized that after Konrad had murdered the doctor and the other delivery nurse, she was the only one still alive who knew that Maddy's child had been stillborn and Konrad's wife had delivered twins. She spirited the real Jimmy Tock baby out of the hospital and took him to her minister. The two of them buried the baby in a quiet place in the graveyard at the church.

Part Five: Chapters 53 - 57 Analysis

Lorrie is fearful as they go through the process of admittance to the Penitentiary. Jimmy is unable to feel sympathy for the inmates who seem to have little in the way of family



ties even on this the day before Thanksgiving. He has never understood the way Hollywood romanticizes inmates and prison life. Despite nine years in prison, Punchinello looks well and his green eyes are alive with interest, his smile seemingly genuine. Though he is still as crazy as he is homicidal, Jimmy is nevertheless impressed with Beezo's list of accomplishments. He seems to genuinely have put the past behind him, telling them he lives for the future now. Beezo realizes they have likely come for something important from him, and wants terms of their agreement out front, so he gives them his three demands which are simple enough. When they tell him they are there because of Syndactyly, he cries as he describes how his father insisted he would just have to live with it. Jimmy and Lorrie had only found out about Beezo's Syndactyly a week earlier.

With great sorrow he describes how his father took pictures of the affected foot and hand periodically to send to Virgilio Vivacamente as a testament to how imperfect a child his daughter created and to prove that she had not given birth to an aerialist but to a clown. Lorrie and Jimmy give him a few minutes to pull himself together. He admits that his father told him the limp caused by his Syndactyly was a gift from God to give him a clown's gait that was natural, and Punch grew up thinking of himself as a malformed and ugly child which was actually far from the truth. When he had control of himself again, Jimmy tells Punch how he knew about his Syndactyly. The simple truth that they were fraternal brothers is at first hard for Punch to accept. He blames the hospital, but Jimmy sets him straight. Finally, they bring in Charlene Coleman - the single surviving hospital staff member involved in their deliveries that night. She tells Punch first how handsome he turned out and actually has him blushing. He listens in rapt attention as she describes the night they were born, his father's rage, and her subsequent decision to give one of the twins born to Konrad's wife to Maddy and Rudy Tock in place of the infant she didn't know she delivered stillborn.

Jimmy listens, having already heard the story, but still wondering how his life might have been different had he grown up with Punchinello and had Konrad as a father. He thinks about what might have been different had Punch grown up with Maddy and Rudy's love instead of him, and he counts his blessings that fate and Charlene Coleman intervened to give him the wonderful parents and childhood he knew. Jimmy and the Tock family had visited the grave of baby Tock in the church's graveyard, and oddly Jimmy felt more as though that stillborn baby was his brother than his actual brother Punch was. He struggled to feel sympathy for Punchinello. Instead of raging in disbelief as they expected he would, Punch not only seems to accept the story as Charlene tells it, but takes it calmly.



Part Five: Chapters 58 - 62

Part Five: Chapters 58 - 62 Summary

Jimmy and Lorrie continue to talk to Punchinello. He reveals just enough about himself to convince Jimmy that he will turn them down. Lorrie tells him that he is the only one who can save their daughter's life, proving his own existence beyond a shadow of a doubt. She shows him a photograph of Annie, and explains the cancer that took both her kidneys. She tells him about her allergy to the solution that cleans the blood in the dialysis machine and reveals that without a kidney from Punchinello, Annie has mere days to live. Punch is unsympathetic, telling Jimmy that he doesn't care that he's her uncle or that he's Jimmy's brother any more than Jimmy cared that he was his brother the last seven years that he spent in prison. Jimmy knows then that there is no hope, but Punchinello adds one more nail in her coffin, telling him to bury her next to the nameless baby whose life he stole when she dies. Charlene can see the truth as soon as they leave the room. They are about to leave when Lorrie realizes he still has Annie's photo, so Jimmy goes back in for it. He doesn't want to give it back at first, asking Jimmy about their deal. Christmas and birthday cards, money for snacks and new paperbacks. Jimmy is so angry that he tells Punch they have no deal, and he'll get none of those things. Punch asks the guard for a few more minutes and when Jimmy agrees, Punch asks if he brought a medical release form with him. He agrees to do it with only one more condition. He wants Jimmy to kill the aerialist Virgilio Vivacamente, and he is not joking. Jimmy immediately agrees.

Since this is one of Jimmy's five terrible days, he still thinks that something will interfere or that Punch will back out, but he doesn't. The day reveals itself to be just as terrible when a phone call to home reveals that Rowena died in her sleep. Jimmy grieves in a room by himself. The surgery goes off without a hitch and Jimmy visits Punch to thank him and to assure him that he will keep his promises - all of them - although he has no intention of killing the aerialist. Now he has only one more terrible day in front of him.

Part Five: Chapters 58 - 62 Analysis

After Charlene leaves, Punchinello opens up to Jimmy and Lorrie a little, revealing more about himself than he likely intended. In truth, he reveals that he suffers from solipsism - extreme preoccupation with and indulgence one's self. More than ever now he scares Jimmy. Lorrie tells Punch that they came to tell him once and for all that he is real and there's a way to prove it. They tell him about Annie, but Punch doesn't care. Instead he waxes on about his personal feelings that black people are an example of how the world is all wrong and how it would be more convincing if all people were white. His ongoing delusions are enough to tell Jimmy that it won't work. Jimmy is devastated, but all Lorrie can think about is the photo of Annie they left with him and how she can't bear the thought that he'll enjoy his cruelty even more with her face to look at. Jimmy knows that would be intolerable for both of them, so he returns to retrieve it. His anger and



frustration shows as he does, and he lets Punch know that they have no deal. No cards, no candy and no money - nothing. For reasons only Punchinello can know - perhaps merely to belong to this family if only a little bit, he changes his mind. Of course, as was the case with his father, there is a catch. Jimmy must commit murder to pay for the kidney donation.

While this is something that Jimmy would never have normally even considered, he immediately agrees. His daughter's life is on the line, and he is willing to lie to Punchinello to save her. Jimmy still believes Punch will back out. Knowing that this is one of his terrible days as predicted by Josef Tock, he is waiting for the other shoe to fall. He doesn't for one minute think that it would come from the other side of life. The call that informs them of Rowena's death is devastating. He sits in an empty room and cries, knowing that if Annie saw him now she would believe it was about her and that would be intolerable to him, so he hides his grief. He tries to remind himself that she lived a long and good life and died gently and with loved ones around her, but the pain is still almost larger than life.

