

My Soul to Keep Study Guide

My Soul to Keep by Tananarive Due

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



Contents

My Soul to Keep Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue.....	4
Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5.....	5
Part 1, Chapters 6 - 11.....	8
Part 2, Chapters 12 - 16.....	11
Part 2, Chapters 17 - 21.....	13
Part 2, Chapters 22 - 25.....	16
Part 3, Chapters 26 - 32.....	18
Part 3, Chapters 33 - 37.....	20
Part 4, Chapters 38 - 41.....	22
Part 4, Chapters 42 - 45.....	24
Part 4, Chapters 46 - 49.....	25
Part 4, Chapters 50 - 53.....	26
Part 4, Chapters 54 - 57.....	28
Part 4, Chapters 58 - 61.....	30
Part 5, Chapters 62 and 63.....	32
Characters.....	34
Objects/Places.....	45
Themes.....	52
Style.....	54
Quotes.....	57
Topics for Discussion.....	61



Plot Summary

The novel *My Soul to Keep* tells a surreal tale of what might happen if mortal and immortal worlds were to collide. The book, which tells the story of an immortal man married to a mortal woman, deals with the themes of loss and death. Another idea that is toyed with in the novel is a question of whether evil and good can exist simultaneously as David murders and lies in order to protect his family and himself from his past. Even though David tries to perform a ritual to keep his wife, Jessica, and daughter, Kira, with him forever, he loses them both.

David, who is also known in the story as Dawit and Seth, has undergone a Life Ritual with Jesus Christ's blood to give him immortality. Khaldun, who went through the ritual because he was "greedy for life" invites other men, including Dawit, to join him in immortality to develop a habitat of scholars in an Ethiopian city called Lalibela. Instead of staying in the city, however, David chooses to spend his time among mortals, taking wives and having children until he becomes tired of watching his families become old and die or being taken away from him by the Searchers.

He decides to slowly introduce his current wife, Jessica, to his true identity in the hopes that she will agree to go through the ritual and live forever with him. As David is revealing his identity to her, Jessica is doing some research on her own and, with her sister's help, learns that David's blood has amazing healing properties. In the process of protecting Jessica from learning about his past before he is ready David does horrible things including killing her great-uncle and her co-worker. When Jessica finally realizes what her husband has done in order to cover his secret, she feels angry and betrayed, but realizes she still loves him.

In order to keep from having to lose his wife and daughter, David decides to perform the Life Ritual on the two of them. Because he believes that his Life Brothers are trying to kill Jessica and Kira, David tries to quickly go through the ritual in a hotel room. Although David manages to pass on immortality to Jessica, he winds up losing her. Jessica, however, uses her immortality and special powers to help others.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The novel *My Soul to Keep* tells a surreal tale of what might happen if mortal and immortal worlds were to collide. The book, which tells the story of an immortal man married to a mortal woman, deals with the themes of loss and death. Another idea toyed with in the novel is a question of whether evil and good can exist simultaneously as David murders and lies in order to protect his family from his past. Even as David tries to perform a ritual to keep his wife, Jessica, and daughter, Kira, with him forever, he loses them both.

A man walks unnoticed down the hall of the Windsong Nursing Home in Chicago to room 11-B one snowy night. He is sickened by the look of the aged woman in the bed. He remembers how she looked before her illness. Rosalie tells him that she and Rufus have been waiting for him even though others had said he had run away. They talk about old times together. Before he leaves, the man gets the pillow from the empty bed in the room. When he tells her to rest, she says simply "goodbye Daddy."

Prologue Analysis

This opening prologue not only raises many questions but also starts the novel with an eerie tone. The man is visiting a woman who is obviously a part of his past. The years that have passed since they have been together don't seem to add up, however, especially if Rosalie is actually his daughter. The man, the novel states, has the face of a thirty-five year old, while the lady is eighty years old. It is known that it has been at least ten years since he has seen her as it is mentioned that he remembers seeing Rufus' obituary in a newspaper and realizes that he is all that Rosalie has left. The man and woman share memories together. The man remembers the woman when she was young and fresh, which seems impossible since he is only 35. The reader might wonder if the man only looks like someone whom she might have known from her past. Before the man leaves, he tells the woman that there is something he must do. He gets the pillow from the second bed in the room and stands over her with it. Since he had earlier thought that death would be a friend to the woman, it can be assumed that he intends to kill her.



Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5

Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5 Summary

In Chapter 1, Jessica and David Wolde are woken by cries of pain from their Great Dane, Princess. David tells her they must call the vet immediately. When she reaches the vet on the phone, he warns her that the situation could be deadly, but asks them to meet him at his office. Jessica helps David load the dog into their van, and then stays home with their daughter, Kira, while he drives off. When David returns home, Jessica knows the dog had not lived. He crawls into bed with her and begins to cry.

In Chapter 2, Jessica had told David that she would be home early the following day from her job as an investigative reporter with the Miami Sun-News but realizes as she tries to complete an article that she might actually have to work late. The article is about neglect of the elderly in nursing homes. It will probably land the nursing home in a state investigation. Although Jessica wants to change things through her writing, she hates the editing process.

Peter Donovan, her friend across the newsroom, asks through their computer messaging system what is wrong. She tells him about Princess' death. They agree to have lunch later. She suspects that Peter, who is gay, is slightly envious of her relationship with David, whom he calls "Mr. Perfect." Peter shows her the real reason for asking her to lunch, a folder filled with cases of elderly abuse in nursing homes including a lady smothered to death in Windsong Nursing Home. He suggests they work together on a book about this abuse. He has an agent who likes the idea and believes they could have a publisher within a month. She promises to talk to David about the book, but dreads his response.

In Chapter 3, Jessica never would have dreamed she would marry her college Spanish professor, whom she disliked. Jessica had believed he was beautiful, but had thought he made her work too hard to pass an easy class. It had not been until she realized how easily and well she could speak Spanish after his class that she had decided to sign up for his Intermediate Spanish 2 class.

That night as Jessica tucks Kira in bed, the girl asks if her dog is in heaven. Kira hadn't asked her father because he is an atheist. She tries to explain to the child that it is only by death that people and animals go to heaven. Kira shares with her mother that David told her he wouldn't ever die. Jessica realizes that her husband said this to comfort the child, and remembers the pain from the death of her father when she was young.

In a flashback, Jessica remembers that on one of their first dates together, they had seen the movie *The Godfather*. David accuses Jessica of seeing too much good in people because she refuses to see main character Michael Corleone as a villain, even after he kills because he is protecting the interests of his family. They talk about dating. Two weeks later they sleep together for the first time. It is on this day that David



professes to Jessica that he is an atheist. She marries him anyway. Fifteen months later, she is pregnant with Kira.

Back in the present, as they talk together in the back yard that evening, David suggests they move to Africa. Jessica feels that the loss of Princess has reminded him of his loss of his family as a young child. She believes he may be afraid of losing her and Kira also. David tells her that he believes that they, as humans, spend too much time away from the things that matter the most.

In Chapter 4, the narration returns to the man in the Prologue named Dawit who killed Rosalie in the nursing home. He had taken a vow not to kill again, yet he had. He wonders what sort of creature would kill its own child. He wonders if loss is his price for life.

In Chapter 5, David works on Jessica's mother's car after church that Sunday. During dinner, Alexis surprises them all by asking Jessica about her book. David is not happy about the news since he has not been told yet. His voice is scornful as Jessica tells him the book is Peter's idea. David is unhappy because he knows the amount of time that writing a book will take. He is also jealous of Peter because he does not understand Jessica's journalistic fire while Peter does.

Part 1, Chapters 1 - 5 Analysis

Much information is introduced in these first five chapters. The reader learns the basics of David and Jessica's relationship: how they met, how they started dating, when they got married and when they had their first child. Jessica's family background is also shared. She sympathizes with David's grief over losing his dog because her father was killed at a young age, on his way home from Burger King. While David's family seems to be most important to him, Jessica struggles with being a good mother to Kira and spending enough time with her. Her true love seems to be her ability and desire to change the world through her writing. David is jealous of Peter Donovitch, her friend at work, because he understands Jessica's love of modern culture, politics and journalism. David lives mostly in a world of music and the past. He is also an atheist, which troubles Jessica and her deeply religious family tremendously. Jessica believes that her husband can still be influenced by Christianity, but David tells her that he has seen too much evil in the world to believe there is a God who is in charge of it all. His parents were both killed when he was a child, and he grew up an orphan.

Meanwhile, sandwiched in between chapters about David and Jessica Wolde, their lives together and their daughter, is a chapter about Dawit. Dawit is the man from the prologue of the novel. He admits to himself that he might have been wrong in killing the old lady in the nursing home. He wonders what sort of creature would kill his own child. As he thinks about his past, his thoughts go back to the time of the Civil War when one of his partners was killed by lynching. The narration indicates that Dawit was hung also. He dies three times when he is hung but always comes back to life, a curse he attributes to the Living Blood flowing in his veins. He is angry with Adele because she



wanted to escape so they could live freely together. Instead, she has escaped to a place where he cannot go because he cannot die. Because the scene is set in the Civil War it is assumed that he and Adele were slaves who were killed because they tried to sneak away from their southern masters to the freedom of the northern states. Because Dawit is unable to die, he has the same fear of attachment that David has. He feels that eventually he will be left by whatever and whomever he loves.

One of the major themes of the novel is the idea of mortality versus immortality. Everyone dies, Jessica tells her daughter. Kira says that her father has said that he won't ever die. Jessica believes the girl has been told this because David didn't want his daughter to be afraid to lose him, the way he is afraid of losing her. Although some people might dream of immortality, Dawit voices the agony of being immortal in a mortal world. He has watched everyone that he has loved die. He has seen his own daughter age and sicken to the point that he didn't even recognize her. He believed death would be the kindest option. Even though he believes he acted mercifully, Dawit still wonders what sort of "aberration of nature" would kill his own daughter.

Loss is another major theme begun in these chapters. In the nursing home, Rosalie has lost her beauty and her youth. David has lost his dog. Jessica lost her father at a young age. Dawit has lost his daughter at his own hands. He has lost a woman named Adele. He notes that loss always seems to find him. He uses the imagery of a bird picking a corpse clean to depict how his losses have left him empty.

Things to remember in this section of the novel include Jessica's defense of Michael Corleone in the movie *The Godfather*. Although the man killed, Jessica believes that he did so to protect his family, which made the killings okay. Also remember that one of the cases that Peter brings to Jessica's attention in suggesting that they write a book together is the death of Rosalie Tillis in Chicago by suffocation, details of which are strangely similar to Dawit's killing. This suggests the two threads that the book has introduced so far may be connected when Peter and Jessica begin investigating this case.



Part 1, Chapters 6 - 11

Part 1, Chapters 6 - 11 Summary

In Chapter 6, Alexis tries to convince Jessica to go ahead with her plans to write the book despite David's discouragement. During a lunch meeting, Peter tells Jessica that an editor has already promised a \$40,000 advance for their book. The deadline for the book is four months. Jessica appreciates Peter's encouragement, but doesn't take the opportunity to tell him so.

In Chapter 7, Dawit realizes that a Searcher has found him. He finds his old clarinet case while he is searching his house for wire taps. He finds a good reed and plays along with "Coronet Chop Suey." He remembers hearing Louis Armstrong, also called Satchmo, playing before he was famous. He is Seth "Spider" Tillis, who played with The Jazz Brigade. As he thinks about the music, he remembers Rosalie and the way that he killed her. He drops his instrument and cries. The phone rings and it is Jessica. She has called to talk about the book. This time, David encourages her to write.

In Chapter 8, Dawit and Mahmoud ride their horses to a small garden behind a monastery in Lalibela, Ethiopia. In a stone sanctuary, Khaldun tells those gathered that they seek knowledge. When Dawit asks him if he drank Christ's blood, Khaldun tells Dawit that he was present when blood was drained out of Christ's body after he was killed on the cross. For two days, the blood was cold, but on the third day when Christ was resurrected, the blood became warm. It was alive.

A traveler who shared the power of the blood with Khaldun taught him a spell called a Ritual of Life for the Living Blood that would give him everlasting life. Of the six who went through the ritual, Khaldun was the only one to survive. The man tried to get Khaldun to perform the ritual on him, but Khaldun drank the rest of Christ's blood and left the traveler to die. Khaldun now wants companions in his immortality. The students ask for proof the spell will work. Khaldun takes a knife and disembowels himself. As the men watch, they see that the wound begins to close itself. The next morning, Khaldun is alive again. Dawit agrees to accept the gift of immortality.

In Chapter 9, although Jessica doesn't believe the story fits their book, she requests a faxed copy of the police report about the death of Rosalie Tillis Banks. As she works her last day, Jessica gets a call from Boo, a source in a story about drug trafficking, saying that he has names for her. Jessica agrees to meet him at 8 p.m. Jessica tells David she will call him after the meeting, which she lies and says is at a nursing home.

