

The Quiet Game Study Guide

The Quiet Game by Greg Iles

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Plot Summary

THE QUIET GAME by Greg Iles is a novel revolving around attorney and author Penn Cage and his hometown of Natchez, Mississippi. Cage returns home with his daughter after the death of his wife to the home of his parents to rebuild their lives. Arriving in the sleepy town, Cage discovers blackmail and a murder from decades ago, tearing up the lives of those for whom he cares.

Penn Cage returns to his family home in order to help his daughter, Annie, after the death of his wife Sarah. Upon his arrival, Penn is stunned to find that his father, Dr. Tom Cage, is being blackmailed by a patient, Ray Presley. Many years ago, Presley had killed a man that had assaulted Penn's aunt. Presley had acted on his own but had used Dr. Cage's gun. Dr. Cage had been shocked and Presley had kept his gun in order to ensure that Presley would not be accused of the crime. Though various avenues are considered, Penn is left with only one: buy the gun from Presley, which he does.

Penn consents to an interview with the publisher of the Natchez Examiner, Caitlin Masters. The two discuss his life and end up in a debate about racism in the south. Penn makes casual comments about a racial murder in 1968 that Caitlin runs in the paper, infusing the public with mysteries of the past, and igniting a highly-charged atmosphere in Natchez. Though Penn has no intention of becoming involved, a visit from the mother and the widow of Del Payton stirs his soul and he begins to investigate the crime.

During the investigation Penn's family is threatened and their housekeeper is killed when their house is fire-bombed. Ike Ransom, a Natchez sheriff, feeds Penn some information about Payton's murder, tying the civil rights activist to Penn's family's nemesis, Leo Marston. Seeking to pay Marston back for the harm he has caused his family, Penn begins the investigation, digging up the past, and stirring racial tensions in Natchez.

The arrival of his first love, Olivia Marston, adds the difficulties that Penn is having in figuring out his life and the mysteries surrounding the death of Del Payton, but with the help of Caitlin Masters and several others who want the truth told, Penn is able to discover that the racial murder of Payton had not been a civil rights issue at all. Del Payton had been murdered in order to quiet the civil rights movement, so that a factory could move into town. Leo Marston had arranged the killing, so he would be able to lease the land he controlled to the company. Payton had been killed simply so Leo Marston would make a profit.

With Penn Cage's relentless digging into the past, he is able to solve the thirty-eight year old mystery and put to rest the question of why Del Payton is killed. The innocent people that had been hurt in the process are finally free to move on with their lives. Penn is also able to move on, finally able to leave his past with Olivia behind, and take care of his daughter Annie.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

THE QUIET GAME by Greg Iles is a novel revolving around attorney and author Penn Cage and his hometown of Natchez, Mississippi. Cage returns home with his daughter after the death of his wife to the home of his parents to rebuild their lives. Arriving in the sleepy town, Cage discovers blackmail and a murder from decades ago, tearing up the lives of those for whom he cares.

In chapter one, Penn Cage decides to return to his hometown and his parents in order to rebuild a life for himself and his daughter. Annie has been unhappy since the death of her mother Sarah, seven months ago. Calling home, Penn's father and mother are thrilled that he is returning to Natchez. When speaking to his mother Peggy, Penn senses that something is wrong but his mother will not elaborate. Knowing he will see her in a few hours, Penn decides not to press the issue.

In chapter two Penn is flying toward home with his sleeping daughter, reviewing the past. The death of his wife Sarah is too fresh in his mind. When Sarah's pain had gotten to unbearable, Penn's father Tom, a doctor, had told Penn to discharge her from the hospital and take her home. Dr. Cage had arrived and had been able to provide pain medications to keep the young woman comfortable. When the end was inevitable, Sarah had again asked for Dr. Cage, and though Penn as not in the room, he knows his father had helped his wife end her pain.

A young woman excuses herself and asks Penn if he is the author, Penn Cage. Introducing herself as Kate, the two begin to discuss the Hanratty case and the details of how Penn had come to kill Arthur Lee's brother. After Penn had convicted Hanratty, his brother had broken into Penn's house and taken his daughter. Penn discovered the man as he was leaving with Annie, holding the baby in front of him as a shield. Penn had shot him in the eye without thinking twice. Kate is stunned when Penn tells her that the third Hanratty brother is still at large, and sends postcards on occasion.

The two young people part company when the plane lands and Penn heads to pick up his rental car. The car will not be needed as Dr. Tom Cage is already there, ready to drive Penn and Annie home to Natchez.

In chapter three Penn and his father discuss the changes in Natchez that have taken place since Penn moved away twenty years ago. One of the interesting things that comes up is the fact that a black man is running for mayor. Shad Johnson had been born in Natchez but had moved away as a boy. Back now; Johnson is a front runner in the election. It seems that times are finally changing regarding racism in Natchez.



Penn arrives at home and is greeted by his mother. Also there to greet Penn and Annie is Ruby, the black woman who has worked for the family for over thirty years. Ruby has prepared Penn's favorite meal and asks Dr. Cage to say the blessing.

After dinner Penn sits with his mother who tells him she believes Ray Presley is blackmailing Dr. Cage. Stunned, Penn asks what there could possibly be to blackmail his father about, but Peggy does not know. As Dr. Cage returns from driving Ruby home, Peggy says goodnight to Penn and heads to bed. Penn suggests to his father that they need to talk and the doctor suggests the library.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The reader is introduced to several main characters, including Penn Cage. Penn Cage is an author and former prosecutor whose wife had died of cancer seven months earlier. Cage has been trying to move on with life, but his daughter Annie is not adjusting well and Cage decides to return to his hometown of Natchez, Mississippi.

On the plane headed toward home, Penn meets a young woman who introduces herself and Kate. Asked if she is an attorney, Kate explains that she is a first amendment specialist. The two have a discussion about Henry Lee Hanratty, a man Penn had convicted and sent to death row in Texas. The execution is fast approaching and has been on the news regularly. Kate is curious about the death of Hanratty's brother and Penn provides the answers he does not often give. Hanratty's brother had broken into Penn's house when Annie was a baby and had kidnapped her. Penn had killed the man, saving his daughter. There had been controversy at the time, with people wondering if Penn had used his daughter as an excuse to murder the man. There is also mention about jurisdictional battles regarding the Hanratty case. Henry Lee had escaped to Texas with his brothers after committing a racial murder in California. Hanratty was in the witness protection program at the time, having testified for the state. Penn had engaged in a battle with John Portman, the California District Attorney for the right to prosecute Hanratty, and Cage had won. Portman is now the director of the FBI and will play an important role in the novel.

At home with his family, Penn is surrounded at once by love and feels better than he has in quite some time. The reader is also introduced to Dr. Tom Cage, Penn's father, his mother, Peggy, and Ruby Flowers, the woman who has worked for the family for over 30 years. Penn learns from his mother that she believes his father is being blackmailed. The news is stunning to Penn, as his father is such an upstanding person, one that has never strayed from living honestly. The man blackmailing Tom, Ray Presley, is notorious to everyone in Natchez, a dangerous man.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary

In chapter four, Penn meets with his father. Tom Cage refuses to divulge what is bothering him, telling Penn nicely to mind his business. Penn asks if it has something to do with Judge Leo Marston, a man who had represented another in a case of malpractice against his father years earlier. Ray Presley had often worked for Marston in one capacity or another, even keeping an eye on Marston's daughter, Livy. Penn and Livy had been lovers in high school and had run into Presley more than once. Dr. Cage does not elaborate, telling Penn that he will take care of things himself. Penn asks his father if he ever discovered why Marston had attacked Dr. Cage, and Dr. Cage replies that he has never known but believes it may have had something to do with Penn's relationship with Livy. Penn is stunned as nothing bad had ever occurred between himself and Livy. Marston's daughter had already abandoned him by that point.

In chapter five Penn decides to grant an interview with the publisher of the Natchez Examiner. Arriving at Biscuits and Blues, Penn is stunned to find that the publisher, Caitlin Masters, is the woman from the plane. At first angry, Penn calms down and consents to the interview. The two discuss how Penn came to be an author; they are interrupted by the waitress, Jenny, who asks if Penn would sign a book for her. Penn agrees graciously.

Penn and Caitlin get into a discussion about racism in the south. Penn points out that the south was a bad place at one time, but that Natchez has come a long way. As an example, Penn tells Caitlin about a race murder that took place in 1968. Delano Payton had been murdered, his car blown up, when he was to be promoted to a "white's only" position at the Triton Battery plant. The murder was never solved. Caitlin is stunned by the story.

In chapter six, Penn is awakened by his father. Caitlin had published her article about Penn, but shockingly, the majority of the article centers on the racial murder of Del Payton, and Penn stating that the murderers were racial cowards. Tom Cage is upset, and the two men talk back and forth until the doorbell rings, interrupting them.

In the living room, Penn finds Georgia Payton, Del Payton's mother, and Althea, his widow. The two women have come to thank Penn for the things he said in the paper. The women want to hire him to find out what happened to Del. Penn wonders if Austin Mackey is still the district attorney in the area, as they went to school together. Cage offers to speak to Mackey and see if he can find out any information about Del's case. Georgia scoffs, telling Penn that Mackey does not care, but they thought that Penn might. Althea shows Penn Del's death certificate, showing his cause of death as accidental, stunning Penn. He listens raptly as Althea tells him that Del burned to death, pinned in his car after it had exploded with him in it. Penn offers his sympathy, but can



offer little else and the two women leave. Dr. Cage tells Penn that he did the right thing, but Penn is not sure.

Chapters 4-6 Analysis

Penn is stunned when his father takes him into the library and tells him that he should keep out of whatever troubles are going on. Penn wonders if the situation might involve his father helping someone to die comfortably as he did for Sarah, but Tom says no. No amount of questioning will open up communication and Penn knows he will have to out wait his father.

