

# **NOS4A2 Study Guide**

**NOS4A2 by Joe Hill**

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# Plot Summary

NOS4A2 by Joe Hill is a fictional tale that introduces the reader to some special people who are able to physically access the inner mind. Victoria (Vic) McQueen has a special gift. With the aid of her Raleigh Tuff Burner bicycle, she is able as a child to access the Shorter Way Bridge and take it to find objects or people regardless of how far away they are. She doesn't share this ability with others, knowing that most likely they wouldn't believe her anyway as the Shorter Way Bridge had long since collapsed into the river below. For Vic, her unique power continues after her childhood, appearing when she needs it to get to some place or to somebody. In addition to introducing readers to Vic, the story includes a monster named Charles Manx, who has evil paranormal powers.

Charles Manx is a serial kidnapper. He uses his 1938 Rolls-Royce to access his own in-scape, which he calls Christmasland. When he takes kidnapped children there, the car helps him to siphon off their life force. He grows younger with each victim, healing faster than nature would allow. He discards the children in Christmasland when he is done. He often takes their parents as well, and those he gives to Bing Partridge, a simple minded man who wants nothing more than to be taken to Christmasland with Manx. In return, however, Manx asks him to prove himself by helping him to 'rescue' these children he takes. Bing is charged with dealing with the parents that get caught up as well. He takes them to his home, dubbed the 'House of Sleep' by Manx, and after amusing himself with them by keeping them under the influence of a gas called Sevoflurane, he kills them and buries them in his basement.

When Vic runs away from home after her parents split up, she uses her bridge to get to Charles Manx's home, called the Sleigh House. Surrounded by fir trees festooned with Christmas ornaments, the forest is an ongoing tribute to the season of Christmas. Vic almost loses her life to Manx, but she escapes by climbing a laundry chute to the upper floor. Then, she makes it to the highway where she is picked up by Lou Carmody. He not only takes her to the nearest phone to call 911, but he helps her to cope with the assault and subsequent arrest of Manx. As has always been the case, Vic doesn't tell the authorities about the Shorter Way Bridge that took her to Manx's Sleigh House. It's easier to let them run with the assumption that he kidnapped her and took her across state lines. In the struggle faced just before his arrest, he kills one man and is sentenced to life in prison for his combination of crimes of which the authorities actually knew very little.

Maggie Leigh, a librarian in Ohio, first told Vic about Manx. She is another special person with paranormal abilities. In a state of confusion Vic asks to learn about Maggie's gift. The bridge links her to Maggie who tells her that she belongs to a special group of people she calls 'creatives.' She is able to access not only the real world landscapes, but the in-scape of the mind as well. Of course, as there is balance to everything, there is also balance to her gift. For Vic, it is debilitating migraine headaches and fevers that wrack her body whenever she returns from using the bridge to go somewhere. Maggie's gift is being able to use Scrabble tiles to tell the future. By digging into what appears to be a bottomless bag of tiles, she is able to discern upcoming



events, find people, and see glimpses of the future. Her balance is a stutter that gets worse the more she uses her tiles.

Though they never marry, Lou and Vicky have a child together named Wayne. Wayne is the pride and joy of his parents. With Manx safely locked in jail, it would seem that life would be fine, but Vic is somehow still linked to his in-scape, Christmasland. Vicky gets telephone calls only she can hear from children who are there, including Manx's own daughters, who threaten her and promise that her son Wayne will join them soon. For a long time, the threats are empty, especially when Manx slips into a decade long coma. However, when Manx's Rolls-Royce is sold at auction to Nathan Demeter and Nathan takes it upon himself to restore it, he inadvertently restores Manx's life force as well. Despite having physically died and gone through a partial autopsy, Manx is reanimated when Nathan takes the car out for its inaugural spin. He leaves the morgue and joins his former cohort and disciple Bing Partridge to begin taking children again. The first on his list is Wayne, Vicky's son. So, begins a battle between Manx and Vicky, during which Vicky uses her bridge to find and finally rescue her son. In the process, both Vicky and Maggie will give their lives. It will also cost Bing and Manx their lives as well. As all things make a return to balance, Wayne is home with his father.



# Prologue: Season's Greetings December 2008 and Chapter 1: Shorter Way 1986 - 1989

## Summary

NOS4A2 by Joe Hill is a fictional tale that introduces the reader to some special people who are able to physically access the inscapes of the mind. It is also a story about a monster. Victoria McQueen has a special gift. With the aid of her Raleigh Tuff Burner bicycle, she is able to access the Shorter Way Bridge and take it to find objects or people regardless of how far away they are. She doesn't share this ability with others, knowing that most likely wouldn't believe her anyway as the Shorter Way Bridge had long since collapsed into the river below. For Vic, it lives on, appearing when she needs it to get to some place or to somebody.

Ellen Thornton goes about her job of caring for the comatose patients in the infirmary of the Supermax prison in FCI in Englewood, California. As Ellen is getting ready to hang another bag of blood, Charlie Manx opens his eyes and begins talking to her about her son Josiah. He is insistent that he needs his Wraith to get to Christmasland where he is saving a place for Josiah.

Victoria hears her parents argue about the bracelet her mother lost. She sneaks outside, taking out her bike. She rides as far as the Merrimack River. Instead of stopping at the covered Shorter Way Bridge which she has been forbidden to cross, she continues. On the other side Vic is surprised to find that she is in the back alley behind Terry's Primo Subs in New Hampshire. The same clerk is behind the register. He takes Vicky's mother's bracelet out of the till and gives it to Vicky. Disoriented, she thanks him and leaves. An employee standing outside is staring in disbelief at the bridge, and Vicky tells him he shouldn't worry. Then she gets back on her bike and rides across, finding herself back in Haverhill, Massachusetts, in the woods of the Merrimack River again. Her head is pounding, and all she can think about is getting back home again. Unable to even continue riding, she pushes her bike home. Her father is standing in the kitchen, running his knuckles under the faucet. He turns to her and tells her she doesn't look very well. She tries to tell him she is okay, announcing she'd found her mother's bracelet between the seats in the car. Then, she keels over. Chris calls out to his wife, telling her that the 'Brat' passed out. He carries Vicky into her room. Vicky notices her mother's mouth is swollen. Her Mom and Dad are no longer arguing. She sleeps and has nightmares about a dead dog and a gas mask. She wakes up flailing. Chris calms her and she asks him what happened to the Shorter Way Bridge. He explains that someone tried to drive across it, killing himself and destroying the bridge. She drifts back off to sleep. Within months, she has largely forgotten the whole thing. She tries not to think about the bridge incident, just as she had done with the other times that she crossed a nonexistent bridge and found a lost item. For example, she had found her friend Willa's



lost corduroy penguin by using the "sometimes existent" bridge to get to Fenway Bowling Alley and back again. When she was ten, she found her father's wallet on a construction site in Attleboro much the same way. At the age of eleven, she found a cat named Taylor. She never told Mrs. de Zoet about the lost cat because she'd found it dead on the highway. Each time, she excused the event and made a more plausible explanation up for herself and others, dismissing the Shorter Way Bridge and its mysterious passages to lost things.

## Analysis

Nurse Thornton is preoccupied with thoughts of her son and her intentions to buy him a Nintendo DS for Christmas, despite the fact that it goes against her better judgment. She had always hoped that her child would be interested in Scrabble and books. She also hoped that he wanted to do outdoor activities with her. She resents the sight of children who are glued to handheld video systems, unable to use their own imaginations or be creatively inventive as a result. However, she can't resist it anymore, especially after seeing her son pretending to play the system he hoped to get for the upcoming holidays.

As her thoughts return to her work routine, she is so horrified when Charlie Manx opens his eyes for the first time that she can't even scream until after he grabs her arm. She drops the bag of blood she was ready to hang and wrests herself free of him, banging through the doors and treading blood down the hall behind her. The doctor who comes in to examine Charlie assures her that he is harmless, but Ellen isn't convinced.

Victoria hates it when her parents argue. She listens at the bedroom door and hears her father hurl a spiteful comment at her mother that brings tears to her eyes. She decides to do what she can to repair the cause of the argument - the bracelet her mother lost. Vicky gets on her bike and does what she will do again in the future - she crosses the Shorter Way Bridge and returns with the lost bracelet. She doesn't think about the fact that the Shorter Way Bridge fell into the river earlier when someone tried to drive over it in their car. Also, she dismisses the fact that each time she crosses the bridge that no longer exists, it takes her to exactly the place she needs to go to find the lost item of the moment. First it was her mother's bracelet, then her best friend's penguin, her father's wallet, and even a neighbor's cat. Each of these was located somewhere different, but the bridge that no longer existed took her and her bike directly to them and back again. Each time she returned from her trip across the bridge, she felt ill. She had headaches and fever that would go away after a short time. Vicky told herself that she found these items in logical places refusing to think about the strange and unnatural alternatives. After all, Vicky began finding things at the age of eight. Part of her realized that she couldn't begin to tell anyone what was really going on - not even herself.



## Discussion Question 1

Why is Ellen Thornton so against the idea of getting her son a handheld video game system? What changes her mind?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Charlie tell Ellen? What is so unusual about this? What does he do that frightens her so deeply?

## Discussion Question 3

What is supernatural about the incident involving Vicky and her mother's bracelet? Why is this unlikely to be something that she simply hallucinated as a result of fever or heatstroke?

## Vocabulary

expeditions, infirmary, metronome, regurgitates, incoherent, suffocating, malevolent, hallucination



## Chapter 2: Spicy Menace, 1990

### Summary

Bing Partridge reads through a Spicy Menace magazine from August, 1949. He sees an article seeking an employee for Christmasland. He is determined that he is the perfect candidate for this job. He types a reply in which he describes his current employment, assuring the owners of Christmasland that he is willing to do anything to gain employment with them. He finds a box of Christmas cards which seems appropriate, so he tucks his letter into one, kisses it for luck, and sends it off. For the next several days, he stands at the mailbox, hoping for a reply even though he has just sent his letter off. On Monday night, he wakes to the sounds of White Christmas, and he has dreams that are more vivid than any he's ever had before.

Bing sees a Rolls Royce while he is at work. Bing is sure that any moment the door will open and he will be summoned, but instead the car drives slowly away. It is another week before he sees the Rolls again, this time sitting across the street from his house when he gets home from work. Charles Manx, the driver of the Rolls, introduces himself and takes Bing down Highway 322, stopping at the Franklin Dairy Queen to pick up some cokes. He talks to Bing about his parents, assuring him that killing them was justifiable. When Bing gets sleepy, Charlie encourages him to close his eyes, telling him that the road to Christmasland is paved in dreams.

Bing wakes on the road to Christmasland, but Charlie says that they still have about a twenty hour drive ahead. The ride is magical, and Charlie explains that his car can slip into the secret roads of thoughts, with sleep like its exit ramp. When passengers dose, the Wraith enables Charlie to slide onto the St. Nick Parkway and share in their dreams. Charlie takes Bing to the Graveyard of What Might Be and shows him the many children that will die at the hands of their abusive families or parents. He has saved seventy children already and hopes to save a hundred before he is done. A loud whining noise gets Bing's attention, and Charlie tells him morning is pulling up on them fast.

At daylight, a truck roars by with Sunrise Delivery on its side. In a blink, they are in the Pennsylvania countryside, and Bing sees a girl on the side of the highway. He recognizes her from the Graveyard. It's Lily Carter. Bing wants to rescue her, but Charlie says there are preparations to make first. He warns Bing that mothers can be a problem. He asks if Bing can get any Sevoflurane from work, suggesting he will want his gas mask and gun as well.

### Analysis

Bing is an adult, who is somewhat retarded as a result of childhood abuse. His father had hit him hard enough on the head to crack his skull. Eventually, Bing killed his father by using a nail gun to drive a nail into his skull. Bing likes to read his father's old





magazines, such as Spicy Menace. He responds to ads in them without understanding that they are older than he is. When he reads one particular ad calling for an employee for a place called Christmasland, he is more than enthused. He feels as though he already knows the place and replies immediately. The ad alone is enough to transport him to a time in his childhood when life was good. It was on a Christmas morning that he considered the best ever. He would give anything to return to that time. He remembered his mother's love and his father as the man on the floor with him, giving him his prized Korean gas mask from the war. It is a memory so sharp that it could have just as easily been the day before. He writes to the owners of Christmasland, assuring them that he is the employee they need. Then, he spends days waiting at the mailbox, hoping for a reply. Within a few days, Bing begins having vivid dreams about Christmasland. Though he can see it as though he were looking through a window, he is never able to completely enter. He wakes one night hearing White Christmas by Bing Crosby. He looks outside to see a Rolls-Royce disappearing around the corner. He sees the same car at work, and he is sure that they have come to pick him up. But, the car leaves him behind again. Bing is beside himself and calls out over and over for the vehicle to stop and to give him a chance, but it doesn't. It is more than a week before he sees the car again, but this time it is waiting on the road outside his house. Bing never questions the driver or his appearance. Bing is just grateful and eager to join him.

Charlie Manx introduces himself and seems to know a great deal about Bing. He buys Bing a soda and takes him to the Graveyard Of What Might Be, showing him the children who will likely die at the hands of their parents. He tells Bing that he could have a future with Christmasland, but he must earn the position first. He also talks to Bing about how his parents died and justifies Bing's actions by reminding him that his father had hit Bing hard enough to fracture his skull. Since his mother did nothing to help, she was just as culpable. This is all directly related to Charlie's mission to 'save' as many children as he can. Charlie shows Bing one of the children from the Graveyard, and Bing wants to rescue her immediately. Charlie tells him that they have to prepare first. He asks Bing to get Sevoflurane and to bring his gun and gas mask as well.

## Discussion Question 1

What memories are invoked by the advertisement Bing finds in his father's old magazines? Why is this such an important memory?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Charlie Manx tell Bing about the children he 'saves'? What items does he want Bing to contribute to earn his way in?



## Discussion Question 3

Where does Charlie take Bing? What unnatural or unusual things does Bing see or experience while he is with Charlie? What does Bing learn from where he is taken and what is his reaction?

## Vocabulary

indiscretions, delineated, distortion, benevolently, unfathomably, transition, intuitions, irresistible



## Chapter 3: The Librarian, 1991

### Summary

Vicky is upset that she has lost a photograph her father gave her of himself and his mother. It was the only photo that her father had. He had asked her to take care of it. Her mother is livid that she has misplaced it. The painting Vic made from the photo is finished, but her mother tells her the photo is a great deal more important. Vicky leaves on her bike, rides the trail to the bridge, and keeps going. The other end opens into her school. After searching; she finds the photo. Then, she sees Mr. Eugley, the janitor, staring at the Shorter Way Bridge and her bike. He shrieks at her to leave, so she does. Two days later, Vicky hears her mother talking on the phone about him. It confirms that he saw her, despite her efforts to brush the event off as a dream. She had used dreams to explain all of the 'finding' events involving the Shorter Way Bridge. Mr. Eugley is proof they really happened, and Vicky longs to talk to someone who can explain it to her.

Vicky rides to the bridge and is surprised to see it is there waiting. This time, the green paint on the wall points to 'Here.' Confused, she rides through, seeing white noise through the cracks of the walls and bats on the ceiling. Each bat has Vicky's face with the exception of red eyes. On the other side, a voice tells her to watch out just as her bike hits a curb. She spills onto the sidewalk. Vic sees a girl not much older than she is who says she was expecting her. She calls her by her father's nickname 'The Brat.' She welcomes her into the library where she is the Librarian. After patching up Vic's knee, she confirms that she is not going crazy. Vic uses her bike and the Shorter Way Bridge to get from one place to another. The librarian, Margaret Leigh, uses Scrabble tiles to foretell future events. She pulls them out of a bottomless bag. When she sees Vic's headache is worsening, she admits there is usually a downside to their gift as well. The more she reads tiles, the worse her stammer gets. In Vic's case, its migraines that worsen the longer she is gone. Maggie opens up her Scrabble bag, and after a couple of tries pulls out 'THE BRAT COULD FIND THE WRAITH.' After arguing with her, she finally tells Vic about the people who vanish because of the Wraith and begs her to stay away from him. The tiles don't give her proper names, so she can't simply call the police or they would think she is crazy. Maggie sees tears streaming from Vic's left eye and helps her back out to her bike. She hands Vic her earrings – Scrabble tiles F and U, telling her they are like armor, and a poem, promising she will always be there.

Vic can hardly stand when she gets back to the other side of the bridge. She no longer has her bike and can't tell its whereabouts. Her father carries her inside. She makes up a story about being knocked off her bike. She is out for almost twenty-four hours. Her temperature climbs to 102, and she has bizarre dreams. She dreams of the Wraith, wetting the bed several times. On the second day, she is found naked, wandering outside. She is looking for her bike. Mr. de Zoet wraps her in a blanket and takes her back home. On the third day, she hears her parents talking about getting rid of her bike and her father saying he will never forget her stumbling up to him with blood leaking out of one eye. Vic knows she can never tell anyone about these experiences. They argue



about summer plans, and Vic retreats to her room, reading over the poem Maggie gave her as though it is a prayer of sorts.

## Analysis

Vic is thirteen. Her art teacher Mr. Ellis tells her she could have a bright future. She is the only seventh grade student included in the annual Town Hall show, having entered her painting of a covered bridge. Her father entrusts his only photo of his mother to her. Vic feels so bad about losing it and her mother's comments make her feel even worse. Vic grabs her bike and escapes, on the verge of hysteria herself. She pedals through the Shorter Way Bridge to the school and finds the photograph there. Before she can leave, Mr. Eugley sees her. He looks at the entrance to the Shorter Way Bridge and her bike. He begins to shake because he thinks that he is losing his mind. He repeats 'Oh, dear' over and over and begins to pray. At the age of seventy one, Vic fears he will have a heart attack. She tries hard not to think about him, which hasn't been too difficult with the intensity of the migraine she suffered afterward, but then she learns he had a breakdown, going to his church sobbing with plans to quit his job.