In Chapter 10, as Dawit waits for Jessica at her desk in the newsroom he sees the folder of faxed information about Rosalie on her desk. He realizes that his life in Chicago may catch up with him in Miami. He knows that if Jessica sees the original copy of the composite sketch, she will recognize him. As David considers his dilemma, Peter comes into the newsroom and talks to him a short while; then leaves. David calls



home and gets a message from Jessica. She asks that they forget about the boxes that night. David throws the nursing home file in the trash on his way out the door. When he sees Peter's car in the parking lot an idea that had been forming in David's mind since that morning becomes firm. He gets a flooring knife out of his vehicle and hides in Peter's car. When Peter gets in the car, David slits his throat.

In Chapter 11, Jessica and David are awakened by a ringing telephone. It is Sy Greene, Jessica's editor. He is crying.

Part 1, Chapters 6 - 11 Analysis

Much happens in the last half of this first section of the novel. The reader learns that David and Dawit are the same person. He is a man who in the 1500s agrees to undergo an incantation that will give him immortality. From the bits and snatches of David/Dawit's life that are given, it is understood that he once loved a woman named Adele. After she was hung, he went on a killing spree to help him deal with the pain of her loss and to make him feel as if he had avenged her death.

He apparently also had a family in Chicago at some point not too terribly long ago. Because he is appalled by the way that his child has aged, he kills her when he visits her in the nursing home. This murder ended a one hundred year period in his life where he had killed no one.

Because he feels that his past actions are being threatened by Jessica's research for a book she is writing, David kills the man who is co-authoring the book with her. For her book, Jessica had requested information about Rosalie Tillis Banks' death. She believes the story does not fit the book the two are writing, which is about nursing home abuse, so she really doesn't even think she will use it, but David does not know this. He only knows that if Jessica sees the composite sketch, she will recognize him. He seems more afraid that his wife will find out about his life in Chicago than that she will consider him to be a murderer.

The most intriguing aspect of these chapters is the story of the Blood of Christ and the Ritual of Life for the Living Blood. A traveler has approached a man named Khaldun with a leather pouch of liquid that he claims to be the blood of Christ. The man sells the idea that those who undergo a ritual with the blood can have immortality to six men, including Khaldun. Khaldun is the only one who survives the ritual. The man asks Khaldun to perform the ritual on him but since he believed the man had intended to do harm with his powers of immortality, Khaldun lets him die and drinks the remainder of the blood so that no one else can obtain the power.

In many ways, Khaldun is portrayed as a god since he has, and is able to give, the gift of eternal life on Earth. This parallels the idea that Christ, through His blood, is able to give eternal life in heaven. Khaldun chooses to keep the power to himself and limit those who can and can't receive this gift. In order to have the gift of immortality, David and the others must die physically, just as those who receive everlasting life from Christ

must die spiritually before they can be brought to a new life. Khaldun separates himself from God by taking on these Godlike powers. Although he prays, he gets no answers to his prayers. Khaldun believes this is because he stole the blood of life from Christ. Now, instead of seeking redemption, Khaldun has decided to seek knowledge.



Part 2, Chapters 12 - 16

Part 2, Chapters 12 - 16 Summary

In Chapter 12, Jessica remembers a scare when she was pregnant with Kira that had been the first time that she had felt the fear of losing someone that she cared about. Jessica is working on photo albums in the days after Peter's death. Kira bugs her to get up but Jessica explains she is still tired. She wants to be alone but as soon as David and Kira leave to go watch a movie, Jessica's tears come.

Chapter 13 tells a story of Mahmoud and Dawit in the year of 1710. Mahmoud has refused to marry the mother of his child but has instead taken the boy to be their servant. The two decide the boy is too much trouble after two years and leave him behind in their rented room in Barcelona.

In Chapter 14, Dawit thinks about the circumstances that have led him to have another family as he and Kira fix dinner together. Although his Life Brothers had encouraged him to make his home with his own kind, Dawit isn't sure who his own kind are. He thinks about what time is already doing to Jessica and Kira, and that if he stays, he will have to watch them get old and die. He wonders what might happen if he were to share his blood with Kira and Jessica.

As they are working, Kira asks why Jessica is sick. Dawit explains that she is sad because of her friend's death. When Kira asks him if Peter is in heaven, he is saved from answering by the phone ringing. Uncle Billy tells him about the records he has found. After talking to Billy about music, David puts together his clarinet and goes upstairs to surprise Jessica with his playing.

In Chapter 15 Jessica stays home while David and Kira go to the county fair. She thinks about how her father's death destroyed her family and her childhood as she walks toward a small cave on their property. Jessica has come to the cave because she believes her father is there. She hears her father's voice speaking to her. He tells her to tell Kira there are no good monsters.

In Chapter 16, Rosalie interrupts David and his band during a practice session. David scolds her and sends her to bed. Later, he goes to her to tell her he is sorry. He suddenly realizes how frightening it is to have something to lose.

Part 2, Chapters 12 - 16 Analysis

Loss is a major theme in this section of the novel. Jessica's sorrow over the loss of her friend Peter makes her relive her memories and feelings of the time in her life when she lost her father. She also remembers bleeding during her pregnancy with Kira and praying to God not to take Kira away from her, that she would serve him if he would stop the bleeding. Included with the stories of Jessica's loss are the stories of loss that David



remembers. There is Adele who was hung before his eyes. Although he admits that he didn't love them as deeply as he loves his family in Miami, David also felt a certain loss when he left his family in Chicago. David had just begun to feel a connection with Rosalie when he was called by the seekers to go away. Now, he has allowed himself to become more attached to Kira and Jessica than he had ever intended. He knows that they will age and die just as Rosalie did, a process he does not want to have to witness. He considers briefly what might happen if he were to share his blood with them, if they would be given the gift of immortality also.

Mortality versus immortality is another theme touched upon in this section of chapters. David recalls how the mortals generally treat him badly because he thinks so differently from them. Only Adele, Kira and Jessica have not made him feel this way. He does, however, recognize that because he is immortal, he thinks about life differently than others. He considers how much time the mortals spend doing things that he considers unimportant, such as Jessica with her job. While he wants to focus on people, particularly upon his family, David tends to shy away from others because he ultimately knows they will die. He thinks of his Life Brother, Teferi, who had made a habit of living among mortals. Teferi had gone mad. His brothers assumed it was because of his constant companionship with the mortals.

One final point of interest in this section of the novel is that it is here that David's aversion to Christianity is finally explained. Since Khaldun has never died, he knows nothing of heaven. Therefore, he has never taught David about heaven. Although David wonders if the gift of life given to them was really the doing of the blood of Christ, he does not question his teacher on these matters. He does not feel as if he should have to live his life seeking forgiveness in order to be granted the gift of heaven. David doesn't understand how the mortal's rituals of praising God and singing make them feel better about their miserable lives, as Adele tries to convince him it does.



Part 2, Chapters 17 - 21

Part 2, Chapters 17 - 21 Summary

In Chapter 17, Uncle Billy believes he has seen a ghost when he sees Jessica's husband in a photo from 1926. That morning, he'd also seen the ghost of his wife, Sadie, standing at the end of his bed. He feels that if he had touched her, he would have gone away with her to heaven. Then, he had seen David in the picture. Uncle Billy believes David is another ghost, one not so friendly, who has come to take him home.

Billy is preparing for a bath when he hears David's knock on the door. He does not speak to David, only hands him the photograph. Although David tries to convince Uncle Billy the man in the photo must be his grandfather, Uncle Billy tells him that he has known there was something strange about David since he met him. David pulls Billy's wheelchair toward the bathroom and asks if he can help with his bath that day. The chapter ends with the two in the bathroom.

In Chapter 18, Alexis tells the family in the hospital waiting room that Billy had fallen in the tub and hit his head. His brain is bleeding. Jessica asks David why he had not gone to visit Uncle Billy as he had planned. David makes up an excuse about getting a call from copy editors. When Jessica had gotten home however, she had thought that she had heard a song from David's favorite Jazz Brigade record that he was supposed to get from her uncle. When she entered the house, however, it was silent.

When Jessica returns to work in Chapter 19 she reads a cryptic message she doesn't understand sent by Peter the night he died. She talks to Sy Greene who updates her on the investigation into Peter's murder. Sy gives his sympathy for Uncle Billy's death. Bea had stopped the life support when the doctors declared him brain dead.

In Chapter 20, David is trimming a tree on his property. The tree makes him think of his time with Adele and her lynching. David also thinks of Billy's death, believing that he had fulfilled the covenant by killing him. As the wind, which the family calls Night Song, begins to wail in the trees, Kira becomes more concerned her father will fall. David sees a movement in the bushes, which he believes is a Searcher. The movement distracts him and he falls. When Jessica returns home, her neighbors are in the yard consoling Kira and trying to help David. He has warned them that he will sue them if they call an ambulance. David brushes off his injuries, saying that he will be all right in the morning. When Jessica tells him she will call 911, David yells at her. After a shower, David comes to say goodnight to Kira. In their bedroom, Jessica puts on soothing music. They talk and David apologizes. He promises to go to the doctor the next morning.

In Chapter 21, Jessica has Alexis stop by to check on David the following morning. Although he is angry, David decides to humor Jessica. Although David tries to joke off the fact that he has healed overnight, Jessica will not accept his flip answers as easily as she once did. Jessica takes a minute to talk to her sister outside about the shape



that David had been in the night before. Alexis tells her to be happy her husband wasn't seriously hurt.

Part 2, Chapters 17 - 21 Analysis

Dawit kills again in this section of chapters. This time it is Jessica's Uncle Billy who is the victim. Uncle Billy uncovers his father's old photo taken with the members of The Jazz Brigade in the 20's. Billy is determined that David is an unkind or evil ghost who has come to end his life. Earlier that day Uncle Billy had also seen the deceased ghost of his wife. He believes that had he reached out to her, he could have gone with her when she came after him. Instead of going with her, however, Uncle Billy cannot bring himself to reach out to her. Although David tries to convince Billy that he must be seeing a picture of David's grandfather, Billy makes it clear he does not buy this story.

One of the things that upsets Jessica the most about Billy's death is that she had understood that David was supposed to have visited Billy on the morning he was fatally injured. When Jessica first returns home, she hears a song from The Jazz Brigade record that David was supposed to get from Billy, the one she stepped on and broke, playing in the background. When she gets inside the house, however, there is no music. What she doesn't know is that David had noticed that she was home and had turned the music off before Jessica made it into the house.

David excuses Billy's murder in his own mind by claiming that he had to kill the old man in order to protect the covenant. Dawit, along with his Life Brothers, has been ordered by Khaldun not to let any mortal know of his immortality. Since Uncle Billy has correctly guessed that it was David in the picture, unaged even though the picture had been taken more than 60 years ago, he was on the border of wondering about David's ability to live so long and change so little. Although it would not have stood up in a court of law, David is able to excuse his own actions by hiding behind the idea that he is protecting the covenant.

David's accident is another significant part of this section of the novel. First, note the circumstances of his accident. Because he is in a tree, he is being distracted by his memories of Adele, who was hung from a tree. He thinks of how his life might have been different if he and Adele had not stopped to rest beneath the tree. At the same time, Kira is distracting David because she is worried that he will fall and get hurt. She warns him that it is getting dark and that Night Song will be angry that he is in her tree. On top of these distractions, as David begins to climb down from the tree, he is shocked to see a Searcher. It is this final surprise that causes David to lose his balance and fall from the tree.

After David's fall, he refuses to go to a doctor even those who saw him fall believe that he may have broken something. When the neighbor suggests to David that he call an ambulance, David threatens to sue him. Likewise, when Jessica suggests that she needs to call 911, David yells at her and curses. Although it may seem David is just reacting badly because of pain or a fear of doctors, he may be protecting the covenant



by keeping himself away from medical workers. The next morning, David's cuts are healed and his shoulder has corrected itself. Jessica will not easily accept David's attempt to brush off his injury. She questions her sister, but the sister is not able to give her an adequate or acceptable answer. She can only guess David is a person who heals more quickly than others and that the injuries might not have been as bad as Jessica thought at first.



Part 2, Chapters 22 - 25

Part 2, Chapters 22 - 25 Summary

In Chapter 22, Dawit is at Lowell Mason Farm where an elderly black lady is trying to nurse him back to health after having been beaten with 100 lashes with a cowhide whip. The woman applies balm to David's back. He passes out from the pain. He wakes in a storeroom and discovers that his wounds are healed. The woman enters. She promises to keep him hidden as long as she can so no one will see his miraculous healing. She also tells him about a deep, infected cut on her hand that healed because she had gotten his blood in it while tending his wounds. She tells Dawit that she had prayed for him to come because she has a great grandson with a foot injury. She wants to take some of Dawit's blood to see if it will help the boy. The boy survives his injury, but walks with a limp. When Clara passes away, Dawit is glad that his secret has died with her. Dawit is given a female slave, Adele, whom his master makes it clear he intends for Dawit to impregnate. Adele tells him she will have no more children because they have taken three away from her already.