Annie survives and thrives after the transplant, and Jimmy goes to Punch to thank him for his gift to them. Punch is only sorry that he won't be able to be with Jimmy when he carries out his end of the bargain. He has given it a great deal of thought, and even has suggestions as to how Jimmy might accomplish his task, but ultimately believes that Jimmy will do it. After all, he killed the great Konrad Beezo for his family. Why not Virgilio? It never occurs to Punch that Jimmy will not hold up his end. With just one more terrible day in front of him, Jimmy wonders what will drive his life when these terrible days are finally over. He has spent his whole life preparing for one or the other of them, and without them there will be something missing.



Part Six: Chapters 63 - 66

Part Six: Chapters 63 - 66 Summary

When the fifth day arrived, the doorbell rings and the entire family automatically reacts. Andy hurries to have a pee so he is ready to flee, Lucy prepared to dial 911 and Annie got the car keys off the pegboard. Lorrie goes to the door with Jimmy, kissing him before he opens it and telling him it's probably just the paper boy collecting, but Jimmy's hand goes to the holstered gun under his jacket anyway. At the door, a ten year old boy that is dressed like an Elvis impersonator is standing with a wrapped box. After confirming who Jimmy is, he tries to hand him the box and at first Jimmy refuses it, but the boy is insistent and determined to deliver it or face the wrath of the sender waiting in the car. Jimmy takes it and the boy tells him to prepare to be enchanted before he leaves. Inside the box are twenty five packages of twenty dollar bills. Each packet contains a hundred bills. In total it adds up to fifty thousand dollars, but Lorrie tells the family she smells evil on the money. A note enclosed is from Vivacemente requesting a meeting with Jimmy at the Halloway farm at seven that evening. Jimmy puts the money back in the box and tells the children to wash with water hot enough to hurt. Lorrie and Jimmy leave the children with Madelaine and Rudy, and armed they go to the Halloway farm. Arriving, they decide the large circus tent is their likely meeting place.

When they enter the tent, there is a troupe of trapeze artists flying just for them. One by one they return to the ground and Virgilio approaches them. He begins by boasting about the many aerialists he is the paterfamilias to and then tells Jimmy and Lorrie that he brings them both great wealth and honor. Jimmy and Lorrie joke back and forth throughout the entire encounter, and when Jimmy comments that fifty thousand isn't wealth, Virgilio told him that was only for good faith. He calculates the total to be three hundred and twenty five thousand dollars, for which all he wants is their son, Adam.

Part Six: Chapters 63 - 66 Analysis

Jimmy writes about the first four terrible days before the fifth one, certain that his memoirs will never be a best seller, and convinced that no matter what he does, he will always be a lummoX - a Jimmy not a James. He is motivated to complete it for his family and also for himself and to remind himself that there are two sides to life. Dark and light, funny and tragic all intertwine. When the young boy arrives with the box, Jimmy tries to refuse it but the boy panics. He tells Jimmy that he has to deliver it and is agitated that it is taking so long. He wasn't supposed to converse with Jimmy. He was only supposed to deliver the package and leave. Feeling sorry for the obviously frightened boy, Jimmy relents and receives the package, but is unnerved when the boy tells him to prepare to be enchanted as he leaves as this is the phrase that was on the card from the circus that the five terrible days had been written on originally.



With fear and trepidation, Lorrie and Jimmy approach the Halloway farm to which the invitation summoned them. The box of fifty thousand dollars is all they carry other than their hidden weapons, intending on returning it to Virgilio. They enter and are surprised to find the Vivacamente's performing. Virgilio approaches, revealing up close how much time he devoted to attempting to avoid old age through cosmetic surgeries. Now, scarred and over altered, he boasts about his many aerialists and accomplishments, telling them he is known throughout the world. Jimmy and Lorrie joke back and forth with each other, even risking a comment about clowns in Virgilio's circus before Virgilio finally reveals the reason he summoned them. He wants to pay them for their son, and offers a remuneration he believes is fair. Three hundred and twenty five thousand dollars is the amount he has determined their son is worth.



Part Six: Chapters 67 - 70

Part Six: Chapters 67 - 70 Summary

Jimmy and Lorrie could have left the tent immediately, but they would never have understood the reasons behind Virgilio's desperate quest to get Andy from them. Instead, they stayed and listened, only to be stunned by the next revelation. After Jimmy assured him that Andy would never be part of his aerialist troupe, Virgilio got angry and insisted that he must have him and that he was the purest lineage and last of his line. He then reveals that he is actually father to Jimmy and Punchinello, having incestuously impregnated his daughter, Natalie before she fled to Konrad. He told Jimmy that had he known about him before, he would have gotten him back from the Tocks many years ago and given him his rightful place. Now, all that remains is Andy from his lineage, and he wanted him badly, offering over \$400,000 for him. His daughter Natalie had given him sons and grandsons at the same time and he insists that if they don't see their son to him, he will kill them both and take him anyway. Jimmy tried to repeat the same tactic they had used on Konrad. By insulting and distracting him, Jimmy hoped that Lorrie would have time to shoot him, but something in their manner gave their plan away, and before Lorrie could fire her gun, Virgilio shot Jimmy twice in the stomach and twice in the chest. Jimmy went down hard and fast as Lorrie fired at Virgilio, killing him dead. She shot him three more times to ensure he was really gone and then stood there stunned as his henchmen came out of the shadows to drop their weapons and laugh over Virgilio's dead body. The aerialists had no such sense of humor, and entered shrieking.

The Kevlar vest Jimmy wore saved his life, but he had bruises that remained for weeks. The impact knocked him down and unconscious, and when he came to, some people were laughing and others were shrieking. Not one seemed angry about the death and instead seemed to celebrate, even performing as the sirens neared. Later, they felt no remorse, and Jimmy felt no different after the revelations of his lineage. Lorrie became pregnant fourteen months later, and though doctors had said it wasn't possible, and even counseled her to terminate, they went forward with courage and child number five, Rowena was born. Another stroke victim follows the pattern Josef began so many years previous, and predicts five days - this time glorious.

Part Six: Chapters 67 - 70 Analysis

Jimmy and Lorrie are stunned by Virgilio's revelation that he is not only Jimmy's father, but grandfather as well, and they are horrified that he should want Andy, or any of their children. A true monster, he more truly resembled the Beezo clown clan than he perhaps realized. They felt no remorse at his death, and no guilt for shooting him. As it turned out, not a soul around him mourned his passing. It was celebrated as his troupe realized true freedom for the first time, and they were overjoyed.