Vic rides back to the Shorter Way Bridge, hoping to talk to someone who can explain it. The green paint describing her destination says 'Here' which confuses her, but she pedals across and finds Maggie there waiting for her. Maggie helps her inside the library after answering questions right away about the bridge and Vic's arrival, describing it as similar to a Polaroid developing. Their conversation inside the library helps Vic to realize that she isn't losing her mind – at least not completely. Maggie assures her that there are others like her, able to access the 'in-scape.' She insists that Vic is a strong and creative. Maggie can access the same in-scape with Scrabble tiles by pulling them out of a seemingly bottomless bag. She does so, and spells out "The Brat Could Find the Wraith." Vic insists on Maggie explaining what that means, but Maggie refuses. She says she is too young and will only get herself hurt or killed. Finally she tells her, making Vic promise to keep her distance. She also warns Vic there is a cost for their gift. Maggie stutters the more she uses it, and Vic suffers migraines. By the time Vicky gets back across her bridge, she can hardly walk. She isn't sure where her bike is, and she staggers into the front yard, blood leaking from one eye. Her father thinks she has been hit by a car. Her incoherent babbling does nothing to dissuade him. He carries her to bed, where she spends most of the next three days before she is able to function again. On the third day, she hears her parents arguing again, partially about her. She retreats to her room. She reads the poem Maggie gave her as though it is a mantra of sorts.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Vicky want more than anything after she hears about Mr. Eugley? Why hasn't this been an issue before now? Why is her encounter with Eugley significant?



## Discussion Question 2

Where does the Shorter Way take Vicky when she asks for explanations? What explanations does she get for her 'gift'? What cost comes with it?

## Discussion Question 3

What warning comes as a result of Scrabble tiles? What aspects of Vicky's gift are shared with the librarian? How does the librarian's gift occur and why is she so adamant that Vicky not pursue the final clue it gives?

## Vocabulary

innumerable, obliterated, foreboding, obstinately, protruded, disintegrating, annihilating



## Chapter 4: Disappearances 1991 – 1996

### Summary

The disappearances of Marta Gregorski, Marta's mother, and Rory McCombers are not recognized as being linked by the authorities. In both cases, they got into a vehicle, expecting to be picked up. Also, in both cases the real car and driver are later found incapacitated. Neither driver is given a blood test, so the Sevoflurane in their systems is unnoticed. None of these people are ever seen again.

Vic starts high school. When she gets home one afternoon, Chris McQueen is gone. He has left his wife. Vic is stunned when her mother admits that her father had fooled around in the past and she had never asked him to choose. Vic decides she will ride to her father, wherever he is, and insist that if he loves her, he should find room for her in his new life. She rides to the bridge, surprised that it isn't there. She rides her bike hard at it, willing it to appear. When it doesn't, she bails at the last moment. In anger, she gets up and hurls her bike over the edge. She limps north to the highway, and without meaning to, dozes in the grass beside it for a short time. On May 9th, 1993, Jeff Haddon walks his dog Garbo in the rain. They walk past the house belonging to Nancy Lee Martin. Nancy is a widow who lives with her nine year old daughter. That night, Nancy and her daughter disappear after being seen getting into a Rolls-Royce Wraith by Jeff and are never seen again. In May of 1994, ten year old Jake Christensen disappears on his way to Buffalo from his boarding school in Philadelphia. The driver who was supposed to have picked him up, Bill Black, suffers from what appears to be a fatal heart attack. It is later determined to be the result of a fatal dose of Sevoflurane. In 1995, Steve Conlon and his daughter Charlene disappear on their way to a dance. Months later her mother Agatha gets a call in the middle of the night from a group of children singing The First Noel. Agatha is convinced that one of the children singing is her daughter, but authorities say no call was placed to her residence. These disappearances are not connected - not until long after Vic McQueen has her run in with Charlie Manx.

One morning during Vic's senior year, Linda catches her in her bedroom with Craig Harrison. Craig is quite impaired, as is Vic, both drinking Bacardi. Though they were doing nothing else, Craig left feeling sheepish. When Vic leaves for work at Taco Bell the next morning, she says nothing to her mother. However, when she gets home, she discovers her room has been emptied of everything but her bed and clothing. Linda tells her she must earn her things back, and Vic is almost speechless. Linda draws her attention to the package of cigarettes she found, some sampler bottles of Gin, two condoms, one empty condom package, and an Altoids tin with red and orange pills that look like candy. Most of the items are innocent. The missing condom was used to make a balloon character in school one day and the cigarettes had been left behind by Craig after a visit. The pills were more serious. They were Ecstasy that Vic was taking at times to help her sleep. She was using gin to wash them down. On those nights when the Shorter Way Bridge intruded on her consciousness, a pair of headlamps glowed,



making her so anxious that she wanted to scream. The X tablets seem to help. Linda tells Vic that she read her diary in which Vic describes having slept with Craig, but what Linda doesn't realize is that the reference is exactly as it sounds. They slept next to each other; nothing else happened. Vic and Linda continue to argue. When Vic threatens to leave, Linda promises her that the door will be locked when she comes back. At that moment, Vic doesn't care. She walks through the rain to the T station and calls her father, hoping that he will come and get her. However, Chris makes it clear that isn't going to happen, as does his girlfriend Tiffany, in the background. Vic argues, but the best Chris will offer is to call her a cab to take her home to her mother, reminding her that the last time Vic and Tiffany were together, she had assaulted Tiffany. Fuming, Vic hangs up and walks home. Believing the door will be locked, she uses a pair of shears to slice the screen and wiggle into the basement. In the dryer, she finds a change of clothes. She curls up on an old chair and goes to sleep. She wakes in the morning to hear her mother talking to her father about her. She decides to stay downstairs rather than face the music. She hears her mother slam the phone down after more arguing. She goes back to sleep, curled up on the chair. When she next wakes, the house is quiet, and Vic can tell that she is alone. Part of her hoped that her mother was out searching for her and part of her just didn't care. She goes upstairs, eats a bowl of cereal, and retrieves her emergency stash of Ecstasy. Then, twenty minutes later and feeling better, she washes her spoon and bowl and goes back downstairs where she stumbles across her Raleigh after moving some boxes. Pulling it out, she climbs onto it, even though it is much too small for her now. It still makes her laugh, and she takes it around to the back of the house so she won't be seen, heading down the trail she'd ridden down so many times before. The memories were some of her best, and she could hear the river ahead. Vic looks up and to her surprise; the Shorter Way Bridge is blocking her view. She could smell the bats and feel as though the bridge was calling her, waiting for her to ride across. On the inside wall, she can see two words.

## Analysis

The story is much the same, although the locations vary. Either a child, or a child and a parent get into the wrong car, and simply vanish from the face of the earth. In Marta Gregorski's case, a clerk remembers her and her mother getting into a black car with running boards, but she is busy and doesn't notice anything else. Her driver Roger Sillman, the real one, contacts police the next morning when he can't reach them and can only remember someone coming to his window and the smell of gingerbread. The driver that was supposed to pick up Rory McCombers can only remember fueling up the car and using the bathroom at the Night Owl. He had been in his trunk for hours before someone finally heard him screaming and called police.

When Chris McQueen leaves his wife and Vic behind to live with his girlfriend, Vic is devastated, blaming her mother and echoing some of the crueler comments that Chris had spewed at Linda as they argued over the years. She fled from the house when Linda rubbed in the fact that he had left them both, not just his wife. She takes her new pink ten speed down the forest trails as fast as possible. The ride of the ten speed was rough and unyielding - so different from that of her Raleigh which was now gone. She



told herself that she would find her father and stay with him instead. The bridge isn't there however, and even riding her bike right at the guardrail doesn't force it to appear. She ditches just before riding over the edge. Angry, she throws the bike over the edge. It crashes in the shallows below.

The disappearances continue. Jeff Haddon is the last to see Nancy Lee Martin and her nine year old daughter Amy - their driver also vanishing and his car found near the water off Bainbridge Boulevard; Jake Christensen disappears after being picked up by an unknown person at the airport in Buffalo, New York; and Charlene Conlon is taken by someone in a Rolls-Royce and her father's body is left beside the Interstate 87 with a bullet through one eye.

When Vic's mother walks in on her and Craig Harrison drinking in her bedroom, Craig is embarrassed and leaves. This sets off a series of events. Linda takes all of Vic's items out of Vic's room, and Vic storms out of the house in anger. She tries to get her father to come and pick her up, but he refuses, offering her cab fare home. Instead, Vic walks home and sneaks into the basement where she hides from her mother overnight. The next day, alone in the house, she finds her Raleigh Tuff Burner in the corner of the basement. Though it is too small, she rides it into the forest where the Shorter Way Bridge is waiting.

## Discussion Question 1

What consistencies are there between the various disappearances? What is the most likely reason that they aren't connected earlier?

## Discussion Question 2

What issues lead to Vic's leaving home? Where does she go, and who is less than helpful? What reasons are given?

## Discussion Question 3

Where does Vic end up this time when she uses the Shorter Way Bridge? What surprises her about the young man she finds there? Why?

## Vocabulary

disintegrating, denouncing, pedophile, abductions, incredulous, portentous, domineering, fixated





## Chapter 5: Sleigh House, 1996

### Summary

Vic has no idea what or where 'Sleigh House' is, but she doesn't care. On the other side of the bridge, the air is warmer. She gets off the bridge and goes into a hardwood forest. Looking back, she can still see Haverhill's light. She gets off her bike and looks around. The fir trees are covered in Christmas ornaments of all descriptions. She can hear Christmas music playing despite the fact that it is March. She heads for the sound coming from the garage. Peering into the dirty glass, she sees a Rolls-Royce with plate number NOS4A2. Part of her wants to run, but then she sees the young boy in the back seat. She taps on the window. As she tries to open the door, she finds it locked from the inside. The boy lifts his head and turns to her. She can see how close to death he is. He tells her that he can't get out or climb into the front and speaks as though he is sedated. White vapor comes from his mouth as though he is standing in a freezer. Vic opens the front door and reaches across the seat, telling him to grab her hand. When he does; his hand is so cold it burns her. He smiles, knowing he is hurting her, and Vic sees pointed rows of hooks where his teeth should be. The horn sounds, and he begins yelling for Manx to come and see the girl he's caught. He continues to yell, and the horn continues to blast on its own. The garage door begins to open, and she can see the trousers on the other side. She opens the door to the house and pulls herself into the mudroom on the other side. She goes through a second door into a hallway and runs through the house which smells like turkey. She runs through to the front door. She is about to open it when she sees him standing in the yard. The boy is standing in the back yard. Manx calls to her, asking her to come out and join him, and she hurries back into the kitchen hoping to find a weapon. There are no knives, but she does find a drawer full of towels and shoves a handful in on top of the turkey. Leaving the oven door partially open, she grabs a frying pan to use as a weapon.

Meanwhile, Manx wheels her bike to the Shorter Way Bridge and heaves her bike inside. She hears a pop, and the bridge vanishes and the pain behind her left eye is devastating. The phone rings, and Vic answers it, begging for help. The child on the other end of the line is one of Charlie Manx's children from Christmasland as well. Flames begin to come out of the oven as the boy bashes his head through the glass. When he reaches through to open the door, Vic swings the pan at him, breaking at least three of his fingers. Vic barricades herself in the pantry, waiting Manx out as the smoke fills the kitchen. Finally, he gives up and simply leaves her in there, turning the fridge over in front of the door so that she can't get out. By the time she checks the door, it is so hot she burns her hand. Smoke is coming in, so she tries again to get out. She is unsuccessful. Then, she notices the laundry chute. Looking up, she sees the other door ten feet or more above. It takes all of her effort to finally make her way up the chute and then out of the house, afraid at every turn that Manx is waiting for her. But, he is gone and so is the boy.



Vic manages to make her way to the highway where a Harley is just passing. She yells and waves, and the large man riding it pulls over for her. When he pulls over, she gets on behind him and at first tries to explain, but finally just says 'Fire.' He quickly gets in gear. He rides to the nearest store/gas bar and goes inside with her where she kisses him for the first time. As she is telling her story, or the version that will make the most sense, the police are called. Vic is telling the group inside that she needs to call her mother who hasn't seen her in days when the Wraith pulls in. One of the customers, a soldier named Tom Priest, sees her face and heads for the door to make sure the Wraith isn't able to leave before the police arrive. Game Warden Alan Warner joins him. The clerk who looks like Popeye gives Tom a .45 to ensure their safety. Tom goes straight to Manx. Pressing the gun in his back, he orders him to put his hands on the roof. Manx slowly does so, and Alan remains on the far side until they hear a noise coming from the trunk. Tom tells Alan to pop the trunk, but when Alan puts his hand through the drivers' side window to do just that, the window goes up on its own. Then, the rear door opens into Tom, knocking him over. Manx uses this advantage to club him with the nozzle of the pump, and then liberally soaks him in fuel. Without hesitation, he lights Tom up as the Wraith is rolling forward with Alan still trapped by the window. Sam Cleary, the owner of the store hurries out with a fire extinguisher and clubs Manx with it before using it on Tom, but it is already too late. The Rolls continues until it hits a telephone pole twenty feet further ahead, the rear covered in flames. No child was found, but a wallet belonging to Cynthia McCauley is discovered. There is no sign of her or her son Brad who had disappeared from the JFK Airport three days earlier.

## Analysis

At seventeen, Vic isn't afraid and decides the best way to test whether or not the bridge is there is to ride through it. This time, the words painted on its inner wall say 'Sleigh House' which means nothing to her, but she knows that she is riding toward trouble. When Vic steps off on the other side, she is looking down a lane at a white Cape Cod style house that for reasons she can't immediately put a finger on makes her fearful. Without seeing more, she is sure that police would find bodies in the back yard. She is drawn forward, pulled toward the garage where she can hear music playing. When she looks into the garage and sees the Rolls-Royce parked there with the same plate as had taken Wayne, she knows she should run. She sees a young boy in the back seat, and as she approaches, she has the thought that he is fine and his father is probably just letting him rest. Part of her recognizes how wrong and inappropriate that thought is, and she can't imagine why she would think it. She wakes him and tries to help him out of the car, but he surprises her by grabbing her with hands so ice cold that they feel hot at first. He shrieks for Manx, excitedly announcing that he's caught a girl. He is not distressed or seeking to escape captivity. Vic manages to pull away just before Manx arrives. She has no alternative but to duck into the Sleigh House itself to escape Manx. Manx taunts her from outside, inviting her to come with them to Christmasland while she tries to find another avenue of escape, or a weapon to use against him. In desperation, she puts a handful of towels on top of the turkey in the oven and leaving the door open a little bit, hoping that she can create enough smoke to leave in the confusion, but it



doesn't work that way. Instead, she becomes trapped in the pantry where she would have roasted had she not discovered the laundry chute.

Fearful at every corner, she climbs up and out, surprised to discover Manx had actually left. She limps her way to the road, and manages to flag down a guy on a Harley who takes her to the nearest store/gas bar. Once there, she confuses the details of events somewhat, announcing that Manx had kidnapped her and tried to burn the house down with her in it. She tells them to call the police as Manx still has a young boy. All Vic wants to do at that moment is call home. When she reveals that she lives in Haverhill, Massachusetts, a soldier named Tom Priest realizes that the kidnapper had even crossed state lines. Vic has no idea how to correct them, so she allows them to draw their own conclusions. At that moment, Manx pulls in for fuel in the Rolls, and the look on Vic's face tells Tom everything. He and a game warden named Alan Warner go out to confront and contain Manx until the police arrive. Neither of them realizes the danger the car itself poses, and it soon helps Manx get the advantage, using noises from the trunk, windows that go up unaided, and doors that open without warning. Manx douses Tom with fuel and lights him on fire, killing him before the proprietor Sam Cleary can use his fire extinguisher to subdue Manx and put out the fire. In the Rolls, there is no sign of the boy, but a wallet belonging to Cynthia McCauley is found. There is no trace of her or her son Brad who vanished from JFK three days earlier.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Vic looking for trouble? Whom is she trying to punish? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is she unable to help the young boy in the back of the Rolls-Royce at the Sleigh House? What does the boy do that ensures it is impossible?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Vic escape the burning Sleigh House? Who helps to rescue her and what is his significance?

## Vocabulary

inquisitive, paralytic, depressurizing, grotesquely, luxuriant, nutritious, resemblance, indulgently, fatigues



# Chapter 6: Interlude: The Spirit of Ecstasy, 2000-2012

## Summary

Vic gets her first call from Christmasland in November. She is living with Lou in Colorado when Brad McCauley calls her saying he is the boy from the Sleigh House and that they are getting hungry. She hangs up and calls the operator to get the number but is told no calls have come in. Lou works in a garage he opens with help from his parents, and they live in a trailer park just outside of Gunbarrel. Vic takes the keys to their big Ford and drives it down a dirt road into a pine forest, feeling the nearness of the Shorter Way Bridge. She drives fast, but she can't find the bridge. She wonders if she needs a bike again. She returns and sits in the garage for some time until Lou comes out to check on her. She tells him she is pondering the bike he is working on. When he asks her opinion, she makes some observations and offers to fix it, and he agrees. While Vic is painting, there are never any calls from Christmasland. A few weeks later Vic sets up a work room and begins the Search Engine books. Lou is thrilled, and Vic now has steady work to keep the calls at bay. Vic's second Search Engine book is highly regarded by the New York Times. In 2009, Lou leaves Vic, taking their son to his mother's for awhile as Vic's mental state deteriorates. Vic falls off the rails completely then, trying to avoid calls from Christmasland by putting all of their phones in the oven on broil. Wearing nothing but her panties and Lou's leather jacket, she sees a bike store with a Raleigh in the window. She breaks in, hoping to find the Shorter Way Bridge. She reasons that she can get to Manx at the Supermax prison. She thinks that if he were dead the calls would end. She hears sirens and fire trucks head for her house, and the police show up shortly after.

When Bing reads that Manx is in a coma, he begins going to the church up the hill again. He prays to God for a sign - something that will tell him what to do. One of the pigeons roosting above craps on his upturned face, and Bing loses his temper, nailing the place shut and burning it to the ground with the birds still inside.