The reader is provided with more background on the life of Penn Cage growing up in Natchez. Dr. Cage is a fine man, loved by everyone, yet at one time he had been the defendant in a malpractice lawsuit. It was a terrible time for him and had resulted in a heart attack. Though exonerated, Dr. Cage had never really recovered from the onslaught. The prosecuting attorney had been Judge Leo Marston, the father of Penn's first love. When Penn questions his father on Marston's motives so many years later, Penn is stunned that his father believes that his relationship with Livy might have been part of the reason. It occurs to Penn that Ray Presley had worked for Marston from time to time, but Penn is unwilling to bring it up at the moment.

The meeting with Caitlin Masters is an important one. Not only does Penn bring the murder of Del Payton to the attention of the newspaper editor, but the two also seem to be at the start of a relationship of some sort. Penn is still grieving for his wife, but for the first time in seven months he is aware of another woman.

Penn is defensive of his hometown, telling Caitlin that racism is everywhere, and Caitlin not being from the south makes things more difficult for her to understand. When Caitlin brings up the use of racial slurs, Penn is again defensive. It seems that though Penn is willing to acknowledge that racism still exists, he wants to make sure Caitlin does not believe it is strictly a problem of the south. The two also discuss Shad Johnson, the black man running for mayor. Caitlin is confused that he is not courting the black vote. Penn explains that he needs to court the white vote; the blacks will vote for him no matter what.

A young waitress is introduced who will play a key role later in the novel. Jenny asks Penn for an autograph, which is not at all unusual, and also expresses an interest in speaking to him again at some point. Penn takes it in stride, but will be drawn to the young woman later.

The newspaper article that Caitlin writes is the beginning of a series of events that will come to a head in Penn's life. Tom Cage is aware of this, but Penn has been away for a long time, and might have forgotten how things work in his hometown. This appears to be the case when the mother and widow of Del Payton arrive, looking for Penn. The two women believe they have found a champion, someone to right the wrongs of so many years ago. Penn is sympathetic but does not believe there is anything he can do for

them. As the novel progresses, this will prove untrue. At the time, however, Penn believes that he is doing the right thing by letting things alone.



Chapters 7-10

Chapters 7-10 Summary

In chapter seven, Penn is called to his father's office, who reveals the truth about his dilemma. In 1973 Penn's aunt was raped by her ex-boyfriend, Don Hillman. Ray Presley had come to the doctor's office and the two had gotten talking about Ellen's trouble. Three weeks later Hillman was found shot in the head. The next time Presley came in the office Tom asked Presley if he knew anything about Hillman's death. Ray replied that he killed the man. When Presley realized how upset the doctor is he returned with a gun he had borrowed from Tom. Another gun, a .38, was not there. Presley told Tom the gun was lost, but Tom knew Presley used the gun to kill Hillman and reporting the crime was not an option. Presley did not say another word about it for 25 years, but when he had been diagnosed with cancer he needed money and had begun to blackmail Tom Cage.

Penn and his father discuss Tom's options. Penn suggests going to the district attorney and telling the truth; however, the murder had taken place in Alabama and Tom might still face charges there. The only other option is to buy the gun back from Presley. That act would be a felony, so Penn prefers to talk to the D.A. first. He went to school with Austin Mackey and might get further that way. Tom tells Penn Mackey will be at a fundraiser that evening for the mayor, Riley Warren. Penn decides they should attend.

In chapter eight, Penn receives a phone call from Shad Johnson, the black mayoral candidate. Shad wants to meet with Penn and convinces him by telling him that his family is in danger. Penn drives to the north side of town to meet with Johnson. Johnson tells Penn that Penn's interest in the Payton murder may put his family in danger. Johnson is pleased when Penn informs him that he has no interest in pursuing the matter. The candidate believes that having the murder in the spot light would cause a race problem, and as a result he would lose the election. Johnson is worried the case might cause BASF, the German company considering Natchez for its location would lose interest. Without BASF, Natchez would suffer. Leaving the office, Penn notices a sheriff's cruiser behind him. After the car passes him, shots ring out, exploding the windows in his father's car. Someone is trying to kill Penn.

In chapter nine Penn and his father arrive at the fund raiser for Riley Warren, the current mayor. Austin Mackey sees Penn and motions him over. Mackey is angry about the article, defending the investigation of Payton's murder. Mackey claims he tried to investigate the case himself, but the files are sealed by the FBI. The mood that Mackey is in does not give Penn any confidence in helping his father with the blackmail issue.

Penn also runs into Sam Jacobs, a friend from high school. The two discuss the article in the paper and Sam tells Penn that Judge Marston is supposed to attend the party. While the two men are talking, Caitlin Masters arrives and asks Penn to lunch the following day to explain herself. He surprises himself by agreeing. Penn finds his father



and shuffles him out the back door as the judge arrives through the front, sending him home. Dr. Cage asks about Mackey before he leaves and Penn tells him things do not look good.

In chapter 10, Penn runs into Caitlin outside. Stepping forward, Caitlin takes Penn's hand and kisses him. The electricity between the two of them is noticeable. Penn returns to the party and sees Leo Marston. Sam appears and agrees to give Penn a ride home. Before they can leave Penn is stopped by Maude Marston, who accuses Penn of ruining her daughter's life and throws a drink in his face.

Chapters 7-10 Analysis

The revelation of his father's dilemma stuns Penn. His father had known that Ray Presley had killed a man, basically as payment for years of kindness and medical care, for over a quarter of a century, and had carried that knowledge over many years. Tom Cage is an honest man, and the fact that there is anything that he could be blackmailed about is news in and of itself. Though Dr. Cage had not been directly involved, he still feels guilt, knowing at the time that giving Presley the name of his sister-in-law's boyfriend was putting the man in danger.

Tom Cage honestly believes that if Presley had not been diagnosed with cancer Presley never would have ever mentioned the murder again. This fact may not be true, as Presley has kept the gun for so many years.

Penn's first instinct is to turn Presley in, believing that he can talk to his schoolmate, Austin Mackey and make arrangements to keep his father safe. This turns out not to be the case when he meets him at the party. Mackey is not only angry about the article in the newspaper, it appears he is also jealous of Penn and has resented him for years. This leaves only one other option, to buy the gun from Presley. Dr. Cage is not happy about this, unwilling to let Penn commit a felony to save Dr. Cage.

The phone call from Shad Johnson brings more information to Penn about the sentiment in the town and the candidate's aspirations. Johnson has returned to the city of his birth to run for mayor and hopes to be the first black mayor. Candid with Penn, he informs him that Natchez is a stepping stone to governor of Mississippi and the presidency. Johnson is not happy about the Payton case being brought up after so many years and, in fact, seems unconcerned about it being unsolved. Shad considers Payton a stepping stone on the way to racial equality or so he says. Penn seems to believe that Shad Johnson cares for no one but himself, swinging back and forth between street talk and law school speech, depending on to whom he is talking. The man is an actor, out for himself.

Someone makes an attempt on Penn's life as he leaves Johnson's office and Penn again realizes Natchez has a tainted past and present. The sheriff's cruiser is not at the correct angle to have fired the shots, but the officer does not respond to the gunfire, leading Penn to think that whoever is driving the sheriff's car must have some



knowledge of what happened. The driver of the sheriff's car will be revealed shortly and will play an important part in the novel.

More characters are introduced to the reader. Sam Jacobs is a friend of Penn's from high school, and the two still share a special bond. Though they had attended a catholic school, Sam who is Jewish, and Penn, an agnostic, had stood alone together. Sam comes to Penn's aid several times throughout the novel.

Judge Leo Marston appears for the first time and the reader gets a glimpse at his character. Though the man had attacked the popular Dr. Cage in court so many years before, the people of Natchez had pushed it aside. Marston belongs to an old Natchez family, as close to royalty as you can get. People swarm around the powerful man, powerful not only in Natchez, but throughout the state.

Maude Marston is the opposite of her husband. An alcoholic, Maude does not carry herself with grace or class, and people tend to avoid her. The accusation that Penn had ruined her daughter's life seems to be the ranting of a drunken woman; however, this is a key part of the novel and will tie together Penn's past.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

In chapter 11, Penn rides home with Sam and the two discuss the situation in Natchez. Sam also warns Penn off the Payton murder, suggesting that nothing good can come of it. In regards to the comments that Maude had made, Penn is truly confused. The last he had heard Olivia was living in Atlanta married to an attorney. Sam has heard rumors that the marriage may be ending.

A sheriff's car follows the men and stops outside Penn's house. Penn approaches and finds a large, black deputy who tells Penn that the deputy is there with unfinished business. Returning to Sam, Penn is informed that the deputy is likely Ike "The Spike" Ransom, a former high school football star. Penn tells Sam goodnight and waits for Ransom to return.

In chapter 12, Ike returns and picks up Penn. The two men drive to the Triton Battery plant where Payton was murdered. Ike tells Penn that regardless of his intentions, by bringing the murder back to the headlines he was acting as an instrument for justice. Penn is stunned when Ransom tells him that Leo Marston was directly involved in Payton's murder. Ike refuses to elaborate, but Penn is intrigued. Ransom drives Penn back to his father's house, knowing that Cage will follow up. Penn's father waits for him and questions if he really needs to buy the gun from Presley. Penn responds that it is the only way. Going to bed, Penn dreams of a woman in the water who seems to be trying to tell him something. The woman is Olivia Marston.

In chapter 13, Penn drives to Ray Presley's trailer. Penn asks if Ray has a gun for sale and offers 50,000 dollars. The two men go outside, leaving a young blond woman in the trailer. Negotiations take place and Ray sells the gun to Penn for 75,000. Relieved, Penn leaves Presley and the young woman, who is administering black market chemotherapy. Before walking out the door Penn asks how Marston got involved in Payton's murder and Presley responds that perhaps Penn isn't very smart after all.