Jimmy came to realize one thing with increased clarity. Life cannot be defined by length, but by quality. He understood that the more one expects from life, the more one gets; laughter never gets used up; and the more love you give, the more you got. These are simple truths that Jimmy learned and lived by. None of the rest mattered.

When Rowena was born two years later, despite odds against it, and the nurse entered with a story about a stroke victim who suddenly was coherent, Jimmy felt sick. When the nurse continued to tell them that this stranger to them predicted the name, weight and moment of Rowena's birth, Jimmy couldn't even look at Lorrie for fear she see the terror in his eyes. The five days this woman insisted the nurse write down were almost Jimmy's undoing, but when he looked at them and commented about five terrible days, the nurse assured him that was not the case. The woman had claimed they would be five wonderful and glorious days. Lorrie and Jimmy both agreed it probably meant something. Welcoming Rowena to her life, Jimmy told her this was her world and she should prepare to be enchanted.



Characters

James Tock (Jimmy)

Known as Jimmy by everyone since the day he was born, Jimmy is self described as a lummoX. Though not overly huge by any description, Jimmy describes himself as a bit big for his size, and claims he isn't always aware of where his feet are going. His nickname in school was Moose and he is often referred to by men taller and heavier than him as 'big guy'. His wife tells him that it is his larger than life presence that people see, but Jimmy thinks she is love blind.

At birth, Jimmy was twenty inches long, and eight pounds, ten inches in weight. These facts were predicted by Jimmy's grandfather minutes before his birth and minutes before his grandfather's death. He also predicted the rare genetic condition that would see Jimmy born with several toes fused together and five dates that would be 'five terrible days' for him. Born to Rudy and Madelaine Tock on August 9th, 1974, Jimmy was born amidst a storm of grand proportions both inside and outside. Outside, wind and rain raged, lightening flashed and lights flickered. Inside, a second father waiting for his son to be born as well, raged against his co-workers and their trait, and then against the hospital staff who allowed his beautiful wife to die in childbirth.

Jimmy is an apprentice baker, and has been for two years at the Snow Valley Resort in Colorado. He has a talent like his father, and never feels clumsy in the kitchen. He has blue eyes that are nice and direct but have an edge of lunatic to them he has been told. As an adult with children of his own, Jimmy discovers that he is not who he thinks he is. In fact, he was switched at birth by a nurse who separated him from his twin brother Punchinello Beezo. His father, Konrad Beezo never knows the truth, but the truth is constantly updated. It turns out that his real father is actually Virgilio Vivacemente, an aerialist who is paterfamilias to a large troupe of talented performers. More than just his son however, Jimmy discovers he is also his grandson, as his real mother Natalie was actually Virgilio's daughter. He will have to face all facets of his family tree before his life belongs to him again, but wife Lorrie never leaves his side or heart.

Lorrie Lynn Hicks

Lorrie is confident and intelligent. She is an avid reader, and thinks quickly and calmly even under pressure. She doesn't scare easily, and has a lovely smile. Lorrie is self described as an indefatigable optimist. She is also a professional dance instructor who teaches ballroom dancing. Lorrie grew up in Los Angeles, and moved to Snow Village a year previously. She is beautiful, with teeth so straight and perfect that they could almost be fake. After she and Jimmy marry, she becomes a web designer.

Her mother, Alysa Hicks, is a snake wrangler and her father, Bailey Hicks, is a storm chaser. Danger seems to run in their family as her sister, Chilson Strawberry conducts



bungee jumping tours. Lorrie falls in love with Jimmy Tock when their fates are entwined as they become unwitting hostages in a botched bank robbery. Lorrie is uncommonly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the family that marrying Jimmy attached her to. She has always wanted the kind of normal and loving relationship that Jimmy enjoys with his relatives, and thought it to be largely out of her reach until she and Jimmy became a couple. Not only are they everything that she ever wanted in a family, but everything she never had. She once explains it to him as they are headed to the hospital. She was in labor at the time, and told him in a moment of pure honesty that her parents, as much as she loved them, lived inside themselves. His parents by comparison lived for each other. In her mind it was bliss and she was just so grateful that he let her into his life with all of them.

Displaying unique courage and chivalry, Jimmy saves Lorrie and wins her heart in the process. She is a dedicated wife and mother, helping Jimmy to reach heights he never imagined possible. She gives birth to five children: four girls and one boy. The son, Andy, is the center of attention in a triangle of lunacy that reveals a lineage no one suspects. Lorrie and Jimmy fight for their family. While Jimmy at one point kills Konrad Beezo after he shoots Lorrie in the stomach, Lorrie has a chance to return the favor, killing Virgilio after Virgilio shoots Jimmy in the stomach and chest. In an even, love and laughter filled relationship, Lorrie and Jimmy face five terrible days together, all predicted the day of his birth, and neither has a moment of regret.

Punchinello Beezo

Dark haired and green eyed, he is a handsome man with the kind of looks that could have made him a movie star. His eyes are remarkable and he has a lopsided, Tom Cruise kind of smile. Though his smile is broad, his eyes are narrow and there is a tic at the left corner of his mouth that reveals his true state of mind better than his smile does. He has porcelain white teeth and is convinced that the town of Snow Village is evil.

Punchinello is the offspring of a clown turned lunatic named Konrad Beezo. He doesn't discover the rest of his lineage until in an effort to win his father's love he kidnaps two people and kills three others while in the commission of robbing the Snow Valley bank. While in jail, he discovers he has a twin. One of his kidnap victims is actually his fraternal twin brother Jimmy Tock who was switched at birth by the attending nurse. He has a moment of decency when he agrees to donate a kidney to Jimmy's daughter Annie, but follows it with the request that Jimmy do a favor in return, commit murder. Punchinello actually believes Jimmy will kill the man his father claims is their enemy, without ever realizing that Virgilio is actually the natural father to both Punchinello and Jimmy.

Punchinello is a man who is consumed with the desire to attain his father's approval and by way of that, his love. He was made to feel like a failure as a child because he was unable to become what his father wanted most of him. His father had hoped from the day he was born that he would be a living legacy to his talent as a clown. He trained Punchinello from the very beginning, even naming him in such a way that he believed



would pave the way for that eventuality. When he discovers Punchinello has a genetic disorder called Syndactyly at birth, he refuses to allow Punchinello to have it fixed, telling him that his uneven gait as a result of several fused toes made him a natural for his coming profession. Konrad Beezo never stops hoping that his son will be the world's greatest clown, and instead, Punchinello quietly dreams of becoming an aerialist like his mother Natalie was. He even takes a few lessons behind his father's back, but he is too old by then to really learn. He then adopts the adage that he may as well die if he can't fly. It is the mentality that drives him to plan and attempt to execute the robbery - all in an effort to win his father's approval if only in a back handed way.