In 2006 in Brandenburg Kentucky, twelve year old Michelle learns how to drive the Rolls-Royce her father Nathan bought at a federal auction. She has dreams of fixing it up one day. He tells her he'd like to have it ready for her graduation. The radio plays nothing but Christmas music. Nathan finishes the Wraith in May 2012, saving the hardest part for last - the engine. Michelle passes her driver's license on her first try at sixteen. Now at eighteen, she drives a Jetta. She is planning a trip to Dartmouth after graduation. With just under a week remaining before her prom, the car is done, and Nathan believes it will fetch a quarter of a million dollars after Michelle's prom. He wants to ensure it is safe before sending his daughter out in it, so he gets in. He remembers his cell phone at the last moment. When he tries to get out, the latch slams down, startling him. Unable to get out, he tries to shut the engine off, but the key won't turn. Jingle Bell Rock blasts from every station on the radio. The garage fills with fumes.



Before he passes out, he manages to activate the garage door opener. As soon as it opens, the gearshift bangs into reverse. The car doesn't even slow as it reaches the road but, thankfully, there is no traffic. The Wraith makes the ninety degree turn throwing Nathan across the seat. The car works through the gears alone as he tries to come to grips with what is happening. Six hours later, the car continues to cycle through Christmas music, and they are driving through a snowstorm. Nathan reasons he must have dozed off. The next time he wakes, the car is idling and a large man in a gas mask is staring in the window at him. Nathan asks where he is, and the Gas Mask Man opens the door telling him this is where he gets out.

At St. Luke's Medical Center in Denver, Hicks poses the dead anchor woman and takes a photo of himself in a sexually suggestive position with her. He likes to pose with anyone famous who comes through the morgue, and his girlfriend Sasha warns him when one comes through, finding his antics hilarious. She likes to raid the medical locker for cocaine or other drugs and have sex with Hicks in the stirrups of empty delivery rooms. When Charlie Manx comes in, she tells Hicks, describing the Sleigh House and his proclivity for children. She asks him to email her a picture of him. In the elevator, on his way down, he practices the things he'll say to Sasha, forgetting his uncle can hear. His Uncle Jim got him the security guard job, and Hicks hopes to work his way into his uncle's job. However, one more citation will get him fired instead. Manx is already in the autopsy room, where someone had started on him. He blocks the door, so no one can walk in on him. He pulls the sheet back. Manx's chest has already been opened and closed. His eyes are open and look bright and alert to Hick's surprise, but Hicks isn't easily scared. He puts a bone mallet in Manx's hand to make the picture more alarming and sits him up. He snaps a photo and hears voices in the hall. Rattled, he slips out as soon they are gone. He emails Sasha the picture and then begins to worry whether or not he put everything back where he found it. So, he goes back to check. He senses he isn't alone. Before he can pull out his gun, he is clubbed unconscious. When he wakes, Dr. Sopher is encouraging him to lie still as he likely has a concussion. To his horror, he realizes that his gun is gone, and his pants and windbreaker are also missing. He begins to cry, feeling violated beyond words as Sopher mentions the body of the serial killer is also gone. Although he won't realize it for hours, his Trans Am is also gone.

## Analysis

Vic wonders how she managed to end up in Colorado after graduating high school. Her intentions had been to attend art school, but she became an unwed mother instead. The only reason she can come up with is vengeance. She did it because her mother was entirely against it, and her father refused to help. She has done all kinds of things out of vengeance over the years including smoking pot, making out with girls, skipping classes to go skiing, living with Lou, and even becoming pregnant without marrying him first. Her mother had always warned that she would have nothing to do with a child born out of wedlock, and Vic made sure that her mother had no access or part in it now. She still remembers how good it felt to bluntly offer Lou sex in exchange for saving her and to hear his admission that he was still a virgin. Sometimes she resented him for loving her.



Other times, she resented herself instead for becoming his friend. Vic hates that she has a baby, tied to him with such intensity now that she can't press the limits the way she feels she needs to. She resents that she can't find the Shorter Way Bridge and blames it on the tie she has to her son which keeps her from the recklessness required to find it. Part of her wonders if there just isn't anything left to find. She is well aware that she is no good at being a mother. Lou worries about her, fearful that she quit therapy sooner than she should have in light of the things she's been through.

Meanwhile, Vic is getting phone calls from the children at Christmasland that no one else seems to hear. They taunt her and slowly drive her crazy until finally her behavior forces Lou to take their son and leave her. When that happens, there is little left to ground her, and she accidentally burns their townhouse to the ground in an effort to destroy the phones that won't leave her alone. Then, leaving the house in only her underwear and Lou's jacket, she breaks into a bike store to steal a Raleigh in the hopes that it will take her to the Shorter Way Bridge.

Bing Partridge is fifty three years old in 2001. He is devastated when he hears that Charlie Manx is seriously ill. He hasn't worn his gas mask in five years. He thought of writing to Manx, but always feared the attention it would bring. The only contact they'd had was a package that came after he'd been sentenced with the license plates from the Wraith inside and a card with a Christmas angel on it. He had been on nine missions with Manx in total. They had planned one more, after which Bing was supposed to have gone to Christmasland, but then Manx had been arrested. What Bing missed most wasn't Manx though. Bing missed the mommies. He had hardly been able to pour lye over the last one in his basement. His faith in God is shaken when during a prayer for Manx a bird craps on his face, so he burns the abandoned church down.

Nathan Demeter teaches his twelve year old daughter Michelle how to drive in the Rolls-Royce he picked up at an auction. It is an old classic that he promises her he will fix up for her prom, and as things stand, it needs a great deal of work. When she reaches sixteen, she easily passes her drivers' exam. By the time she is eighteen, Nathan is finishing the old Wraith as promised. Inside and out it is just like new. He saved the hardest part for last, completing the heart of it, the engine, just one week before Michelle's prom. He decides to take it out for a test drive first, to ensure that it is safe, but he soon discovers that the car has a mind of its own. As soon as he cranks it, the troubles begin. The doors lock all by themselves and refuse to let him out even to get his cell phone. He can't shut the engine off either, so before he suffocates, he opens the garage door remotely, and the car leaves on its own. Nathan has no say over the car as it slams its way through the gears, taking him on a journey all its own. As an unwilling passenger, he rides along until the car finally stops outside Bing Partridge's House of Sleep. Bing, wearing his mask, tells him he's reached the end of the line.

In St. Luke's Medical Center, Manx is being autopsied. In fact, the autopsy is partially complete already – his chest having been cracked open and organs removed, examined, and weighed. His skull has pencil marks where it is obvious that the next thing on the agenda is the removal of his brain. Hicks takes all of this in as he poses him for a photo to go with his ghoulish collection, knowing his girlfriend Sasha will love



it. Somehow, the Wraith coming to life is linked with Manx however, and before the night is over, Hicks will learn a lesson that he will never forget. To begin with, he is almost caught in the act – an infraction that would have cost him his job as a security guard. Then, when he returns to ensure that he hadn't left anything out of place, he is knocked unconscious and his pants and jacket are stolen. When he wakes, he has a concussion and feels a violation equal to that of his posed cadavers and worse. Hicks still isn't aware that Manx also took his Trans Am, his prized possession.

## Discussion Question 1

What illness does Denver neurosurgeon Marc Sopher describe Manx as having? What are the symptoms? What is Manx's condition, which the doctor is reluctant to discuss? Why is he reluctant?

## Discussion Question 2

What stops Bing from writing to Charlie Manx over the years? What disturbs Bing most about Manx's illness?

## Discussion Question 3

What never happens while Vic is doing the custom paint jobs for Lou's customers? How does she fill the void when there are no jobs pending?

## Vocabulary

vengeance, exertions, retrospect, existence, deranged, prominent, vocation, revulsion, apprehension, metaphorical



## Chapter 7: Bad Mother, December 16, 2011 - July 6, 2012

### Summary

Released from Lamar Rehabilitation Center in Massachusetts, Vic goes home to see her mother before she passes away. Linda wants to go to the lake like they used to. When Lou calls suggesting Vic and Wayne spend the summer together, she decides to rent a place. She finds one with a carriage house she can use as a studio and a ramp for her mother's wheelchair. However, before they can go, Linda dies. Wayne and his dog Hooper arrive, and Vic wastes no time leaving her mother's house for the house she rented in Lake Winnepesaukee. In the carriage house, Wayne finds an old Triumph. The next day, when Wayne heads to day camp, Vic begins working on her new book and the old Triumph. By June's end, the Triumph is stripped, and the first stack of pages is roughed out.

Sigmund de Zoet is painting his small soldiers when the figure he is working on backs away from him. Suddenly, they are all moving, and Sigmund thinks he is having a stroke. He falls when he tries to get up, breaking his hip. He calls Giselle, but she doesn't answer. It's likely that she is still with the air conditioning repairman, Bing. He smells gingerbread and uses a stool to pull himself up, just as a man in a gas mask comes by dragging Giselle by the hair down the hall. When he comes back moments later, Sig tells him he has ants in his brain, and Bing says it is the Sevoflurane he pumped through the air conditioner. Sig asks why, and Bing tells him it is because they live across from Victoria, and they have a garage big enough for Manx's car.

On July 1st, Vic returns to her mother's house with Wayne to find Maggie waiting. She sends her away. Thirty minutes later, Wayne takes Hooper for a walk and finds the folder Maggie left on the front porch. He reads it until Hooper uses the bathroom on the neighbor's lawn. Wayne is about to knock when Lou pulls up and calls him, saving Bing from deciding what to do with the boy and his Saint Bernard. He goes back in to sit between the de Zoet's and watch television, gently holding Giselle's hand. At seven, he watches as Lou and Wayne leave, and shortly after, Vic leaves with empty bags for the grocery store. Bing goes outside and searches for the papers from Maggie's file, finding only one about Nathan Demeter and the Wraith that disappeared and arrived at the House of Sleep two days before Manx showed up in the Trans Am. Bing is sitting on the couch when Manx gets up. He asks why the de Zoet's aren't in the spare room as instructed, and Bing insists that even dead they are better than no company.

Lou takes Wayne back to his hotel for the night. He asks about Manx, telling him about Maggie's arrival and the folder. Lou says he'll have to ask his mother about Manx. Vic joins them to watch the fireworks and he tells her about Wayne's questions. She finally admits that there are two versions of what happened to her when she ended up with Manx. Then, she tells him everything, sure that the part of her that traveled over the





Shorter Way Bridge is the crazy part and that she somehow blended Maggie into it. Lou invites her to live in Colorado, and she asks him to help her find a place while she finishes the summer with Wayne at the lake. He gives her his motorcycle jacket for when she is finished restoring the Triumph. The next day she and Wayne head back to the lake. They are across the border before she realizes that she's forgotten to refill her prescription of Abilify. At the lake, Wayne wakes in his mother's bed. Bad dreams and confusing images of Manx get him up. He joins his mother to work on the Triumph until she finally gets it to run. Wayne hands her the Triumph wrench that looks like a curved knife, and she promises to be right back. Neither of them sees the pair of headlights behind her. She rides until she finds herself in the Shorter Way Bridge again. She tries to brake, but the line lets go, as do a number of other parts. She barely manages to stop the bike. She walks the bike out with her eyes closed. When she gets back on the highway and looks back, it is gone. Wayne goes into the house and texts his dad still at the airport to tell him the bike is running. He hears Hooper barking, but he can't see him in the fog. A moment later, he hears thumping and opens the door expecting the dog, but finding Bing instead. He asks to use the phone, saying they'd just hit a dog, and Wayne hurries out to see. Hooper is lying on the ground, but he is still alive. A tall man apologizes, and Wayne looks up to see Manx standing there with a silver hammer in his hand. He smells of decay, and Wayne tries to back up. He is stopped by the smaller man who is now wearing a gas mask. Wayne screams for help even though the tall man promises that he is there for his mother and means him no harm. The man in the mask marches him to the car, and Wayne screams for Hooper who bites Bing on the way by. Bing squeals, and Manx hits Hooper over the head with his hammer, killing him. In shock, Wayne realizes if they get him into the car, he'll never get out. He braces himself against the door and bites Bing's arm as hard as he can causing him to scream again. He clubs Wayne across the head. Wayne sees stars and screams for his mother as Bing climbs in beside him. His mother begins to materialize in the mist, and she calls out that she is coming. She is still unaware of what is going on. Wayne screams again, and Bing threatens to shoot him, silencing him finally as Manx gets in the front seat and puts the car into drive. Vic had almost reached the driveway when she hears the car idling and sees headlights in the fog. She drops the bike and runs, hopping the fence with the Wraith coming up behind her. A log from the fence hits her and knocks her unconscious. Wayne hears his mother's body hit the car and starts to scream. Manx tells Bing to put him to sleep and gets out to deal with Vic. Wayne struggles, seeing Manx use his hammer on his mother and screams again. She tries to get up, and Bing forces Wayne to watch as Manx hits her again and again. Vic hears her father's voice in her head, guiding her as Manx taunts her, calling her names. He hits her with the hammer again, and he bends down to tell her that Wayne is with him and she will never see him again. Her father's voice in her head tells her to make it count, and she feels Lou's lips on her brow as she yanks out the Triumph wrench and catches Manx in the face with it, missing his throat which was her intended target. She sees what looks like an insect man holding a gun, and he says 'bang, bang.'" At the same time, Manx pushes himself off the hood he'd fallen over, and the bullet leaves Bing's gun taking Manx's ear off. Bing begins to apologize immediately, and Manx tells him to shoot Vic, who is already loping across the yard.



At the airport, Lou still has an hour to kill. His phone rings, and Wayne tells him he is trapped in a car and can't get out. He tells him that Charlie Manx is going to kill his mom, along with someone in a gas mask who is shooting at his mom. Lou tells him to get out, but the doors won't unlock. Then, Wayne says he has to go and he'll call back when he can. Lou screams Wayne's name as the phone goes dead. As he tries to call 911, the phone slips from his hand. Vic yells to Wayne that she'll find him and manages to make it to the dock. She dives in, and bullets strike the water around her as she swims for the float. She breathes quietly, listening to the Gas Mask Man yell to her. Manx talks to her too and encourages her to come and find them using her impossible bridge, telling her he will stop at the House of Sleep first. She hears the car drive away.

## Analysis

Vic goes to see her mother after being released from rehab. The house smells of cigarettes and incontinence, but Vic does her best to ignore it as she tries to work her way through the eighth step of her rehabilitation program. When Lou suggests they spend the summer together, Vic asks him if he trusts her, but Lou insists if she is ready, her son is, too. Vic rents a place with a carriage house, but her mother passes away before they go. When Wayne first arrives, Vic drives back to her mother's house, but she can hardly wait to get out. Vic is happy to be taking Wayne and Hooper to the lake but nervous that she didn't deserve him or know him well enough to handle it. When Wayne finds the Triumph in the carriage house, his excitement is contagious. Until then, the only thing Wayne had shown any real interest in was his wife and Vic is eager to do anything else with him. She begins work on both her new search engine book and the Triumph, alternating her time between them.

In Haverhill, Sigmund de Zoet, is painting one of his tiny soldiers while his wife Giselle is downstairs with the air conditioning repairman named Bing. As Sig is painting, the little men suddenly come to life, and he fears he is having a stroke. He tries to stand, and falls, breaking his hip. He calls out to Giselle, but she doesn't come and for a time he lies on the floor, smelling something like gingerbread. Using a stool, he hauls himself up, not wanting to frighten Giselle and he is stunned to see Bing come past the door, dragging Giselle by her hair, motioning that he'll be right back. Bing returns to question Sigmund and though he has no intentions of answering, he finds himself doing so anyway. Bing tells him it is one of the effects of the Sevoflurane. He asks where Victoria is, but distracted, that is one question Sig doesn't answer.

Vic brings Wayne back to Haverhill at the beginning of July. Lou is joining them for the fourth of July celebrations, and Vic considers moving back to Colorado, intending to talk to him about it. Maggie is waiting on the doorstep, looking as twitchy as a junkie. At first, Vic doesn't even recognize her and when she finally does, she doesn't want to. Maggie is a symbol of her insanity. She sends Wayne and Hooper inside. Vic sees it all in her mind - the library, the Scrabble tiles, as Maggie continues to stammer out the reason she's come. Manx is free. He'd come back to life and was killing again. She hands Vic a file with clippings but Vic is remembering the laundry chute. She keeps telling herself he's dead, he's dead, like a mantra to keep her sanity intact. Maggie shows her the



article about Demeter who bought the Rolls and vanishes with it after restoring it. Vic snaps. She throws the folder at Maggie and tells her to leave; calling her crazy and again insisting she doesn't know her. Maggie tries again, pointing out the earrings she gave to her that Vic is still wearing, but Vic slams the door in her face, threatening to call the police. Wayne takes Hooper for a walk to get away from Vic's misery and finds the file on the doorstep. Although his mother would be unhappy, he reads through it anyway, sitting on the curb across from Sigmund's house. Wayne has been unhappy most of his life, wanting nothing more than to be part of a normal family. He reads the articles but nothing seems to be related to his mother. He is about to reread them when Hooper evacuates his bowels on Sigmund's lawn. He crosses the street and heads to the door to see if they have a plastic bag he can use, but before he can knock, his father pulls up and calls out to him. Behind the door, Bing sags in relief, not knowing what he would have done had the confrontation occurred. Manx had instructed Bing to do nothing beyond observation and Bing is loath to disappoint him again. He sits between the de Zoet's and watches television again. He watches Lou and Wayne leave, and then Vic leaves as well. Then he goes outside to retrieve any papers he can find, but there is only one. He can't understand why the junkie woman would have an article about his house and Nathan Demeter. When Manx wakes, he doesn't understand why Bing would want to sit with the dead couple rather than put their bodies in the spare room as he'd instructed. Bing quietly insists that even dead, they are better than no company at all.