In Chapter 23, David asks Jessica to go away with him. Jessica wonders if the trip might turn her life from ordinary to extraordinary. Kira tells Jessica that her grandfather has told her they must go. Jessica admits to herself that she feels bored at work. She talks to her sister about her changing relationship with David and their plans to go abroad. When Jessica returns to work, a mail clerk hands her the original copy of the police report from Chicago. The envelope reminds her of Peter and their book project. She tries to throw the envelope away but can't find her trash can so she tucks it into a drawer.

In Chapter 24, Mahmoud visits Dawit to try to convince him to return to Lalibela. Dawit asks permission to stay longer but Mahmoud says he can only guarantee a month or two at most. Khaldun has told Mahmoud that Dawit is becoming dangerous. They know about Dawit's murder of both Rosalie and Peter. He says that while he sees the sense of killing to protect the covenant, Dawit's actions have been stupid. Dawit becomes angry when Mahmoud compares him to Teferi. Mahmoud gives Dawit a thinly veiled threat against Kira and Jessica. Dawit and Mahmoud begin to fight when Jessica walks in on them. Mahmoud walks out.

In Chapter 25, David tries to make up a story that will explain to Jessica what happened with Mahmoud. He tells her the man is an ex student angry about a grade. Because Jessica will not buy this story, he tells her that he and Mahmoud grew up together and were like brothers. He says the man is jealous because of David's father's money. Jessica accepts this story and tells him that she is looking forward to going to France.



Part 2, Chapters 22 - 25 Analysis

In this section of the novel, the mysterious healing qualities of David's blood are first noticed by a mortal. Clara, a fellow slave at Lowell Mason Farm, not only notices how quickly that David's back heals from his beating, but also notices that a deep, infected cut on her hand got mysteriously better when David's blood got in the cut as she was doctoring his back. David does not kill Clara because he realizes how scared she is of him. He is relieved that she dies of natural causes, indicating that just the passing of his blood is not enough to give eternal life.

One significant phrase in the novel is mentioned in this section of chapters. Earlier in the novel when Jessica believes that she is speaking with her father in the cave, she believes that she hears him instruct her to tell Kira there are no good monsters. In this section, when Kira tells her mother that her grandfather had told them they must go away, she says that he told her, as well, that there are no good monsters. It can be assumed that the monster to which Jessica's father is referring is David.

David's encounter with Mahmoud is another significant part of this section of chapters. When David was in Chicago and the seekers came for him, he went willingly. This time, he puts up a fight and refuses to go. Khaldun wants David back since he is becoming dangerous to their clan because of the three murders that he has committed in order to preserve his secret. Mahmoud tells David he is beginning to act as Teferi did, their Life Brother who went insane because he spent too much time with mortals. David resents the comparison to Teferi as well as the threat that Mahmoud makes against Kira and Jessica.



Part 3, Chapters 26 - 32

Part 3, Chapters 26 - 32 Summary

In Chapter 26, Dawit tries out the Life Ritual on Teacake, the family cat. The next morning, he surprises Jessica by packing two bags and telling her they are going on a trip to a cabin in the Everglades. He is worried because Teacake has not come back to life but tries to cover his fears. David plans to reveal the secret of immortality to Jessica during the weekend. Because Kira wants to say goodbye to Teacake, he checks on the cat one last time. The cat is still dead. David collects his hunting knife and leaves.

In Chapter 27, David and Jessica travel to the secluded island. The owner of the cabin tells them there is no phone, no cell phone service and he won't be back to get them until the following evening.

In Chapter 28, after they make love, David tells Jessica about the unusual makeup of his blood that allows him to heal quickly. He won't tell her more, only saying that she should expect a miracle that night. Then, he goes to take a bath. Once in the bathroom, David uses the hunting knife to disembowel himself. Believing she has heard David call her, Jessica walks into the bathroom. She thinks at first that David is asleep in the tub, but the water is pink. As she leans over him, she sees the muddy red water near his wound and begins to scream.

In Chapter 29, Jessica runs across the island screaming before she remembers they are on an isolated island. She prays that David will make it through the night. When she goes to check on him he tries to smile. He dies as she sits there holding his hand. When David wakes, he sees Jessica sitting, asleep, on the bathroom floor. When she wakes and discovers he is alive, Jessica is stunned. He reminds her that he had told her he would be all right by morning. The rest of the day is a blur for Jessica. David takes care of her and wakes her up when it is time to go. She lifts his shirt to see what is left of his scar and tells him that she wished he hadn't told her about his immortality the way that he did.

In Chapter 30, Kira is glad to see her parents back. Bea wants Jessica to get out of the car, but David tells her that Jessica is sick. Alex suspects there is something wrong but Jessica will not tell her what has happened. In the car on the way home, David had told her about his background, explaining that he had undergone a ritual to be immortal. They pull up in the driveway and Kira cheers because Teacake is back.

In Chapter 31, Jessica deals with morning sadness and depression as she lives through the days after their weekend in the Everglades. David shows her the Jazz Brigade photo of him in the 1920s. He tells her about attending a Beethoven concert and shows her the program. He shows her the pass he wrote himself as a slave. He tells her about Adele's death and his part in the Civil War. He tells her that he lost his soul. They go to the cave to talk about David's experiences. He even tells her about the details of the life



ritual when she asks. David tells Jessica he has discovered that he has the ability to give her the gift of immortality.

In Chapter 32, Dawit pets Teacake as he calls a realtor to put their house on the market. To Dawit, Teacake represents the possibility of lasting happiness. When Jessica gets home later, she asks to see Kira's homework but the child tells her that her father has already checked it. When Jessica asks Kira a question, Kira ignores her and instead speaks to her father in French. Jessica threatens to spank Kira if she doesn't speak to her and then chides David for taking up for the child. As Dawit thinks about the possibility of telling Jessica about his plan for them to all become immortal, he realizes now is not the time as he has already thrown Jessica off balance with too much information. She makes up with Kira, they put her to bed, then go for a walk.

Part 3, Chapters 26 - 32 Analysis

In these chapters, David begins to tell Jessica about his extraordinary abilities. Instead of just talking to Jessica about himself, however, he feels the need to take her to a deserted island where he can show her what his body can do. Although David must realize what an amazing amount of stress he will be putting on his wife, he still carries through with his plan. Jessica becomes physically ill because of the stress that she goes through during the weekend. David has also let her in on a terrible secret that she can not tell anyone about. When she talks to her sister later at her mother's house, Alexis knows that something is wrong but Jessica won't tell her what has happened.

Meanwhile, David has been experimenting with the ritual that will bring immortality. Information in the text indicates that David had been experimenting on lizards before he finally got the procedure right on Satchmo. The floor of his shed is littered with the skeletons of dead lizards. When David sees that he has been successful with the lizard, he decides to step up and try his procedure on the family cat. He leaves for his weekend with Jessica still not knowing if his experiment was successful or not. When he leaves, Teacake's body is still stiff and dead. When the family returns the following day, however, the cat is waiting for them on the front porch. It is becoming more and more obvious that David is intending to try to convince Jessica to allow him to perform the ritual on her and Kira.

An important aspect to remember in this section is that when David packs Jessica's things, he forgets to include her birth control pills. Jessica realizes that it is possible that she will become pregnant when they have intercourse because her pills have to be taken religiously in order to keep her from conceiving.



Part 3, Chapters 33 - 37

Part 3, Chapters 33 - 37 Summary

In Chapter 33, Kira is still in diapers when she first sees her maternal grandfather in the cave. Her grandfather had made her cry once when he said that her daddy did bad things. He tells Kira that she and her mother will have to leave soon, in a hurry.

In Chapter 34, Jessica feels more comfortable with the idea of leaving her mother because Bea has begun a relationship with Randall Gaines. After church, Bea asks Jessica about their plans to go to Africa. She indicates only that she doesn't want Kira to forget her. Bea tells Jessica that she has always been uncomfortable with David.

In Chapter 35, Mahmoud is waiting for Khaldun to respond to a letter he has sent. He spies on Jessica and David through hidden cameras and wiretaps. Mahmoud knows that David has told Jessica about the covenant.

In Chapter 36, Jessica visits her news editor's office intending to talk to him about a drug trafficking story, but discovers a police officer there. Lieutenant Fernando Reyes has come to ask questions about Peter's death. He asks if David had been at the paper the night of Peter's death and says that the security guard had mentioned seeing him. Jessica realizes she is being interrogated and tells Reyes she can't help him any more. He asks her to have David give him a call. What bothers Jessica the most is that David never mentioned to her that he had seen Peter the night of his death. David apologizes for not mentioning his meeting with Peter and says that he had really not thought it was proper to bring it up.

In Chapter 37, Jessica has a dream where she sees her father and Peter at the mouth of the cave. She waves and tells them she won't be coming with them. She asks that they hold tight to Kira. When Jessica wakes, it is 4 a.m. and she is thinking about what Reyes said about the flooring knife. She goes to the shed to look for the flooring knife that she knows that her husband had. She doesn't find the knife, but does find a syringe filled with David's blood.

At lunch the next day, Jessica calls her sister and asks her to run some tests on the blood. Alex reluctantly agrees. At home that evening, David tells Jessica that a woman has offered them \$150,000 for the house. Jessica allows herself to think that this will be enough money to give them a good start on their new life.

Part 3, Chapters 33 - 37 Analysis

There are several incidents in these chapters that could be considered premonitions of what will happen in coming chapters. It is also in these chapters that Jessica really begins to suspect that her husband may not be the perfect man that she had always thought he was. For instance, the ghost of Kira's grandfather upsets her because he



tells her that her father is bad. He promises not to say anything else bad about David but it is apparent that he still believes that David is not the ideal father. He also tells Kira about a trip that she will be taking soon, a trip that Teacake will also be taking, but she will not have time to get even her favorite doll, Imari.

As Jessica tries to come to terms with David's immortality, she thinks about the way she will age and grow old while he will remain young and unflawed. Although she considers her mother an attractive older woman, she wonders if David will want to be seen with her even if she ages as well as her mother does. She thinks briefly what it might be like for her to have the gift of immortality that David has so that they could both stay young together, but then realizes that she would be trading her salvation for a pretty face, a trade that she considers unthinkable.

It is when Jessica is questioned by Lieutenant Reyes about David's visit to the newspaper office the night of Peter's death that Jessica begins to become suspicious of her husband. She wakes in the night thinking about the linoleum knife that David used when he laid Bea's floor. She believes that if she can find the knife, she can convince herself that David had nothing to do with Peter's death. Instead of finding the knife, however, Jessica wanders into David's shed where he has been experimenting with the Life Ritual. She sees the skeletons of the dead lizards and even the collection of poisons that David has stored in the shed but doesn't consider what David might be doing with all of these items. She also finds a syringe of blood which is still warm. She assumes that it is David's and gets it to her sister to run some tests.



Part 4, Chapters 38 - 41

Part 4, Chapters 38 - 41 Summary

In Chapter 38, Mahmoud has received a letter from Khaldun. He is told to speak to Dawit again about his transgressions.

In Chapter 39, Alexis confirms Jessica's suspicion that the blood is miracle blood. She has found that even massively diluted amounts of the blood fight disease. Although Alexis believes it is not ethically responsible for her to do so, she agrees not to tell anyone about the blood when Jessica tells her that it is David's.

In Chapter 40, Alexis goes home, pours herself a glass of wine and goes to stand on her balcony. As she tries to relax, she hears, and then feels, a sharp crack on the back of her head.

In Chapter 41, Jessica leaves the hospital where Alex has been in a coma for three weeks to go to work. David calls and tells her that Alex has opened her eyes, twice. When Jessica and her mother visit Alex, she is trying to say something, but Jessica can't make out what it is. When she wakes in the morning, however, she realizes that Alex had been trying to tell them that someone had pushed her from the balcony.

Part 4, Chapters 38 - 41 Analysis

In this section of chapters, Alex and Jessica's life of faith is sharply contrasted with the ideals of David and Mahmoud who believe they must be in charge of their lives and protect themselves. Jessica finds a syringe of David's blood and takes it to Alex to run tests. What Alex finds, she believes to be a miracle of God. She discovers that the blood that has been flowing through her brother-in-law's veins holds the answers to cure many deadly diseases. Because David is not supposed to reveal his secrets, however, Jessica begs Alex not to make the secrets of the blood public. Alex feels she is being medically unethical because she is throwing away the chance to provide a cure for many hurting people, but agrees with her sister that they cannot move forward without David's permission. Alex believes that David will eventually come to a point where he will be willing to submit to testing and will allow his condition to help others. What Alexis doesn't realize is that David and those like him have no intention of helping others with their gift. They are interested only in themselves. For years they have been chopping off body parts to watch them regrow and killing themselves to prove they cannot be killed but keep their gift to themselves as they don't know what sort of evil others might do with it.

