

Reliquary Study Guide

Reliquary by Douglas Preston

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Plot Summary

Snow is on his first dive with a New York Police Scuba squad and is going into a waterway called the Cloaca Maxima. It's filled with sludge and debris with almost a zero visibility. He and the other divers are searching for a large brick of heroine that was part of a police shooting. While he doesn't locate the drugs, he finds two headless skeletal remains. The police officer in charge, Lieutenant Vincent D'Agosta, notes that the heroin has also been recovered but that it is now much less interesting. He tells the divers that they'll have to go back down to search for the heads.

The bodies are identified as Pamela Wisher, a young debutant, and Greg Kawakita, a young scientist. The body of Greg is badly deformed and both have what appears to be teeth marks, prompting an investigation. D'Agosta calls in scientists Dr. Frock and Margo Green. Green soon realizes that the teeth marks bear a resemblance to the murders of more than a year earlier, a monster that ate a specific plant. She soon figures out that the original scientist had ingested the plant which grossly deformed his body and created a need for a specific hormone which prompted him to kill in search of a supply of that hormone. Now Margo is faced with the challenge of finding out how the plant has survived and where it is growing. She, with the help of Agosta and FBI Special Agent Pendergast, soon learns that there is a population of people who have ingested a drug that's a byproduct of the Mbwun Plant and now live in the tunnels deep below New York City.

Prompted by a suggestion by Frock, it's decided that the tunnels will be flooded out. Then Margo discovers that the plant is actually being grown in the reservoir that will be used to flood the tunnel, meaning the population of creatures will have a ready supply of the plant. The use of grenades and other weapons are put into play and Margo uses vitamin D - deadly toxic to those who have ingested the plant - to kill many as the tunnels are flooded.

It's believed that the plan worked and that the creatures have been killed, but the bigger concern is that the plants would have leaked into the environment before a herbicide poured into the system could kill it. A year later, when there's no sign of an environmental catastrophe, Pendergast is finally able to smile.



Chapters 1 through 6

Chapters 1 through 6 Summary

Snow is on his first dive with a New York Police Scuba squad and is going into a waterway called the Cloaca Maxima. It's filled with sludge and debris with almost a zero visibility. He and the other divers are searching for a large brick of heroin that was part of a police shooting. While he doesn't locate the drugs, he does encounter a skeleton and then realizes there is another, then becomes entangled in them and loses his guide rope as his mask is torn from his face. He manages to rise to the surface and then helps retrieve the two skeletons, held together by sinew but both missing their heads. The police officer in charge, Lieutenant Vincent D'Agosta, notes that the heroin has also been recovered but that it is now much less interesting. He tells the divers that they'll have to go back down to search for the heads.

Dr. Louie Padelsky, New York City's assistant medical examiner, looks over the first of the two bodies recovered, notes that it was a female and that her head and some additional pieces - including a foot - are missing. The body is soon identified as a local debutante Pamela Wisher. Dr. Padelsky takes a cursory look at the second victim and calls for Dr. Brambell, telling nurse Sheila Rocco that she's not to share details with anyone.

Meanwhile, Margo Green - assistant curator for the New York Museum of Natural History - is working in her office when she sees the story about Wisher in the New York Post. The story is written by her friend, Bill Smithback. Just as she finishes reading, D'Agosta calls for her, demanding that she come to the Forensic Anthropology Lab immediately. She arrives to find that NYC Medical Examiner Dr. Simon Brambell is there with D'Agosta and the museum curator Olivia Meriam. Soon Dr. Whitney Cadwalader Frock arrives and Brambell reveals that the second body is badly deformed. It's said that the second skeleton could be the Missing Link, so different is its skeletal structure. Frock and Margon, both having been involved with an incident involving a beast loose in the museum just eighteen months prior, are reluctant to say they'll help the police investigate the situation, but eventually do agree. They're shown evidence that both bodies were bitten by a large animal, possibly canine, and that the second skeleton doesn't match anyone who has been reported missing in the region. They're warned that the public cannot find out the facts of the situation and Margo and Frock are left to work together.