Konrad Beezo

Konrad calls himself Beezo. He is a performer with the traveling circus and is married to a trapeze artist named Natalie. Beezo is a clown who's makeup reflects the sad-faced, Emmet Kelly tradition instead of the polka dot bright plumage of the average Ringling Brothers clown. He wore a brown suit with a bright plaid patch across the baggy seat; and the sleeves of his jacket were short to the point of comical. He wears a bread plate sized flower in his lapel, and big clown shoes. His face is painted with white grease paint and his cheeks are heavily rouged. On his head he wears a pork pie hat. His eyes are bloodshot and are as red as his painted cheeks. He is a chain smoker who smokes unfiltered Lucky Strikes. Beezo is having a son at the same time as Jimmy Tock is born, and his intention is to call his son Punchinello after the famous clown. He is also certain that his son will be a clown of fame, and will never be an aerialist.

Konrad proves again and again that he has completely lost his mind. After his son is convicted of murder and sent to jail, Konrad decides that Jimmy and Lorrie are responsible for Punchinello's incarceration and inability to have a child. As such, he determines that they owe him a son to carry on the family name. He tries on more than one occasion to collect on the 'debt' he perceives, without success. Konrad wants only one thing. He wants to be remembered as the greatest clown of all time, and the only way he can think of to accomplish that is to have a son that will carry on his legacy. He doesn't care if the son is actually his, as is revealed later in the story when it is revealed that even Punchinello is not his natural son. In fact, Konrad is unable to have children which is why he is so disturbed by the comment Lorrie throws at him as he tries to take their son, telling him that he should find some demented soul with which to propagate his seed. Determined to collect by force if necessary, Konrad finally impersonates an FBI official to gain access to Jimmy and Lorrie's home. He has gone through plastic surgery more than once in order to hide who he is, and seemingly has spent his whole life geared to this one purpose - gaining an heir to the 'family talent'. When the Tocks refuse him, he shoots Lorrie and is himself killed by Jimmy shortly afterward, never learning that Jimmy is actually the twin to his step son Punchinello and the child he tried so hard to take from them was actually his wife's grandson, and his by marriage as well.



Virgilio Vivacemente

Paterfamilias to the Flying Vivacemente's, Virgilio is the aging patriarch who fears the loss of his youth more than everything else except not having someone to carry on the family tradition. Virgilio wanted a son so badly to carry on his name and tradition. To get the purest lineage possible, in an act of madness he impregnates his own daughter Natalie. Natalie then runs off with Konrad Beezo, a clown in their traveling show. Virgilio discovers Natalie died in childbirth, but doesn't realize that she gave birth to twins until after an illness forces a confession from the nurse responsible and brings Jimmy's identity out into the open. Once Virgilio discovers he has another son, he immediately attempts to gain access to the youngster he now realizes is his grandson/great grandson, Andy, seeing it as his last chance at immortality.

Virgilio is every bit as demented as Konrad Beezo, and for most of the same reasons. Virgilio sees himself as the world's greatest aerialist. He may even be, but he is consumed with having a 'son' to train as his living legacy - someone to carry on the family name. He has tried many times already, even buying several cousins or distant relative children in the hopes of accomplishing this goal, but none seem to measure up. He finally determines that it will take his own blood, a heavy concentration of it, to accomplish his goal. As such, he impregnates his daughter - an act so vile that she runs away from him and straight into Beezo's arms. It is the ultimate betrayal as far as Virgilio is concerned, and though he keeps track of her as her pregnancy develops, he loses touch when Konrad takes Punchinello and disappears from the hospital. He isn't aware of his relationship to Jimmy for many years, though all of this comes to light when Jimmy and Lorrie approach Punchinello for a kidney to keep their daughter Annie alive.

When Jimmy and Lorrie refuse to sell their son Andy to him, even though they are related, Virgilio threatens to kill all who stand in the way. Knowing there can only be one outcome, Lorrie and Jimmy try to distract him, but he sees through their attempts. He shoots Jimmy four times before Lorrie manages to kill him and put an end to the attempts by clowns and aerialists to take their son.

Charlene Coleman

Charlene is a nurse at Snow Valley hospital. She had already worked there for many years when the night of Jimmy's birth arrived. She attended both Madelaine Tock and Natalie Beezo while they went through their labors and subsequent births. She saw the child that Madelaine had was still born. She also watched as life slipped away from Natalie after her small body gave birth to twins. She hid with one of the twins while his father went on a rampage to avenge her death, killing the doctor who attended and one of the nurse's, leaving only her to tell the tale. Charlene makes a decision at that moment that would affect several families for many years to come. Quietly, she gives the second Beezo twin to Madelaine Tock, never telling her that her own baby died in childbirth. Then she lets Konrad Beezo leave with a single son instead of twins, never telling him the truth either. For years she kept silent, watching the child she saved from



a madman growing up in a home with love and tenderness. Jimmy reaches adulthood before she is forced to tell him the truth about his lineage, and she would never have done so, but Jimmy's daughter Annie was dying. In need of kidney that Jimmy didn't have and that Lorrie couldn't give, Charlene finally confesses that Jimmy is one of a twin, and that a transplant hope still exists.

Charlene is a moral and law abiding citizen who lives for the opportunity to help people. In everything she does, she tries to live a God fearing and respectful life. Her last act as a nurse is to help bring in the final of Jimmy and Lorrie's five children.

Mello Melodeon

Mello is the internist who delivers Annie Tock and all of Jimmy and Lorrie's subsequent children. He is a solid man with a personable demeanor and unending charm. He has a relaxed manner and comes originally from Atlanta where his family is a collection of professional gospel singers. He is married to Rachel.

Mello helps Lorrie deliver each and every one of her five children. No one is more surprised than he is when she conceives the fifth one. This is a child that shouldn't be possible with the amount of damage that was done after she was shot by Konrad Beezo. Still, a pregnancy is long way from the end so he recommends to Lorrie and Jimmy that they do not try to carry this child to term. After a short discussion on the matter, both parents decide that a gift like this shouldn't be ignored. Mello is happy and surprised to welcome the fifth child, little Rowena Tock, named for her grandmother.

Madelaine Tock

Jimmy Tock's mother Madelaine earns a small income by painting portraits of pets on commission. She paints dogs, cats, and less frequently rabbits, parakeets and even a milk snake once. She has a good sense of humor, and a tolerance for caffeine that is nothing short of remarkable. Like the rest of the Tock family, she also has an efficient metabolism, enabling her to consume large amounts of food in a sitting without becoming overweight.