Jessica doesn't realize that she has put her sister in danger by sharing the syringe of David's blood with her. When Alex goes home that night, however, she is pushed off the balcony of her apartment. Since Alex had gotten an angry message from David requesting that his wife come home, it is assumed that David might have had motive to



hurt Alex. It is still unsure if he knew that Jessica had slipped the blood to her for testing. The fact that David was outside on the front porch with his car keys in hand is a sign that he might have taken a trip somewhere while Jessica was gone. It is suspected that he might have gone to Alex's apartment. Jessica is angry with him for even considering leaving Kira at home alone but doesn't suspect her husband as being Alex's attacker until she realizes that her sister is trying to tell her that someone pushed her from the balcony.



Part 4, Chapters 42 - 45

Part 4, Chapters 42 - 45 Summary

In Chapter 42, Jessica wonders if David had been the one who had hurt Alex. She also wonders if he might have been the one who killed Rosalie. She goes to work and searches for the file on Rosalie Banks. As Jessica flips to the composite photo, a fellow worker comes to talk to her but her mind won't work.

In Chapter 43, Jessica calls Reyes but gets an answering machine. She decides she has to get Kira away from David.

In Chapter 44, Mahmoud recognizes there is something new upsetting Jessica. He realizes he messed up when he did not check to see if Alex was dead after he pushed her. Mahmoud thinks about how close he is to failure. As Mahmoud watches the drama unfolding he decides to abandon his plan to kill Alexis and Bea and instead kill Jessica and Kira.

In Chapter 45, when Jessica gets home, she tells David she wants to take Kira to a doll store while David is fixing dinner. Jessica pitches Teacake, who is laying on the hood of the van, into the vehicle. When she gets out of the van at a stoplight to close Kira's door, Jessica notices a red Ford Tempo three cars back. She is relieved when she sees the driver is a Hispanic, not David. It is at this point that Jessica realizes life as she had known it is over. Jessica makes up a lie for Kira that they are going on a surprise vacation. When Kira asks if the monster is coming, Jessica can't answer.

Part 4, Chapters 42 - 45 Analysis

In this section of chapters, Mahmoud's main concern is with Dawit and the danger he holds to their group. Along with his fears about David, Mahmoud also realizes how badly he messed up when he did not check to be sure Alexis was dead. Although he has chided David in the past for his willingness to kill in order to cover up his mistakes, Mahmoud finds himself doing the same thing. In addition, Mahmoud is scornful of David because of the way that he has seen David allow Jessica to talk to him and treat him.

Also in these chapters, Jessica finally looks at the composite sketch that the Chicago Police sent her with the file on Rosalie Tillis Banks' murder. It is at this point that Jessica's fears are realized. Her husband is a murderer. She realizes that she needs to get Kira away from David. Just like Kira's grandfather warns her during one of their talks together in the cave, the two leave in a hurry. They don't take Kira's doll or any of her things, but they do take Teacake because he is laying on the hood of the van. Although Jessica doesn't understand Kira's question completely when Kira asks if the monster is coming with them, she can't answer because she assumes the child is talking about David. Kira, however, only knows that her grandfather has warned her about a monster; she doesn't realize the monster is her father.



Part 4, Chapters 46 - 49

Part 4, Chapters 46 - 49 Summary

In Chapter 46, David realizes that Jessica has taken Kira and has left him. At first he wonders why she has done so, then becomes angry that she has betrayed him. He swears to himself that his wife and daughter will be with him, forever.

In Chapter 47, Jessica does not stop until she reaches Palm Beach County. When she tries her card in an ATM machine, she is surprised to learn her card is invalid. Her fear increases as she realizes that David must have done something to keep her card from working. She decides to head for Georgia, where she has distant relatives with whom she and Kira can stay. Jessica stops at a Mobil station. She collects necessities and tries to pay with a different card but discovers this card has been reported as stolen. The clerk points out a Mobil card in Jessica's wallet. This card works.

In Chapter 48, Mahmoud pulls up into the lot at the same Mobil Station where Jessica is getting gas. Mahmoud opens the hood on Jessica's van and loosens the fuses hoping the van will stall out once the vehicle gets on the road.

In Chapter 49, Dawit learns from the customer service line for one of their credit cards that the card has been used at a Mobil Station in Yeehaw Junction. Dawit calls the station and learns he has just missed Jessica and Kira. Dawit decides to fly north to Orlando and try to intercept her.

Part 4, Chapters 46 - 49 Analysis

Thinking she is escaping from danger, Jessica tries to get herself and her daughter to relatives in Georgia. What she doesn't know is that Mahmoud, who is actually more dangerous to her than her husband, has already tracked her down and is following her. Mahmoud plans to kill both Jessica and Kira because of the danger that they hold to the secrecy of the brotherhood. She also doesn't realize that it was Mahmoud who tried to kill her sister. At the same time, David has reported their cards as stolen so when Jessica uses them, he is able to track her. Unfortunately, Mahmoud catches up with Jessica first and tampers with her van so that it will stop running and leave her stranded.



Part 4, Chapters 50 - 53

Part 4, Chapters 50 - 53 Summary

In Chapter 50, Jessica stops the car and gets out to check under the hood when the lights and radio go out. As Jessica checks the battery, Kira switches the engine off. Jessica notices a car parked about thirty yards behind her. When Jessica gets back in the van, it won't start. She hears the door of the car shut behind her. The man calls her name saying he is Office Rhodes from the Orange County Police Department. He tells her that they have been looking for her and have her husband in custody. Jessica feels relief but notices the man is cocking his gun. Jessica becomes suspicious and refuses to get out of the van. The man starts shooting at the vehicle. Just as Jessica is about to comply with the man, another car pulls up. She hears a sound, then the next face she sees is David's.

In Chapter 51, Dawit uses his car to tow the stranger's car 30 miles down the Interstate. He makes Jessica go with him as he stashes Mahmoud's body in the woods. Jessica tells him that she has turned him in for killing Peter and trying to kill Alex. David denies hurting her sister. She tells him that she knows he had reason to hurt Alex because she was aware of the healing power of his blood, another action that David considered as betrayal on Jessica's part. When Jessica asks what he is, David tells her that he is her salvation. That Mahmoud had wanted her dead because of what she knew about him, and also wanted her mother and sister dead. Jessica tries to refuse to go with David but he warns her that he is taking Kira with him and that Mahmoud will come after her and her sister.

In Chapter 52, Teacake is dying. Jessica feels as if she has lost everything. She won't leave because David takes Kira with him everywhere he goes. As David and Kira play a game in the front seat of the car, Jessica realizes that despite all that has happened, she is still in love with David. David, meanwhile, decides they need to stop soon. He has all of the things needed for the ritual. After that they will be able to get fake birth certificates and passports and leave America for good.

In Chapter 53, Mahmoud wakes up in pain. His life brothers Kelile and Teka are standing over him. Mahmoud believes they have come because he has failed in bringing Dawit home. Instead, they tell him to be glad he has not succeeded in killing Jessica and Kira because Khaldun had a vision that the two were no threat to them. In fact, it is believed that Jessica's infant is chosen. Although Mahmoud reminds the two of the troubles in store for them if their race were ever made public, the two tell him that they cannot disobey Khaldun.



Part 4, Chapters 50 - 53 Analysis

Luckily, David catches up with Mahmoud in time to keep him from killing Jessica and Kira, which is good for all four of them. When Mahmoud comes back to life the next day with his brothers standing over him, they tell him that Khaldun has had a vision in which he is shown that Jessica's infant is chosen. Although there is confusion concerning the infant that Khaldun might be talking about, the reader might remember Jessica's concern when David neglected to pack her birth control pills on the night that they spend in the Everglades. While Mahmoud believes they may be referring to Kira, who is hardly an infant, it may be that Jessica is actually pregnant.

Even though David feels betrayed by Jessica, he still plans to take her through the Life Ritual and keep her with him. Although it would have been easy for David to leave Jessica behind at this point, David reminds her that Mahmoud is still searching for her, still wanting to kill her. At this point, David does not realize that his wife and daughter have been spared from death at Mahmoud's hands by Khaldun's vision. Jessica also chooses to stay with David because she is worried about Kira and does not want to leave her behind. David shows his distrust of her by keeping Kira with him and not giving Jessica another chance to run away with her.



Part 4, Chapters 54 - 57

Part 4, Chapters 54 - 57 Summary

In Chapter 54, Jessica wakes up when the car stops in the parking lot of a motel in Louisiana. Although David tells her that Teacake is fine, Jessica knows he is dead. David brings the cat's body into the room and hides him in the closet. Jessica suddenly realizes she feels strange because David put something in her drink. She asks him to promise not to give Kira anything. Jessica passes out. When she wakes, something heavy lands on her and she sees Teacake's green eyes looking at her. She screams. David tries to explain to her that he gave Teacake some of his blood, causing the cat to be immortal. Jessica asks if David wants to perform the ritual on her and Kira.

David hands her four capsules, which he says are sleeping pills, and asks her to take them. She does so, trustingly. David tries to give Kira three of the capsules but Jessica becomes angry, warning Kira not to take them. She suddenly realizes what David is trying to do. She tries to run with Kira but is unable. Jessica begs David not to do anything to Kira. Just as she falls asleep again, she has a horrible image of the lizard skeletons on the floor of David's shed.

In Chapter 55, the pizza delivery kid tells Lou Reed he had heard screaming coming from Room Two and a crash like something had broken. Although David tells him there's nothing wrong in the room, Lou doesn't feel comfortable and has his state patrol brother-in-law run the tags on David's car.

In Chapter 56, Kira tells her father she doesn't want to take the pills but David convinces her to do so. David briefly thinks that he could leave Jessica and Kira sleeping and let them go about their lives but is afraid of what Mahmoud might do to them. He uses his hand to suffocate Jessica, repulsed that she fights against him even though she is unconscious. As her pulse slows to zero, he injects the blood and repeats the words of the ritual.

In Chapter 57, meanwhile, Alexis is dying. She is hemorrhaging and her heart is weak, but she also knows that her mother is keeping things from her. She has lost her will to live because she has heard her friends and family discussing the situation with Jessica and David. As the doctors and nurses work over Alexis, she has a vision in which she sees herself, Jessica, Bea and a little girl standing in front of a throng of black people. Alexis is healing people. At the same time, Jessica is having the same vision. Both siblings gain the will to live from this vision.

Part 4, Chapters 54 - 57 Analysis

With all that is happening in this section, one of the most significant parts of these chapters is the section where the souls of both Jessica and Alexis touch in their personal fights for life. Both sisters have the same vision in which they are healing



people. They are surrounded by happy, loving people, all of whom they have helped. In a book where one of the themes is the idea that nothing happens by chance, could this be part of a greater plan to make some good come out of a decision made hundreds of years ago that seems to have caused only pain? Khaldun also had a vision that Jessica and her infant were chosen so one must wonder if these visions came from the same source. Is there something that Jessica has been sent to do in respect to the Life Brothers and their secret?

Also in this section, David has already drugged Jessica to the point that she is no longer combative but readily takes the additional drugs that he offers her. What is interesting, though, is that Kira, who is usually eager to please her father and not as obedient to her mother, hesitates when David asks her to take the drugs. In fact, she reminds him that her mother did not want her to take any drugs and is unwilling when her father does convince her to do as he had asked.

It is interesting that it is Teacake who turns out to be the one who changes the outcome for Jessica and Kira as he scares Jessica badly when he jumps on her chest after he comes back to life. This scream is heard by a pizza delivery boy who tells the hotel owner about the strange sounds that he has heard coming from the room that was rented by the Woldes. Although the hotel owner does not find anything specifically amiss in the room, he runs the tags on David's car just in case.



Part 4, Chapters 58 - 61

Part 4, Chapters 58 - 61 Summary

In Chapter 58, Dawit notices Jessica is breathing again, and starts to work on Kira. Meanwhile, Lou receives a call telling him the man in Room Two is a murderer and has kidnapped the woman and child. The police are on their way. Back in Room Two, Dawit strangles Kira.

In Chapter 59, Jessica wakes to see Dawit standing over Kira, strangling her. Jessica is too weak to do anything. Then there are knocks on the door and men burst into the room. The men order David to get away from Kira. Jessica sees David doing something with his hand to Kira's arm, and hears him whispering phrases. One of the officers shoots David, knocking him away from Kira. It is when Jessica sees the syringe of blood that she realizes that David had killed Kira in order to save her and that his ritual had been disrupted. Although she gets the syringe in hand, Jessica realizes that she cannot inject her child with the blood. When the people take David away on a gurney, Jessica tries to tell them that he isn't really dead, but they don't listen. With Kira, she tells the medical people to check on the child in the morning to see if she is better.