In chapter 14, Penn calls his father and tells him that he has the gun and then heads to the office of Austin Mackey. On the way, thoughts of Leo Marston swim, and rage is ignited within Penn. Calling his assistant, Penn asks for the number of Peter Lutjens, an FBI agent that has helped him before. Penn calls Peter, who agrees to find out what he can on the Payton file and call back. Penn hears from him in minutes. Peter tells him the case was sealed by J. Edgar Hoover and will not be opened because of national security.

In chapter 15, Penn arrives at Mackey's office. Penn asks about the file, but Mackey tells him that it was destroyed in a fire in 1973. Penn is disappointed but runs into a janitor that tells him some files remain in the basement. Penn calls Caitlin to postpone their lunch and then searches the files. He finds nothing, but the janitor tells him about



Willie Pinder, a former black police chief, who might have information. Penn goes to Willie's house and is surprised that the ex-chief has the original file on Payton. Penn buys the file for 2,000 dollars. Pinder warns him to be careful and states he is going to pretend he'd never met Penn.

Chapters 11-15 Analysis

The Marston family is revealed to be a powerful, old Natchez "nobility." Sam's revelation that Leo Marston stands to profit handsomely from the BASF facility moving to the city is a telling one. Money and power drive the Marston family. This does not seem to explain the comment that Maude made about Penn ruining Olivia's life. Penn is surprised that Olivia's marriage might be in trouble, but she had been the one to end things with him years earlier, not the other way around. Olivia had married well and prospered; there has been no sign of a life ruined.

Ike "The Spike" Ransom's arrival stirs Penn's curiosity again. The officer wants the murder of Del Payton solved and seems to believe, almost in a spiritual way, that Penn Cage has returned to Natchez for this purpose. Ransom tells Penn several things that are important during what will be the first of several meetings. The first is that Leo Marston was directly involved in the murder of Del Payton. The second is that Ray Presley was involved as well. The third is that Penn might want to think carefully before involving anyone from the FBI in any investigation that Penn does. The first two facts almost guarantee Penn will look further into Payton's murder. The third fact, by itself is odd, but the reason behind it will be revealed later in the novel.

The meeting with Ray Presley goes better than Penn could have hoped for, with Presley selling the gun for less the \$100,000 than Penn had brought with him. Presley is dying of cancer but has maintained his wiry strength and appearance. The young woman attending him seems to be not only his nurse, but his lover. Penn can not help bringing up the Payton murder, resulting in Presley wondering how smart Penn really is. Presley remarks that he remembers Penn from the days when Penn had dated Olivia Marston. Presley's comment that Olivia was a fine piece of ass that always got what she wanted seems offhand but will become important later in the novel.

The information that turns around in Penn's head is overwhelming, and the rage he feels is beginning to overpower him. Penn has been intrigued by the twists and turns of the Payton murder, but the knowledge that Marston might be involved in it is a big draw. Penn realizes that the anger he has been suppressing toward Marston for so many years might finally have an outlet. If Penn can prove Marston was involved in the death of Del Payton, he may be able to avenge the damage done to his father many years ago.

Beginning the investigation seems to go easily. Despite the fact that no one in Natchez seems to be interested in having the Payton case re-opened, within a matter of hours Penn has the original case file in hand, thanks to the former police chief. A brief check reveals that Ray Presley was indeed involved in the investigation. The chief tells Penn

that Presley discouraged him from following up on the matter, and though he made no threats, Pinder chose to listen. Penn is left to wonder why Presley discouraged the chief, and what Presley has to do with the Payton case.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

In chapter 16, Penn drives to the Payton home and tells Althea he is going to investigate Del's murder. The widow is relieved. The two discuss Del's murder, and Althea tells Penn about Agent Stone, one of the agents that had investigated the case, and another younger man who had shown almost no interest at all. Offering Penn tomatoes from the garden, Althea takes him outside where Penn is stunned to find the 1961 Ford Fairlane in which Del had been murdered. Looking the car over something strikes Penn as odd, and he takes a piece of the engine with him as he leaves. Driving home Penn realizes what seems out of place. Del Payton had been killed by a bomb made of dynamite, but Huey Moak, an explosives expert had taught Penn some things about bomb damage. The destruction of the Fairlane was not caused by dynamite; it was caused by plastic explosives.

In chapter 17 Penn returns home for dinner with his family before taking the gun to the swamp with his father and getting rid of it. While there, Dr. Cage speaks to Penn about the dangers of investigating the Payton murder. Penn tells his father about his visit from Ike Ransom and his claim that Leo Marston was behind the murder. Tom Cage doesn't believe it, knowing that Marston is capable of destroying people, and would not need to murder anyone; however, when Penn tells his father about the Payton file being sealed by Hoover, the elder Cage realizes that there may be truth in Ransom's accusations. The two men agree that if Penn is to move forward, they will have to be sure the family is safe.

In chapter 18, Penn meets Caitlin for dinner and tells her he needs her help on the Payton case. Penn promises her an exclusive as long as she helps him with research and does not print anything until he says it is ok. Caitlin agrees, and Penn's first task for her is to get all details on Leo Marston. Discussion moves to shared topics of interest until Caitlin suggests that Penn visit her home. Knowing that Caitlin is interested in him, Penn gives in and the two leave the restaurant.

On the way, Penn asks Caitlin if she would go to Colorado with him. Agent Dwight Stone lives there, and Cilla had confirmed that he was the agent that had been kind to Althea Payton. Along the way, Penn is stopping in Texas to witness the Hanratty execution. Caitlin is not happy about babysitting Annie while Penn witnesses Hanratty's demise but agrees. They kiss goodnight and Penn arranges to meet Caitlin in the morning.

In chapter 19, Penn, Caitlin and Annie wait for their plane in Baton Rouge airport. Penn is stunned to see Olivia Marston deplane. Livy tells Penn that she is on the way home to help care for her mother. Caitlin returns to Penn's side and he introduces the two women. Caitlin does not like Livy and seems catty. Livy announces that she is separated from her husband, leaving Penn in shock. Livy comments to Penn that 20



years after high school the two of them are free again. Penn calmly states that the difference is that he had not wanted to be free of his wife.

On the plane Penn gives Caitlin a very condensed version of his life and that of Livy Marston, as well as the malpractice case against Tom Cage that had more or less ended their relationship forever. Penn explains that Livy had disappeared before the case, already drawing away, but the lawsuit had been a nail in the coffin. Caitlin suggests that Livy might have run away pregnant, but Penn discounts it. Caitlin asks if Penn ever asked Livy about the case, and he replies that when he had tried, Livy had more or less shut him down. Caitlin tells Penn that he still loves Livy, but he denies it, discouraged by the thought. The thought occurs to Caitlin that Livy might be returning to Natchez to help her father. Penn does not believe this to be true.

In chapter 20, Penn arrives at Huntsville Prison to witness Hanratty's execution. Penn sits with the family and is stunned when the director of the FBI, John Portman arrives. Penn is unsure why Portman is there, assuming that it is to witness the death of the man that almost derailed his career.

As the execution proceeds, Hanratty greets those present, making reference to the murder he had committed under the watch of Portman in Compton, and the fact that he still has a living brother, one who will be visiting his enemies soon. The warden orders the prisoner gagged, and within five minutes, Hanratty is dead. The execution over, Penn stands to leave and is confronted by John Portman. The FBI director tells Penn that Peter Lutjens, a FBI special agent, is being transferred to Fargo, North Dakota. Penn knows that the transfer is because Penn had solicited the help of Lutjens against Portman's direct orders. Penn wonders why a little murder in Mississippi would be of interest to anyone in Washington anymore, and leaves.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Althea Payton can hardly believe that after 30 years, someone is going to take up the case of her husband's murder. Grateful to Penn, the two discuss price and the widow is even more stunned when Penn tells her that he will be billing her one dollar a day. Penn is working this case for Althea, but now also for himself, the anger he feels toward Leo Marston pulling him forward.

This anger is evident when Penn discusses the case with his father while the two men dispose of the gun Penn had bought from Ray Presley. Tom Cage is a good man and agrees that Del Payton had gotten no justice, but the doctor is worried about Penn and the safety of his family first. Even the name Marston is not enough to convince Tom at first, but the information that J. Edgar Hoover had sealed the files himself sways Penn's father. Still, his biggest concern is taking care of his wife and his granddaughter. Penn believes that the more people who know he is looking into things, the safer the family will be. This is true in most cases, but those responsible for the death of Del Payton do not care who or what is at stake in keeping their secret.



Another important piece of information is obtained when Penn sees the car in which Del had been murdered. The car sits in Althea's garden, almost a sculpture, rusted and battered. While looking the car over Penn notices that the description of the car does not match the damage that is actually present. Without yet beginning his investigation, Penn has already discovered a discrepancy in the case.

The return of Livy Marston to Natchez is important. Through the small bits of information that Penn imparts to Caitlin, the reader is led to believe that Penn and Livy had been in love during their senior year, but something had ended their relationship. Penn believes that they had been growing apart, but the lawsuit against his father had severed any hope permanently. Still, Penn can not help wondering what his life would have been like if they had not gone their separate ways, and Caitlin realizes that Penn will always wonder what might have been.

The arrival of John Portman on the night of Arthur Lee Hanratty's execution is interesting. Though Portman had dealings with Hanratty, it seems the real reason for being at the execution is to let Penn know he is aware of his call to Peter Lutjens. His announcement that Lutjens is being transferred to North Dakota for assisting Penn is a bombshell, but his anger at Penn for wondering aloud why the Payton case is raising flags in Washington is even more of a bombshell.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

Penn returns to the hotel and has a discussion with Caitlin about John Portman and his hatred for Penn. Portman had allowed Hanratty to kill again while in the witness protection program and hated Penn for keeping the killer in Texas and not allowing him to be extradited to L.A. to save face. After they talk, Caitlin watches TV and Penn thinks about Livy and their youth. Caught up in the way Livy was and the way things might have been, Penn is stirred from his reverie when Caitlin asks if he is thinking about Livy and then goes to her room. Penn does not kiss her, caught up in thoughts of Livy.