Madelaine is a true Victorian woman and a stickler for etiquette. She is a woman who's primary concern is the love she has for her family. She lives for them, feels their successes and shares their pain. She is truly a perfect parent and Jimmy is the center of the love and laughter that surrounds their family.

Rudy Tock

Rudy is Jimmy's father, and is the head pastry chef at the Snow Village Resort in Colorado. He goes to work at 1am (often six days a week) and seldom returns until after 8 a.m. Rudy lives for his wife and son, and his parents as well. Though the day Jimmy is born is the happiest in that he has a son and a shining example of the love he has for



his wife, it is tempered with sorrow as his father Josef passes away on that day, right at the time that Jimmy is born.

Rudy is a gentle family man who has a wonderful sense of humor. He raises Jimmy in a home filled with love and laughter, teaching him the most important parts of life and giving him the life that Punchinello only wishes he had. In truth, when Punchinello discovers that his twin lived the kind of life he always wanted, he is resentful and jealous of him.

Grandma Rowena

Rowena turned 77 in 1994, and had already been a widow for 24 years. She is a happy woman, who delights in playing devil's advocate.

Honker

At about fifty years of age, Honker is bald, and has shaggy black eyebrows that are thick enough to knit. He has an enormous, ruddy nose with spiderwebs of burst capillaries that could be referred to as a drinker's nose. He is brooding and suspicious, with a thick neck and burly in stature. Despite his size, he is agile and unafraid to work.

Crinkles

With eyes the color of brandy, Crinkles enjoys killing. Much like Honker, he is burly and thick necked, agile and ready to work without complaint. Crinkles could be described as resembling Art Garfunkel, with a choirboy's decadent face and electro-shocked hair. He refers to Lorrie as an it, lamenting the fact that it would be a shame to kill it before using it.

Alysa Hicks

Lorrie's mother, Alysa is a snake wrangler. She raises snakes, hiring them out for occasional movie spots or parties, and milking the one's with marketable venom.

Bailey Hicks

Lorrie's father Bailey is a storm chaser by profession. Never at home much during Lorrie's childhood, he spends his time filming tornadoes and hurricanes for profit.

Chilson Strawberry

Chilson is Lorrie's sister and takes people on bungee jumping tours for a living.



Annie Tock

Annie is born to Jimmy and Lorrie Tock on January 12th, 1998. She is the closest thing to perfect that Jimmy has ever seen. She has fine golden hair and seems to be beautifully proportioned.

Dr. Cornell

Surgeon who works on Lorrie after Beezo shoots her twice in the stomach. He is in his forties, but looks younger and has a comforting air about him that exudes confidence, experience and authority.

Edna Carter

Stroke victim who predicts Rowena Tock's five wonderful days just as she is born and who dies shortly thereafter.

Nedra Lamm

Neighbor who lives across the street from Jimmy and Lorrie and is killed by Konrad Beezo so that he can use her place as a point of surveillance.



Objects/Places

Snow Valley Colorado

The town in which Jimmy Tock is born.

Snow Mansion

Located in the center of Snow Village Square

Snow Village

An alfresco museum of Victorian architecture founded in 1872.

Cornelius Rutherford Snow Library

Founded by railroad and mining magnate, it is the town library.

Hawksbill Road

Road that Jimmy and Lorrie have their house on, which burns to the ground while they are staying with Jimmy's parents awaiting the passing of the second of five terrible days.

Rocky Mountain Federal Penitentiary

A maximum security Federal Penitentiary that houses Punchinello Beezo from which no inmate has ever escaped.

Goldmine Run

Bigger than a stream and smaller than a river, Goldmine Run originates from a hot artesian well and forms a volcanic lake to the east after being bridged by Hawksbill Road.

South America

Place where Konrad claims he hid with Punchinello after taking him from the hospital.



Send In The Clowns

Song Lorrie assures Jimmy she will never again want to hear in her life after Jimmy rescues her from Konrad Beezo in the gully of Goldmine Run.

Snow County Hospital

Hospital in which all five of Jimmy and Lorrie's children are born, where Jimmy is born, and where Grandpa Josef and Natalie Beezo die.

Syndactyly

Genetic disorder that affects both Jimmy and Punchinello at birth.

Prepare To Be Enchanted

Phrase on the free circus pass that Rudy Tock uses to write down the five terrible days that Josef Tock predicts for Jimmy. The pass is one of only two objects to survive the burning down of Jimmy and Lorrie's house on Hawksbill Road by Konrad Beezo.

Cameo pendant

Second of only two items that survive the fire that takes Jimmy and Lorrie's house from them.

Halloway Farm

Place that Virgilio set up his tent to meet with Lorrie and Jimmy to convince them that he should have their son.



Themes

Love Builds Strength

When Jimmy first meets Lorrie, he sees himself as a LummoX. He feels big and clumsy, and while he has confidence in himself, he has little in the way of self worth. He finds himself handcuffed to Lorrie in a dangerous situation involving Punchinello Beezo and his two clown co conspirators. Although he is frightened at first, he is immediately more frightened for her safety than for his own. He is already thinking less about his own survival - which was his only concern just ten minutes prior to their meeting than he is about her survival. The very idea that anything might happen to her makes him feel protective, and gives him a strength he hasn't had before this. Lorrie has never met Jimmy before, so she has no expectations and takes him exactly as she finds him. In this situation, though she teases him about his lack of survival optimism and courage, she comes to see a strength of character in him that surprises her. When the moment comes for action, Jimmy doesn't let her down. He steps up, using her nail file to disable Punchinello long enough to ensure that they are able to escape.

Later, when the danger of the event is past, Jimmy reflects on his time with Lorrie. He invites her to meet his family, and during one dinner they come to appreciate everything that Jimmy sees in her. She fits in. In every way and in more ways than he would ever have dreamed of, she is as much a part of the family as if she'd been around them her whole life. He realizes that he can't let her get away. Still, his confidence wavers. He calls her, finally mustering his courage, and proposes to her. His proposal begins by exposing his many self recognized faults, telling her that he knows he isn't good enough for her, but if she'll consider him, he'd like to marry her. Lorrie immediately sets him straight. She tells him she is already in love with someone else. She is in love with a man who is kind and confident, courageous and intelligent, humorous and sensitive. In short, he is everything that she is looking for. He is Jimmy's alter ego, and she hopes never to meet this version again. Relieved and surprised, Jimmy begins to see himself through her eyes. In short order, he changes his view of himself. As the next terrible days come that Grandpa Josef predicted, he faces them with courage and strength instead of fear and uncertainty. As their children are born, he becomes stronger still, willing to put his life before theirs, and happy to sacrifice anything and everything to keep their family intact. Through Lorrie's eyes, and her love, he learns about a side of himself he hasn't really known before, and those strengths - the ones that she sees - come to the surface to become a more assertive part of his personality. He is no longer the LummoX who only has grace and confidence when in a kitchen.