In Chapter 60, Kira wakes in the cave with her grandfather. He reminds her of the story of Lin and tells her that it was really a story about Kira. Princess comes in from outside the cave and gives her a pony ride. At first she feels the bumps of Princess' paws hitting the ground, but soon there are no bumps at all, just light and wind.

In Chapter 61, Jessica will not let anyone take blood from her because she knows that she has David's blood in her system. The final doctor who checks on her tells her that the baby seems to be okay despite all that has happened to her. Jessica thinks at first he is talking about Kira, but he tells her she is six weeks pregnant. Bea believes the pregnancy is a miracle. Jessica also learns that it is believed that someone has stolen his body. Kira's body is still in the morgue. Jessica wonders when her mother tells her that no one can ever take away the baby that Jessica is now carrying, if her mother already knows the truth about what has happened.

Part 4, Chapters 58 - 61 Analysis

Any suspicions that Jessica might be pregnant are confirmed in this section of the novel. Since the baby has been fathered by David, and will have spent most of its incubation period being nourished by Jessica's blood, which now has the same qualities as David's, one must wonder what sort of qualities this new infant will have. It is already known that the baby has been chosen according to Khaldun's vision.

It is unusual that the doctors do not feel that the theft of David's body from the morgue is out of the ordinary. Jessica, of course, realizes the body has not been stolen at all, but that her husband has come back to life and gotten himself out of the morgue. The



doctors also believe that Kira's body was moved by whoever stole David's body. Probably what actually happened is that David moved Kira's body to see if there were any signs of her coming back to life. When he had seen that she was really dead, with none of his blood injected into her, he had left her corpse behind.

What is stunning in this part of the novel is that even with Jessica's mental strain and the physical stress she has just been through, Jessica thinks pretty clearly through her decision not to give her daughter David's blood and complete the ritual. She realizes that if she finishes the ritual, her child will never die. She knows that she will be damning her own daughter to a life where she can never go to heaven. Because she has been granted immortality by her husband, Jessica, who was a born-again Christian and taught these same beliefs to her daughter, will never go to heaven, or join her daughter, family members and friends in heaven. She believes that God is being cruel by placing this decision in her hands.



Part 5, Chapters 62 and 63

Part 5, Chapters 62 and 63 Summary

On New Year's Eve several years later, Dawit travels to a children's clinic run by Americans. He asks for Jessica but the lady at the desk tells him only Doctor Alex is there. When he tells the woman that he is Jessica's husband, he sees surprise, as well as reverence in her eyes. She calls a boy to take David to the house. Children play and laugh in the yard of the house. There is a man on the front porch whom David recognizes as Randall Gaines. Gaines takes David inside the house. A toddler who has cut her finger runs into their path. David forgets about the child when he sees a shadow at the top of the stairway. When she sees David, Jessica turns around and goes back to her room. Gaines sends David upstairs after her. Jessica sits in a wicker armchair with Teacake in her lap. Jessica tells him simply that she knew he would come some day. She asks what he wants. He tells her that he only wants to tell her that although the clinic is amazing, it is also dangerous. She becomes angry when he tells her the blood was not intended to be used the way she is using it. When he asks if she hates him, she seems unsure. She did not ask for what he did to her, yet she has found a way to bless people. He warns her not to become too attached to the mortals because they will soon be gone. Jessica points out his contradiction since he had always told her to treasure people while she had them. Before David leaves, he tells her that Lalibela is her home and she should go there when what she has now is gone. He tells her that he will be there waiting for her.

In Chapter 63, Alex comes into Jessica's room. Jessica, who realizes how much she still misses David, tells her sister simply that he had come. Alex asks if he saw Beatrice but Jessica did not even tell David about his child. Bea and Randall come up the stairs with the child. The cut on her hand has already healed. Jessica realizes that she hadn't told him because it would have hurt him more to leave. Beatrice surprises them all by asking if her father went away. She promises the child she will see her father someday. When they remind Jessica it is New Year's she realizes that is why she had been expecting David. She plans to attend the family party for a short while, and then spend the rest of the evening in her room searching herself and her Bible for answers.

Part 5, Chapters 62 and 63 Analysis

Jessica and Alexis have seen the realization of their shared vision on the night that Alexis almost died and Jessica did die. They operate a clinic in Africa where they treat and heal children who are suffering with deadly and debilitating diseases. Children who have been given a new lease on life play in the yard outside Jessica's home so that she can hear them laugh. Although she has made the best of her bad situation, Jessica is clearly divided. She realizes when she sees David again that she is still in love with him. Yet, David has turned her life on its head, causing her to be a freak of nature, just like himself. She can never go to heaven, as she has prepared herself for through her life.



She will never see her God, or her friends and family members who have died before her.

An interesting aspect of this portion of the novel is the way the people at the children's clinic treat David. Once they realize that he is Jessica's husband, they look upon him with what can almost be seen as reverence and awe. David had probably expected to be met with hate or at least have the people not recognize him. He is surprised that Randall Gaines escorts him into the house and does not have him thrown from the property. Jessica's reception of her husband is not as warm as the others, but she has lost much more than the others as a result of his actions.

Though Jessica is not one of the Life Brothers and has taken no covenant of secrecy, she still tries to keep the powers of her blood quiet. The group has plans to move on to another location as soon as their clinic starts to attract too much attention. David, however, is concerned that Jessica will do something that will endanger the others who are immortal. Jessica calls him on his hypocrisy when he tries to tell her that the blood is not supposed to be used as she is using it. Since he used his powers selfishly and in a way that hurt others, she believes he has no business telling her that her charitable use of the blood is wrong.

Before David leaves Jessica's home, he tells her about the city of Lalibela. He tells her that since she now has the same blood as he in her veins, that city is now her home as well. He tells her that he will be there waiting for her when she is ready to come. Even at this point, David still holds out hope that Jessica will want to spend her immortality with him.

Jessica and David's second daughter, Beatrice is also included in the final chapters of the novel. She is already showing signs that she has extraordinary powers. Her cuts heal within 20 minutes, and she knows things, without even being told. For instance, she knew that David was her father, even without being told. As she clumsily tries to pronounce the name of the city where the immortals live, it seems as though she already knows that is the place for which she is destined.



Characters

David Wolde aka Dawit aka Seth Spider Tillis

David, or Dawit as he is often referred to in the novel, is a man who has been alive since the 1500's. He was part of a group of 59 men who accepted an offer made by Khaldun to have immortality. David questions Khaldun directly about how he inherited immortality on one of their first meetings. Even after he learns that the miracle of Khaldun's immortality came from the theft of Christ's blood, Dawit still agrees to undergo the ritual. Because Khaldun knew nothing of Christ and did not profess to be a Christian, Dawit also has no interest in seeking God or Christ. He tells Jessica that he is an atheist soon after they begin dating. Although Jessica has hopes of being able to convert her husband, she has not yet been successful in their years of marriage.

It is known from information given in the book that Dawit has lived a tumultuous and dramatic life. He has fought against and slaughtered both Christians and Muslims. He has been killed on various occasions and has come back to life. He had his hand chopped off in a sword fight with a jealous husband. Through all of his life, Dawit has longed for sustained human companionship, because he is tired of watching those whom he befriends get old and die, and of having to leave them because the Searchers have come for him. Dawit first believed he had found the companionship that he desired in Adele, the female slave given to him as his wife by his southern slave master. Dawit is devastated when Adele dies at the hands of five white men who rape and hang her while he is unable to do anything to help her. More than 100 years later, he is still haunted by his memories of Adele.

Dawit begins his next life in Chicago where he plays clarinet with a band called The Jazz Brigade. He had learned everything he knew about music from Khaldun in Lalibela's House of Music. Music is the only area of study that has ever held any interest for him. During his time in the band, he meets and marries Christina with whom he fathers Rosalie and Rufus. Rufus dies of congestive heart failure while Dawit kills Rosalie in the nursing home because he believes that in her aged and sickly state, death will be a blessing. Dawit admits to himself that his love for his Chicago family was never really strong. Because he was so involved in his music, he never spent time with his children the way he does with his current daughter, Kira. He realizes that he was only beginning to get attached to Rosalie when he was called away by the Searchers. As for Rufus, Dawit never even took the time to teach the boy about music even though the child begged him to do so.

In the time period in which this novel is set, David has collected a new family. He breaks the covenant he made with his Life Brothers not only because he is making his home among the mortals but also because he has decided to tell Jessica the truth about himself and ask her to join him in immortality. As Dawit tries to find the right timing to tell Jessica the truth and perfect his ability to perform the ritual, more and more evidence comes up that causes others to suspect there is something really strange about him.



His murder of his daughter is learned by his wife when she investigates the death of Rosalie for a book she has been hired to write. Dawit kills Peter, Jessica's writing partner, in an attempt to keep her from discovering that he had killed Rosalie. Dawit also kills Jessica's Uncle Billy when the old man finds a photograph of Dawit taken in the 1920's with The Jazz Brigade. Uncle Billy is a threat to Dawit because he refuses to believe the man in the photograph might be Dawit's grandfather.

Dawit's crimes finally catch up with him as he is trying to perform the Life Ritual on his wife and daughter. Dawit has just successfully brought Jessica back to life and is working on Kira when police come to arrest him. Because he will not stop working with Kira, the police officers shoot him, keeping him from injecting her with his blood and giving her immortality. David's body disappears from the morgue, causing the doctors to believe it has been stolen, but in reality, David came back to life and got himself out of the morgue. He appears again a few years later when he pays Jessica a visit at the children's clinic that she is helping to run. Even after all that has happened, Dawit lets Jessica know that he will still be waiting for her if she should choose to join him at Lalibela.

Jessica Jacob-Wolde

Jessica Jacob-Wolde is David's wife and mother to both Kira and Beatrice. She is the daughter of Beatrice Wolde. Jessica's father died in a car accident when she was very young. Jessica likes the cave on David's property because she believes that she is able to converse with her father in this cave. The main regret that Jessica has is that she was never able to show her father, who was highly intelligent, that she was smart.

Jessica meets David when she takes his Spanish class at the University. Her first impression of David is that he seems older than his real age. Jessica thinks that he is beautiful but believes that he makes her work too hard for her grade. When Jessica realizes how easily and fluently she can speak Spanish after her first class with Dr. Wolde, she signs up for a second class with him. Jessica goes on her first date with David when the two see an on-campus showing of the movie *The Godfather* together. She believes that she begins to fall in love with him during one of these dates when he shows true shame at having put her in an uncomfortable position because she is dating a teacher.

Even before David starts to tell Jessica about his immortality, she has already noticed the strange way that he heals abnormally quickly. It is not until she is interrogated by Lieutenant Reyes that Jessica begins to be suspicious that her husband might be a murderer. After her sister is injured in an accident in which she says she was pushed from her balcony, Jessica suspects that her husband was the one to hurt her sister. She finally looks at the composite sketch of the alleged killer of Rosalie Banks, David's daughter from another marriage and realizes that it was David who killed Rosalie.

In an attempt to save herself and her daughter, Jessica takes Kira and runs away. David catches up with her and saves the two of them from Mahmoud. He drugs Jessica and



performs the Life Ritual on her, giving her immortality. When David is shot by the police while he is trying to perform the ritual on Kira, it is up to Jessica to decide if she wants to finish the ritual and damn her daughter to immortality or allow her to die in peace. Jessica decides to let her die naturally.

After Jessica realizes that she does have David's blood in her, she tells her mother and sister about what has happened. They set up a children's clinic in Africa where they heal children of deadly and debilitating diseases.

Mahmoud aka Officer Rhodes

Mahmoud is one of Dawit's closest friends. They are together when Khaldun suggests the ritual that he wants to carry out on a select group of men so that he will have companions in his immortality. Mahmoud is the brother of Rana, Dawit's first wife. Their grief over the girl's death in childbirth seals the relationship of the two. As the two continue to live, however, Mahmoud becomes more faithful to Khaldun and the pursuit of knowledge. He is eventually appointed as the Seeker sent to search for and bring back Dawit. Mahmoud is angry because Dawit finds so much pleasure in mortals and their way of life. Mahmoud has dedicated himself to celibacy and learning. He threatens to hurt Jessica and Kira if Dawit does not return to Lalibela. Mahmoud has video surveillance in the Wolde's home and vehicles. He has also taped their phones. When Mahmoud learns that Jessica has given her sister a sample of Dawit's blood, he pushes Alexis from her balcony. He is only disappointed in himself because he did not check to make sure she was dead after her fall. Mahmoud also follows Jessica when she takes Kira and leaves Dawit. When she stops for gas, he loosens fuses in her van so it will stall. Once the van is stopped, Mahmoud pretends to be a law officer, but Jessica notices that he has his gun cocked. Mahmoud shoots at the van but is not successful in hurting Jessica or Kira before David shows up to save them. When Mahmoud comes back to life after Dawit kills him, he is with two Life Brothers who tell him that Khaldun has had a vision and now says that Jessica and Kira are not to be injured. Mahmoud doubts Khaldun's order, but does as he is told.