In chapter 22 Penn arrives in Colorado with Caitlin and Annie. Agent Stone does not want to talk about the Payton case but gives some of his time when Penn tells him that he is not trying to write a novel, but wants the case solved. Stone answers some questions but is not straight forward. The agent tells Penn he should not assume that Payton's killing was about racism at all, the same thing that Ike Ransom had told him. Penn does not tell Stone about Ransom; he merely states that someone else has told him the same thing. Stone tells Penn that he should interview the witnesses and work the case, just as Stone had in 1968. When the group leaves, Caitlin points out that there had only been one witness listed in the file, but Stone mentioned two.

In chapter 23, Penn arrives back in Natchez to a fax about stolen plastic explosives from a nearby army base in 1968. He calls Caitlin so she can research the information further and then follows up on the one eyewitness, Frank Jones, now a car salesman.

Penn arrives at the dealership and has Frank take him for a test drive. Once on the road, Penn questions Jones, who has said that he was alone in his car on the way to the store when the bomb went off. Penn knows he is lying. Tracking down Jones's ex-wife, Penn's thoughts are confirmed. Jones had been in his car with another woman. His ex supplies her name and Penn contacts her, but the woman refuses to speak to him, obviously afraid.

Driving home, Penn receives a call from Althea with stunning news. Watching the coverage of the Hanratty execution the night before, Althea had seen John Portman on CNN. Portman was the younger agent that had investigated Del's murder. To Penn, this might explain why Portman has warned him off the case.

In chapter 24, Penn reviews the case as it stands. Dr. Cage returns home with news that someone had tried to kill Ray Presley by poisoning his IV. The doctor also had a visit from Betty Lou Beckman; the woman who had been with Frank Jones the night Del was killed. Beckman tells Dr. Cage that she had seen Presley at the battery plant the night of the explosion. He had warned her not to tell anyone, but when Agent Stone had pressed her, Beckman had told the truth. Presley had returned and beaten and raped her. Shortly afterward, Presley was arrested for drug trafficking.



Caitlin arrives with news that she spoke to a man who admits selling C4 to Ray Presley. Penn and Caitlin argue when Penn refuses to tell Caitlin the information Penn has. When Penn tells her that John Portman had been part of the investigation, Caitlin is floored. Masters wants to take the story national, and Penn thinks there is a way to bring things to a head. Cage wants to accuse Leo Marston of being responsible for Payton's murder, but Caitlin will not consent to putting the story in her newspaper. The lawsuits would cause problems for her father. Caitlin can not understand the risk that Penn is willing to take to get justice for Del Payton.

Returning home, Penn finds Caitlin waiting. She has received a call at the office from Agent Stone. Penn calls him and the agent tells him that all their phones are bugged. Stone is still refusing to answer any direct questions, but when Penn tells him he is going after Marston and wants to be sure the risk is worth it, Stone tells him it is.

In chapter 25, Livy Marston arrives at Penn's house and takes him for a drive to the Cold Hole, a water hole where they had spent many afternoons. Livy refuses to discuss the past, but Penn reminisces in his mind about times gone by. Livy wants Penn and tries to seduce him, but Penn refuses her, unable to give himself to her the way he would have when they were young. Penn tells Livy it is time to leave, that he needs to check on his daughter. Livy dresses but suggests that after Penn is sure Annie is alright they continue the day. The two drive back toward Penn's home and find the house engulfed in flames.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

The relationship between John Portman and Penn Cage is revealed. John Portman's career had almost been ruined when Arthur Lee Hanratty had killed while in the Witness Protection Program as a witness for Portman. Escaping California for Texas, Hanratty had killed again. Captured in Texas, Penn had refused to allow Hanratty to be extradited so Portman could prosecute him and save face. Portman, now the director of the FBI, has never forgiven Cage. Another tie to Portman is revealed when Penn receives a call from Althea Payton. John Portman had been a new agent when Del was murdered in 1968. At the time Portman had shown no interest in the case, according to Althea.

Penn's visit to Agent Dwight Stone is revealing in a few ways. Though Stone had been released from the FBI for alcohol-related issues, it was several years after the Payton case. Stone is unwilling to talk about the case, but does share some information because he is aware of Penn's past as a prosecutor. Stone tells Penn he must investigate the case, interviewing the witnesses. This is an important fact because there is only one witness listed in the police report. Stone also tells Penn that the entire case file that is under seal at the FBI is not necessary, only his final report is important. At first Penn misses the importance of this statement, but later Penn realizes Stone must have solved the case. It is for this reason that he will return to visit with Stone again.

Penn speaks with the one recorded witness and discovers that Frank Jones had been in his car with a woman the night of the murder. The woman is afraid to talk to Penn, and



Dr. Cage will make things a bit more clear when he speaks to Penn. Betty Beckman had seen Ray Presley at the murder scene and he had threatened her. When Beckman had told the FBI what she had seen, Presley had returned, beating and raping her. Dr. Cage had medicated Beckman and taken her home.

The pieces of the investigation that are coming together are circumstantial, and Penn formulates a bold plan. Cage wants to accuse Marston of being responsible for Del Payton's death. Forcing Marston to file a lawsuit against him for slander will mean Marston will have to open his records for discovery. Penn is beginning to think Ransom and Stone are right, and the murder of Payton was not about race but about money and power. If that is the case, there may be some proof in Marston's files.

Livy appears at Penn's door and tries to relive their past. Driving a car similar to the one she drove when they were younger and taking Penn to the Old Hole, a water spring, makes it clear that Olivia is more concerned with bringing back their youth than discussing what happened to them or what is going on currently. As much as Penn wants to push Livy aside, he is still drawn to her, wondering what might have been if only things had been different.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

Penn arrives in front of his burning family home and his mother tells him that Ruby is still inside. Breaking a window and entering from the rear, Penn struggles, but finds Ruby, flesh burning, on the floor with a broken hip. As he feels himself passing out, Penn is able to push Ruby to a window and is pulled to safety. Coming to outside, Penn's mother tells him that Annie is missing. Galvanized, Penn searches the crowd and is preparing to call the police when a neighbor arrives with Annie. The girl had been dropped off with a note, warning Penn how easy it would be for his daughter to disappear.

At the hospital, Penn and his father pray over Ruby, who dies waiting for a helicopter to transport her to an area burn unit. Caitlin arrives and tells Penn that between the house being fire-bombed, Ruby's death and Annie's kidnapping, she will print the accusations against Leo Marston.

In chapter 27, Penn's accusations hit the morning paper, sparking racial retaliation, including the drive-by shooting of a former KKK member. The police manage to keep things under some sort of control while the search for the suspects. Penn hires private bodyguards from Argus Security to keep his family safe and moves them to a motel. After Penn finds out the Leo Marston has filed a 5 million dollar lawsuit against him and the Examiner, he leaves with his guard, Daniel Kelly to meet Ike Ransom. Ike is angry about the newspaper until Penn explains his reasoning. While they talk, shots are fired outside the warehouse where they are meeting. Dan Kelly calls Penn outside. Two men are dead, one professional with a sniper rifle, the other Clovis Harratty, Arthur's brother, seeking revenge.

In Chapter 28, Penn meets with the sheriff about the two dead men. While Penn is there, news comes that there are two suspects in the killing of the former KKK member. Caitlin rushes to the scene with Dan Kelly. Returning to his motel, Penn finds Livy waiting. Again, Livy refuses to speak of the past, pushing Penn to have sex with her. Penn resists at first, curious that Livy has not asked about the lawsuit or if her father is guilty. Livy pushes Penn further, and as things grow serious, Dan Kelly arrives to tell Penn that Kelly is back, and announcing that Annie is safe. Penn is ashamed of himself for forgetting his daughter, no matter how briefly. Livy pushes again, and the two have sex in her room.

In chapter 29, Penn watches Marston's office with Caitlin. Before long, Marston arrives with Olivia and the two carry boxes from the office. Following the Marston's to Tuscany, the family home, Caitlin creates a diversion when the two look in a window and see Leo preparing to burn the boxes. The police arrive with Judge Franklin, who angrily has the officers take the boxes to her office for safe keeping, worried that Marston is trying to



destroy evidence. Livy denies that this is the case, but Penn does not know if she is protecting herself or her father.

In chapter 30, Judge Franklin arranges for Leo to give the files to Penn in order to avoid obstruction charges. Penn takes the boxes to the newspaper where Caitlin has some interns to help them search the boxes. Large amounts of Marston's past business are contained within, from property holdings to private adoptions he helped arrange. The phone company also delivers phone records from Marston's office. There is documented proof that Marston had spoken to John Portman and the FBI several times after Caitlin's first article about Del Payton had run in the paper.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

Things become much more serious when Penn discovers the family home on fire. His mother reports that there had been an explosion and flames almost immediately. Penn does not think twice when rushing into the inferno to save Ruby, as the woman is as much a part of the family as any of them. Ruby would have done the same, had in fact, saved Penn from a vicious dog in his youth, though she herself was terrified of dogs.

Annie is missing when Penn awakens, and Penn realizes that the entire episode has been set from start to finish. The friends of his father that had been helping keep an eye on things had rushed into the house at once to save those inside, and Penn's rushing in after them to save Ruby had provided enough distraction for even his mother. Annie is taken and left down the street, proving to Penn that no one is safe, and that whoever is behind the Payton murder is willing to do whatever it takes to keep their secret. The killer or killers can not know that their actions will be the catalyst that pushes Caitlin to help Penn, and print his accusations in the Examiner. Penn also hires professional security to guard his family. Though they are very professional, the firm will prove to be a problem later in the novel.