Parental Programming Can Be Positive or Negative

In Life Expectancy, we meet two parents in the first chapter. Both are about to have a son, and come from very different backgrounds. Rudy Tock is a simple man. He is a baker by trade, with an easy going attitude and a great deal of love for home and family.



He is excited about the upcoming birth of his son, although it is tempered somewhat by the coincidental loss of his own father at the same time. Rudy has a strong and loving home life. He lives with his wife and has a great respect for his parents and for the family unit as a whole. When his son Jimmy is born, it is into a house that is filled with love and laughter. There is good communication, and honest, forthright approaches to child rearing in this home. Jimmy is well loved, and grows up in a house that is filled with love and joy. Occasions are celebrated and family is treasured. As such, these values form the type of man he becomes as an adult. He is kind, respectful, and filled with a love of family and home life.

Konrad Beezo's son is born the same day as Jimmy Tock is born, but under very different circumstances. Konrad is faced with great loss on this day as well, but Konrad's loss is his wife. She dies while giving birth to their son, Punchinello. As a result, Konrad loses his way. He is filled with hatred and loathing for both the doctors and nurses that he deems are responsible, and for the arialists who are the extended family on his wife's side. When he has avenged his wife by killing the doctor and nurse he believes are responsible for his loss, he takes his son and vanishes. He raises Punchinello on his own, and in the process he communicates his loathing for his wife's family to the child. While Jimmy is a well balanced adult, ready to create a family of his own, Punchinello is bent on revenge. He spends his young adulthood planning ways to get even with his mother's family, the arialists who looked down on his marriage to one of their own. Konrad did such a good job of programming Punchinello with this venomous family history - largely of his own creation, that Punchinello has absolutely no chance to become a balanced adult. The two children are born to parents of similar class and status, but the programming done by the parent in control of their upbringing created a markedly different adulthood for them.

Morality vs Necessity

In Life Expectancy, there are examples of moral and honest people doing things that they would never normally do, but faced with situations that are out of the ordinary they must make choices that would normally go against the grain of their beliefs. For example, Nurse Charlene Coleman is a woman who's life is dedicated to helping those in medical need. She is a virtuous and honest woman who enjoys her job and gets satisfaction from it. When the Tock and Beezo parents are having their first born children, a sequence of events places her in a position where she must bend her moral compass. The Tock's baby is stillborn, but neither parent is aware of that, while the Beezo family has twins and the mother dies in childbirth. Again, the fact that twins are involved is unknown to Konrad Beezo.

When Konrad kills the only other two people involved in these births (the doctor and the other nurse), Charlene makes a decision she would probably never make under any other circumstances. Rather than tell the Tock parents who are obviously loving and caring individuals that their baby was stillborn, Charlene gives them one of the Beezo twins - knowing that morally and legally she was stepping way out of bounds, but realizing that Konrad will have a difficult time as a parent on his own with even one



child, and the Tock parents will be devastated to be childless, she breaks her own code of morality and splits the twins up, giving one to each parent.

Another example of this kind of behavior is shown in the home of Jimmy and Lorrie Tock when Konrad Beezo manages to get in by impersonating an FBI agent. When their family is threatened with harm, they respond with force - totally out of character for both Lorrie and Jimmy. Jimmy actually kills Konrad Beezo, shooting him first in the throat, and then crossing the line of morality by shooting him twice more, despite knowing for certain that he was no longer a threat to them in any way at that time. His actions were spurred on by his love and protectiveness for his family and his desire to put an end to the fear of a repeat performance by the lunatic clown, Konrad Beezo at some time in the future.

One further example of this behavior is shown in Jimmy Tock/Beezo when his daughter Annie is faced with death if a kidney transplant is not performed. With only one kidney himself, he is unable to donate, and mother Lorrie has kidney problems that make her unsuitable for donation as well. Having learned from Charlene Coleman that he is in fact a Beezo by birth, he approaches the man he now knows is his brother, Punchinello. Though he is loath to do so, and fearful of the outcome, he and Lorrie talk to Punchinello, and reveal the lineage they share. After dropping that information on him, they tell him about Annie, showing him a photograph of their young daughter and asking him to donate a kidney. Predictably, he refuses at first, but reconsiders under one special condition. He asks that Jimmy kill his arch nemesis, aerialist Virgilio Vivacamente. Jimmy hardly hesitates before agreeing to do this, knowing full well that it is a promise he will never honor. This goes against his character and basic morality, but to save his daughter's life, he will agree to anything, even murder.

Predictions vs Expectations

In Life Expectancy, the story begins with the birth of Jimmy Tock, and his grandfather Josef's predictions. These predictions, made on his deathbed, are made to Jimmy's father Rudy just before Jimmy was born. They cite his weight, length, the characteristics of his name, and then there are five terrible days. Each date given has terrific consequences for Jimmy and his family. Since Josef was correct about Jimmy's height, weight and time of birth, it is assumed that his terrible days prediction is also correct. The entire family seems to live their lives around or for those terrible days. As they near, anxiety increases, precautions are taken, and the family tends to stick together. Each successive 'terrible day' seems worse than the last. This is likely because when you have four more or three more dates to 'look forward' to, it isn't likely that the one you are facing is going to kill you. It is nerve racking for all involved. When the last terrible day comes to pass, Jimmy is set free. His 'sentence' is over, and he speculates as to his coming motivation for life as everything until then had been geared to surviving those terrible days.

When Jimmy and Lorrie's daughter Rowena is born, she is a miracle on more than one level. She should never have existed because according to doctors, after Lorrie was



shot in the stomach by Konrad Beezo, she was unable to have children. When she became pregnant, she was told by doctors that it would be safer to abort the child rather than to try to carry it to term, but Lorrie and Jimmy had never run from danger, and weren't going to start now. She successfully carries the child to term and Rowena is born. Just before she arrives in the world, a stroke victim in the same hospital regains consciousness just long enough to tell a nurse that a young girl will be born. She tells the nurse the child's name, height, weight, and then gives the nurse five dates before she dies. These dates are written down as the woman instructs, and the nurse takes them to Jimmy and Lorrie. Rowena, like Jimmy, is everything that was predicted, and when the nurse tells Jimmy about the five days, he immediately believes that her life will follow his pattern of fear and concern as each day approaches. He is almost sick with dread until the nurse corrects him. These are not terrible day predictions but wonderful day predictions. These are to be days of extraordinary joy. Jimmy's expectations based on his predictions were projected to the dates given his daughter, but were baseless. Now his life would indeed take on a new set of expectations but of joyous and momentous occasions in the balance that is life.