Raymond Jacobs aka The Man in the Cave

Raymond Jacobs is Jessica's father and Kira's grandfather. Raymond died in a car accident when Jessica was a young child. Raymond has been appearing to Kira in the cave since Kira was in diapers. He makes her laugh and tells her stories, like the story of Lin. After Kira dies, it is Raymond who helps escort her to heaven. In a dream, Jessica has had a premonition of this when she sees Peter and her father standing at the mouth of the cave. She tells them to hold tight to Kira for her. Jessica has also sensed her father's presence in the cave. She often hears his voice talking to her when she is in this cave. At one time, her father tells her to tell Kira that there are no good monsters. Raymond also tells Kira about the trip that she will take with her mother, indicating that the two will leave in a hurry and will take only Teacake. He tells her that



she will come back from her trip very soon. It is when Kira returns to the cave that her grandfather calls Princess to give her a ride to heaven.

Clara

Clara is the elderly black slave who is owned by the master of Lowell Mason Farms. She cares for David after he is whipped 100 lashes with a cowhide whip the day he comes to the farm. Clara notices that David's back heals much more quickly than it should have. She comes up with a plan to keep others from seeing how quickly he healed. She also had a deep cut on her hand that had not healed. She got some of David's blood in the cut which caused it to heal quickly. Clara also notices that the blood that had gotten on the wall from David's back has not congealed and is still warm. She believes that David may be some kind of voodoo man and is afraid of him but still asks him to help her great-grandson whose foot had been injured in an accident. She hopes that some of his blood will help the boy's foot to heal properly. Although David feels that he should kill Clara because she has learned his secret, he lets her live. When Clara dies, David is relieved that he has not passed on the gift of immortality to her through his blood.

Alexis

Alexis is Jessica's sister. Jessica calls Alexis in to check on David after he falls from the tree. Alexis brushes off Jessica's concern that her husband has healed so quickly. Later, Jessica gives Alexis a syringe of David's blood to test. Alexis finds that the blood has an amazing ability to fight disease. Because she does not want to hurt her sister, Alexis agrees not to tell anyone about the powers of the blood although she believes that what she is doing is unethical. When Alexis gets home that evening, Mahmoud pushes her from the balcony of her apartment in an attempt to kill her and keep the powers of the blood a secret. Alexis lives and becomes a doctor in a children's clinic in Africa where she experiments with her sister's blood to heal diseases. Even though she walks with a limp as a result of her fall, Alexis never experiments with the blood to see if it will help her condition.

Bea Jacobs

Bea Jacobs is Jessica's father and Kira's grandmother. Bea lost her husband at a young age and raised her daughters alone. Bea had always thought that there was something unusual about David and has often warned Jessica to be careful around her husband. When Alexis is injured when she is pushed from the balcony of her apartment, Bea stays with her almost around the clock as she recuperates. When Jessica is in the hospital after she is kidnapped by David, Bea flies to the New Orleans hospital in which Jessica is being treated to be with her daughter even though she had sworn to never fly again after a plane she was supposed to fly on crashed. Bea believes that Jessica's pregnancy is a miracle even before she even realizes just how special the child actually



is. Bea and her new husband, Randall Gaines, go with Jessica and Alexis to start their children's clinic in Africa.

Uncle Billy aka William Emmet Gillis

Uncle Billy is Jessica's great-uncle. He is diabetic and has suffered from a stroke. He lives with Jessica's mother because Bea believes that family should take care of their own. Uncle Billy shares David's love of music from the 1920's. Billy has a collection of music from this time period that he shares with David. It is when Billy finds a photo of David with The Jazz Brigade, the band in which David played, that he realizes why he and his sister have always had a strange feeling about Jessica's husband. Billy shows the picture to David who tries to convince Billy that the man in the picture must be his father. He realizes that Billy doesn't buy his story so he arranges for Billy to fall in the tub. Although he had expected Billy to die from the fall in the tub, or at least drown in the full tub, Billy survives the accident but is later determined to be brain dead.

Beatrice aka Bee-Bee

Beatrice, who is called by her nickname Bee-Bee, is the child conceived by Jessica and David the night they stay in the cabin in the Everglades. Jessica does not discover that she is pregnant until after David has already performed the Life Ritual on her. Bea believes the baby is a miracle. Beatrice is a toddler when she appears as a character in the novel. When David visits Jessica at the clinic, Beatrice is crying because she has cut her finger. By the time he leaves 20 minutes later, the cut has already healed. Although no one tells Beatrice that David was her father, she knew. Information in the novel indicates that there were many things that Beatrice just knew. Before Beatrice is born, Khaldun sends a message to Mahmoud saying that Jessica should not be killed because he had a vision that her infant was chosen.

Teacake

Teacake is the family cat whom Jessica raised from a kitten. David experiments with the Life Ritual on Teacake. He is afraid at first that his experiment failed, but when he and Jessica return from the trip to the Everglades, the cat is alive again. Because Teacake is lying on the hood of the van when she takes Kira from David, Jessica pitches him in the car with her. By the end of the trip in hot cars with little water, Teacake dies. Jessica is devastated by his death. She is even more shocked when she discovers that the cat has come back to life in the hotel room. In the last chapters of the book, Jessica sits with Teacake in her lap. David tells her that soon, she and Teacake will be the only ones left because they are both immortal.



Khaldun

Khaldun is the leader of the Life Brothers. He is present when the blood is drained from Christ's veins after his crucifixion. Khaldun witnesses when Christ's blood becomes warm when He returns from the dead. He is the only one of his group of men who are given the Life Ritual by the traveler who survives the procedure. Although the traveler wants Khaldun to perform the ritual on him, Khaldun refuses to do so and then drinks the remainder of Christ's blood so that no one else can discover its powers. It is Khaldun who sends Mahmoud to track Dawit and bring him back to Lalibela. Khaldun has a vision in which he learns that Jessica's infant is chosen. He sends word to Mahmoud not to injure either Jessica or her child.

Adele

Adele is a slave who is given to Dawit as his "wife" when he is owned by the master at Lowell Mason Farm. The master intends for Dawit to get Adele pregnant but Adele makes it clear that she does not want to have any more children because she's already had three children who have been taken from her and sold. Adele is angry and distrusting when she is first given to Dawit, but the two grow to love one another. Dawit plans to escape to the northern states to safety, then arrange to purchase Adele's freedom. Instead, Adele follows after him. The two are surprised by a group of workers who tie up Dawit and rape Adele, then hang them both.

Rosalie Tillis Banks

Rosalie Tillis Banks is David's daughter by Christina. In the prologue of the novel, David visits Rosalie in the nursing home and is disgusted by what old age has turned her into. David smothers her with a pillow, believing that death will be a friend to her. It is Jessica's investigation into Rosalie's death that causes David to kill Peter. He is afraid that his wife will find out about his life in Chicago and his immortality if she traces him to Rosalie. Dawit realizes that he was beginning to get attached to Rosalie when the Searchers came to him in Chicago. He did not grow any closer to Rosalie at this time because he left willingly when the Searchers asked him.

Peter Donovitch

Peter Donovitch is Jessica's friend at work and fellow reporter on the I-team. Peter suggests that the two write a book together, an idea with which David is not happy because he is afraid it will take too much of Jessica's time away from him and Kira. It is when Dawit discovers that Jessica is investigating Rosalie's death that he decides to kill Peter and in this way put an end to the book. Because Peter was such a close friend and mentor to Jessica, his death upsets her badly. It is not until after he dies that she realizes how little she knew of the man.



Kira Wolde

Kira Wolde is the daughter of Jessica and David Wolde. Kira is very close to her father. When Kira is born, David quits his job in order to stay at home with her. He teaches her foreign languages. One day after Peter's death Kira upsets her mother by speaking to her father in French, a language that she knows her mother doesn't understand. Kira is killed when her father attempts to perform the Life Ritual on her but is stopped when the police shoot him.

Sy Greene

Sy Greene is Jessica's immediate news editor at the Miami Sun-News. He is prepping her for a chance at a Pulitzer with her writing. For this reason, he picks her articles apart during the editing process. It is Sy who calls Jessica to let her know about Peter's murder. It is also in Sy's office that Lieutenant Reyes questions Jessica about David's encounter with Peter the night of Peter's murder. Like Jessica, Sy believes that Reyes is interrogating her.

Teferi

Teferi is one of the Life Brothers who goes mad because he spends too much time with mortals. It is because of Teferi that the Seekers are created to search for and monitor Life Brothers who have spent too much time in the mortal world. In Turkey, Teferi had killed a dozen people in a market place. When Mahmoud first visits Dawit, he tells Dawit that his actions remind him of the way that Teferi acted just before he went mad.

Randall Gaines

Randall Gaines is the man with whom Jessica's mother, Bea, begins seeing about the same time that David and Jessica decide to go abroad. Gaines supports Bea through the hospitalization of both her daughters. Gaines goes to Africa with Jessica, Bea and Alexis to start the children's clinic. He is the man who brings David into Jessica's house the day he comes to visit.

Lou Reed

Lou Reed is the man who owns the I-Ten Inn. A pizza delivery boy brings Lou's attention to crashing noises and screams coming from Room Two. Lou checks out the room and although everything seems okay, he gets his brother-in-law, who works with the state patrol, to run the tags on David's car. Because of this, Lou learns he has a murderer staying in his hotel.



Lieutenant Fernando Reyes

Lieutenant Fernando Reyes is the leading officer from the Miami Police Department who is investigating Peter's death. His questions lead Jessica to suspect David might have been involved in Peter's death. Jessica leaves a message on Reyes' answering machine when she leaves with Kira telling him that it was David who killed Peter.

Franklin

Franklin is Clara's great-grandson. His foot was injured when it was crushed beneath a wagon wheel. Franklin's foot is turning black and he's running a fever. Clara asks David to give her some of this blood to see if it will help the child's foot. The blood does help heal Franklin, although he still walks with a limp.

Lin

Lin is the name of the boy in the story that Kira's grandfather tells her. In the story, a dragon takes Lin into the sky where he lives forever. His parents can't go, however, because they are wizards. After her death, Kira's grandfather tells her that the boy, Lin, was actually Kira.

Kelile and Teka

Kelile and Teka are the two Life Brothers and fellow Seekers who find Mahmoud to tell him that Jessica and her infant must be allowed to remain alive. Although they don't agree with Khaldun's decision and believe both Jessica and David are dangerous to their kind, they feel that his orders must be obeyed.

Christina Tillis

Christina Tillis is David's wife in Chicago. She falls in love with David when she first hears him play his clarinet with The Jazz Brigade. Christina and David have two children, Rufus and Rosalie. David leaves Christina and the children when the Seekers come in search of him.

Night Song

Night Song is the name that the Wolde family gives to the sound of the wind in the trees around their home at night. They give the wind this name because they believe the howling sounds like the war cry of an Indian woman. On the night that David falls from the tree, Kira claims that it was Night Song who pushed him.



The Traveler

This random traveler performs the Ritual of the Living Blood on Khaldun, hoping that Khaldun will perform the ritual on him. Instead of complying, however, Khaldun lets the traveler die. It was the traveler's idea for the group to drain the blood from Christ's veins after his crucifixion and use the blood to give themselves immortality.

Boo

Boo is a small-time crack dealer who had called Jessica with a tip about the county's maintenance workers trafficking drugs at the area housing projects. Jessica is having a meeting with Boo and talking with him about more tips in this story the night that Peter is killed.

Chinja

Chinja is Mahmoud's son by a mortal woman. The woman had wanted Mahmoud to marry her, but he instead took Chinja when the child's mother told him no one would want her since she had a child. Chinja serves as Mahmoud and Dawit's servant until Mahmoud decides he has had enough of the child and abandons him.

Rufus

Rufus is Rosalie's brother and David's son by Christina. David is never close to Rufus even though the boy begs him to teach him music. Rufus has died of congestive heart failure ten years before David visits Rosalie in the nursing home.

Princess

Princess is the Wolde family's Great Dane. Princess suffers with a stomach torsion and dies just as soon as the family returns from a trip to Disney World. After Kira dies, it is Princess who gives her a pony ride up to heaven.

Rana

Rana is Mahmoud's little sister. Her marriage to Dawit sealed his friendship with Mahmoud, making them like brothers. At thirteen, Rana died in childbirth with Dawit's baby.



Lester Payne

Lester Payne is one of the people who are in the band with Dawit in the 20's. Even though Lester is frustrated during a practice session because they are interrupted first by Roaslie, then by Dawit's landlord, Lester knows that the music is worth the frustration.