When Wayne asks his father about Manx, Lou's heart almost thumps right out of his chest. Though he doesn't reveal it, he can't answer him because of a deal he'd made with Vic when she was pregnant with Wayne - never to discuss Manx with Wayne. At the time, he hadn't realized that this deal also prevented him from revealing to his son the single act of heroism he'd ever accomplished - rescuing Vic from the monster. Instead, his son only knew him as an overweight, walking fat joke. Lou wants nothing more than to have a second chance to be a hero in his son's eyes. Wayne tells him the best part of his summer so far has been the fact that no one is in rehab. Vic joins them for the fireworks, and, again, Lou can hardly believe that Vic would love him or even want anything to do with him because his self-image is so low. Instead, he reminds himself that she is certifiable and would likely not have given him a second glance otherwise. They sit together, discussing Vic's father. However, the only use she has for him is if she needs to blow something up. His only strength is his ability to destroy things. Lou watches as a pink blossom from a tree over them drops into Vic's hair. The romance of the sight stuns him, but she brushes it away. The moment is lost.

Vic admits then that there are two versions of the incident with Manx, and both feel real to her. He already knows about the version she gave the federal prosecutor, so she tells him about the version that includes the bridge. Lou listens while she describes how she has found things over the years and how Manx is more like a vampire than a child molester. Lou listens without much comment until she finishes, and then asks if she realizes the second version is only a coping mechanism. She admits she learned that in the mental hospital and tells Lou she loves him, apologizes for being such a mess. She admits to having lived a life full of mistakes but that he wasn't one of them. She worries that she ruined his life and Wayne's, but that isn't how Lou sees it. To him, she is the gift he never thought he could attain. When he invites her to come and live in Colorado, she



doesn't hesitate, glad that he would want her there. She asks him to help her find a place. He gives her his jacket, asking her to be sure to wear it, and it immediately takes her back to the night they met, when she wrapped her arms around him and felt safe from Manx.

The next day Vic drives back to the lake with Wayne and Hooper. They both have nightmares about Manx, and he wakes in her bed alone. A knocking at the door reveals Manx first, and Wayne is ready to scream when he resolves into Hooper. Relieved, he hears his mother outside, and looks out the window to see her and Hooper. Confused, he gets up, convincing himself that he must have still been asleep. For the first time in years, mother and son labor on the Triumph with a common interest and goal. It is a comfortable and normal feeling and Vic works on the bike all afternoon. She finally gets it running, but just as she does, Wayne has a feeling of intense discomfort. He tells her that it's okay if it doesn't run, but it fires up and just before she leaves, Wayne hands her the Triumph wrench that reminds him of a knife. Neither of them notice the headlights approaching as she leaves, the fog is so thick. Vic's eye aches as she rides, and moments later finds herself in the Shorter Way Bridge. She can smell the bats and brakes with such force that the pedal disintegrates and pieces fall around it. She manages to stop it, but can't process the fact that it is there. The bridge is just too real to be nothing more than the coping mechanism everyone has tried to convince her it is. Telling herself it isn't real, she walks the bike out and turning back finds that it is gone again. She pushes the bike back unaware that in the meantime Wayne is dealing with Manx. Manx had sent Bing to the door with the story of having hit a dog, and Wayne had rushed outside immediately. Hooper is alive, but Wayne quickly realizes he is in trouble when he sees and smells Manx. He tries to back away, but Bing is behind him, now wearing his mask. Terrified, he calls to Hooper for help. Hooper's last act in life it to try to save Wayne by biting Bing on the ankle. Manx clubs him to death, and Wayne is shoved in the car. He screams for his mother, who is just coming down the road in the fog. Vic tries valiantly to save her son from Manx, but isn't able. She sustains injuries that would cripple anyone else, but Lou's jacket likely saves her life, blocking most of the blows from Manx's hammer. She tells her son she will find him, and hides under the float until they are gone. Manx is furious. In the exchange, Vic not only slices open his face, but Bing also shoots off his ear. He invites Vic to come and find him with her bridge when she is ready – he'll be waiting.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Bing get Wayne out of the lake house while Vic is gone? Who is injured when they try to get Wayne into the car? How?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Manx so angry with Vic? What does he tell Wayne about her and what does he accuse her of? Why is that?



## Discussion Question 3

What does Manx invite Vic to do? How does he ensure that she will follow him and why?

## Vocabulary

expeditions, disquieted, preposterous, grotesque, collaborate, reflexively, disintegrating, cadaverous, irradiated, evanescent



## Chapter 8: Search Engine, July 6 - 7, Part One (Pages 328 – 372)

### Summary

Wayne tries to get out of the Wraith. He heaves himself into the front seat, only to find himself in the back again. Unsuccessful, he sees his phone on the floor and calls his father to tell him what is happening. When Manx and Bing return, he hangs up, promising to call again when he can. Manx gets in, and the car maneuvers on its own. Wayne watches, telling himself it has to be the gingerbread smoke Bing used on him. Bing takes off his mask and bandages Manx's ear. Manx talks to Wayne, explaining how the car is an extension of him, so he is driving even if it doesn't appear that way. He says Wayne is in his own pocket universe in the back seat. The police pass them without seeming to notice them at all, heading for the lake. Manx tells Wayne they are going to Christmasland. He suggests that Wayne sleep for a while, and for reasons he can't explain, Wayne does.

The phone is ringing when Vic gets to the house, and a child tells her not to worry and that her father will take very good care of Wayne. Vic hangs up and calls 911, giving them as much information as she can. They send out an alert immediately, but as Vic suspects, no one sees the car or Manx. EMT's show up, but she refuses to go with them despite the damage her body sustained. She gives them a photo of Wayne, giving her information several times to Officers Daltry and Chitra knowing they won't be able to help her. Daltry asks about Lou, and Vic reminds him that she saw who took Wayne. She can't understand why the reports on television don't mention Manx by name. Vic tells Chitra that someone needs to look for Hooper, unable to put together why he isn't barking at all the unusual activity. Suddenly she understands and breaks down praying that Wayne doesn't know. Finally, FBI agent Tabitha Hutter arrives. She tells Vic that Manx is dead, and has been since May. Vic argues with her, and again goes over the events as they occurred. When she mentions the hammer Manx used, Hutter hesitates for the first time, but still insists that after ten years in a coma Manx couldn't have the strength to get up, let alone drive away or attack anyone. When Vic realizes Hutter has her entire file, and thinks she is having a psychotic episode, she finally understands why no one believes her. Hutter asks her to look at photos of hammers, but before she can, she hears Lou's voice. His face is ashen, and he looks terrible. He folds her into his arms and holds her.

They sit at the table, Vic holding Lou's hand as he explains how he missed his flight after Wayne called him. Vic says if Wayne has his phone, they can trace him using the 'Find My iPhone' function. When Hutter asks for the password from Lou, she notices the marks left behind by the EKG leads earlier. After a few seconds, the screen shows the iPhone is traveling on the St. Nick Parkway. Vic feels as though she is losing her grip on reality and when Hutter asks her and Lou if the strange map means anything to them, she and Lou both say no. Lou asks to be allowed to rest for a while, and Lou joins her.



He lies down, and he asks her to lie with him for a while. When she does, he asks about her injuries, and she finally has a chance to tell him what really happened earlier. She tells him about seeing the bridge again, breaking the bike, and walking home to find Manx with Wayne. She tells him about the second man and Manx hitting her with the hammer. She goes on to tell that she'd fought back with the Triumph's tappet key, and the Gasmask Man shot Manx in the ear. When she finishes, she asks him what really happened at the airport, but he is not as forthcoming. They talk about the map and how the worlds connect. Then, Vic asks Lou to fix the bike for her. He promises to do so under one condition. When he repairs it, she has to take him with her.

Bing wakes having dreamed of Christmasland, and Manx assures him it is the closest he will ever get to it. Wayne can see his breath and notices that Manx's face appears as though it has been healing for days instead of hours. He tells Wayne that the car will take care of them both. Wayne tells Manx he wants to call his mother and let her know he is alright. He tells Wayne that he has no phone, but when they get to Christmasland he can call her every day if he wants to. Manx asks Wayne about his mother's tattoos and how she felt about older men, confusing Wayne. In his dreams, his Grandma Lindy had spoken to him but everything was backward. He remembers her telling him to think in reverse. At an intersection, she sees someone and calls out for help, but the jogger just smiles and waves at her. Manx tells him that the people outside are unable to see or hear what Wayne want them to. He says it is like Vegas. What happens in the Wraith, stays in the Wraith, but adds that they are almost at their destination - The House of Sleep.

## Analysis

While Manx and Bing are chasing his mother, Wayne tries to get out of the Wraith, but it defeats him. He calls his father and tells him that he is being taken by Manx and they are shooting at his mother. When they return, he is smart enough to hang up. Bing is horrified when the Wraith begins to pull away without him, locking the door when he tries to get in. He begs Manx to forgive him, apologizing and insisting it was a mistake. He is horrified and grief stricken, offering to cut off his own ear to make up for his error. Finally, the lock opens, and he gets in. Manx tells him that what he really wants is for Bing to shut up. Bing bangs his head against the dash, and Manx has to ask him not to damage his interior. He asks Bing to bandage him up, and then he talks to Wayne. Wayne admits that he knew Manx was coming that morning already, and Manx equates it to thinking about Christmas the night before. Wayne watches as the car seems to be driving itself, thinking it is the gas Bing sprayed, but Manx explains his relationship with the car. Thinking about anything seems difficult and sluggish.

Manx is still angry with Bing. His shirt is ruined. Police cruisers pass them on their way to the lake and seem not to see them. Wayne tries to think of a way to get Manx to let him go, but none of his ideas work. Manx tells him about Christmasland and suggests he get some sleep.



Back at the lake, Vic makes it to shore and calls 911 to report the kidnapping. The dispatcher tries to calm her down, but Vic is close to being hysterical, swearing and insisting they send help. She apologizes, again insisting that someone will notice the distinctive car they are in, but Manx slips through unnoticed. EMT's try to take Vic to the hospital but she flatly refuses, until one police officer agrees to let her stay. She takes off her shirt and creates a stunned silence and a few gasps of sympathy from those in the room. They again try to get her to go in for tests, but Vic explains that it is in their best medical interests to leave her there, gaining mirthful responses from some of the males in the room. Looking around the room, Vic knows that the person who matters and who will be handling things hasn't arrived yet. She continues to answer questions while she waits. When she tells them again about Manx's car, she is assured that it is so distinctive they will have him in no time, but that doesn't happen. She keeps seeing Wayne in flashes in the backseat, and visions of his childhood. Finally, she can't sit still anymore, and gets up to make food. The media is broadcasting Wayne's photo, but no one is mentioning Manx. Vic is getting angrier by the minute. Then, she remembers Hooper, and learns he is dead which reduces her to tears.

A woman shows up, and Vic knows this is who she's been waiting for. FBI Agent Tabitha Hutter is a psychiatric evaluator. Vic doesn't realize this at first, but when she does, she begins to lose hope, knowing that they all think she is crazy. Hutter takes her through it all again, one step at a time, and only seems surprised when Vic describes Manx's weapon. Despite that, she draws Vic's attention to how close her account of things is to her drawings for the Christmas version of Search Engine, and doesn't fail to mention her stay in a mental facility either. They haven't found any slugs. Before the conversation can go any further, Lou arrives. He holds her, his face white and sickly. They all sit down again, and Vic assesses Lou's appearance, mistaking illness for fear. Lou tells them about his phone call from Wayne and describes his heart attack as a fainting spell, glossing over it for Vic's sake. Also, he wants the focus kept on finding their son instead of his health. They try tracking his iPhone, but the coordinates that come up make no sense and neither does the map which is labeled as the United In-scape of America. Hutter has no idea what to make of that, and Vic can feel herself losing her grip. Lou takes his cues from her, and when she doesn't explain the map, he plays dumb as well. Lou and Vic go upstairs to rest, and he holds her, taking comfort from her proximity. Finally, she has a chance to tell him everything that happened since that morning. She tells about the bridge appearance, the bike's breakdown, Manx's assault on her, and Wayne's abduction. She begs Lou to help her fix the bike, and he promises to do so provided she will take him with her. He knows that going after Manx is crazy, and he won't risk losing her too.

Wayne sleeps for some time as the Wraith heads for the House of Sleep. Looking outside, he sees the majesty of the Rockies for first time and is astounded by them. The snow is falling, and he can see a bright spot that shines like a torch about one third of the way from the top of the largest one. Manx suggests for him to open the window and grab a sugar flake. Somehow, to Wayne's surprise, Manx isn't scary to him anymore. In fact, he looks young and well dressed. Even the Gasmask man is dressed in a white uniform with medals made out of chocolate coins. His grandma Lindy comes to him, but her words make no sense. It all sounds like gibberish to him, and he is afraid suddenly





again. Then Manx turns back into the fearsome man with an ear missing. Manx asks who is in the back with him. By then, Gramma Lindy is gone, and Wayne no longer wants to go to Christmasland. Bing wakes and tells them of his dream of Christmasland, but is crestfallen when Manx suggests that he enjoy it as it will be the closest he gets.

Manx is already healing as though they've been on the road for days, and Wayne can't reconcile what he sees with what he knows. He claims that it is all because of the relationship he has with the car, but that makes even less sense. Wayne can't grasp how the car can keep him in the back seat, keep others from seeing or hearing him yell for help, heal Manx, and drive itself when required. His voice is still hoarse from screaming, but now he is starting to feel better somehow. The inside of the car is filled with sunshine, and he admires how beautiful it is before shaking himself out of the stupor again. He asks to talk to his mom, but Manx tells him he must wait until he gets to Christmasland.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Manx's relationship with the car alter what Wayne knows is real? What happens that doesn't seem possible? How does Manx explain it?

## Discussion Question 2

Who tries to keep Wayne from falling under Manx's spell? Why does Wayne fear her at first? Why can't he understand her? How does she explain it? What does she tell him to do?

## Discussion Question 3

What is different about the place that Wayne wakes to find himself in? How does Manx try to appeal to him? What does Wayne see for the first time in his life?

## Vocabulary

centrifugal, hallucinate, fixation, incredulity, dissertation, deliberated, manatee, assumptions, perturbed, incapacitated



## Chapter 9: Search Engine, July 6 - 7, Part Two (Pages 372 – 434)

### Summary

Vic's father calls early the next morning to ask if there is anything that he can do. Hutter's group is unable to trace Wayne's phone. She asks Vic if the Sleigh House is Christmasland, but Vic knows it isn't. She says nothing. Hutter takes her to look at photos of hammers and Vic shows her the one Manx used. Hutter asks if she is up to doing a media appeal, and wants Vic to give her the details of her original encounter with Manx. Vic goes out to the garage where Lou is asleep among the bike pieces. Dalton tells her he was there all night. Vic tells Hutter the same story about Manx as she gave investigators originally. Then, Hutter asks her if the story boards she created for the new search engine could be the Christmasland referred to on the iPhone map. Vic doesn't think so. Vic goes up to rest and finds Lou asleep in the chair with a note taped to his chest that says bike still isn't right. She takes Lou's phone and calls Maggie who tells her Wayne is still alright, but she has no way of knowing for how long. Vic decides to have a look at the bike herself, and opening the door, she finds Hutter standing there. She asks her about Maggie and how she knows that Wayne hasn't been hurt yet. Vic can't explain, so Hutter is prepared to arrest her just as Lou comes into the room. Vic tells him she has to go. He puts himself between Hutter and Vic, and Vic escapes out the window. In the garage, the key is in the ignition, and the Triumph flares to life. Hutter is standing in the yard, but she doesn't draw her gun. Vic nods at her and leaves her behind. The brake is not connected, but Vic has no intentions of stopping. She rides and rides, but the Shorter Way Bridge doesn't appear. She speeds past a police car and decides to duck into the parking lot of North Country Video to hide. Behind the building, she sees a dirt bike run and riding along the narrow rut she finds herself wishing she could take Wayne for a ride. At the bottom of the slope she sees the covered bridge. Without hesitation she rides through it, the sign this time pointing to the 'House of Sleep.'

When they get to the House of Sleep, Bing's house, Manx tells him that he wants some time alone. Manx sends him ahead into the house suggesting he cook some bacon for Wayne. The look he gives Wayne on the way out of the car is filled with intense hatred. Manx wants to know more about Maggie, and he tells Wayne he'll leave him in the car to think about it until breakfast is ready. As soon as Manx is out of sight, he opens the small compartment he'd hidden his phone in, but it is gone. When Manx returns, he says if Wayne tells him about Maggie and is honest, he'll let him call his mom. Wayne tells him almost everything, but omits the information about the bridge. Somehow, Manx knows, and Wayne is not allowed to make his call. Wayne sees a butterfly outside his window. He wishes he could teach it to do tricks. When Manx returns, he asks about the butterfly, but Wayne only has vague memories of mutilating it and doesn't want to think about it. So, he puts the butterfly pieces into the ashtray. Manx tells him they will be in Indiana that night. Bing has found a great deal of information about Maggie Leigh for



Manx. When he comes out and tries to put his suitcase in the car, it won't open. Manx tells him the car doesn't want him, and they drive off without him.

On the other side of the bridge, Vic is looking at the charred remains of a church. She turns off the bike and walks to a nearby shed to look inside. A voice from behind her threatens to call the police. The Wraith isn't there, and neither are Manx or Wayne. A retiree comes toward her, shouting about it being private property, telling her that she and her friends have no right to trespass. She asks what friends he is talking about, and he tells her they left half an hour ago in an old car, then offers to let her use his phone.

Vic wonders if the burned out church is the House of Sleep and follows Bing who says he wishes he could have stopped the man with her son. He points her to the phone and when he calls himself Bing, something registers. She asks the name of the town, and then his voice registers too. She turns, but he already has his mask on and tells her she is in the House of Sleep. He says that is the end of the line for her and hits her in the face with his shears. Vic staggers and tumbles down the basement stairs. She lands on a plastic wrapped mound damaging an arm and a leg. Bing follows her down and drives an air tank into her stomach. He grabs her hair and drags her down a hallway, pushing her onto a cot in the corner as she struggles to stay conscious. He holds a mask over her face and tells her to take deep breaths. She pulls the tube out, but he isn't perturbed. He points the valve at her and sprays a steady stream happily sharing that he has enough to knock out several elephants. He seems overjoyed, saying she is his second chance, and she remembers the lighter in her pocket. She pulls it out and opens the lid, making him take a step back. She thumbs the wheel, and a spark follows the stream back to the tank where it explodes, killing him instantly.