Meeting with Ike is difficult because the sheriff does not understand Penn's motives for the newspaper article. Once he does, Ike actually laughs with glee at the thought of Leo Marston being forced to open his secrets to the defense team. Dan Kelly, Penn's security guard quickly proves himself valuable when he kills the two men outside the warehouse that had been gunning for Penn. Both men prove to be a bit of a shock. One is obviously a professional; the other is Arthur Lee Hanratty's brother, on scene to provide the revenge called for his by his brother at his execution.

Penn proves himself unable to resist Livy Marston when she turns up at the motel to see him. The overwhelming urge to make love is unbearable, and though Penn is almost able to stop when Dan Kelly arrives and tells him that Annie is alright, Livy pulls him back in, quite like a spider. It seems that Livy will do anything to relive the past, as long as she can keep the present from intruding. The following day when Penn catches Livy helping her father removed evidence from his office; Penn is not sure how to react. Caitlin is ready to move and stop them, but Penn is still willing to give Livy the benefit of the doubt. When Livy tells the Judge that the papers are old things from her father's

office, Penn is unsure whether Livy believes her father's tale, or if she is trying to be sure not to get involved in the Payton case and the aftermath



Chapter 31-35

Chapter 31-35 Summary

Penn and his family attend the funeral service for Ruby Flowers. The reverend speaks about Ruby's life, and mentions Penn's attempt to find the truth about Del Payton's murder. Shad Johnson speaks, urging Penn to stop the search until after the election, prompting Althea Payton to speak, reminding those present that Johnson had done nothing to help them, just made promises like everyone else.

In chapter 32, Penn drives alone, feeling ashamed. Althea had told the congregation he was unselfish in his pursuit of the truth, but he was really seeking revenge. Continuing to drive, Penn winds up at Ray Presley's trailer with Dan Kelly close behind him. Presley goads Penn, telling him that he had not killed Payton, and that Penn had no idea about the truth. Presley stays faithful to Leo Marston the entire time.

Penn and Dan wind up at Biscuit and Blues for drinks and are interrupted by the waitress, Jenny. She asks Penn to come to her apartment upstairs to sign another book, and when he hesitates, Jenny tells him it has something to do with the Marston's. Penn goes upstairs with the girl, but is surprised when Jenny reveals that she believes Penn might be her father.

In chapter 33, Penn is shocked by Jenny's claims, until she explains that she is the daughter of Olivia Marston, and had found out the two had dated in high school. Her birth certificate shows Olivia as her mother with no father listed. Jenny had worked at the attorney's office that had handled her private adoption, and stolen the records. The fee for her adoption was \$35,000. Penn promises that if Jenny is his daughter he will take care of her and leaves for the Examiner offices, where he finds the paperwork about Leo Marston's adoption dealings. Jenny's adoption fee is listed. While there, Caitlin tells him that Dwight Stone has a daughter in the FBI, explaining Dwight's reluctance to speak to Penn.

Penn meets Livy and confronts her about Jenny and is surprised when Livy denies he is her father. Leo Marston arrives; glibly telling Penn that Peter Lutjens had been arrested trying to photocopy the Payton file at the Hoover Building. Marston has a gun and seems to threaten Penn, but Dan Kelly arrives and stops any problems. Penn realizes that he needs to talk to Agent Stone again, and Dan Kelly helps provide the distraction he needs to leave for Colorado without being followed.

In chapter 34, Penn arrives at Stone's cabin and the agent is clearly agitated, telling Penn there are people watching the house, now surrounded in snow. Penn convinces him to talk and Stone tells Penn that Marston had arranged the killing of Del Payton in order to quiet civil unrest in the area. There was no civil rights undertone; Marston simply wanted to lease the property he had to a man that did not want problems with blacks. Payton was an example, but not a specific one. While talking to Penn Agent



Stone keeps checking the phone line. Suddenly Stone leaps up and tosses Penn a gun. The line is dead and the men watching the house are moving in.

In chapter 35, Penn and Stone rush from the house with bullets flying toward the river. Stone is shot in the buttocks, but he persists. The two men float downstream holding onto their boat until they approach the rapids. The channel is deep, and the men looking for them are above with guns drawn. Penn and Stone allow the boat through first, and the boat is ripped with gunfire. They manage to get through and to the far bank where Stone sends Penn to the Silver Bell for help getting home. Stone promises that if he lives he will testify against Marston.

Chapter 31-35 Analysis

The knowledge that Olivia had been pregnant when she left after their senior year in high school stuns Penn. Though he had considered the idea, he had tossed it aside years ago. Livy's older sister had gotten pregnant and had an abortion, and Penn thought that if Livy got pregnant Livy would have done the same thing. The thought that he might be the father is another blow. Though Penn is unsure of Jenny's story, her birth certificate does list Livy as her mother. His further investigation finds a slip of paper in Leo Marston's files, detailing the dates of private adoptions he had handled and the price for each. There is evidence tying Jenny to Marston as well. Penn is also upset about the fact that Livy wants nothing to do with Jenny, possibly his child. The information that Jenny supplies and how she obtained it will be very important later in the novel. The confrontation that Penn stages does not produce the expected result. For the first time, Livy is angry at him for interfering with her life. The fact that Penn had accused her father of murder had barely fazed her, but Penn asking how she can turn her back on her own child angers her beyond belief. The arrival of Leo ends the discussion, but pushes Penn further into the investigation. The news that Leo cheerfully delivers, that Lutjens had been arrested for trying to copy the Payton file, convinces Penn that he needs to have Stone testify for him.

In Colorado, Stone finally ties together the bits of information that Penn had found here and there. Marston had indeed arranged the murder of Del Payton, though Del was not a specific target because of his work with civil rights. As far as Marston was concerned, one black is as good as another to prove his point. The murder had been committed simply to convince an out-of-state businessman to lease Marston's property. Stone had solved the crime, but J. Edgar Hoover himself had taken the file, and used it to gain the political influence of the Marston family. Hoover wanted to make sure that Nixon was elected President, and he used his knowledge about Marston to convince his family to support his choice. Penn also learns that Marston turned Presley over to the FBI for shooting at the agents one day, and Presley had been arrested and served time for drug charges. This is a key factor, and will play an important role shortly.

The men that are shooting at Penn and Stone are obviously professionals, and presumably FBI. Penn and Stone manage to escape, and Stone is so angry that he

decides to take Penn's offer and his daughter's advice, and testify against Marston. If he lives.



Chapters 36-41, Epilogue

Chapters 36-41, Epilogue Summary

In chapter 36 Penn gets a call from Dan Kelly telling him that all his actions have been reported to the FBI by the company owner, a former FBI agent. Penn manages to escape Portman's men and call Caitlin who has news. A man identifying himself as a reporter named Bookbinder will be attending the trial. Penn knows that Stone has survived the gunfire, as Bookbinder is his former partner's name.

Ike calls for a meeting and Penn agrees reluctantly. At the old peanut factory Ike is irrational, asking if Stone said anything. Penn questions him and Ike reveals that he had killed Del Payton in order to avoid prison for a drug charge. Ike has hated himself ever since.

Shots are fired and Ike is hit. Presley is there to kill both men, but Penn manages to shout that Marston had turned on him. Presley is quiet and Penn dives for cover, knocking himself unconscious. Waking up, Penn finds Ike dead. Taking Ike's gun, Penn calls Livy to warn her of Presley's approach.

In chapter 37, Penn meets Livy trying to keep her safe from Presley. Livy admits to Penn that Jenny is the daughter of Ray Presley. After a party one night, Livy had taunted him and Presley had pulled over and raped her repeatedly. Penn realizes that Leo Marston had always believed that Penn was the father, and that was why he had attacked Dr. Cage so viciously in court. Penn also realizes that Livy had the ability to stop the attack at anytime, simply by telling Leo that Penn was not her baby's father, but chose not to. Penn tells Livy about the adoption; how Leo profited from her pregnancy. Livy is angry and tells Penn that there are records at the house that might be helpful. They head to Leo's office to get them.

In chapter 38 Penn finds the hidden files in Leo's office. Marston interrupts, angry that Penn is in the house. Livy confronts her father with the evidence of the adoption. Leo tries to placate her, and then challenges her about it. Livy is very angry and might have continued, but Ray Presley arrives. Presley accuses Marston of setting him up for jail, a charge that Marston at first denies, but then admits is just business. Penn realizes that Presley means to kill Marston and encourages Livy to interfere. Penn tells the men that Presley is the father of Livy's baby, stunning both. Livy calls Ray and Penn is able to hit him in the head with a wine bottle. There is a struggle over weapons during which Marston is wounded. Presley is disarmed, but before anything else can be done, Livy shoots him with Ike Ransom's weapon. Presley is not dead, and Leo takes the weapon from his daughter, killing Presley. Any tests will prove that Leo fired the gun. Leo apologizes to Penn for attacking his father years ago. It had been done because he believed that Penn had gotten Livy pregnant. Marston tells Penn to retract his story in the paper and they can all move on. Penn refuses.



In chapter 39, Penn arrives to pick the jury which moves quickly, as everyone wants to be part of the case. Marston is represented by his law partner and his daughter. Three character witnesses are called on Marston's behalf, the Governor, a bishop and John Portman. Portman insists that the file on the Payton murder is a matter of national security, but that Leo Marston had assisted in the investigation. Penn asks Portman if the case had been solved and he admits that it had, but the revelation would have compromised national security. The courtroom is stunned. Caitlin tells Penn that Agent Stone has arrived.

In chapter 40, Agent Dwight Stone takes the stand and tells the court that Ike Ransom had confessed to the murder of Del Payton. Stone explains how Presley had forced Ike to commit the crime. According to Stone, Hoover had been thrilled with the knowledge that a black had killed Payton; making it as far from a civil rights case as possible. The recordings that Hoover had ordered had incriminated Leo Marston, and Hoover had used that information to help have Nixon elected president.