Sadie Gillis

Sadie Gillis is Uncle Billy's deceased wife. On the day that Billy finds the photo from the 20's with David in it, Billy had seen Sadie standing at the end of his bed, wearing her wedding dress.

Mr. DeNight

Mr. DeNight is Jessica and David's next-door neighbor. When David falls from the tree in his yard, Mr. DeNight tries to help David but David threatens to sue him if he calls an ambulance.

Berhanu

Berhanu was the youngest of the Life Brothers. He is twelve when he goes through the ritual. Information in the novel notes that Berhanu grows taller and matures until he becomes an adult. At this point, he stops growing and getting older.

Victor Dunn

Victor Dunn is one of the doctors who works as part of Alexis' surgical team. Alexis feels that she is dead for sure when she hears Victor's voice because he barely passed anatomy. For this reason, he has been nicknamed "The Resident from Hell."

Sipho

Sipho is the young boy at the children's clinic who takes David to Jessica's home. Sipho's leukemia had progressed to the point that everyone believed he was dead when he was treated at the clinic.

Mrs. DeNight

When Jessica pulls up in her driveway the night that David falls out of the tree, one of the first things that she sees is her next-door neighbor, Mrs. DeNight, trying to comfort Kira.



Rick Mantooth

Rick Mantooth is the man from whom David rents the secluded cabin in the Everglades. Mantooth uses his airboat to take David and Jessica to the cabin in the Everglades.

Dr. Ivan Guerra

Dr. Ivan Guerra is the doctor who handles both Uncle Billy and Alexis' medical cases when they are injured in separate accidents.

Melaku

Melaku is the Life Brother who suggests to Dawit that he has an addiction to the mortal's way of life.

Dr. Roman

Dr. Roman is the veterinarian whom Jessica calls to see Princess when the dog becomes ill.



Objects/Places

Windsong Nursing Home in Chicago

The Windsong Nursing Home in Chicago is where Dawit goes to visit his daughter, Rosalie, then kills her by smothering her with a pillow.

Room 11-B

Room 11-B is Rosalie's room number at the nursing home.

The Trib

The Trib is the newspaper in which Dawit reads that Rufus has died and Rosalie is all alone.

Dade County

Dade County is the county in which Dawit, Jessica and Kira live.

Miami Sun-News

The Miami Sun-News is the paper for which Jessica works as an investigative reporter.

O'Leary's

O'Leary's is the restaurant where Peter and Jessica eat lunch the day he tells her about the book deal.

University of Miami

The University of Miami is the school where David taught classes until the time that Kira was born.

Honor Thy Mother and Father: America's Abuse and Neglect of

Honor Thy Mother and Father: America's Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly is the name that Peter had suggested for their book.



Intermediate Spanish 2

Intermediate Spanish 2 is the class for which Jessica voluntarily signs up after she realizes how much she learned in Dr. Wolde's Spanish class.

376 Tequesta Road

376 Tequesta Road is the address of David and Jessica's home.

El Portal

El Portal is the neighborhood in which Jessica and David live.

A Small Cave

This small cave on Jessica and David's property is where both Jessica and Kira believe that they are able to speak to Jessica's deceased father.

The Godfather

The Godfather is the movie that Jessica and David see on their first date together.

'Canes Keg

'Canes Keg is the place where Jessica and David eat during their first date together.

Century of Blood

Dawit's Century of Blood is the time after the death of Adele when he fought in the Civil War and shed much blood in an attempt to get revenge for Adele's death.

Life Brothers

Dawit's Life Brothers are the other men who have also undergone Khaldun's ritual and have received the gift of immortality.

Lalibela

Lalibela is a city in Ethiopia that the Life Brothers consider to be their home. It is here that the brothers spent their time studying and seeking knowledge.



Century of Peace

The Century of Peace is the time period after Dawit's Century of Rage when he made a pledge with himself not to kill anyone else.

David's Burn Mark

David gets this leaf shaped burn mark when he burns himself on a saucepan because he is so upset about Princess' death. The scar is gone in less than a week.

1968 Ford Mustang

Peter's car was a 1968 Ford Mustang. It is in this car that David slits Peter's throat.

New Life Bethel Baptist Church

New Life Bethel Baptist Church is the church that Jessica attends with her mother, daughter and sister. David will rarely go to church because he is an atheist.

Victrola

It is about this old-fashioned record player, a victrola, that Dawit kids Uncle Billy by saying he would like to steal from him.

Blue

Blue was Beatrice Jacobs' pet name for her husband, Jessica's father. She called him this because he was blue-black.

Burger King

Burger King is the restaurant to which Jessica's father was going the night he was killed in a car accident.

A Whopper

A Whopper is the sandwich from Burger King that Kira says that her grandfather is always eating when she sees him in the cave.



Casablanca

Casablanca is one of Dawit's favorite movies. He is watching this movie on the night that Alex calls to talk to Jessica about Dawit's blood.

Paperweight Troll

Peter gives this troll with purple hair to Jessica as a gift when he suggests they write a book together.

Searchers

The Searchers are a group of Life Brothers who are specifically trained to go in search of immortals who have been in the mortal world too long and are in danger of revealing the secrets of the covenant.

Cigarette Butt

It is when Dawit sees this cigarette butt half buried outside his backdoor that he realizes for sure that the Seekers have come to look for him.

B-flat Laube Clarinet

Dawit played a B-flat Laube clarinet when he was part of the The Jazz Brigade. He purchased it in an antique store. When he first finds the instrument and plays it again in Miami, he remembers and mourns Rosalie as a child.

House of Music

It is in this house of learning in Lalibela that Khaldun teaches Dawit what he knows about music.

Cornet Chop Suey

Cornet Chop Suey is the song with which Dawit plays along when he first finds his clarinet in his Miami home.

The Jazz Brigade

The Jazz Brigade is the band in which Dawit played in the 20's.



Ritual of Life for the Living Blood

The Ritual of Life for the Living Blood is the ritual that Dawit and his Life Brothers underwent in order to accept the gift of immortality.

A Lame Dog

A lame dog is the animal on which Khaldun experimented in order to determine if he could properly perform the Ritual of Life for the Living Blood.

Composite Sketch

Jessica can tell nothing about the composite sketch that is faxed to her by the Chicago Police Department. When she finally looks at the original of the sketch, she realizes that it was David who killed Rosalie.

Godfather Movies

It is during their first date that Jessica and David watch and discuss The Godfather.

Covenant of Secrecy

The Covenant of Secrecy is the promise that each of the Life Brothers have made to never tell anyone about the details of the life ritual or their immortality.

The Living Blood

The Living Blood is the blood that flows inside Dawit's veins. This blood gives him immortality. According to a traveler, the blood came from Christ after he died on the cross.

Photo from The Jazz Brigade's Summer Stomp, 1926

When Uncle Billy sees David in this picture, he believes that he has seen a ghost.

A Hook-bill Knife

A hook-bill knife is the instrument that David used to kill Peter.



Lowell Mason Farm

Lowell Mason Farm is the farm where Dawit was a slave during the Civil War era.

Cabin in the Everglades

A secluded cabin in the everglades is where Dawit takes Jessica to show her his ability to come back from the dead.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the country from which Dawit originally came.

Imani

Imani is the name of Kira's doll. Peter gave her this black baby doll as a Christmas gift.

Syringe of Blood

Jessica finds this syringe of warm blood in David's shed and takes it to Alex for analysis.

Supercells

Supercells is the term that Alexis uses to refer to the miraculous healing properties of David's blood.

The Doll Store

It is to this doll store that Jessica tells David she wants to take Kira when she is actually intending to run away.

Mobil Station in Yeehaw Junction

Mahmoud tracks Jessica down at the Mobil Station in Yeehaw Junction and loosens the fuses so that her van will stop running when she gets back on the Interstate.

I-Ten Inn

It is to the I-Ten Inn that David takes Jessica and Kira so that he can perform the ritual on them.



Red and Yellow Capsules (Dalmane)

Dawit uses Dalmane, a sleeping medicine, on Jessica and Kira to make them go to sleep so he can strangle them.

Skeletons of Dead Lizards

It is just before she goes to sleep from the Dalmane that Jessica remembers seeing the skeletons of dead lizards in David's shop and realizes they were the victims of unsuccessful Life Ritual experiments.

KAT-161

It is when the owner of the I-Ten Inn has this license tag tracked that it is discovered that David is wanted for murder.

Forever Man

Forever Man is a song written by David for The Jazz Brigade that he feels as if he had written for Jessica.

Wizards

Kira's grandfather refers to her parents as wizards who can never live in heaven with her.

KwaZulu/Natal South Africa

KwaZulu/Natal South Africa is where Jessica and Alex's clinic is located when David tracks them down.

The Children's Clinic

Alex and Jessica have founded this children's clinic in order to use Jessica's blood to help heal African children with diseases so they will have a chance at life.

Blood of Christ

The blood of Christ is what has given Khaldun and his followers their immortality.



Themes

Loss

Loss is a major theme in this novel. Because Dawit is immortal, he has outlived almost everyone that he has come to love. He lost Rana, his first wife, to death in childbirth. He lost Adele to the hate and ignorance of men during the Civil War era. His child, Rosalie, grew old and unfamiliar to him after he left that family when the Searchers came looking for him. Now that David has a new family, he has decided that he does not want to lose them as well. As hard as he tries to keep from losing Jessica and Kira, however, he still winds up losing both of them.

Loss appears to be especially hard for a man who is immortal. Teferi, one of Dawit's life brothers, has gone mad. The other brothers reason that it is because he spent too much time among the mortals. Khaldun advises the brothers not to become attached to people who will pass away but to pursue those things that will last. Instead of staying in the Life Brothers' habitat of Lalibela, Dawit chooses to follow in Teferi's footsteps and make his life among the mortals. One of his brothers tells Dawit that he is addicted to the mortals' ways of life. When Mahmoud comes to attempt to escort Dawit back to Lalibela, he tells Dawit that he is becoming very much like Teferi in his behavior and mindset. Even though he loves Jessica and Kira enough that he wants to take them through the Life Ritual and keep them with him forever, he still hurts over the loss of his first wife, Rana, and Adele, the black slave woman with whom he fell in love.

When Dawit alters Jessica so that she will live forever, he takes away from her the one thing that is most important to her. As a Christian, Jessica's salvation, and the idea that she will one day go to heaven is very important to her. As she tells Kira one day as they talk about the family's dog which has passed away, Jessica tells Kira that it is only by death that one can go to heaven. Since Jessica cannot die, she cannot go to heaven. She will be separated forever from her family and those whom she loves when they die. Although she was given the opportunity to give her daughter the same immortality that she now has, Jessica realized that keeping her daughter with her was not the best thing that she could do for Kira.

Coincidence Versus Fate

An aspect of life that Jessica believes in very strongly is the idea that nothing happens without a reason. She believes there is a reason that she married her professor husband. She believes there is a reason why her husband turned out to be such an unusual person. As Jessica learns more about her husband, and learns more about what he has done in his recent past, she becomes more and more uncertain about the direction in which her life is going.



After Jessica receives her immortality from Dawit, she seems to become even more torn about the direction in which her life has gone. She and her sister are healing children. They are using the miracle of the blood in a way that helps people, not just in a way that benefits them alone. Jessica realizes though that her family will grow old and die. She will be left alone with her cat, and perhaps her daughter Beatrice who may or may not have inherited immortality from her mother and father. She faces the knowledge that one day the only person that she will have left is Dawit. Despite all that he has done to her and all that he has taken away from her, Jessica knows that she still loves Dawit. In the last chapter of the novel, Jessica is seeking time that she can spend alone searching herself and her Bible for answers.

Love

Love and the true nature of love is another major theme in the novel. As Dawit moves through his life, it is difficult to tell if he really loves the people with whom he comes in contact. He admits that he does not love Christina and Rufus. He realizes as he spends time with Kira that he had begun to become attached to Rosalie. Despite the love that he claims to feel for Rosalie, however, Dawit kills her. He believes he is being kind to her by killing her, but at the same time believes he is a monster for killing his own child.

Again, Dawit believes that he loves Jessica and Kira enough that he wants them to live with him forever. Although Dawit may believe this is love that he is showing to his family, it is a selfish love. Dawit has been selfish in his love from the beginning of his relationship with Jessica. He has started a family with her knowing that he cannot stay with her as a normal husband. Eventually, Dawit will either have to leave, or he will have to explain to her the reason why he doesn't age. When Jessica learns Dawit's secret, she is concerned about the way Dawit will feel about her as she begins to age. It is already known that Dawit killed his daughter, Rosalie, because she was offensive to him in his old age.