## Analysis

Vic doesn't want to talk to her father. She bluntly tells him that she'll call him if she needs to blow something up. Hutter interviews her again, this time about her original encounter with Manx and Vic is horrified to realize that Hutter truly thinks that she killed her own son. Dalton tells Vic that he's most surprised that no one has seen the Rolls-Royce.

When Manx gets to Bing's House of Sleep, he tells Bing what a disaster he's been. Bing tries to cover his ears, not wanting to hear what Manx has to say, his face streaming with tears. He claims he could just shoot himself, and Manx tells him not to bother, as he'd probably miss and shoot him instead. Wayne can't help but laugh, and Bing shrieks at him to shut up. For a moment, Wayne entertains the idea of Manx hitting Bing with the hammer and is surprised that something in him finds it funny. Deep down, a part of him wonders how he can find anything funny under the circumstances.

As Manx takes him out for a bathroom break, he asks him how Maggie and his mother know each other, revealing that he had watched them from the de Zoets' house. Somehow, Wayne knows this can mean nothing good for the de Zoets. Manx doesn't believe Wayne when he tells him that he didn't hear the conversation between Maggie



and his mother. To punish him for his lie, he tells Wayne that he won't be allowed to call his mother after all. Wayne begs him for another chance, and Manx warns him that if he lies again, he will lose any opportunity he has. Wayne is as honest as he can be, remembering details Manx isn't even asking about, even telling him inadvertently about the Triumph. He is sure Manx will give him back his phone now, but he doesn't. He tells Wayne maybe tomorrow, and Wayne is devastated. He cries and shrieks, but Manx closes the garage door and turns out the light, telling him to get some sleep.

Wayne hits a window as hard as he can, but it doesn't break. He bangs his head against the window in angst, loosening a front tooth in the process. He picks up the moon ornament off the floor thinking of it as a key of sorts to Christmasland and for some reason the idea pleases him. A butterfly crawls across the window outside, and Wayne relaxes as he watches it, thinking he could have a pet if the window opened a bit. He daydreams about naming it Sunny and teaching it to do tricks. When he considers how by taking off one wing, it would be able to fly loops, the window opens. The butterfly comes in, and he plays with it for a while before it gets tired, having done a couple of loops first. He dozes, and when he wakes, Manx asks him what happened to the butterfly. Wayne looks down and sees it in a pile. Both wings and legs have been torn off. Confused, and feeling shameful, he remembers a feeling of excitement when he tore one wing off. He doesn't want to remember the rest. So, he picks up the pieces and puts them into the ashtray, feeling better once they are out of his sight.

Manx is pleased with the information Bing has found out about Maggie Leigh. He gets in, and when Bing tries to open the trunk to put his suitcase in, the latch locks, as do the doors. Manx apologizes, telling him the car doesn't want him. Bing begins to panic, begging for another chance, but the Wraith pulls away leaving him lying on the pavement. He tries to follow the car, and when he gets left behind, he beats himself about the head in frustration. When Manx jokes about possibly having had to drag Bing all the way to Colorado, Wayne realizes with a sick feeling he is smiling.

Vic isn't sure how to make the next part happen. She rides down the road, going increasingly faster, but the Shorter Way Bridge isn't in the same place as it was the day before. Part of her brain is still arguing that there is no bridge and that it only exists in her mind. She remembers the psychiatrist telling her that the bridge was her escape hatch when reality was too much for her to bear. Her speed increasing, she passes a police cruiser, and knows he will turn around for her. She turns into the parking lot of a country video store. She sees a dirt bike trail behind it, hidden in the shadows. She rides around the chain and down the trail, letting gravity pull her down. Part of her is wishing that she had Wayne on the back to show him the beauty of the woods and share the joy of the ride. She can almost feel him holding on to her and in that moment, she reaches the bottom and twenty feet in front of her is the bridge. Her mind argues, as the bridge is sitting on the ground, spanning nothing. The rest of her knows now without doubt that the bridge is real. It is not some concoction of her mind or some metaphor like the psychiatrists had insisted. She can even hear the bats in the rafters and see the green paint inside with the arrow pointing to The House of Sleep. There is nothing left to argue as she rides in slowly. The bridge is in even worse shape than before, boards cracking under the weight of the bike. She guns the throttle, seeing her old bike dumped



against one wall. Then, her front tire thumps out onto asphalt. She is sitting in front of a burned out church on a suburban street. A retiree is standing out in front of a pink house with a lawn cluttered with tinfoil flowers. She leaves her bike at the edge of the lot with the keys in it. But, before she can explore too far, the man is yelling at her that it is private property, and he will call the police on her and her friends. It takes time to register that someone had been there before her, and questioning him, she learns that they'd only just left. When she convinces him she is no threat, he innocently offers the use of his phone.

She is still trying to figure out how to find Wayne from there, so she follows him into the house. By the time she realizes who he is and turns to face him, he already has his mask on. He tells her it is the end of the road for her. She is in the House of Sleep. She backs up and finds herself falling down the basement stairs. In the battle that follows, Bing is confident, having been through this fight many times before. He is excited to have gotten his second chance, having captured the one thing that Manx wants most – Victoria McQueen. He tries to use the Sevoflurane on her, but she struggles much like all the others had. He is in his element now, telling her how many before her have tried the same strategies. Vic feels the lighter in her pocket, remembering the flammable sign on the tank. She yanks it out, and his face changes. He tells her she is crazy, spraying her directly in the hopes of incapacitating her. She flicks the wheel, and the explosion that follows is deafening. Bing is thrown back, the flame following the spray right to him. She can't hear anything beyond her own lungs and heart as she staggers.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Manx convince Wayne to tell him everything he knows, even betraying his mother in the process? What method of coercion does he use? Why is it so effective?

## Discussion Question 2

What conflicts does Wayne struggle with as a result of being in the back of the Wraith? Which inhibitions is he losing, and what examples are there to support this?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Vic manage to finally find her bridge? What conflict must she resolve before she can bring it into being and how does she manage to do so?

## Vocabulary

studious, impassivity, insinuation, lassitude, apothecaries, disembodied, delusional, indignant, empowerment



# Chapter 10: Christmasland, July 7 – 9: Part One (Pages 436 – 493)

## Summary

Wayne closes his eyes for a minute. When he opens them, he and Manx are on a highway where snowmen watch as they pass. Manx tries to show him the snow lion biting the head off a snow sheep, but his grandmother appears and is in the way. In backwards language, she tells him the sky is false, and he isn't trying to fight. He remembers Grandma Lindy trying to tell him something, but brushes it off. Manx tells Wayne they should be at the Here Library around dark the next day.

Vic struggles to regain consciousness in the basement of Bing's House of Sleep. Bing is in two pieces, and another body is nearby. Paper in his mouth reveals a note to his daughter from Nathan Demeter. She makes it upstairs as the phone rings. When she answers it, she hears Manx's voice. Thinking she is Bing, he asks about Vic who tells him Bing is dead. Manx deals for confirmation that Wayne is alive by asking Vic how she found Bing. She tells him, and she talks to Wayne who seems brainwashed, so she reminds him of Hooper. He says he thinks he's been poisoned. Wayne is about to tell her they are going to Maggie's when Manx takes the phone back. After their call ends, she is drained. She calls Lou, and Hutter listens in and tells her to stay where she is. She tells Hutter about Demeter and then tells Lou she's making one stop for ANFO. Lou tells her to get out of there, and she does. Her bridge takes her to Here next and to Maggie. After Lou hangs up, he collapses. Hutter holds his hand in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. Vic rides into the bridge which takes her to the library. Maggie is waiting for her. There is nothing left of the library, having lost everything to a flood, but Maggie is still ready to help Vic with her tiles if she can. As soon as Lou is conscious, he is getting himself dressed again. He knows that Vic is headed to her father's to pick up ANFO, and he plans to be there when she arrives. He gets into a cab and heads to the train station. Back at the hospital, male nurse Bilbo Prince is given ten dollars for noting the license and cab number for Hutter.

## Analysis

Wayne is so excited when he opens his eyes and sees the snowmen that appear to be alive. He claps delightedly when he sees the snow child standing with a hatchet between his decapitated snow parents. Manx tries to show him the snow lion biting the head off a snow sheep, but his grandmother appears and is in the way. In backwards language, she tells him the sky is false and he isn't trying to fight. He opens the door and shoves her out. Suddenly, the snowmen are gone. Wayne doesn't feel right, but Manx looks twenty years younger. He asks if Manx if he is a vampire, but Manx says the car is helping them both. Wayne remembers Grandma Lindy trying to tell him something, but he brushes it off. He asks Manx if he will be allowed to leave



Christmasland. Knowing he won't, he wants a buttered ear of corn, the beer that his father promised him on his twenty-first birthday, and the fireworks and sparklers he would have had on the Fourth of July as payment for Manx killing Hooper like he promised. Manx agrees. He tells Wayne they should be at the Here Library the next day. Wayne wants to leave Maggie alone, but Manx suggests he read the stories about her so that he understands why she concerns him. Wayne does, and he learns about her psychic insights that have saved many people. He still doesn't understand. They are stopping for food when through the window Wayne sees a television set that shows his mom leaving the lake house on the Triumph. Manx returns without food, his face pinched and angry.

Vic revives slowly, struggling against a raging thirst and the desire to let darkness take her again. She manages to uncover the identity of the man Bing hadn't buried yet, and she works her way upstairs trying not to look at what is left of Bing. In tremendous pain, everything is a conscious effort not to pass out. The phone rings, and Manx is on the line trying to find out what Vic might be up to from Bing. She takes great pleasure in telling him what she's done with him and suggests that he leave her son anywhere on the side of the road for her to pick up, but he isn't interested. They deal information for phone time with Wayne, and Vic does what she can to shock him out of the stupor he seems to be in. Manx ends the conversation before she can do more than tell him she is coming. Her next call is to Lou. With Hutter listening, she tells him obliquely where she is going and about Nathan Demeter. Vic heads to Here where Maggie is waiting for her. Maggie looks almost as bad as Vic does, and they both resist the urge to cry looking at each other. Vic asks her for help, and Maggie tries to oblige but is so tired herself that she is unable to make sense of anything from the tiles. They agree to nap briefly, and Maggie gives Vic the bed where she usually sleeps. Vic offers Maggie her companionship and friendship. They sleep side by side, with Vic's arms around Maggie loving her from the same place in her heart that she set aside for Wayne.

Lou knows Hutter is sending people to pick her up. He warns her and tells her he loves her. Then, he keels over. Hutter takes him to the hospital, but he refuses to stay there. His only concern is living long enough to free his son. Since Hutter realizes this, she has the male nurse watch him surreptitiously. She notes the cab number and license plate as he leaves.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Maggie manage to overcome her stammering temporarily? Why does it help?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Vic feel pain in the left side of her head whenever she uses the bridge to get somewhere?



## Discussion Question 3

What do they tell Lou when he gets to the hospital? How does he feel about his condition versus the other issues in his life at the moment?

## Vocabulary

depravity, degenerate, culminated, figuratively, configuration, emaciated, transient, ischemic, angioplasty





## Chapter 11: Christmasland, July 7 - 9: Part Two (Pages 494 - 556)

### Summary

Maggie wakes and does what she must to get the tiles to behave. Once she has the message and has copied it onto paper, she puts the tiles away and looks up to see a boy with a sparkler in the remains of the library. She closes the office door softly and goes to look for him. Speaking backwards, Wayne tells her he can't stop himself and laughs in a drunken way, smelling of beer. Still speaking backwards, he tells her he's fighting, but it's too late and begs her not to follow him. She doesn't understand. In the parking lot, he spells out RUN with his sparkler before she recognizes who he is. Manx turns on the headlights and calls her by name. She tells him to run, but he can't. She crosses in front of the car, thinking only to grab Wayne and run; but, Manx pulls up alongside her and his mallet connects with the back of her neck, lifting her right off the ground. She lands and is unable to move. Manx kicks her in the stomach, raging at her, but the tiles spill out and spell Triumph. She smiles, enraging him further, knowing Vic wins. Vic wakes to a note on the desk that reads "When the Angels fall, the children go home." She hears a radio say a woman is dead just as two men come into the office. She picks up the gun paperweight and asks them who is dead, part of her already knowing. They try to talk her into coming with them. Instead of joining them, she throws the paperweight and slips behind a bookshelf in the dark. She can hear Maggie's voice from before, telling her to get out. Outside, there are no police. All of them are on the side where Maggie lies.

Vic gets on the Triumph and manages to get into the bridge before they can stop her. On the other side, she looks back and sees a cop standing at the entrance. She closes her eyes and wills the bridge away. She turns and sees her father's house. Hutter and her officers lose video and audio when Vic's bridge appears outside Chris McQueen's house. Hutter reviews everything she knows about this case, but she still doesn't know what is going on. Lou and Chris help Vic into the house. The ANFO is on the table in a backpack. He asks her about her plans for it, and she tells him she is going to bring the Fourth of July to Manx's Christmasland. Chris warns them that they have to be a hundred feet away from the blast. They get outside just as Hutter, and her group yells at them to surrender. Vic heads for the Triumph. Lou steps between the officers. Vic calls out to Hutter, telling her she has to get Wayne, or Manx will kill him. Hutter still insists Manx is dead, but Vic insists he just killed Maggie in Ohio. Hutter can call and check. She does, and she can't believe it when an officer informs her that Vic was seen leaving the scene. Hutter can't understand, but Vic promises to show her. When Hutter lowers her weapon, Daltry insists they stop, or he'll shoot. Chris flicks a cigarette in his face and tells Vic to go. Daltry shoots him twice. Vic screams, and Lou gets on behind her telling her they need to go. She enters the bridge at an angle and hits her old bike before she can correct, pitching them both to the ground on the other side. Lou keeps his burned hand down at his side. They are back at the Sleigh House, and it is snowing.



She uses the cuff dangling from his wrist to cuff him to a branch of the tree he leans against. Manx calls out to her inviting her along. Lou tells her it is a mistake, but she climbs on the Triumph and follows the Wraith's taillights into a brick tunnel leading to Christmasland.

## Analysis

Maggie wakes first, thinking Vic is the most beautiful woman she's ever been in a bed with. She wishes they had more time together, but now that Vic is asleep she can do what she needs to in order to get answers from the tiles. She lights a cigarette and holds the lit end against her breast, getting a message sorted out in just minutes this time. She copies it onto a piece of stationary and sees a boy walking through the library with a sparkler. Kissing Vic gently on the temple, she steps out of the remains of the office to find him. Wayne tries to warn her, but speaking backwards, she doesn't understand. He is unable to stop himself from doing what he does. He lures her outside to where Manx is waiting. When she realizes who he is and tries to save him, Manx breaks her neck with a devastating blow to the back of her neck with his hammer. Her tiles spill as she crashes to the ground and spell out Triumph. She grins even as she is dying, knowing that Vic wins. Manx is incensed by her smile, kicking her before leaving. When Vic wakes, she sees the reading that Maggie did for her, but has the feeling that something is terribly wrong. She hears voices, and the police are already there. Listening to their radio, her worst fears are confirmed, but she picks up Maggie's paperweight and asks the questions anyway, confirming that Manx really did kill her. She tosses the paperweight to buy time, and in the dark she manages to get outside and back to the Triumph. She manages to engage her bridge and her next stop is her father's house. Lou is already there with Chris waiting for her with a pack of ANFO and timers. They help her inside and when Chris sees her in the light, he bursts into tears. She tells her father about the bridge, and he believes all of it, including that Manx has Wayne. He has some confessions of his own, admitting at the end, he and her mother had reached a place of forgiveness. Lou promises he won't let Vic kill herself and Vic pales, insisting that neither of them can come as the structure won't take it. She needs the structure to survive so she can bring Wayne back over. They encounter FBI when they go out the back door, but manage to talk their way past almost all of the weaponry. The only one who resists and fires is Daltry and he hits Chris twice. Vic shrieks and Lou wraps his arms around her, kissing her cheek. A part of her stays with her father, holding him as he dies, and the rest of her careens into the bridge again. Vic wakes with Lou beside her, and tells her that her mother was just there. She told Vic that Wayne was running backwards - two steps back for every two miles ahead. There is still time. She tells him that some of the bats got out - that they are part of her and the cost for using the bridge. He remembers her face on them and shudders. Lou has already armed some of the ANFO and shows Vic how to set the timers. Lou realizes this isn't Christmasland, but Vic tells him it is the doorway he uses. Vic tells him the first part of the plan is for Lou to give her the ANFO and the second part is that Lou stays there while she deals with Manx who is just arriving. She tells him she loves him and that he is her hero, kissing him. Then she turns away from him and follows Manx and his Wraith to Christmasland.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Why doesn't Maggie understand Wayne's warnings? What makes her smile as she is dying?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What convinces Tabitha to let Vic go? How does her father help?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What is Vic's two part plan?