Bill Smithback manages to gain entrance to the apartment of Mrs. Wisher, Pamela's mother, and finds the woman is formidable. She tells him that he's told nothing of the real Pamela, that she'd planned to begin work in a hospice for AIDS patients, and shames him when he tries to turn on a small tape recorder. As he leaves, she says that the police won't tell her anything about Pamela's death, but vows that it won't be in vain though she doesn't elaborate.



Smithback's newspaper has posted a \$100,000 reward and one of the first to claim to know something asks Smithback to meet him in a Penn Station bathroom. There, he's led through a hole to an underground tunnel that goes continually lower along abandoned train rails by a man who calls himself Tail gunner and claims to be the "chief runner" of the leader of a group of underground dwellers. The group is called Route 666 and the leader is Mephisto. Smithback meets the man who says that something has been preying on his people, and that something must be done. Mephisto seems angry that the police have ignored the reports Mephisto's people have lodged but that they've responded when Wisher was the victim. He tells Smithback that they're not interested in the reward, that they only want the killings to end.

Chapters 1 through 6 Analysis

Snow is barely introduced at this point, though he'll play a larger role in the story line later on. He was a professional diver before joining the police scuba unit and believes that he's a good diver. He's ridiculed by the other member of the team, including a man named Fernandez who is an experienced diver. They all believe he'll wash out of the initial dive because the water is unbelievably polluted. There are several feet of silt on top of several feet of mud and the divers have to go through the silt to feel around in the mud for the brick of heroin. Snow insists that he go on that dive because he doesn't want Hernandez to say that Snow was afraid. When he gets down just a little way and discovers that the visibility is almost nil, he panics, but gets hold of himself by thinking of the ridiculing he'll get from Fernandez.

The majority of the characters are introduced at by this point and the previous book - Relic - is hinted at. Margo Green was among the characters of that book, as was Dr. Frock. While a complete understanding of that story is not necessary for keeping track of this book, it is helpful.

Chapters 7 through 17

Chapters 7 through 17 Summary

D'Agosta is visited by a female officer named Sergeant Laura Hayward, who tells him that there may be a connection between the Wisher murder and several murders of those living underground. D'Agosta tells her she should have followed the chain of command and she says that her own boss is not interested. D'Agosta finally realizes that he should follow up on the information and agrees that he, Hayward, and her boss, a man he calls Waxie, should go into the tunnels to the sites where the other bodies were found to see if they can make any connection. They find the head of one of the victims and are attacked by those who live in the tunnels. Waxie panics, but they all manage to escape with Hayward carrying the head.

Margo Green goes to the Physical Anthropology Lab where the museum's skeletons are stored. There are thousands of them overseen by Sy Hagedorn. Margo requests three skeletons, all with some medical condition that Frock thinks might offer a clue regarding the second body recovered with Wisher.

Smithback is at the Polyhymnia Club when he encounters a journalist from a competing newspaper who asks Smithback if he knows where the bodies of Wisher and the other victim have been taken. Acting on a hunch, Smithback calls the museum and asks veiled questions that bring him to realize that the bodies have been moved there. Smithback, knowing that he has yet another positive lead for another front page story, makes plans to ask for a raise.

D'Agosta hopes to have some additional manpower assigned to help him, but instead is told that Waxie will be assigned to the case. D'Agosta knows that Waxie, though superior in rank, is inferior in ability and immediately begins planning what peripheral duties he might be assigned that will keep him out of the way. D'Agosta leaves his boss's office with the command that he's to have results within a day.

Smithback is at a rally in which Mrs. Wisher is calling for action. She says there are too many murders in the city and that it is time to take action. When the mayor arrives, she refuses to yield the microphone, saying that she demands action - not another speech - and leaves the stage to a roar of approval from the crowd. The mayor has no option but to leave. Later, Smithback is waiting when Margo returns from a run. He tricks her into confirming that the bodies are at the museum and that there are teeth marks on the bones, but agrees to hold the story for a day in order to have more test results confirming whether the marks are canine.