Livy questions Stone, making him look less trustworthy because of his dismissal from the FBI after involvement with an informant and his drinking habits. Stone does his best, but Livy ties the case to the fact that Stone hated Portman. Afterward, Livy questions Penn and asks him about their relationship and her father's court case against Dr. Cage. Livy is trying to convince the jury that Penn and Stone are trying to discredit Leo and Portman. Penn is about to give up, aware that he can't win, when Jenny arrives and interrupts him. She has a tape, part of the evidence she had taken when she worked for the lawyer that handled her adoption, with Leo and the lawyer discussing the Payton murder. The judge orders the tape heard in her chambers.

In chapter 41, all parties retire to the judge's chambers and the tape. The judge asks where Jenny obtained it and she explains. The judge orders the lawyers from her office and stays with Jenny to hear the tape. After a few minutes Judge Franklin appears and plays the tape. The voice of Leo Marston is clear, speaking to the lawyer who wants a favor from J. Edgar Hoover for his employer, a mafia boss. The courtroom is stunned. Livy Marston simply stands and walks out, not looking back. The judge tells Leo's remaining lawyer that the jury will retire to deliberate. Leo Marston makes to leave, but the judge has him restrained. The only way that Leo can leave is if he dismisses the suit against Penn and the newspaper, and that is exactly what he does. Before anyone can leave the courtroom, Austin Mackey declares that he will bring the murder of Del Payton before a grand jury within three weeks. Mackey orders Marston arrested.

The case is over. Althea stops to speak to Penn saying she can finally get on with living now that the truth about Del's murder is known. Penn thinks of Livy briefly, but realizes that as of now, the past is dead.

In the Epilogue, Penn returns to Disney World with Annie and Caitlin. Life is moving on. John Portman was asked by the President to resign as director of the FBI. Leo Marston is going to trial for the murder of Del Payton. Shad Johnson has lost the mayoral election. Life in Natchez is going back to as normal as it can after the upheaval of the



Payton case being resurrected. Penn is moving on with his life as well, letting go of the past and taking steps toward the future, with Annie, and Caitlin.

Chapters 36-41, Epilogue Analysis

The action in the novel is delivered more rapidly in this last section, bringing the many pieces of the story together for the reader. Dan Kelly informs Penn that John Portman has known his every move in the investigation because the security men he had hired to protect his family were reporting his actions to the office. This explains how the FBI knew that Penn was returning to see Dwight Stone and had been waiting outside the cabin. The ambush is also explained. The men had been ordered to allow Penn access to Stone, so that both men could be eliminated at once. Kelly confesses to Penn, the only man on the team that had not been an FBI agent, since he feels no loyalty to Portman or the organization. Upon Penn's return to Natchez, he is thrilled that Stone has survived the firefight and will testify against Marston.

Ike Ransom confesses to Penn and agrees to testify. The guilt Ransom has carried for years needs to be released. Presley had blackmailed Ransom into killing Del Payton, taking advantage of a man already having a difficult time adjusting to life after Vietnam. When Ransom found out who he had killed, his grief was magnified. Ransom had believed that Stone had judged him, which explains his distrust for the FBI. Ransom knows that the case had been solved, as he had confessed to Stone and Portman in 1968.

Presley attacks, planning on killing Ransom and Cage, but Penn is provided a brief window to inform Presley that Leo Marston had framed him so many years ago, and that was the true reason for the five years spent in prison. Knocked unconscious, Penn wakes, knowing that Presley is on his way to deal with Marston.

At Tuscany, the Marston home, Penn speaks with Livy, who reveals her rape at the hands of Presley and why she wants nothing to do with Jenny. Her anger is palpable when Penn reveals Leo's profit from the adoption. Livy reveals the existence of the hidden records, in retribution for her father's deception. Leo's arrival in his office creates more tension, with Livy goading her father about the adoption.

Presley arrives as well, intending to kill Leo as payback for his time in prison. The only option Penn has to stop him is to reveal the existence of the child her created through the rape of Livy. Marston is stunned, having always believed that Penn was Jenny's father. After the struggle that results in the death of Presley, Leo actually apologizes to Penn for the problems Marston had created for Penn's father. Leo also places the blame on Livy, for never revealing the truth. Penn refuses to retract the remarks he had made to the paper, knowing finally that the Marston family, both father and daughter, care for no one but themselves.

The trial progresses quickly, with Character witnesses presented by Marston's attorneys. John Portman is forced to admit to Penn that the Payton case had been



solved, but no one would know the truth because the case file was sealed. The arrival of Dwight Stone changes this when Stone reveals to the stunned courtroom the absolute truth. Despite this, Livy Marston, acting as her father's attorney is able to create the illusion that Stone and Penn had worked together to bring down the two men they hated most, Marston and Portman. The case seems lost, until Jenny Doe arrives with the tapes she had stolen from her old boss, the adoption attorney. Ironically, if Livy Marston had acknowledged her daughter when the young woman had arrived in Natchez, even been a bit kind, the tapes might never have made it to court. The same applied to Marston. Leo had suggested that things would have been better if Jenny had never been born. This is certainly true for him, as she is the person that provides audio evidence regarding his guilt. Marston is forced to drop the libel charges against Penn, but is later prosecuted for the capital murder of Del Payton.

Penn is finally able to move on his life, and move forward with Caitlin. The Payton family is able to move forward as well. Natchez begins to recover from the thirty years of mystery and betrayal.



Characters

Penn Cage

Penn Cage is a thirty-eight-year-old author and former prosecutor. After the death of his wife Sarah from cancer, Penn returns to his hometown Natchez, Mississippi with his daughter Annie to try and rebuild their lives. Arriving for what he hopes will be a soothing recover period, Penn is stunned to discover that his father is being blackmailed for a crime committed long ago. Penn has spent his life trying to be sure that the law is followed but needs to break the law in order to save his father.

While trying to remove his father from harm, Penn becomes embroiled in the history of the town when a race murder thirty years past is resurrected in the town's memory. Penn becomes the center of the storm as racism that has simmered below the surface in Natchez for so long rises again and people choose sides.

Penn reconnects with his first love, Olivia Marston, the daughter of "Judge" Leo Marston. Marston had represented a man suing Penn's father for malpractice years ago and had almost destroyed Tom Cage. Penn has no idea why Marston attacked his family with such venom but discovers that Olivia's father had believed for years that Penn fathered the baby Olivia gives up for adoption. Olivia seems to want to reestablish the relationship she had with Penn many years ago, but Penn discovers Olivia's innate self-centeredness and realizes that the pedestal he had placed her on was of his own making.

Solving the murder of Del Payton is an important step for Penn Cage. Throughout the novel Penn Cage seems to be lost, trying to rebuild his family and recover from the loss of his wife. Having the case to focus on, at first driven by revenge and then by justice, Penn seems to recover himself, and begins to move forward in life, with his daughter Annie and his new love interest, Caitlin Masters.

Caitlin Masters

Caitlin Masters is the publisher of the Natchez Examiner. Her father owns the newspaper and Caitlin is working in the area on a tour of duty, learning the newspaper business. Masters attended Radcliffe as an undergraduate, then Columbia School of Journalism course for her master's degree. Now working in Natchez, Caitlin becomes involved with Penn when she interviews him for a her newspaper. In a casual conversation that Penn believed was off the record, the murder of Del Payton is discussed, and Caitlin publishes Penn's words. The town becomes immediately embroiled in the past, with racism once again a focus.

Caitlin is a strong woman, who is interested in Penn as a person and as a possible lover. Her motives are always clear, even if they are self serving. Masters at first declares her desire to have a Pulitzer by the time she is thirty and sees the Payton case



and the apparent cover-up as a way to reach this goal. Spending more time in Natchez and learning more about the characters involved brings her to the realization that her goals are not as important as justice.

Caitlin patiently waits for Penn to realize that Olivia Marston is not what she seems nor who Penn remembers. When Marston reveals her true character, Caitlin is there, and she and Penn are able to start building a relationship built on honesty and trust, two things he never would have had with Olivia.

Judge Leo Marston

"Judge" Leo Marston is the most influential man in Natchez, Mississippi. Marston has been the bane of Penn Cage's existence since he sued Cage's father for malpractice and caused the man to have a heart attack and almost die. Marston sued Tom Cage in an act of vengeance, believing Penn Cage had gotten his youngest daughter Olivia pregnant when Penn and she were in high school. Marston does not know that his employee, Ray Presley, raped his daughter and is the father of her child.

Marston is a wealthy man, descended from a long line of a powerful family in Natchez. Though Leo Marston is wealthy, he is driven by greed, always having to get more and be more powerful. This is proven by the fact that when his daughter Olivia got pregnant, he arranged a private adoption for cash to profit from her mistake.

In 1968, Marston was brokering a deal in which land he had rights to would be necessary for a new company to move to Natchez. The company owner was worried about the racial tension in the south. Marston arranged for a "sacrifice," a murder to calm the local blacks and allow his business deal to go through. Ray Presley arranged the death of Del Payton for Leo Marston, and the secret had been held for thirty years, locked in the files of the FBI, by orders of J. Edgar Hoover himself.

Ray Presley

A former police officer in Natchez, Presley worked as an enforcer for Leo Marston. Now dying of cancer, Ray has been blackmailing Dr. Tom Cage for a crime Presley committed thirty years ago. Penn Cage steps in and ends the blackmail situation, but in doing so discovers Presley has more to hide than one murder.

During the investigation of the Del Payton murder, Penn is able to place Presley at the scene, tying him to the crime. Presley did not actually plant the bomb that killed Payton, but he used his power as a police officer to force someone else to do so. Presley does so while working for Leo Marston, at his order. When the FBI arrived in Natchez to investigate the murder, Presley shot at the agents on the highway, which led to Leo Marston providing evidence to have Presley jailed for five years on drug charges. Ironically, Presley remained loyal to Marston throughout the years, believing him to be a true friend. When Penn reveals that Marston was the person behind his incarceration, Presley plans on killing Marston for the five years he lost in prison.