## **Vocabulary**

epigrammatic, transcendent, disconcerting, eccentric, reprehensible, delusion, periphery, vacuity



# Chapter 12: Triumph, One Eternal Christmas Eve and Come All Ye Faithful, October

## Summary

Vic follows the Wraith down Gumdrop Avenue which appears deserted until he honks his horn. Then, everything lights up as she passes. At the center is the largest Christmas tree she has ever seen in her life, well over a hundred feet tall with children sitting in its lower branches. It lights up to reveal more children beneath, most in clothing outdated for fifty years or better. Vic calls out to Manx to let Wayne go as he steps out of the car wearing Maggie's fedora to say hi to 'his' children. Wayne gets out and smiles as he looks around. Vic can see his teeth are as pointedly sharp as the others. Millie whispers to Wayne that he has to unwrap his gift, and when he asks where it is, she points her knife at Vic. Vic promises to blow Christmasland off the ledge it sits on if he doesn't give Wayne back. She sets the timer on the first package. Manx screams, and the moon screams with him as he tells his children to kill her. The moon yells "Scissors-for-the-drifter" just before the first explosion which is deafening. She takes out another packet and tosses it into the Sleighcoaster entrance, set for five minutes. She is staring up at it when a child comes out of the dark and sticks a kitchen knife into her back, driving it right in up to the hilt. He laughs, telling her he wants to play with her. She roars away but only a hundred yards past, the explosion ripples the ground. The coaster collapses as Vic realizes she is dying. She rides to the Ferris wheel where she hands the next on, her mouth filling with blood. She tosses her backpack against the trunk of the big Christmas tree and makes her way back to Manx's car. His daughter Millie is trying to put Wayne in the trunk, and Manx is shoving his other daughter Lorrie into the car. Millie bites Wayne's ear, and he screams finally wrenching himself away from her. Manx is heading straight for him, hammer already raised in the air as Vic blows past him, and the Christmas tree explodes. She makes it to Wayne and drags him up behind her. Manx is screaming at her as she races off with Wayne holding tight to her middle. Manx chases her in his car, hitting her back tire with his bumper. The Shorter Way Bridge appears, and she sees the paint on one side with Lou and an arrow. The Wraith flies in behind her, and the bats attack Manx and his girls. Vic races forward out of the other side as the front of the Wraith crashes through the floor of the bridge. Manx screams as the car pitches into the static. Then, suddenly the bridge is gone, and the bike dies. Laughing, she realizes it is out of gas.

Wayne wakes from a dream. Lou, almost thin, is sitting beside him. He tells Wayne he has a tow to do, and Wayne can stay home with Tabitha if he wants. But, Wayne decides to keep him company. Tabitha shows up anyway, and Lou makes her coffee before they all head out the door. Wayne is last, pulling on his sneakers when the phone rings. A girl on the other end asks him when he's coming back to play and to help



rebuild Christmasland. Tabitha comes back in, and he hangs up, telling her it was a wrong number. Wayne knows he isn't right.

Lou, Tabitha, and Wayne drive up to the property where the burned out shell of the Sleigh House still sits. Wayne is able to feel the children nearby. He thinks about using the hammer behind him on his father's head just as Lou takes it from him and gets out of the truck. He begins smashing ornaments as Wayne sits in the truck, imagining running Tabitha over with it. Tabitha asks Lou what he's doing, and Lou explains that one of the ornaments is Wayne's. He tells her that Vic brought most of Wayne back, but Lou wants the rest too. Tabitha joins him, and then so does Wayne. He keeps hammering, and then out of the corner of his eye, he sees a young girl, crying silently. Marta Gregorski, missing for twenty years, is still twelve now as she was when she disappeared. Tabitha goes to her as Brad McCauley comes out of the bush. Lou turns and sees that Wayne is crying, realizing that the ornament he'd just smashed was his. On the highway, Wayne hears the roar of a motorcycle. For a moment he thinks that since the children all came back, maybe his mother would, too. But, it was just a guy on a Harley, out for a spin.

## Analysis

Vic follows the Wraith into Christmasland. Before she can get over the shock of the sight of Gumdrop Avenue and the great Christmas tree as it lights up in front of her, she realizes that it is surrounded by children who are unkempt, armed and mostly barefoot in the snow. Their smiles are unnatural, mouths filled with pointed teeth and translucent faces where all the veins showed. The tree ornaments are the heads which belong to the only adults in sight. Manx gets out, insisting that everything he's done has been for his children, hugging two of them who came to him. The children behind Vic begin talking about taking parts of her as prizes, and Manx suggests they ask Wayne what he wants while Vic continues to insist that he hand him over and warns him of the dire consequences should he refuse. Wayne gets out of Manx's car, eyes alight with wonder, and laughing with unrestrained happiness that Vic hasn't seen in him for a long time. She calls him to her, telling him they have to go, but Millie whispers in his ear, telling him he has to open his present first. She asks if they can help, and Wayne assures them they can, still not realizing that the 'gift' is his mother and 'opening' it would mean her death. Vic tells Wayne to think in reverse, and he says he is trying but it is hard. Manx sends the children after her. She turns the bike and tries to ride through them but lays it down to avoid running over a little girl. The girl attacks her, and Vic pushes her away. She ends up in front of a building with ANFO in her lap. Vic roars away as the package explodes. Placing the next one at the coaster, she looks up to see it filled with mummified bodies - dozens of men and women. Stunned, she stands there as one child plunges a knife into her back. As he pulls it out again, she knows that he has just killed her.

The next explosion occurs before she is a hundred yards clear, and staggers her as the Sleighcoaster collapses. She puts another clump of ANFO on the Ferris wheel, and thinks about the fact that she will never see New England in the autumn again. The



wheel erupts as she tosses the last sack against the trunk of Manx's car. She looks back to see Millie holding Wayne and preventing him from leaving as she tries to force him into the trunk. The package of ANFO under the Christmas tree blows and Vic loses sight of him. Wayne is trying to get up, and Vic heads to him on the Triumph, unable to hear but sure she is calling his name. She grabs him on the way by and hauls him onto the bike behind her. Wayne holds his dying mother tightly as she rides for the Shorter Way Bridge. Manx follows in the Wraith, determined to run her down as the Triumph starts across. She can hear Manx screaming at her and feel his bumper as he bangs into the back of the bike. Wayne voice is childlike as he draws her attention to the bats and Vic promises him they won't hurt him. Vic can hear Manx screaming as the bats attack. The Wraith breaks through the bridge in the center and pitches forward almost folding the bridge in the middle. Finally, it drops into the Merrimack River, the engine block going through Manx's chest. The child beside him in the car is swept away and found four days later almost in Boston Harbor. On the other side of the bridge, the bike dies - out of gas.

Wayne wakes from a dream with Lou sitting on the edge of his bed. It is the first Sunday of October. Lou asks what he was dreaming, and he lies, telling him he doesn't remember. In truth, he remembered that he'd been dreaming about several of the children in Christmasland, now just The White. They still played games in the void, but Christmasland was gone. He decides to go with Wayne on a towing job, even though Wayne assures him he could stay home with Tabitha instead if he wanted to. Tabitha is spending more time with Lou and Wayne, and Wayne assures his father that he doesn't mind. Tabitha decides to join them, and Wayne is putting on his sneakers when the phone rings. White noise hisses and a girl with a Russian accent asks when he'll be back. It isn't the first time they've called, telling him they can rebuild Christmasland with his help. Tabitha comes in and Wayne tells her it was a wrong number, all the while knowing that something is really wrong. He knows that other children don't dream of playing games like 'bite the smallest' or enjoy the sight of a chipmunk as it becomes road kill. He also senses that there are other rows of teeth in his mouth, although his tongue feels only the single row. Lou drives to the Sleigh House, and Wayne trembles when they get there, feeling how close the children are. He thinks about rebuilding Christmasland, and it occurs to him that he could use the hammer on the seat beside him to smash Tabitha's face in, and how much fun it would be. As he considers it, Lou takes the hammer from him and smashes the first ornament to pieces. He crushes two more, and when Tabitha asks him why, he tells her that one of the ornaments is Wayne's. She asks Wayne if he wants to help, and he admits that it looks like fun. In the truck, the radio is playing Christmas music. They all continue to smash ornaments until Wayne sees a young girl standing by the house. She asks for help in Russian, but Wayne still understands her. Tabitha sees her and calls Lou who looks at Marta Gregorski - missing since 1991. Twenty years had passed, and she still looked the same twelve years of age she had been when she was taken. Tabitha goes to her as Lou continues and more children come out behind her. Tears stream down Wayne's face as he tells Lou over and over again how sorry he is. Tabitha is trying to calm a dozen children now, and Wayne asks his father if they can skip Christmas that year. On the highway, Wayne hears a motorcycle approaching and for a moment he thinks his mother is returning too, but it's just some guy out for a ride.



## Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the bats in the Shorter Way Bridge? Why is Vic so sure that they will not harm her or her son?

## Discussion Question 2

What are the names of the games the children in Christmasland played? How are they played?

## Discussion Question 3

What final act must be performed before the children of Christmasland and Wayne are finally freed from the influence of Manx and his madness?

## Vocabulary

periphery, translucent, demented, annihilating, inarticulate, transcendent, imprecise, ostensibly



# Characters

## Linda McQueen

Linda McQueen is Victoria's mother,. Linda dies when she continues to smoke after losing one lung to cigarettes. She is an unhappy woman, who makes those around her unhappy for most of her life.

## Victoria (aka The Brat; Vic) McQueen

Vicky is a special young woman who from the age of eight discovered that she could 'find' things. It begins when Vic's (Vicky's) father buys her a Day- Glo Raleigh Tuff Burner for her eighth birthday. It is her favorite gift of all. When her mother loses a bracelet, Vic rides off on her prized bike, thinking if only she could find it she would be able to resolve the fight her parents were having about it. Though she isn't allowed to cross the Shorter Way Bridge, she braves it. On the other side she finds herself at Terry's Primo Subs which is located about halfway between Winnepesaukee and Haverhill. Though confused as to how she got there, she recovers the bracelet her mother had left behind. Over the years, she finds other objects as well, including her best friend's corduroy penguin, Mr. Pentack at the Fenway Bowling Alley, her father's wallet at a construction site in Attleboro and even their neighbor's cat, hit by a car. She makes all of these discoveries just by using the bridge that she never told anyone about. When she loses the picture of her father and his mother that he had allowed her to take to school, she uses the bridge to get back to her school. The strangest part of these events is that the bridge itself had collapsed when she was eight, dropping down into the river below when someone had tried to drive their car across. It always seems to appear when she needs it though - old but intact enough to support her on her bike.

All of these events had two stories to them however. There was the truth - that the bridge had somehow taken her to each of the places she needed to be, and there was the truth she shared with others... the more plausible stories she made up to explain how she found things. One day, riding her bike through the woods and feeling like she is losing her mind, she asks that someone explain what is happening to her. At the bridge, she sees the word 'Here' painted on the wall in the same place as the other destinations had appeared over the years. She rides across and finds herself in Here, Ohio, where she meets a librarian named Maggie. Maggie explains that Vic is special - a 'strong creative,' able to see the inner worlds of thought that most don't. It is a gift, Maggie tells her, admitting she has a version of that as well. She is able to discern certain events using Scrabble tiles which spell out messages like the fact that Vic was coming to see her. There is always a cost, she warns though. For Maggie, the cost is a stutter that gets worse the more often she reads the tiles. Vic has migraine headaches. As she sits with Maggie, her eye begins to bleed as her head throbs relentlessly. Maggie helps her back to the bridge, and Vic barely makes it back, collapsing in her father's arms in the front yard. She is bedridden for most of three days. When she is able to get up, she





discovers that her bike is gone. Her parents had decided that it was too dangerous for her, and they had taken it. Along with it, her access to the bridge disappears.

In the year that Vic begins high school, her father leaves her mother, and the relationship between them slowly deteriorates. When she is seventeen, her mother catches her with Craig Harrison. When Vic returns from work the next day, she finds that her mother has packed up all of her things, telling her that now she will have to earn them back. She storms out, with her mother telling her the door will be locked if she returns. Vic tries to talk her father into coming to get her, but he tells her to go home. Unwilling to face her mother, Vic climbs into a basement window and spends the night on an old chair instead. The next day, she inadvertently finds her old bike. Though too small for her now, she rides it with abandon through the woods, and the bridge appears like a long lost friend, just as Vic has decided that she should try to find the Wraith Maggie's tales foretold but that Maggie had begged her to ignore. Part of Vic believes that it would serve her mother right if something did happen to her.

Her subsequent encounter with Charlie Manx is almost the death of her. But, as when she is escaping, she meets her savior, Lou Carmody and together they eventually have a son, Bruce Wayne. Bruce Wayne is the best thing that ever happened to her, and she lives for both him and his father. She spends her time at first helping Lou to paint custom bikes for other people, and then creating what becomes a well-known selection of children's books surrounding the theme 'search engine'. When she paints, or works on her books, she is able to avoid the calls and messages from Manx and his near dead captive children, but they slowly invade her life to such a degree that she is forced to abandon family life, leaving Lou to raise Bruce (Wayne) alone.

Vic turns to drugs in desperation, and she is committed for psychiatric help for a time, eventually making contact with her family again. She makes peace with her mother before she dies, and even takes Bruce to 'their' lake for a vacation, but once there, Manx again invades her life and attacks her, taking Bruce with him when he leaves. None of the authorities will believe that Manx is alive, and even Vic has to believe it is improbable - especially considering he had been autopsied at the Super Max Prison where he had died, but when a man buys his wreck of a Rolls-Royce and restores it, he inadvertently brings Manx back from the dead to continue bringing children to Christmasland. She rides a restored Triumph which allows her access to the Shorter Way Bridge again, and manages to use this access to track Manx and her son to Ohio where he kills Maggie, then to her father's where she gets the material necessary to kill Manx, and then to Christmasland where she rescues Bruce (Wayne) and returns him to his father. However, Vic dies in the endeavor.

## **Charles (Charlie) Talent Manx III**

Charlie Manx is a serial killer who preys on children. He is extremely tall - probably close to six and a half feet in height and completely bald. His skull is pale and crisscrossed with blue veins, and his face is so long that it almost appears to have melted somewhat. His skull is large, and his facial features are so crowded together on



his face that he looks somewhat like a weasel. His eyes protrude, his chin is sunken, and he has an overbite that makes him look almost feeble or dim witted. All of this is displayed on a bulging skull like a dinosaur egg. When he laughs, it sounds like a horse's whinny.

Charlie has been driving on roads that aren't on any map for a long time. He is traveling highways that don't belong, and he is only able to access them in his Rolls-Royce Wraith. He had been arrested near Gunbarrel after transporting a minor (Vic) across state lines and burning a man with gasoline for trying to stop him.

His age is a mystery, but he is in a coma by 2001 in the hospital of the Supermax prison in Denver. In 2012, he passes away, eleven years later. The house called the Sleigh House had been burned to the ground by Vic as she tried to escape after dozens of children had been taken there, although no bodies are ever found. After his death, the morgue he is taken to is broken into, they presumed, and his body is removed along with a Trans Am belonging to a security guard.

His Rolls-Royce is purchased at an auction by a man named Nathan Demeter in Kentucky who restores it for his daughter's prom, intending to sell it afterward. But Nathan disappears with the car before either event can take place.

It seems that Charlie Manx was somehow revived when Nathan restored the car. The car, with a mind of its own, drives to Bing's House of Sleep. Reunited there with Manx, they begin hunting Victoria McQueen to finish what he'd started so many years earlier. Manx and Bing follow Vic and Bruce Wayne back to the lake house where they finally take Wayne hostage, killing Hooper in the process and severely injuring Vic who tries to stop them. Manx takes Wayne back to the House of Sleep first where he drops Bing off as punishment for shooting Manx's ear off accidentally in the struggle with Victoria. Then, Manx heads with Wayne to Christmasland, despite Bing's objections and begging that he not be left behind. Using the Shorter Way Bridge and the Triumph, Vic tracks them to the House of Sleep and then on to Christmasland. In a final showdown, Vic rescues her son Bruce Wayne and kills Charlie Manx in a way that is permanent. Unfortunately, Vic loses her own life in the process.

## **Louis (Lou) Carmody**

When Vic first meets Lou Carmody, he is riding his Harley down the highway just beyond Manx's Sleigh House. He is a large man with a mullet style of brown hair and a beard that covers both chins. He is wearing black leather gloves with the fingers removed, a black leather jacket and a Weird Al t-shirt underneath. He has skin that is smooth and pink and is emotionally almost childish in his behavior. He commonly uses the expression "Dude" if the situation warrants it, and he does when he stops for Lou who hops on behind him without hesitation. Lou is twenty years old and already has a record of vandalism, smoking under age and shoplifting. When he stops and Vic begins to cry, he promises her he won't let anything happen to her and without thinking about it, she kisses him. When the Wraith pulls in shortly afterward, Lou was going to head out



after the two men bent on stopping him, but another customer grabs his arm, likely saving his life. Lou has a tattoo of the Joker on his hip and after he and Vic get together, they live in a trailer park just outside of Gunbarrel, Colorado. He borrows money from his parents to open a garage in which he picks up jobs including custom painting.

## **Bruce Wayne Carmody**

Called Bruce by his paternal grandparents, Wayne by Vic, and The Bat by Lou, Wayne is Lou and Vic's son. He is born three years after Lou rescues Vic from the side of the highway and promises to keep her safe. Wayne, Vic, and Lou live in a trailer park two miles outside of Gunbarrel, Colorado. Wayne spends most of the day safely inside a monster truck tire which is his parents' version of a playpen. Wayne lives with his mother and father until his father tires of his mother's drinking, wandering, and overall craziness. The next time Wayne visits with his mother, he is twelve years old and has been unhappy for as long as he can remember. When Wayne spends a summer with his mother, he takes his dog Hooper with him. The dog is a Saint Bernard who idolizes Wayne.

Wayne is taken by Manx from the home he and his mother are vacationing in, captured while Vic is taking the Triumph for its first run. The Triumph breaks down while Vic is taking it for its inaugural run. She unexpectedly finds herself traveling over the Shorter Way Bridge on it. Her surprise is so great that she brakes fiercely and parts fall off the bike. She is forced to walk it back, and by the time she gets back to Wayne, he has already been grabbed by Manx and is trapped in the back of his car.

## **Margaret (Maggie) Leigh**

Maggie is the librarian in Here, Ohio. She is twenty years old and is the first person that Vic sees when she tumbles out of the Shorter Way Bridge after asking it to take her to someone who could explain the events that surround her 'finding' of things. She has fluorescent purple hair and wears a fedora tipped back on her head. Her favorite earrings are a pair of Scrabble tiles – one that is an 'F' and one that is a 'U' which she gives to Vic before she returns home through the Shorter Way Bridge. Maggie wears a necklace made out of beer-can pull tabs and Chuck Taylor Converse high top sneakers without laces. Maggie has a speech impediment that causes her to stutter, and that only began when she started to read events as they were revealed to her through Scrabble tiles. Before that, she didn't stutter at all, but the more she reads her tiles, the more intense her stutter becomes. She has an upturned nose and ears that make her look rather elfish. Maggie is one of the top five Scrabble players in Iowa, having found her first Scrabble board when she was only twelve years old. She refers to both herself and Vicky as 'strong creative'. She tells Vicky that everyone lives in two worlds – the real world and the world inside their heads.