A man named Nick Bitterman and his girlfriend climb Belvedere Castle in Central Park, where they share some champagne and Nick proposes, presenting Tanya with an expensive ring. He goes into the bathroom as they're leaving, though it's nearly dark



and the park is now deserted. He sees a movement and realizes that someone else is in the bathroom. When Tanya comes looking for him, she begins to scream.

Smithback reads a story by a competing journalist that gives many of the details he'd already known, including the fact that the body of Wisher had been at the Museum for analysis, that the decapitation of Nick Bitterman could be associated, that the deaths of those living in the underground tunnels could also be associated, and that the unspoken fear is that the murders could be associated to the creature killings of the previous year.

While D'Agosta is looking at a map and worrying about the possibility of a pattern to the killings, he hears an argument going on outside involving a homeless man. The man eventually manages to get inside and D'Agosta finally recognizes him as Special Agent Pendergast of the FBI. Having working on the Museum murders, Pendergast is now offering his aid on the current situation and D'Agosta readily takes him up on the offer. Pendergast plans to get up to date on the information available from the police and then go underground, disguised as a homeless man, with the hope of finding the killer.

Chapters 7 through 17 Analysis

The action of the story is interrupted for the first look at the "monster" committing the murders. The information is sparse. He is in a dark place, uses gas heat to boil water, and adds a small amount of a powder the color of "light jade," and pours it into a beaker. The "ceremony" requires holding the liquid for moments before consuming, but this doesn't happen and "he" laughs at the fact that he isn't able to carry out his own instructions to the others. The liquid produces a sensation that doesn't last long, though there's a sense of power that continues for some time.

While Margo is waiting for the skeletal remains requested by Dr. Frock, she remembers a former member of the staff in the Physical Anthropology Lab, a man named Greg Kawakita. Greg called Susan just a few months earlier, leaving a message on her machine. When he called back, she didn't answer. She says Greg was involved with the investigation of the murders of eighteen months before and that she simply didn't want to be reminded of the incident, but realizes she's now involved in a similar situation anyway and resolves to call Greg. There's a feeling of foreshadowing here regarding Greg and the reader will soon learn that Greg is the second body found with Wisher.

When Hayward, D'Agosta, and Waxie go into the tunnel, the two men really don't believe Hayward's stories of the people who are living down there. Waxie is particularly upset to find that Hayward and her fellow officers don't roust out those in the levels below the first one or two because, according to Hayward, it's too dangerous. She says that some of them simply want to escape, but some are running from something. She reiterates the fact that there are more there than just grown men. D'Agosta admits that the one image that remains with him is a freshly soiled baby diaper.



D'Agosta was among those involved with the murders of eighteen months prior, though he says the new police administrators don't want to hear about it and have given him no credit.

A story by Smithback's competitor outlines the previous murders associated with the Museum. A creature known as the Mbwun was responsible for a number of deaths, attacked a group during an opening and was eventually killed with its body disposed of.



Chapters 18 through 28

Chapters 18 through 28 Summary

Margo, D'Agosta, Frock, Waxie, Pendergast, and two detectives gather at Linnaeus Hall in the Museum to hear Brambell's presentation on the case. He says that he has been working on identifying the second victim by means of an orthopedic device Margo discovered on an x-ray. He says the bites appear to be human, that the victims appear to have been bitten while alive, and that the bites are not from Mbwun. The officers are torn, with Waxie saying that it's bound to be a single killer while others believe there are more than one. Pendergast clashes with D'Agosta's boss, who is impatiently demanding answers and who personally believes that there's a psychotic homeless person at the root of the killing. As the meeting breaks up, Smithback leaves the projection room where he's bribed himself a spot.

Waxie announces to D'Agosta that he's taking over direction of the case and D'Agosta, though initially angry, realizes that it means he'll no longer be answering directly to the higher officials and agrees. Pendergast then comes by for a visit, says that he's been into the tunnels and that they're vast, and says there are stories of a cannibalistic group living there. He says some don't even refer to them as "people."