Style

Point of View

In *Life Expectancy*, Dean Koontz uses a first person narrative that switches is primarily surrounding the main character, Jimmy Tock. The narrative is reliable and the story is well told. Jimmy marries Lorrie Hicks and the story revolves around his telling of the terrible days as predicted by his grandfather Josef on the day he was born. Each day is laid out chronologically, and he narrates them in a story telling fashion, detailing not only what made each one terrible, but his preparations before hand and his feelings afterward. The only deviation from that format comes with the last terrible day.

In that segment the narrative switches from Jimmy to Lorrie Hicks/Tock. Lorrie is now a large part of his life, having shared his terrible days with him, and been a great part of them throughout. When the narrative switches at the end, and she is telling the story, it appears as though she is doing so because in the last terrible day Jimmy has lost his life. In a way that fosters that expectation, she narrates how the final episode plays out, describing how Jimmy is shot four times by the third mad man that has become a part of their lives. Once again, they fight to hold their family together, but it looks as though all is lost as Jimmy falls to the ground. Then she reveals that this is not the case as she and Jimmy had both been prepared, wearing bullet proof vests at the time - having learned their lessons from previous bad day encounters. In her narrative, she even jokes about how they foster the thought that Jimmy doesn't survive this day. Of course, they actually live happily ever after!

Setting

This novel is set entirely in the town of Snow Valley Colorado. It begins and ends in the same location - the Snow Valley Hospital where a great deal of the story is often narrated. Beginning with one of the most significant events, the birth of Jimmy Tock, and the predictions of Josef Tock, his grandfather, the story unfolds in layers. Another expectant father sits in the hospital at the same time, while his wife is giving birth to their child. The two families would have histories and lives that continually intertwine from that point forward. The Tock family and the Beezo family are exact opposites in just about every way. The Tock family is quiet and gentle, loving and centered on family while the Beezo family or what remains of it is egocentric, and angry, violent and unreasonable. Jimmy first officially meets the first Beezo family member in the library in the center of town. Punchinello takes Jimmy hostage, along with another unwitting victim who happens into the library during the commission of this first of many crimes. Beezo discovers that Jimmy is the son of Rudy Tock, a name his father Konrad Beezo has told him about his whole life. In that moment, he claims to protect Jimmy who thinks quickly to include Lorrie Hicks handcuffed to him. They manage to overcome Beezo, and he winds up in jail at the Rocky Mountain Penitentiary. Jimmy Tock stays in the town he is born in to raise his own family, all children of which are born in the same



hospital he was born in. The next Beezo he encounters is Konrad Beezo, who in some twisted way believes that the Tock family owes him a son. He attempts to take that son by force even before it is born. When his plans fail, he burns down the house where Jimmy and Lorrie live at the outskirts of town. Fortunately, the house next door to his parents becomes available, and they buy it.

Meanwhile, Konrad Beezo has not given up. He returns having had plastic surgery to conceal his identity, and again tries to take the son the Tock family now actually has. This attempt is also thwarted, but as a result of the gun play involved, Lorrie is in the hospital again. The next contact with a Beezo family member comes from a illness suffered by their daughter Annie. She is in need of a kidney transplant and when it becomes clear that neither Lorrie or Jimmy are suitable donors, a nurse who helped to deliver Jimmy makes a confession that will take them to the Penitentiary. Discovering that at birth Jimmy was actually born a Beezo means that the incarcerated Punchinello is a match and they ask for a kidney from him. He asks for a few concessions - the largest one being that Jimmy kill the Beezo arch rival, aerialist Virgilio Vivacamente. While not intending to comply, Jimmy agrees and sets in motion the events that would put Virgilio in his path anyway. Annie survives, but now another lunatic is laying claim to their son. In a twist of madness, it is revealed that Virgilio is actually the father and grandfather to Jimmy, having impregnated his own daughter before she ran away and married Konrad Beezo. Now Virgilio wants a son to carry on the family name. The Tock family puts an end it all by taking control and removing Virgilio, leaving them to live happily in Snow Valley.

Language and Meaning

Written in English and without any special language attachments, Life Expectancy revolves around two families which turn out to be one extended family. In a story that reveals itself in layers, the reader is first introduced to two families. They come together as a result of a birth, and are thrown together again and again afterward. At first, Konrad Beezo believes that the Tock family owes him a son because they caused his one and only son to be incarcerated and in the process of escaping him, rendered him incapable of having children. As such, Konrad wants a son, and expects them to provide it for him. He doesn't realize at this point that by marriage he is related to the Tock family. In fact, he never knows this as he is killed before it can be revealed.

The story evolves to reveal that Konrad's son Punchinello and Jimmy Tock are actually fraternal twins. This opens up another avenue of surprises for the Tock family. While it is a benefit in one way, it comes to the attention of Konrad's father in law as well. He also wants an heir, preferably one who is as close genetically as possible. To that end, he impregnated his own daughter, and the twins she gave birth to make Jimmy both his son and his grandson. In a tale of convoluted genetics, these families come together again and again, locked in some twisted fate until finally the spell is broken as the last of the line is killed and they are released. Jimmy isn't adversely affected by his connection genetically to the Beezo family, more in tune with Tock family than his roots. Once again nurture rules over nature. Jimmy is a Tock at heart, as are his children by extension.



Structure

Life Expectancy is written in six parts. Each part deals with a particular stage in the story creating a sub plot within each one. They vary in length depending upon their importance or impact on the story as a whole. The first part, "Welcome To The World, Jimmy Tock," deals with the birth of the main character, Jimmy. This first section is four chapters long and covers just over 40 pages. It explains the circumstances that surround the birth of Jimmy Tock, and the strange predictions made by his dying grandfather, Josef at that time.

Part two, "Might As Well Die If I Can't Fly," is just under 160 pages long. It covers the first of Jimmy's five most terrible days as predicted by Jimmy's grandfather Josef. In this part, Koontz skips ahead in time. Jimmy is now twenty years old and he is narrating his story, describing the day before and the day of his first ordeal - September 14th and 15th of 1994.