Presley is also the father of Olivia Marston's daughter, Jenny Doe. Olivia led Presley on, goading him one evening, and Presley responded by raping her repeatedly. Olivia never told her father, and Presley had no idea he fathered a child with Olivia.

Olivia Marston

The daughter of Leo Marston and Penn Cage's first true love, Olivia Marston is a complicated woman, one who is very self involved. Olivia's high school years were spent with Penn placing her on a "pedestal," and it seems Olivia still wishes to be there. Returning to Natchez to help her father with the Payton case, Olivia works very hard at rekindling her relationship with Penn Cage. The problem is that Penn wants to know about the past and why Olivia left him and disappeared; Olivia refuses to discuss the past at all.

Dr. Tom Cage

Penn Cage's father, Dr. Cage, is a mainstay in Natchez, popular with the people and a good man. Through the years Cage has earned the respect of everyone, with the exception of Leo Marston. The Cage family never knew why Marston attacked Dr. Cage so viciously in court, but the two men have hated each other with a passion for years.

Thirty years ago, Dr. Cage discussed a family problem with one of his patients, Ray Presley. Presley took it upon himself to kill the man that had caused the problems, as a sort of payment for all the good that Dr. Cage had done his family. When Cage expresses dismay about the killing, Presley kept the weapon, which belonged to Dr. Cage, in order to assure silence. Now dying of cancer, Presley is blackmailing Dr. Cage for money in order to purchase his bootleg medical treatments.

Delano Payton

A black man that had lived in Natchez, Payton was murdered in what was believed to be a racial killing in 1968. Payton receives a promotion at the battery plant, and everyone assumes that he was killed for taking a job that most considered to belong only to a white man. Payton had been active in the civil rights movement, and with the racial tensions in the South in 1968, it was assumed his murder was an example to others. In reality, Payton was not specifically targeted for his civil rights actions or because he had gotten a promotion; the motive was simply greed. Leo Marston had been trying to conduct a business deal with a man who wanted to be certain that "Negroes" stayed in their place and were submissive.

Althea Payton

Delano Payton's widow, Althea asks Penn to look into the murder of her husband.



Georgia Payton

Delano Payton's mother, Georgia lives with her daughter-in-law and her grandson, Del Payton Jr.

Annie Cage

Annie is Penn Cage's four-year-old daughter. Penn moves back to Natchez so his mother can help him raise Annie after the death of Annie's mother seven months earlier.

Sarah Cage

Penn Cage's wife, Sarah died of cancer seven months earlier.

Maude Marston

Leo Marston's wife and the mother of Olivia Marston, Maude is a vicious woman that spends more time drunk than not. At a party, Maude accuses Penn of ruining her daughter's life. Marston has always believed that Penn had gotten Olivia pregnant in their senior year, when in reality it was Ray Presley.

Ike Ransom

A Natchez sheriff, Ike is a former high school football star who had never made it through college due to an injury. After serving in the war, Ransom returned to Natchez. Arrested for drugs by Ray Presley, Ike Ransom plants the bomb that kills Del Payton to avoid jail. The secret has been eating at him for thirty years, leading Ransom to seek out Penn Cage and encourage his investigation.

Agent Dwight Stone

A former FBI agent, Stone investigated the Del Payton murder. While investigating, Stone uncovered the truth and the actual murderer. Rather than being able to close the case, Stone was ordered to turn all evidence over to J. Edgar Hoover, who used the knowledge of Leo Marston's guilt for Hoover's own political gain.

Jenny Doe

The daughter of Olivia Marston and Ray Presley, Jenny was adopted privately. Her life has not been easy and after discovering the identity of her birth mother, Jenny travels to Natchez to find her. At first Jenny believes that Penn is her father, but Cage finds out that Jenny is the result of a rape by Ray Presley.



Ruby Flowers

Penn's housekeeper, Ruby helped raise Penn alongside his parents. Though now in her 80's, Ruby still works every day at the Cage home, though her work is little to nothing. Ruby is killed when Ray Presley fire bombs the Cage home in order to discourage Penn from investigating the murder of Del Payton.

Peggy Cage

Penn's mother, married to Dr. Tom Cage.

John Portman

The director of the FBI, Portman had been the District Attorney in California when Arthur Lee Hanratty committed murder while in the witness protection program and escaped to Texas to kill again. Penn Cage refused to allow Portman to bring Hanratty to trial in California. As the FBI director, Portman is in the position to make life difficult for Penn by protecting the files that the FBI holds on the Payton murder. Portman was in Natchez investigating the murder of Payton and is aware that the FBI has covered up the truth about the killing, allowing those responsible to remain free.

Frank Jones

The only recorded witness to the murder of Del Payton, Jones said he was alone when Del Payton's car exploded, but in reality he had been having sex in his car with a woman from the plant. Penn is able to track down the woman who verifies that Ray Presley had been on the scene at the time.

Don Hillman

A man who dated Penn's aunt Ellen in 1973. Hillman was murdered by Ray Presley after Hillman raped Ellen. Presley kept the murder weapon, which belongs to Dr. Cage, and blackmailed Dr. Tom Cage, though Cage had never asked Presley to do anything to Hillman.

Ellen

Penn's aunt, his mother's sister.



Willie Pinder

The former police chief, Pinder is black and had difficulty in the department due to racism. When Pinder is fired, he took the original file of the Payton murder with him, and sells it to Penn.

Huey Moak

An explosives expert, Moak tells Penn that the bomb in Payton's car was not dynamite, but plastic explosives, or C4.

Peter Lutjens

An FBI agent, Lutjens tries to help Penn but is caught and punished by Portman. Lutjens is sent to Fargo, North Dakota.

Shad Johnson

A native of Natchez, Shadrich Johnson was raised in the north but has moved back to town in order to run for mayor. A black man, Shad has the vote of the blacks in the area but needs the white vote to win the election. Johnson discourages Penn Cage from digging into the past and investigating the Payton murder, concerned that racial tensions will cost him the election.

Tiny McSwain

The bartender at The Silver Bell, McSwain gives Penn a ride to the airport so he can return to Natchez for the trial against him.

Riley Warren

The current mayor of Natchez.

Austin Mackey

The district attorney in Natchez and a former classmate of Penn Cage.

Sam Jacobs

A former classmate of Penn Cage and a loyal friend.



Objects/Places

Natchez

Natchez, Mississippi is where Penn Cage is born and raised. After the death of his wife, Penn and his daughter Annie return to Natchez to be near his family.

Biscuit and Blues

The restaurant in Natchez owned by a friend of Penn Cage. Jenny Doe, the daughter of Olivia Marston works at the restaurant as a waitress.

Triton Battery

The battery plant where Del Payton worked and was murdered thirty years ago in a supposed racial killing.

Parchman Prison

The prison in Mississippi where Ray Presley served time for a drug charge.

The Pilgrimage

In the 1930's, women began opening their homes for tours annually, providing much needed funds to the area after the cotton crops were destroyed by the boll weevil.

Mammy's Cupboard

A restaurant built in the shape of a Negro mammy such as the characters in GONE WITH THE WIND. The restaurant is under the large hoop of the woman's skirt. A landmark in the Natchez area, Mammy's Cupboard reassures Penn Cage that some things are still the same in the place he grew up.

Huntsville Prison

The location where Arthur Lee Hanratty was held before his execution and where the execution takes place.



Crested Butte, Colorado

The small town outside of which Special Agent Dwight Stone lives.

Tuscany

The mansion that belongs to the Marston family.

The Silver Bell

A bar in Crested Butte, where Penn goes for help after leaving Agent Stone in the woods fighting off the men that had attacked them.



Themes

Racism

Racism is prevalent in *THE QUIET GAME* by Greg Iles, and a central theme to the novel. Based in Natchez, Mississippi in 1998, *The Quiet Game* revolves around the supposed racial murder of Delano Payton, a black man who had gotten a promotion at the Triton Battery plant in 1968. Payton had been blown up in his car, and the common thought at the time and until recently had been that the murder was in retaliation for Payton taking the job that "belonged" to a white man. Payton had been active in the Civil Rights movement, and with the Ku Klux Klan active in the area at the time, this seemed to be a natural assumption. It is not until Penn Cage arrives back in his home town and investigates the case that this assumption is questioned. Digging into the history and the people of the town, Penn discovers Payton's murder was disguised as a racial murder but really centered on greed.

Throughout the novel, the reader is submerged in race, both in the past and the present. Though the murder of Payton was not racially based, the people of the town believed it for thirty years. Once the story is restored in their memories, the anger and bitterness comes to the surface and racial attacks begin again.

Blackmail

In *THE QUIET GAME*, blackmail is the cornerstone of the novel, the catalyst upon which the story is built. Penn Cage returns to Natchez to help his daughter recover from the death of her mother seven months earlier. Relieved to be in his hometown with his parents, Penn is stunned to find that his father is being blackmailed for a crime committed thirty years ago.

Ray Presley had killed a man that had wronged Penn's aunt. Penn's father, Dr. Tom Cage had discussed the problem with his patient, and Ray had taken it completely upon himself to kill the man. Now, thirty years later, Ray needs money to buy the illegal drugs with which he is treating his cancer, and he has decided to blackmail Tom Cage. The irony is that Dr. Cage is the most moral, upstanding man in the town and had treated Ray and his family for free for many years. Despite this fact, Presley sees no other option, stating simply that he needs money and the doctor has it.

Penn's return to town puts an end to the blackmail. Cage purchases the murder weapon from Presley, and he and his father get rid of the evidence. The blackmail is the beginning of the novel and leads Penn down the path to the Payton murder, the main plot in the novel.



Lost Love

In *THE QUIET GAME*, lost love is central to the novel. Penn Cage returns to Natchez after the death of his wife to help him and his young daughter recover from the loss. Sarah Cage's death devastated Annie as well as Penn, and though he tried to carry on with life, Annie needs more than Penn is able to give her. Sarah had been the center of their lives, and the cancer that killed her slowly had taken her from them long before her death.