Dawit's odd type of love does not take into consideration what is best for Jessica and Kira. Although Jessica's salvation is one of the most important aspects of her life, Dawit does not take this into consideration when he decides he wants her to be immortal. Although he does not intend to do so, Dawit permanently separates Jessica from her daughter. He also puts the decision of whether to let Kira die or give her immortality in Jessica's hands. In his attempts to show Jessica his love, Dawit has caused Jessica more pain than happiness in the long term.

Style

Point of View

This story is told from the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. The narrator is omniscient because he knows about the things that have happened to Dawit even back in 1540 when he underwent the Ritual of Life at Khaldun's hands. All characters are referred to by the personal pronouns he or she in the expository passages of the story, showing that none of the characters is acting as narrator.

The action of the story is told mainly from the point of view of main characters Dawit and Jessica. The story is told through the thoughts of each of these characters as well as through their dialogue. Although other characters aren't given as much emphasis as Jessica and Dawit, these other characters also help to tell the story.

Setting

One of the major settings of the novel is the home of Jessica and Dawit located at 376 Tequesta Road in El Portal. David bought this house before he and Jessica were married. He has renovated most of it himself. The house is located on the haunted grounds that once belonged to the Tequesta Indians. A burial mound is located across the street from their home. At night, a high-pitched howling can be heard in the trees. Jessica often says the sound is made by the ghost of an old Indian woman. The family calls the ghost Night Song. A cave on this property is a significant setting in the novel because it is here that the ghost of Jessica's father appears to both Jessica and to Kira. Jessica and David also go to this cave when they want to talk about David's history without being overheard or spied upon.

Other important settings in the novel include the I-Ten Inn where David gives Jessica immortality, then is shot by the police and the Yeehaw Junction Mobil Station where Mahmoud catches up with Jessica. Jessica's newsroom is another important setting as is the car where Peter is murdered. The cabin in the Everglades is where David proves to Jessica that he is immortal. Beatrice's home is another important setting since this is where Dawit kills Uncle Billy.

The Windsong Nursing Home, where David goes to visit and murder his daughter, Rosalie, is the first setting introduced in the novel. The Children's Clinic in Africa is another important setting since this is Alexis' and Jessica's dream for their life. A final important setting is the city of Lalibela where the immortal Life Brothers live. It is in this city that Dawit suggests that Jessica come to look for him after the people she knows now have passed away.



Language and Meaning

Although it covers a variety of different time frames and places, this novel uses language that is uniform and smooth. The text transitions easily from place to place and time period to time period without these transitions being distracting to the reader. The characters are so well developed that they are believable and their story is engrossing. The language moves the plot along quickly, giving the right information at the right time to make the story both perplexing and mysterious.

Generally, the language of the novel is accepted English. Only in a few spots, such as the dialogue by the slave Clara and her husband, does the writer attempt to mimic what might have been the speech patterns of these people. In a few places in the novel, a few French or Spanish phrases are sprinkled in but can generally be easily understood using context clues.

The majority of the novel is spent in descriptive passages that set the scene for what is happening in the novel. The eerie and surreal tone of the novel is set in the Prologue when Dawit is walking through the quiet nursing home which is cold and lonely despite attempts to make it cheery. Descriptions of other settings, such as the Wolde's home add to this eerie tone. For instance, the plot on which their home is built is next to an old Indian burial site. They personalize the sound of the wind in the trees, giving her the name Night Song, and her own personality. Perhaps the most cheerful setting in the novel is Jessica and Alexis' children's clinic in Africa where the place is described as being filled with the sound of children laughing and playing.

Structure

Although this novel is very complex and deals with a variety of themes and ideas, it is a very engrossing and intriguing book. It is split into five parts with each part detailing a specific part of the action. It is in the first part of the book that the reader learns that David and Dawit are the same person as well as that David has a very terrible and long life that he has hidden from his wife and daughter. When he kills Peter at the end of this first part, David shows that he is willing to do whatever it takes to keep his past hidden from his family. The second part of the novel deals with Jessica's reaction to Peter's death. It also gives the reader a great deal of background on Dawit including his time with his family in Chicago as well as his history with Adele. In this part of the book, the powers of David's blood have begun to be revealed.

In the third part of the book, David experiments with the Life Ritual on the family cat in his plan to perform the same ritual on his wife and daughter. He also proves his immortality to Jessica by killing himself in her presence, then coming back to life the next morning. It is at the end of this section that Jessica begins to suspect that her husband might be responsible for the death of Peter. In the fourth section of the book, Jessica believes that her fears about her husband are cemented when her sister is pushed from the balcony of her apartment after she discovers what a medical miracle David's blood is. In this section David also kidnaps Jessica and Kira. He manages to



perform the ritual on Jessica before the police, whom she has notified of his murders, stop him. David does not complete the ritual on Kira, however, and the girl dies. In section five, Jessica has found a sort of peace in helping save the children of small towns in Africa from once deadly diseases through the use of her blood. Dawit, however, still roams the world unsatisfied and hurting.

The story is not told in a linear fashion and the writer often flashes back in time to give pieces of David's history. Sometimes these flashbacks take up entire chapters. In these chapters, the time period as well as the setting of the situation is noted. In some cases these bits of history are shared through David's own memories. In these instances, the story will suddenly switch backward in time as David's thoughts drift back into his own past.



Quotes

"Did Kira understand already what Jessica, as a Christian, feared: That unless David accepted Christ, he would not be saved?"

Chapter 3, pg. 29

"What aberration of nature would murder his own child?"

Chapter 4, pg. 39

"Nature had been poised to take his child, and for the first time he'd been a witness to nature's inevitable triumph: his own child among the succession of mortal lives constantly flickering out around him."

Chapter 4, pg. 40

"Later, when she would think about this lunch with Peter, she would realize that she'd never even told him how much his encouragement and faith meant to her."

Chapter 6, pg. 53

"It should be clear to them that he had not betrayed the Covenant with Khaldun. He had never betrayed it. Why was mere separation always considered such a dire threat? All he wanted was peace."

Chapter 6, pg. 53

"The first word she spoke was his name, the name he'd told her, the Hebrew variation of the name his mother had given him in his first language, so long ago."

Chapter 6, pg. 57

"Did you know that precious ounces of Christ's blood were stolen from the fresh corpse, drained into a leather pouch? This is true. I was there when it was done."

Chapter 8, pg. 61

"Then, not long before the reports of the empty burial cave miles from where we sat, the blood in our pouch grew warm. We could feel the heat when we passed it between us. The blood lived."

Chapter 8, pgs. 61-62

"I have been alone too long. I need obedient pupils who are willing to journey with me in Life for the purpose of knowledge, and knowledge alone."

Chapter 8, pg. 62

"The Blood of Life is inside me. I have lived much like a hermit for many years, asking God to forgive me. But He does not hear my prayers because I have stolen from one of His favored children."

Chapter 8, pg. 62



"The Chicago world had never before crossed the Miami world, and yet his daughter's name was written before him like an indictment—and in his own wife's bouncy, feminine handwriting."

Chapter 10, pg. 69

"It wasn't merely these women's bodies he wanted, it was their souls. Their love."

Chapter 14, pg. 90

"In Kira, Dawit understood how reborn Khaldun must have felt when he collected the Life brothers as pupils, so many fertile minds ready for seeds."

Chapter 14, pg. 91

"There'd been one time—he couldn't remember the circumstances nor what words had been spoken between them—when he looked at her and comprehended that she was not merely an accident who carried his genes and traces of his face, but a treasure."

Chapter 14, pg. 91

"What if Jessica and Kira never had to age or die? What if they could share his blood?"

Chapter 14, pg. 92

"Your only Covenant to me in exchange for the Life gift is this: No one must know. No one must join. We are the last."

Chapter 14, pg. 93

"He'd so often wished he could relive that moment in the parking lot, at Peter's Mustang, and let that mortal live. Killing his wife's friend, he now realized, had been a hasty mistake."

Chapter 14, pgs. 93-94

"No, Dawit had decided, he would not be a prisoner to Christ or Allah or Satan, or any other of humankind's imaginary guardians or tormentors. He would not mourn his exclusion from a fabled Heaven."

Chapter 14, pg. 96

"Americans had grown far more pampered in recent decades. Perhaps the Searchers were right in what they had told him the night they came to bid him to leave his family in Chicago; perhaps it was no longer possible, in modern times, to blend with mortals."

Chapter 21, pg. 130

"Maybe you a devil. Maybe you got some voodoo. Don't know which. You got healing in your blood."

Chapter 22, pg. 139

"Grandpa says if we don't leave, bad things will happen. Very, very bad things."

Chapter 23, pg. 147



"Peter's death had shaken her faith, a tremor at the roots, which time had stilled, but Jessica was stubborn in her belief that everything happened for a reason."

Chapter 23, pg. 152

"For the sake of the Covenant, I would take a life with less conscience than even you. But I would not be so careless. I would not rely on the stupidity of mortals to cover my deeds."

Chapter 24, pg. 157

"Mahmoud would surely return. Clearly, he had threatened to harm Jessica and Kira, and Dawit did not doubt his sincerity."

Chapter 26, pg. 173

"When my first wife died long ago, in Ethiopia, I thought I knew grief. But until you have witnessed the death of a loved one to another man's violence, you know nothing of grief."

Chapter 31, pg. 205

"Jessica could see how flimsily constructed all of David's lies were. An orphan. A trust account. Bea had always seen through him, even when love made insight impossible for Jessica."

Chapter 34, pgs. 220-221

"The monitor in Dawit's vehicle had captured evidence that would result in Dawit's imprisonment for all of time."

Chapter 35, pg. 224

"And the minute you put this sample in my hand, you gave me knowledge that could help save lives in ways I haven't even thought of. This is what I'm talking about. And if I have that knowledge and don't act on it, then guess what? What all the folks have been saying is true."

Chapter 39, pg. 246

"No, David wasn't beating her. Far from it. He was saving her. If Kira was the beauty in her life, David was the anchor."

Chapter 41, pg. 257

"Coincidence followed David. Alex had said there was no such thing as accidents."

Chapter 42, pg. 261

"His message had been very clear, but Mahmoud had failed to interpret it then; Khaldun had been trying to tell him that Dawit might bring destruction to their centuries of peace."

Chapter 44, pg. 265

"Jessica was paralyzed with the realization that the life she had known was over. Simply over. Her rationalizations, her acceptance of David's history just to keep the peace, could not change that."

Chapter 45, pg. 270



"That seemed to be the only fitting outcome: David had to go back to his home. Whatever he was, wherever he belonged, he was a freak in their world."
Chapter 47, pg. 275

"How ironic it was that mortals, who had the least time of all, were willing to waste so much of it away from people they loved."
Chapter 49, pg. 282

"It figured. Like Job, she'd lost everything else she cared about, so why not the cat she'd raised since he was a fur ball of a kitten?"
Chapter 52, pg. 296

"Dawit's wife and child must live. They are no threat to us."
Chapter 53, pg. 301

"Khaldun was not one to change his mind, nor one to heed dreams or visions. Khaldun, who never spoke of God, was professing a divine vision?"
Chapter 53, pg. 301

"We know Dawit's intentions. But Khaldun was emphatic: Dawit's wife must live, and the infant as well. Your work here is done. No blood will be shed. You will return with us."
Chapter 53, pg. 301

"'Dawit will come of his own will,' Teka said. 'This is what Khaldun has told us.'"
Chapter 53, pg. 301

"'Her infant is chosen,' he said."
Chapter 53, pg. 301

"With his blood, Dawit is bringing fire to humankind. Their greedy race, when it has fire, burns everything to cinders. All of us will be in that fire's path."

Chapter 53, pg. 302

"But if you learn nothing else from me, Jessica, learn this: Do not stake your attachments too deeply. In a very short amount of time—it will amaze you how quickly—one by one, they will all be gone. They are mortals, and you are no longer of them."
Chapter 62, pg. 340



Topics for Discussion

In the 1540s Khaldun gives other people the gift of life so that he doesn't have to live alone as an immortal. If Khaldun was able to give the gift of life, why does he not allow his students to do the same? Why is it considered wrong for David to want to keep his family with him forever?

In your opinion, why did Teferi go mad among the mortals?

Compare and contrast the actions of the character of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* to David. How is Jessica's defense of Corleone's actions in the movie significant to her life with David?

Why is the smell of blood significant in the novel?

After Jessica has taken Kira and run from David, turned him in to the police and betrayed him in multiple ways, does David still want her to spend eternity with him? Why does he not just go away and leave her alone?

Why, in your opinion, does Khaldun order that Jessica and her child not be hurt?

Explain the significance of the song "Forever Man" in the novel.

What does the cave represent?

How is Khaldun like a god? Why is it significant that he feels unable to gain redemption from God?

Why is it significant that Jessica's father tells her to tell Kira there are no good monsters? How does this idea flow through the book? Who is the monster that he is talking about?

Compare and contrast Khaldun's actions with Dawit's actions. How are the two characters similar? How are they different?