When Maggie shows up on Vic's mothers' doorstep after Vic's mother dies, Vic can't place her at first. She is wearing acid washed jeans which are threadbare at the knees



and thighs and has the look of a junkie. She tells Vic that the Wraith is free. It is up to her and her bridge to find it. Her arms are a series of cigarette burns. She has missing teeth. She gives Vic a manila folder with her phone number on the inside cover. The first three digits after the area code are Vic's birthday, and the next four are spelled out as FUFU.

## Bing Partridge

Bing is a disturbed man who grew up in an abusive home, often beaten by his father – a behavior that was either ignored or condoned by his mother. Bing responded by eventually killing them both. He killed his father first by shooting him in the head with a nail gun. Bing enjoys going through his father's old magazines, and in one of them he discovers an ad recruiting for Christmasland employees. Something about this resonates with Bing, whose fondest memory is connected to a Christmas past when his father gave him his gas mask from the Korean War after telling him that it was the last thing that at least three Koreans saw before they died. Bing responds to the ad, telling them that he is the perfect employee for their company, and begs them to give him a chance. Soon afterward, he begins dreaming about Christmasland. Bing is a short man, overweight, and hairy. He has a flat, broad nose and protruding eyes with a patchy bristle of hair that makes him look as though he has mange.

## Chris McQueen

Chris is Victoria's father. He and his wife Linda do not get along very well, arguing frequently. He has said some very nasty things to her, including comments like his belief that she is an ugly person inside. Chris leaves his wife when Vic is still in school, and the loss is tough on Vic. He moves in with another woman, and for a time his relationship with Vic is very strained. Calling her 'the Brat,' he always thinks of her as his girl. That thought is reinforced when she goes to him looking for ANFO to get her son Wayne back. He not only provides the explosives and timers, but he also runs interference for her when she has to leave with the explosives to go and get her son. Chris and Vic have a brief time to talk before she goes, and they clear the air about the past, during which Chris has a chance to listen to the truth of her bridge trips. He doesn't question the truth of her statements, taking their validity on faith, and she is touched by his belief in her. When he distracts an agent to get her the space to leave, he is shot twice – once in the stomach and once in the throat.

## Manx's Victims

Marta Gregorski is a Russian girl who was abducted from Vic's area. She was mentored by Kasparov and was a small chess celebrity on her own, having been ranked a grandmaster by the time she was twelve. Marta and her mother were both victims of Charlie Manx. They were expected to attend a dinner at Harvard and the clerk at the Hilton DoubleTree remembered seeing them leave the hotel, and get into a black car



with running boards. The car sent to pick them up was a town car driven by Roger Sillman who was unconscious on the other side of the turnaround and didn't wake until almost midnight. The sixty-two year old had assumed the Gregorskis had taken a cab instead. Though interviewed often by the FBI, his story never changed, and they were never found. He vaguely remembered someone coming to his window, and when he rolled it down, he smelled gingerbread.

Rory McCombers was fourteen in November of 1991 when he went missing. He was supposed to be joining the rest of his family in Key West. The freshman at Baltimore's Gilman School met a Rolls-Royce in the parking lot of his dorm, believing it had been sent by his father. His father had in fact sent a car to pick up his son for Thanksgiving, but it was a limo which was found parked half a mile away with the driver, Hank Tulowitzki locked in the trunk. He'd remembered stopping for gas at a Night Owl, and little else. He'd spent five hours kicking and screaming before getting someone's attention. Rory was never seen again.

Amy Martin is Nancy Lee's nine year old daughter, and one of the long list of children who disappear in May of 1993. She is with her mother, and together they are headed to a fundraiser for George Allen.

Jake Christensen is ten years old and is flying from Philadelphia to Buffalo in May of 1994. He had left his boarding school and flown to New York alone where his driver, Bill Black was supposed to have picked him up. No one knows who really picked Jake up, but he is not seen again.

Charlie (Charlie) Conlon and her father are headed to a father/daughter dance in Plattsburgh, New York in 1995 when she is taken, never to be seen again. She is only twelve years old. Months later, a call is answered by her mother in their home and she is identified by her as one of the children singing The First Noel.

Brad McCauley is the first person to call Vic from Christmasland. At first she recognizes the name, but not from where. He identifies himself as the boy who was in the car at the Sleigh House, reminding her of how much fun they had together. He tells her that they are all getting hungry, and asks her what the point is of having all the teeth that they do if they can't be used on something.

## **Bing's Victims**

Nancy Lee Martin, a former Virginia Tech cheerleader is forty-two years old and has a nine year old daughter named Amy. She is still beautiful to Jeff Haddon who has a crush on her and is the last one to see her and Amy alive. He witnesses them climb into a Rolls-Royce Wraith, supposedly on their way to a fund raiser for George Allen, a new candidate for governor. Their driver, like them, is never seen again and his car is found just off Bainbridge Boulevard near the water. All they find is his hat which is soaked in blood.



Steve Conlon and his twelve year old daughter Charlie are on their way to a father/daughter dance when Charlene disappears in Plattsburgh, New York in 1995. A stretch limo had been ordered for the event, but a Rolls-Royce had shown up instead. Agatha had kissed her daughter goodbye and never seen her again. Her husband Steve was found off the Interstate 87 with a bullet through his left eye.

Nathan Demeter lives in Brandenburg, Kentucky. He buys Manx's Rolls-Royce from a government auction. Though Demeter's daughter Michelle is just twelve, he begins to teach her how to drive it. He fantasizes about how he could restore it for her to go to her prom in one day. Even from the start, the car plays nothing but Christmas music, despite the fact that the car is a mere shadow of its former glory. Michelle likes everything but the hood ornament, which she says looks like a vampire lady. Michelle tells her father that she is driving them to Christmasland, insisting that it exists and pointing in the direction of the mountains with a faraway look in her eyes.

## **Jeff Haddon**

Jeff is the last person to see Nancy Lee Martin and her nine year old daughter Amy as he walks his dog, a Springer Spaniel named Garbo, on a rainy night in May of 1993. Jeff is wearing a yellow poncho as it is raining heavily, and even Garbo is unhappy about having to be outside. He tells the investigators that he heard Christmas music, sure that it was the Little Drummer Boy that was playing as they got into the car. Jeff owns a Mercedes dealership, and has no trouble recognizing the car as a Rolls-Royce Wraith, and remembers waving at Nancy because he had always had a bit of a crush on her. When he walks back later, the car is gone and so are they.

## **Malcolm Ackroyd**

Malcolm is supposed to take Nancy Lee Martin and her daughter Amy to a fundraiser for George Allen, but he disappears before he ever arrives. His car is found near the water on Bainbridge Boulevard, but all that is ever found of him is his hat which is soaked with blood.

## **Bill Black**

Bill is the driver who was sent to pick up ten year old Jake Christensen from the airport in Buffalo, New York. He is found in the parking garage, dead after suffering a massive heart attack behind the wheel of his stretch limo. Later, when the autopsy is performed, near lethal doses of Sevoflurane are discovered.

## **Tom Priest**

Tom is wearing military fatigues when Vic first sees him in the grocery/gas bar. He is standing at the head of the line, waiting to pay. He is at the end of two weeks' leave, due



to return to Saudi Arabia after returning to Fort Hood that night. He is one of the group that Vic meets after escaping from Manx's Sleigh House, When Manx himself pulls in for gas, Tom decides to go out and make sure that Manx stays until the police arrive. His wife isn't pleased with the idea, reminding him that he had an eighteen month old son to think about, but he reminds her that he is on active duty with the US Army and as such is authorized and expected to enforce and uphold federal law. He goes out and confronts Manx, but Manx has help. Tom is knocked into a gas pump by a door being opened. Manx manages to club him with the gas nozzle. He then sprays Tom with gas, soaking him completely before using his lighter to set him on fire. Tom dies in front of his wife and son.

## **Alan Warner**

Alan has a gourd shaped body and is wearing a red and white checkered shirt when Vic first sees him in the Colorado grocery/ gas bar.

## **Sam Cleary**

Sam is behind the counter of his country grocery store and gas bar, smoking a corncob pipe. He has a bulging chin and eyes that squint, giving him a Popeye-like appearance.

## **Ernest Hicks**

Ernest Hicks is a security guard at St. Luke's Medical Center in Denver, Colorado. His uncle Jim got him the job, which is a step up from his previous job at McDonald's. Hicks and his girlfriend Sasha are not exactly model employees. Hicks likes to photograph himself in suggestive positions with famous cadavers, and Sasha often steal pharmaceutical drugs that she shares with Hicks as they have sex in empty delivery rooms. It is Sasha who tells Hicks that Manx is in the morgue and that Hicks should send her a copy of the photo he takes. Hicks is primed when he goes downstairs. He poses with a bone mallet, almost getting caught in the act. When he later returns to ensure that everything is returned to its proper place, he is knocked unconscious. Manx gets his revenge by stealing Hicks's pants and taking his jacket as well. He leaves Hicks on the floor. Hicks is later discovered. He feels violated and drives away in his prized possession, his Trans Am.

## **Hooper**

Hooper is Wayne's dog. The Saint Bernard travels in a crate the size of a baby's crib. He is known for eating when he is nervous. On the flight with Wayne to see Vic, he tore a phone book to shreds and later continued to consume a pair of flip-flops and a new tennis racket. While large and described as the equivalent to the shark in Jaws, Hooper is fiercely loyal. He defends Wayne to his death when Manx comes to take him at the Lake.



## Chitra

Officer Chitra is one of the first responders when Vic calls 911 after Manx takes Wayne. The Indian police officer gives her a hoodie to wear after she is examined by EMT's.

## Tabitha K. Hutter

FBI Psychiatric Evaluator Tabitha Hutter is the specialist called in to talk to Vic after she reports the kidnapping of her son Wayne. Tabitha has a snubbed nose with hair that is frizzy and brown. She is dressed in a tweed coat with blue jeans. Tabitha is plain at first, but a second glance reveals her devastating beauty.

## Bilbo Prince

Bilbo Prince is a male nurse at the hospital where Tabitha Hutter takes Lou when he keels over after Vic's phone call, Bilbo is about the same age as Lou and has dark circles under his sleepy looking eyes. His forehead juts out in Cro - Magnon style and he has a tribute to the TV show Firefly - the space ship Serenity - tattooed on his forearm. Calling himself a Browncoat, he tells Lou that he needs an angioplasty. Bilbo watches as Lou's cab pulls away from the hospital. He notes Tabitha's license plate. For his troubles, he is given a ten dollar bill.

## Ellen Thornton

Ellen Thornton has been a nurse in the infirmary of the FCI Englewood Supermax prison for the last three years. She helps to look after Charlie Manx and three other comatose patients in the ward, and for the most part, she has learned to shut herself off to the horrible people they were. She just concentrates on the job at hand.

## Josiah Thornton

Josiah is Ellen Thornton's son. For some time, he has hoped to get a Nintendo DS for Christmas, even cutting out a photo of it and pretending to play games when he is bored.

## Mr. de Zoet

Vicky McQueen's neighbor, Mr. de Zoet, is a nice man who spent time with Vicky when her parents argued. When the de Zoets lost their cat Taylor, Vicky had used the Shorter Way Bridge to find him. Taylor had been hit by a car on the highway and was dead. She never told them. Mr. de Zoet has an accent that reminds Vicky of Arnold Schwarzenegger. He wears suspenders and bow ties, and he usually smells of pipe smoke and freshly brewed coffee.





## Leonard Potts

One of four men in the long term care ward of the prison, Leonard has been comatose for five years as a result of a confrontation with another prisoner who jammed a screwdriver into his brain. Leonard sometimes shouts out 'I know!' as though he is ready to answer a teacher's question.

## Don Henry

Another man in the long term care ward in the prison, Don burned his girlfriend and her kids to death. He was found later in a bar down the street, watching a baseball game and drinking Bushmills. Don is different from the other three in that his feet often move as though he is walking.

## Mr. Eugley

Mr. Eugley is the janitor at the Cooperative School where Vicky attends. He is an old man, who is hunched over and wears bow ties and gold rimmed glasses. Mr. Eugley had also worked as a crossing guard, and gave out jelly beans to all the kids on the day before Easter. He is a nice man who was rumored to have taken the job so that he could be near children because he had lost his own to a house fire years earlier. What no one usually discussed was the fact that it was Eugley himself who had started the fire, having passed out with a cigarette in his hand. After the incident, he found God.

## Nancy Lee Martin

Nancy Lee, a former Virginia Tech cheerleader, is forty-two years old and has a nine year old daughter named Amy. She is still beautiful to Jeff Haddon who has a crush on her. He is the last one to see her and Amy alive. He witnesses them getting into a Rolls-Royce Wraith, supposedly on their way to a fund raiser for George Allen, a new candidate for governor. Their driver, like them, is never seen again. His car is found just off Bainbridge Boulevard near the water. All they find is his hat which is soaked in blood.

## Amy Martin

Amy is Nancy Lee's nine year old daughter. She is on the long list of children who disappear in May, 1993. She and her mother are headed to a fundraiser for George Allen.



## **Jake**

Jake was a ten year old passenger flying alone from Philadelphia to Buffalo in May,1994. His driver, Bill Black, was supposed to have picked him up. No one knows who really picked Jake up, but he is not seen again.

## **Steve Conlon**

Steve and his twelve year old daughter Charlie are on their way to a father/daughter dance when Charlene disappears in Plattsburgh, New York, in 1995. A stretch limo had been ordered for the event, but a Rolls-Royce had shown up instead. Agatha kissed her daughter goodbye and never saw her again. Her husband Steve was found off Interstate 87 with a bullet through his left eye.

## **Charlene**

Charlene, known as Charlie, and her father are headed to a father/daughter dance in Plattsburgh, New York, in 1995 when she is taken, never to be seen again. She is only twelve years old. Months later, a call is answered by her mother in their home, and she is identified by her as one of the children singing The First Noel.

## **Brad**

Brad is the first person to call Vic from Christmasland. He identifies himself as the boy who was in the car at the Sleigh House, reminding her of how much fun they had together. He tells her that they are all getting hungry, and he asks her what the point is of having all the teeth that they do if they can't be used on something.

## **Nathan Demeter**

Nathan lives in Brandenburg, Kentucky. He buys Manx's Rolls-Royce when his daughter Michelle is just twelve from a government auction. He begins to teach her how to drive it and fantasizes about how he could restore it for her to go to her prom one day.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Bracelet

A gold hoop style bracelet with a butterfly mounted on it made out of ice chips of diamonds and blue sapphires. It is a bracelet that Linda McQueen loses, and her daughter Victoria finds after 'traveling' in a supernatural manner to the restaurant in which it had been left.

## Little Drummer Boy

The song that Jeff Haddon heard playing as Nancy Lee Martin and her daughter climbed into the Rolls-Royce Wraith.

## Vegetable Patch

The name some use when referring to the long term care ward of the Supermax Prison.

## Christmasland

The place that Charlie Manx takes the children he kidnaps which exists as an in-scape in his mind.

## 1948 Rolls-Royce Wraith

This is the car that Charlie Manx uses to access the area he calls Christmasland. The car is what he uses to pick up the children he pretends to rescue.

## Raleigh Tuff Burner

This is the bike that was given to Victoria by her father when she was eight years old. It is what enables her to access the Shorter Way Bridge despite the fact that it fell into the river below when Victoria was eight.

## Shorter Way Bridge

This is the bridge that Victoria uses to 'find' things. She can only access the bridge by using her bike. In reality, the bridge broke and fell to the river below when someone tried to drive across it.



## **Mr. Pentauk**

The name of the corduroy penguin that Willa Lords lost. Victoria found the penguin at the Fenway Bowling Alley.

## **Gas Mask**

This is the gift Bing's father gave him on the Christmas that he finds most memorable. It was a gas mask from his Korean War days.

## **Olivetti Typewriter**

Bing uses this to type out his letter to the 'Respected Christmasland Owners' asking them for a job and giving them his work history.

## **Scrabble Tile Earrings**

Tiles lettered 'F' and 'U' in earrings given to Vic from Maggie just before she left Iowa to go back home through the Shorter Way Bridge.

## **Fedora**

Distinctive style of hat that Maggie Leigh wears.

## **The First Noel**

The song that was being sung by a group of children over the phone when Agatha Conlon picks it up at two thirty in the morning after her daughter had disappeared.

## **Ecstasy**

The tablets that are found by Linda in Vic's room. Vic takes these when she needs to escape the visions she has of the Wraith in the middle of the night.

## **Scissors For The Drifter**

A game Manx tells Wayne he can play in Christmasland.



## **NOS4A2**

This is Manx's vanity plate. It stands for Nosferatu – a German name for vampire – which his first wife called him.

## **Triumph**

The motorcycle that Wayne finds in the carriage house of the place that Vic rents for the summer at Lake Winnepesaukee.

## **Tappet Key**

A tool made especially for Triumph bikes that is a spanner wrench, Vic uses it against Manx when he attacks her.

## **Sevoflurane**

Bing steals this chemical, often used by dentists to sedate their patients, from the company he works for so that he and Manx can sedate their victims. It smells like gingerbread.

## **Trans Am**

With a zebra striped interior, this is Ernie Hick's pride and joy. Manx steals it when he leaves the morgue.

## **Bone Mallet**

This is the object that Ernie Hicks puts in Manx's hand to make for a more dramatic portrait. Manx takes it with him and uses it later on Hooper and on Vic. It is a foot long and has a sharp hook curving from one end and a rectangular head with a crosshatched handle.

## **Find My iPhone**

The feature that Lou has put on Wayne's iPhone which enables him to track the phone via the internet.



## **ANFO**

These are explosives that Vic's father Chris uses to blow things up in his job as a blaster. It is what Vic gets from him to eliminate Manx and his Christmasland.