Lost love is a theme in the life of Penn Cage. He has lost his wife to cancer, but in his youth he lost his first love, and never knows why. The abrupt way that the relationship ended had always left Penn wondering what his life would have been like with Olivia Marston and how things would have been different. Olivia Marston vanished, leaving Penn with no answers. The result was a life of questions. When Livy returns to Natchez, Penn is immediately swept up in the possibilities, wondering if they can ever share what they had, or if they can ever move beyond their past.

Livy seems intent on recovering the life they had lived, but will not provide answers about the past. Her refusal to look back, to explain the reasons behind her choices, allows Penn to see Livy for what she is. Livy Marston never accepted her fault in anything, and Penn is able to understand finally that the woman he loved many years ago was an illusion, placed on a pedestal by those around her, and she is more than happy to remain there.

Style

Point of View

THE QUIET GAME by Greg Iles is written in the first person, from the point of view of Penn Cage, the main character and protagonist of the novel. This is important to the reader because the life of Penn and the events that surround him are central to the novel. This point of view is important in the novel because Penn Cage is not only investigating a thirty-year-old murder but also struggling internally with the reasons behind his investigation and the feelings he has for those involved.

The novel contains passages of dialogue exchanged with the main character, Penn Cage, which allows the reader to have access to the thoughts and feelings of others involved in the story. There are very long, descriptive passages regarding Natchez and the surrounding areas, as well as some history of the area. This is important as it gives the reader an inside look of the views of the main character and the people in the area, both in the past and in the present.

Setting

THE QUIET GAME is set in Natchez, Mississippi, with brief portions taking place in Colorado and Texas. Penn Cage has returned to his home town with his daughter to recover from the death of his wife. Having grown up in Natchez, Penn can think of no better place to heal. Natchez is portrayed as a close knit town, where everyone knows who and what goes on there.

Penn moves back to Natchez from Texas, where he had been living until his wife's death. A brief trip is made back to Texas so Penn can witness the death of Arthur Lee Hanratty, a man that he had convicted when acting as a prosecutor for the state. Once the execution is carried out, Penn does not wish to return to his old home, having decided to make a clean break from the painful memories there.

Two trips are made to Crested Butte, Colorado when Penn travels to meet with former FBI agent, Dwight Stone. Stone lives in the mountains in a cabin that has been in his family for generations. The area is quiet and beautiful, and the reader is given a sense of isolation when the author describes it.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is relaxed and free-flowing, allowing the reader to easily understand the plot and not get immersed in lengthy descriptive passages. Though there is quite a bit of history in the novel, the author provides it in such a way as to not overwhelm the reader, interspersing explanations of past actions with dialogue to provide a better understanding of motivations.



The language used in the novel allows the reader to navigate the different classes of characters in the novel, as well as their background and level of education. The different races are portrayed quite adequately with language and dialogue. An example of this is Shad Johnson, the black candidate for mayor. Shad had been born in Natchez, but educated in the north. Upon his return to Natchez for the campaign, Johnson alternates his speech and dialect, depending on to whom he is speaking. The reader is given insight into the racial differences in the area when Penn Cage witnesses Shad performing.

Structure

THE QUIET GAME by Greg Iles is broken down into 41 chapters of various lengths as well as an epilogue. The chapters are numbered, each containing one or two important facts that build the story until its dramatic conclusion in the final two chapters. The epilogue allows the reader to see what the main character of the novel, Penn Cage, does once the excitement of the investigation is concluded.

The main plot of THE QUIET GAME is the investigation by Penn Cage of the murder of Del Payton. Payton's murder had been assumed a civil rights issue, but Penn discovers that the underlying motive was nothing more than the greed of Leo Marston. Penn's desire for revenge against Marston is his driving force in trying to solve the crime, but along the way, justice becomes more important to him.



Quotes

"In the magical world of Disney, Annie believes Sarah might step around the next corner as easily as Cinderella. When I patiently explained that this could not happen, she reminded me that Snow White rose from the dead just like Jesus, which in her four-year-old brain is indisputable fact. All we have to do is find Mama, so that Daddy can kiss her and make her wake up."

Chapter 1, pg 3

"Yet when Sarah finally died, a dark seed took root in my mind. As irrational as it is, a profoundly disturbing idea haunts me: that on the night that prayer blinked to life in my tortured mind, a chance beyond the realm of the temporal was granted me, and I did not take it. That I was tested and found wanting. My rational mind tells me I held true to myself and endured the pain as all pain must be endured. alone. But my heart says otherwise. Since that day I have been troubled by a primitive suspicion that in some cosmic account book, in some dusty ledger of karmic debits and credits, Sarah's life has been charged against my account."

Chapter 3, pg 21

"Don't kid yourself, Cage. I'm Moses, cast onto the waters as a child and raised by my enemy. I prospered among the mighty and now return to show my people the way!' In an instant the candidate's voice has taken on the Old Testament cadence and power of a young Martin Luther King.

As I gape, he adds in his mincing lawyer's voice: 'Next time come over to campaign headquarters south. It's on Main Street. The atmosphere's more your style. Genteel and Republican, the way old white ladies like it. Over there I'm a house nigger made good.' Johnson is still laughing when I leave the building."

Chapter 8, pg 67

"Sam shuts off the engine. 'Listen to me Penn. Whoever blew up Del Payton was in their twenties then, thirties max. Kluckers full of piss and vinegar. Those guys have got wives and grown kids now. And if you think they're gonna let some hotshit, nigger-lovin' writer take all that away, you're nuts. That's who shot at you tonight. And if you keep pushing, they'll kill you.'"

Chapter 10, pg 89.

"'The quiet game?' Memories of Sarah flood into my brain, of her trying to trick Annie into being silent long enough for us to eat dinner in peace, by seeing who could go the longest without talking. 'Who's playing the quiet game, Ike?'

'Everybody, man. White and black both. Everybody keeping quiet, making like things is sweet and easy, trying to fish that new plant in here. Nobody wants nobody digging into Del's killing. Nobody 'cept you. You got a reason.'"

Chapter 11, pg 97

"When she opened to me like a flower in the spring of our senior year, I accepted her attentions like a divine gift. For girls that age, having sex is usually so tied up in the



desire to be accepted by peers that true motives are impossible to fathom. But for Livy Marston acceptance was not an issue. When she gave herself, it was because she wanted to, and that knowledge immeasurably dilated the experience. That her skills did not seem virginal I wrote off to her being as gifted sexually as she was in so many other ways. I submerged my self into hers, basked in the glow of being seen with her, of being known to be loved by her. I cared as little for what lay ahead of me as for what lay behind, and so set myself up for the fall of my life."

Chapter 21, pg 171

"She takes a step toward me. I want her to stay back, because the closer she gets, the more I want to go to her room with her. She is achingly beautiful in the moonlight.

'How did I ruin your life?' I ask.

She shakes her head, absolving me of any possible sin. 'You didn't.' Another step. 'But you can save it.'"

Chapter 28, pg. 258

"Althea raises her eyes to the pulpit, from which Shad stares like an attorney facing a dangerously unpredictable witness, and points at him. 'That man there wants to be our mayor. He's coming down from Chicago special to do it. And he might be a good one. He sure talks a good game. But I know this. He never came to my house and offered to help me find out who killed my man. And to stand here like this...to use this poor lady's funeral to tell a good man to stop trying to do good so HE can get elected...well, it don't sit right with me.'"

Chapter 31, pg 291

"'Where were you Tuesday afternoon, Ray?'

He cuts his eyes at the blond, then looks back at me, a smug light in his eyes. 'I believe I was delivering a message in town,'

'A message,' I repeat, recalling the flames eating through the roof of our house, the smell of Ruby's cooking flesh. My hands ball into fists at my sides.

'I don't think it got received, though,' he says.

I step within two feet of him. 'I'm going to settle that score, you piece of shit. You're going to die in the Parchman infirmary. They don't stock your Mexican cocktail there.

And there aren't any blonds to take the edge off, as you like to put it. Not girls, anyway.'"

Chapter 32, pgs. 299-300

"'Leo Marston stood to make a lot of money off that land. But the labor situation wasn't as stable as Hickson wanted it. Blacks were using unions to push into white jobs.

Hickson had the idea that if an example was made, it would calm the blacks down.

Apparently he'd done it somewhere in Georgia, and it had worked.'

Marston's plan seems so obvious now. All it takes is a few facts.

'I honestly doubt Marston ever thought it would work,' muses Stone. 'He was too smart for that. But he didn't care whether it worked. He just wanted to sell Hickson the land.'

'So, he went to Ray Presley,' I fill in. 'He said, 'We need to make an example of somebody.'

'You got it. Marston didn't care who died. It was just business.'"

Chapter 34, pgs.328-329



"Don't you judge me!" he cries, the whites of his eyes making him look wild in the dark. 'Don't you cast no stone! I been torturing myself thirty years. After I realized the work Del was doing, I just about went crazy. The whole town was marching for him. I wanted to scream out what I'd done, what Presley made me do. But I didn't have the guts. I couldn't face my own sin."

Chapter 36, pg. 360

"No. Hoover grew up in Washington, D.C., when it was still a Southern town. This business you're talking about was in sixty-eight. Hoover would have traded twenty nigras for one electoral vote for Nixon. It was that close. You tell Macello I'll speak with Edgar, but remember...quid pro quo. That goes for me as well."

Chapter 41, pg. 427



Topics for Discussion

Why does Penn Cage return to Natchez?

Why is Tom Cage being blackmailed? How does Penn solve the problem?

How does Penn feel about Caitlin? How does he feel about Olivia?

Who is Jenny Doe? What is her relationship to Penn? To Olivia?

Why does John Portman dislike Penn Cage?

Why does Ike Ransom want Penn Cage to investigate the death of Del Payton? How does Ike get Penn interested in the case?

Why was Del Payton murdered?