Part three, "Welcome To The World, Annie Tock," is just over 110 pages long and covers the birth of Jimmy and Lorrie's first daughter. Konrad Beezo has been watching them, having decided that they owe him a son, since they are responsible for his son being imprisoned and no longer able to create a grandson for him. He hatches an elaborate plot to kill Jimmy and kidnap Lorrie until the baby is born at which time he plans to take the boy and run. Several things ruin his plans—the least of which being that Lorrie has a girl. He comes close to killing Jimmy but Jimmy is a baker with stamina. He overtakes Konrad, chaining him to a tree before continuing to the hospital. When the police are sent to pick Konrad up, he is gone. Fearful, Jimmy, Lorrie and baby Annie move back into his parents home temporarily. On the second most terrible day, Konrad Beezo burns Jimmy and Lorrie's house to the ground, leaving a note that threatens his return if and when they have the son they owe him.

Part four, "All I Ever Wanted Was Immortality," is just over 60 pages in length.



Quotes

"Yes, but there's always the possibility of severed limbs and mutilation...and paralysis and brain damage." Ch 4, Pg 43

Grandma Rowena's comment to Jimmy when he tries to calm himself by remembering that grandpa Josef predicted five days and as this is the first, he should be fine.

"How many flies do you swallow on the average day, standing around with your mouth hanging open?" Ch 7, Pg 71

Killer to Jimmy right after he shoots librarian Lionel Davis in the head on the first of Jimmy's predicted five terrible days.

"All these years, planning for this day, I expected it to be gratifying in a savage sort of way, even thrilling, but I never thought it would be as much fun as this." Ch 10, Pg 100
Killer to Lorrie and Jimmy after he tells them that it's time to get even with the town.

"This is about money because wealth isn't just wealth but also the root and stalk and flower of power, and power liberates the powerful while it oppresses the powerless, so to crush what crushes, those who are oppressed must oppress the oppressors." Ch 14, Pg 134

Crinkles to Lorrie and Jimmie when they question the motives of the three who are robbing the bank.

"The most arrogant, most pompous, most conceited, most overrated of them all is Virgilio, the paterfamilias, my mother's father." Ch 16, Pg 144

Punchinello's description of his mother's family and in particular, his grandfather on his mother's side, as told to him by his father, Konrad Beezo.

"..... I shouldn't ask over the telephone, something I should ask in person, something that I'm probably asking way too soon, but I've worked myself up into this terrifying conviction that if I don't ask you tonight, I'll be foiled by fate or storms, and my window of opportunity will close, so the question is.... Lorrie Lynn Hicks, will you marry me?" Ch 23, Pg 205

Jimmy to Lorrie after her first dinner at his home with the Tock family.

"That weird other Jimmy - the one that kept putting himself down, telling me how plain and dull and unworthy he was - I hope he's gone forever." Ch 25, Pg 215

Lorrie to Jimmy after she tells him that she is in love with someone else - his positive alter ego.

"It's just that a thing was done, my son was taken from me and rendered incapable of giving me grandchildren, heirs to the Beezo talent, and therefore it's only fair that I be compensated." Ch 34, Pg 269-70

Konrad Beezo to Lorrie as he tries to explain why her first born child should be his.



("You know, parents and children and love come in some strange combinations".) "I mean, your parents can love you and you can love them, and still grow up so lonely that you feel.... hollow." Ch 36, Pg 283

Lorrie's confession to Jimmy on the way to the hospital in labor.

"God forbid anythin' I say might cause you to let your guard down too soon, but I think your troubles with Konrad Beezo may be drawin' to an end at last." Ch 44, Pg 339

Carson to Jimmy and Lorrie just before he reveals that he is actually Konrad Beezo.

"Even a boy with minimum faculty for clownery can be molded inot greatness with me as his guide and his master and his guru." Ch 46, Pg 351

Konrad Beezo to Jimmy and Lorrie as he assures them that he can mold any child into his legacy, making him immortal.

"The crazy story he told you about the night of your birth, the assassin nurse and the doctor bribed by Virgilio to kill your mother - that was all a grotesque lie." Ch 55, Pg 398

Jimmy to Punchinello as one of many revelations he would share the day he explains to him that they are related.

"Do you sometimes wonder if you're real?" Ch 58, Pg 410

Punch to Jimmy shortly after he discovers they are fraternal twins.

"Or I wake up in the night convinced there's nothing out there beyond my window, nothing at all but a darkness, a vacuum, and I'm afraid to open the drapes and look, afraid I'll see a perfect emptiness, and that when I turn from the window, the room will be gone, too, and I'll cry out but won't make a sound, just float there with no sense of touch, no taste or smell, deaf and blind, the world gone as if it never was, me with no body that I can detect, no heartbeat I can feel, and yet unable to stop thinking, thinking, furiously and frantically thinking about what I don't have and what I want, about what I do have but want to be free of, about how I am nothing to anyone or anyone to me, never real and yet all these memories, these churning, insistent, hateful memories." Ch 58, Pg 410-11

Punch's personal revelation to Jimmy and Lorrie after nurse Charlene Coleman leaves having told him the truth about his birth.

"There is no vengeance equal to the vengeance of Virgilio Vivacamente." Ch 68, Pg 465
Virgilio to Jimmy and Lorrie after he describes how he will eliminate their entire family to secure Andy for his troupe.

"Prepare to be enchanted." Ch 70, Pg 476

Jimmy to new daughter Rowena on the day of her birth.



Topics for Discussion

What two events coincide when Maddy and Rudy Tock go to the hospital?

What predictions does Josef make? Why are they significant?

What does Konrad Beezo do in the hospital and why? What does he tell his son Punchinello about these events?

What are Punchinello, Honker and Crinkles after and what are each of their motives?

Why does Punchinello decide to ensure Jimmy's safety? How does he go about it?

How do Jimmy and Lorrie escape from Punchinello? How will this affect their future?

What is the difference between Lorrie's family life and Jimmy's as seen through Lorrie's eyes?

What does Konrad Beezo want from Jimmy and Lorrie? Why makes him think he has claim to this?

What happened to Nedra Lamm and why? What effect does Captain Foster believe Konrad intended?

What revelations did Jimmy learn about his family and in what order did he learn them?

Why after so many years does Charlene Coleman reveal the truth to Jimmy?

What two people want to take Andy from Jimmy and Lorrie, and why?

What are the ironies that bind Virgilio and Konrad?

What irregularity do Punchinello and Jimmy share? How is it significant in both their lives?

What about Rowena's birth terrifies Jimmy at first but becomes a source of wonder?

What conditions does Punchinello set for meeting with Jimmy and Lorrie? What one item does he add to the list for his kidney?

What is the general reaction to Virgilio Vivacemente's death? Suggest why and give reasons for your answer.