## **Wraith**

The 1938 Rolls Royce that Charlie Manx used to pick up children and take them to 'Christmasland' where he does unspeakable things to them, taking their life and vitality for himself and trapping their souls in a place between time he calls Christmasland.

The Wraith is his method of entering this space. It is one of only four hundred that was originally made in Bristol, England. It came equipped with a polished cherry dash, pebbled leather seats, and the smoothest ride most have ever felt. The license plate is Charlie Manx's play on Nosferatu - something his first wife accused him of being which amused him.

## **Raleigh Tuff Burner**

The Day-Glo bike that Victoria owns with fat tires and banana yellow rims. It is her favorite possession and the best birthday gift she was ever given. She remembers it fondly for the rest of her life.

## **Harley-Davidson**

This is 1979 shovel head that Chris McQueen rides to work in the summer. It is his pride and joy. It has an airbrushed picture of a comical, sexy blonde straddling a bomb with flames as a backdrop.

## **Pittman Street Woods**

Unofficial name for the thirty acres scrub pine and birch woods that are located just beyond the McQueen's back yard.

## **Merrimack River**

Location of the Shorter Way Bridge that is Vicky's method of travel on her bike between home and the location of the object or person she is seeking.

## **Framing Nail Gun**

Bing shot this into his father's temple to kill him.



## **Spicy Menace Magazine**

The magazine that Bing had from his father's collection of old magazines in which he found and responded to the ad placed by Charlie Manx looking for people to work in Christmasland.

## **NorChemPharm**

This is the company that Bing Partridge works for where he is the floor manager of the custodial team. He handles the care and shipping of a variety of compressed gasses including oxygen, hydrogen, helium, and Sevoflurane. The latter is of particular interest to Charlie Manx as it creates a zombie like state when a person is exposed to it.

## **Sugarcreek, Pennsylvania**

Bing Partridge lives here.

## **Christmas Ornaments**

Hundreds of Christmas ornaments decorate the fir trees around the Sleigh House - each one representing a child that Manx has taken. Each ornament holds the soul of the child. Before the child can be returned home entirely, the ornament representing him must be broken. Lou promises Vic he will do this and does after her death.

## **Search Engine**

The name for a series of books Vic creates for children that include a character named 'Search Engine' who has to work his way through a series of puzzles and challenges to reach the next story. He is joined by his friend Bonnie, and Mad Mobius Stripp.

## **Christmas**

Bing Partridge's favorite holiday, and the same holiday that Charlie Manx uses to lure children in.

## **Nosferatu**

The German word for vampire. Manx's wife used to call him by this name, which he now has on his vanity plates on the Rolls-Royce.



## **Motorcycle Jacket**

Lou's jacket, which he gives to Vic to wear when she finishes the Triumph. It is the same jacket he was wearing when he rescues her from Manx and still has the patches from Route 66, Soul, and Captain America on it.

## **Spirit of Ecstasy**

The name given to the Rolls-Royce hood ornament that Michelle Demeter thinks looks like a vampire lady.

## **Abilify**

The prescription that Victoria takes and forgets to refill when she and Wayne leave Haverhill for the lake again.

## **White Christmas**

Sung by Bing Crosby, it is the song Bing wakes to on Monday, several days after he has mailed his letter to the owners of Christmasland in response to their ad in 1949 seeking an employee.





## Settings

### **Battlefield Boulevard**

The road near the water where Nancy Lee Martin's drivers' car was found some time after Nancy and her nine year old daughter Amy disappeared on their way to a fund raiser. There is blood, but no sign of the driver.

### **Fenway Bowling Alley**

This is the place where Vicky finds herself after going through the Shorter Way Bridge to find Willa's missing corduroy penguin named Mr. Pentack.

### **Attleboro**

The area of the construction site where Victoria found her father's wallet after he lost it by going through the Shorter Way Bridge.

### **House of Sleep**

The House of Sleep is what Charlie Manx calls Bing's home because it is where Bing disposes of the women who are the mothers of the children Charlie kidnaps. The house is pink and looks like a small cake. Lilies grow outside, and it almost looks like a kind of gingerbread house where an old woman might fatten children up and put them in the oven. The front yard is filled with foil flowers that spin with the breeze.

### **FCI Englewood, Colorado**

This is the location of the Supermax prison that Charlie Manx is kept in.

### **Haverhill, Massachusetts**

Haverhill is where Victoria McQueen and her family live.

### **Pittman Street Woods**

The woods that Vicky rides through to get to the Shorter Way Bridge from home.



## **Sugarcreek, Pennsylvania**

The town where Bing Partridge lives and works.

## **Here, Iowa**

Location of the library where Vic ends up when she asks the Shorter Way Bridge to take her to someone who could explain what was happening to her.

## **Here Public Library**

The place where Margaret Leigh works.

## **Terry's Primo Subs**

This is the name of the place that the Shorter Way Bridge takes Victoria to when she goes looking for her mother's bracelet. Terry's Primo Subs is located in Hampton Beach, New Hampshire.

## **Lake Winnepesaukee**

The place where Victoria's family usually spent a part of their summer vacations.

## **Chesapeake, Virginia**

The place from which Nancy Lee Martin and her daughter Amy disappear in May, 1993, on their way to a George Allen fund raiser. The driver who was sent to pick them up, Malcolm Ackroyd, also disappears.

## **Buffalo, New York**

The place that ten year old Jake Christensen disappears from when he is flying in from Philadelphia after his driver, Bill Black dies, having suffered a heart attack that proved fatal as he waited in his limo. According to his autopsy, his death occurred as a result of a nearly lethal dose of Sevoflurane.

## **Durham, New Hampshire**

This is where Vic's father Chris and his new girlfriend live after he leaves them.



## **Interstate 87**

The place where Steve Conlon is found dead with a bullet through his left eye.

## **Sleigh House**

The house that Manx lived in where Vic discovers the fir trees full of Christmas ornaments and the boy in the back of Manx's car in the garage. She burns this house down.

## **Sam's Gas & Sundries**

This is the place where Lou takes Vic after he rescues her on the highway close to Manx's Sleigh House.

## **NorChemPharm**

This is the company that Bing works at before he meets Manx, and it is where he gets his supply of sevoflurane.

## **Lamar Rehabilitation Center, Massachusetts**

This is the asylum where Vic was committed to do 28 days of rehabilitation.

## **St. Nick Parkway**

This is the road that Find My iPhone identifies Wayne's phone as being on when the FBI searches. According to Manx, it is the way to Christmasland.

## **Orphanhenge**

One of the places shown on the map revealed by Find My iPhone, shown as being located in a dense forest in Vermont.

## **The Tree House Of The Mind**

One of the places shown on the map revealed by Find My iPhone, shown as being located in New Hampshire.



## **Lovecraft Keyhole**

One of the places shown on the map revealed by Find My iPhone, shown as being located north of Boston, it looks like a crater in the shape of a padlock.

## **Pennywise Circus**

Located in Maine on the map revealed by Find My iPhone.

## **United Inscapes**

The name of the continent that represented where Wayne was as revealed by Find My iPhone.

## **St. Luke's Medical Center, Denver**

Where Manx's body is taken for autopsy.

## **Gumdrop Avenue**

The main boulevard in Christmasland which goes through a nineteenth century village with gaslights and iron lampposts.



# Themes and Motifs

## Christmasland vs. Reality

Christmasland is the place that Charlie Manx creates in his head to keep children young and happy forever. It is an imaginary place that only a few can access. In Christmasland, it is Christmas every day. There are huge nutcrackers. There is an impressive looking roller coaster that Manx calls a Sleigh Coaster because it is made up of Christmas Sleighs. The roller coaster's entrance is a large Santa Claus face. In the center of this theme park, down the main road called Gumdrop Avenue, sits a Christmas tree that is at least a hundred feet tall. The base of the tree is as big around as a house. Children can sit in its branches. Manx brings children to Christmasland, truly believing that they will be forever happy. They will never have to grow up. No one ever tells them what to do, and they have no rules to follow. A life where Christmas exists every day is not one that would bring permanent happiness. It's wonderful at first; but, like all good things, unless it is tempered with some kind of reality, it soon pales. No child would want to eat cotton candy every day or live each day with no purpose beyond that of satisfying a base need to please oneself. True happiness is gained only when a person is able to enjoy the sense of satisfaction that comes from helping out another. Reality is necessary for Christmasland to be balanced. Without it, a sense of satisfaction is missing. There can be no sense of accomplishment or love for one another. All of these are required to live a happy life.

## Innocence vs. Humanity

When Manx takes the children and drives them to Christmasland, the ride there removes all of the pain, hurt, and sadness that they have along the way. In that way, Manx believes he is returning their innocence. He is correct to some degree. But, while he believes that he is doing something noble and good for them, he doesn't realize the other side of that coin. A child who is completely innocent loses a great portion of his or her humanity. There are no inhibitions or reservations. With complete innocence, there is no concept of right or wrong. It is by making mistakes and having them corrected that we gain the guidance and understanding we require in order to become decent human beings. Without these tethers to humanity, we are free to kill, maim, or cause pain to anyone or anything without remorse. It becomes okay to do even the most vile and evil things as we have no idea that with total innocence, we are unable to regulate our behavior. As such, complete innocence is not a good thing. It does not help or improve the life of the individual. It actually separates the person from humanity. Humanity is what separates people from the other animals on the planet. It instills the desire to help and serve others without the need for self-gratification in the process.



## Parental Love vs. Self Sacrifice

When a parent has a child, a bond is created that is unparalleled. It is the beginning of a lifelong connection that has no equal. There is no sacrifice too great, no hardship too big to bear, and no labor too intense to complete. In fact, there is no bond that is stronger. Both Vic and Lou demonstrate self-sacrifice where their son Wayne is concerned. When Vic begins to come off the rails, Lou makes one of the toughest decisions he has to make. He decides to take Wayne and leave Vic. This decision is difficult because Lou has never had a great deal of self-confidence. He was always surprised that Vic would have anything to do with him, let alone live with him or have a child with him. Taking Wayne away from his mother separated Lou from a woman he loved without reservation. It is a testament to his love for his son. By the same token, when Wayne is taken by Manx, there is no mountain Vic won't climb, no hazard she won't bear, and no health risk she won't endure to get him back and see him safely home in the arms of his father. She isn't saving him so that she can keep him for herself, despite her desire to be with him. She recognizes that she is not the best parent to look after him, and putting his needs first, she is content to step back while Lou raises him in a manner that is better for him than what she could do. Vic sacrifices her life to return him to his father's arms. In a last effort to do what is right for him and to ensure his entire return, she makes Wayne promise to destroy the ornaments at the Sleigh House which hold the pain and suffering of the children Manx kidnaps. Without this other half of themselves, these children have not completely returned.

# Styles

## Point of View

NOS4A2 is written entirely in the first person perspective by the main character, Victoria McQueen. The story is reliable throughout and told mostly as an exposition.

## Language and Meaning

NOS4A2 by Joe Hill is a novel that while written in modern day English deals with a subject that requires that the reader stretch his or her imagination to the breaking point. Hill manages to blend enough realism into his story that reading it does not become an exercise in absurdity. Instead, the reader is taken on a wild ride in which a modern day vampire who calls himself Nosferatu (German for vampire) stalks children to maintain his life and his youth, using a car that he is as much a part of as it is a part of him - a Rolls-Royce Wraith.

Manx lives half in the real world and the other half in his 'Inscape' which is a world his mind creates and his car enables him to get to, much in the same way as Victoria's bridge allows her to get to distance locations in order to find missing items. Joe Hill uses a terrific imagination to create individuals that are especially high functioning 'creatives' who, like Vic and Manx, can access alternate realities much the same way as we might travel to other countries. He reveals three characters in his book with this ability. Vic uses a bike or her rebuilt Triumph motorcycle to access the Shorter Way Bridge; Manx uses his Wraith to confine children and sap their youth, energy and inhibitions as he drives them to places that don't exist anywhere but the inscape of his mind, and Maggie Leigh who reaches into a bottomless bag of Scrabble tiles to foretell important future events.

## Structure

NOS4A2 by Joe Hill has 704 pages (hardcover) which are divided into twelve sections (including the prologue). These twelve sections range in length from seven pages in the prologue to a couple of sections which are over a hundred pages in length and average. Sections average about fifty eight pages throughout. These twelve sections are further subdivided into one hundred and three chapters or sub sections and each of these sub sections varies in length from three to thirteen pages and averaging just under seven pages each.

These 'sub sections' or chapters are not numbered. Instead they are labeled by either one word or several words that describe either the location or the main topic of events as they occur. For example, there are several sub sections that are labeled simply 'The Lake' and these all relate to Lake Winnepesaukee where Vic and her family vacationed when she was young and she continues the trend with her son when she is able to



spend a summer with him. While most of the headings are actual locations, some are as vague as 'kitchen,' 'inside,' 'outside,' 'pantry,' etc. Some of the headings refer to locations that are only in Manx's mind. These include headings such as 'Christmasland' which is where the children he kidnaps reside until they are finally set free by Lou and Victoria; 'The Graveyard of What Might Be' which is a place that Manx takes Bing to elicit his support by showing him the possible futures (according to him) of the children he takes to Christmasland. 'Beneath The Great Tree' and 'Gumdrop Lane' refer to places that are located within Christmasland. The 'St. Nicholas Parkway' is the route that Manx uses to get the children he kidnaps to Christmasland.





## Quotes

There's a place for Josiah John Thornton in Christmasland, and there's a place for you in the House of Sleep.

-- Charlie Manx (Prologue paragraph 16)

**Importance:** This quote is significant first because it is said by a man who has been in an unresponsive coma for years. Also, he seems to be aware of Mrs Thornton's mindset about her son. He tells Mrs. Thornton that her son will be safe from the world in Christmasland. Manx is conveniently using Mrs. Thornton's fear to make it seem as if he's doing her a favor by keeping her son in Christmasland. She fears that her son's mind will become corrupt as a result of the hand held video games that are rampant in the real world. She sees the games as a threat to creativity and outdoor exercise for children.

The fires of hell are not hot enough for a man - or woman - who would hurt his children.

-- Charlie Manx (Chapter 2, Section 3 paragraph 33)

**Importance:** This quote by Charlie Manx is important because it reveals his underlying pathology for taking children. Using their dysfunctional home life as an excuse, he 'liberates' them. In the process, he convinces other dysfunctional adults to help him in his quest by making it appear as though his motives are purely noble.

Help me find someone who can tell me I'm not crazy.

-- Victoria McQueen (Chapter 3, Section 2 paragraph 16)

**Importance:** This is an important quote because it reveals the depth of Victoria's confusion and fear of her own insanity as she attempts to understand the fact that she can use her bike and the Shorter Way Bridge as a conduit to find things that are missing or that she needs. It is with this mindset that she now rides across the bridge again in the hopes that she will find someone who can help to explain to her exactly what is going on.

I found some things in one of your drawers.

-- Linda McQueen (Chapter 4, Section 4 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** The quote is important as it reveals the invasion of privacy that led to Vic's leaving her mother's home in anger. The issue pushes her to go looking for trouble, which she manages to find.

Most people would be upset to find a covered bridge sitting in their front yard, but not Mr. Charles Talent Manx the Third.

-- Charlie Manx (Chapter 5, Section 4 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** This quote is part of a segment in which Charlie Manx reveals that he also



accesses places that can only be found in his mind, much like the Shorter Way Bridge works for Vic.

If we keep going, we could be in Christmasland by tonight.  
-- Michelle Demeter (Chapter 6, Section 4 paragraph 26)

**Importance:** At twelve years of age, Michelle is learning to drive the Rolls-Royce that her father bought at auction. Even at her young age, she is able to recognize that it would take her to Christmasland which proves that the car was the key to getting there. Manx alone could not do it.

There is the Night Road, and the train tracks to Orphanhenge, and the doors to Mid-World, and the old trail to the Tree House of the Mind, and then there is Victoria's wonderful covered bridge.  
-- Charlie Manx (Chapter 7, Section 22 paragraph 37)

**Importance:** This is one of the things Manx says to Victoria as she hides under the dock while Bing is shooting at her. He reveals the many different roads that can be found with the mind that he is already aware of, telling her he has had a lot of time to think about her covered bridge, and by doing so, he assures Vic on some level that she hasn't imagined it all and that she isn't crazy.

Everyone has an in-scape, and they all connect, too, in the same way New Hampshire connects to Vermont.  
-- Victoria McQueen (Chapter 8, Section 4 paragraph 24)

**Importance:** In this comment, Vic is trying to explain the difference between the physical world and the private inner worlds that we all have in our thoughts to Lou, and trying to help him understand how some people are able to access and cross over from one person's in-scape to another person's.

Hiding something in this car is as bad as putting it in the pocket of my coat.  
-- Charlie Manx (Chapter 9, Section 9 paragraph 48)

**Importance:** In this comment, Manx reveals the connection he has to the car to Wayne. This explains the things that the car does seemingly on its own, as it is merely an extension of Manx himself to a degree.

You're taking something out of me and putting it into you.  
-- Wayne Carmody (Chapter 10, Section 2 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** In this quote, Wayne is revealed as understanding that Manx's accelerated healing has something to do with the lethargy he feels. He is beginning to realize that in some ways being in the car with Manx is sapping his life force.

I'm sorry about a lot of things I put you through, and I wish like hell you'd met someone better than me. But I'm not sorry we had a kid together.



-- Vic McQueen (Chapter 11, Section 10 paragraph 30)

**Importance:** This quote is important as it is Vic's declaration to Lou of his value to her. Lou has always doubted his worth, and she lets him know that their child has her looks and his heart, and she knows which of the two is worth more.

Vic brought most of him back, but I want the rest.

-- Lou Carmody (Chapter 12, Section 4 paragraph 78)

**Importance:** This is an important quote as it shows that Lou was not only aware that his son wasn't entirely returned to him yet, but that he understood Vic when she told him that the part of her son that was still missing was locked in with the ornaments hanging all over the yard in front of the Sleigh House.