Simon Brabell, the medical examiner, is last to leave the Museum. As he walks toward home at midnight, he passes through a seedy neighborhood; however, having been mugged before, he doesn't fear the drunks. He has a scalpel in his hand for protection when he hears a noise and smells a foul odor, turns around and is grabbed from behind by a large, scaly, slimy arm. He notes a curious sensation just below his Adam's apple.

Margo learns of Brambell's murder the following day from Frock. Then she receives a phone call from a surgeon who Brambell had located based on an anomaly found in the x-rays. That surgeon says the body belongs to Greg Kawakita.

Pendergast and D'Agosta go into the tunnels dressed as homeless men and saying they are the leader and a runner from a small community of underground people who live below Columbia. Pendergast manages to find the way to a knot of people who direct him to Mephisto. Pendergast, saying his name is Whitey, says that three of their community has disappeared and that his people are uneasy. Mephisto says that the killings began about a year ago and that not all who have gone missing have been found. He says the rumor is that the killers are a group who live far below them in the deepest part of the tunnels in a place known as Devil's Attic.

Pendergast invites Hayward to his apartment to talk about the underground, knowing that she's sensitive about her quest for a master's degree in the field of sociology as it relates to the underground societies. She tells him that the fact that winter is coming means there will be even more homeless people moving underground and that will



mean the killers have an ample supply of victims. Hayward says she's heard of the "Devil's Attic" but thought it was a myth.

D'Agosta visits a warehouse where Greg Kawakita apparently worked. The next-door-neighbor says that he didn't know Greg at all, but that he wasn't a good neighbor. He says there was hammering, an odor, and visitors at all hours of the night and that he complained to the police, but they'd never done anything. He says he got a look inside once and that there was an abundance of science equipment and aquariums, and that the electric company had wired in heavier lines at one point.

Pendergast goes to see Al Diamond, said to be the expert on all the tunnel systems below the city. Diamond says the area known as the "Devil's Attic" was really the Astor Tunnels, built by a group of rich people who wanted their own train transportation without the hassles of public transportation. He sketches an area of the system but refuses to go down.

Chapters 18 through 28 Analysis

Mephisto says that the key to catching the killers is to make the city pay attention. It seems he realizes that the officials of the city - including the police - have no intention of doing any real investigations into the deaths of those living in the tunnels. In fact, that's almost exactly what Waxie has said, calling Wisher a "real" victim as opposed to those of the tunnels who he regards as something less than human.

Diamond gives Pendergast some information on the Devil's Attic, including why there seem to be no maps of the system. He says that it was the rich people of the city who prompted the building of these tunnels, and that they did so in order to have a way into and out of the city without "rubbing shoulders" with the common people. Diamond, who had worked in the city's tunnel systems for many years and was considered an expert, says that he hasn't been down in ten years. He now works in a small room suspended in the air overseeing a roadway tunnel instead. His information provides some insight into the what Pendergast can expect to find in these lower levels.

Diamond says the tunnels are thirty stories below ground because that's the level that was available for an uninterrupted rail line. They had to go below the existing rail lines and sewer and water lines. Another important point is that the depth meant they were impossible to keep dry and when there was a major flood, the tunnels were abandoned. Before they gave up on the idea, the builders had installed private stations and waiting rooms. When it was abandoned, nothing was removed. The biggest problem was that heavy gases tended to settle there because it was the lowest open space available. For a one hundred dollar bribe, Diamond sketches out this lowest level but says there's no way he would go down there personally, though he doesn't say why. He goes on to describe what would be found - elaborate waiting rooms and hydraulic elevators, parquet floors and walls with murals, all having been flooded by sewage pipes and then blocked up more than a century earlier.



Chapters 28 through 39

Chapters 28 through 39 Summary

Margo accompanies D'Agosta to the site of another warehouse where Greg had been working, this one having burned sometime around the time of his death. Margo agrees to map the identifiable items in an effort to figure out what kind of work Greg was doing. She finds a DNA sequencer and several aquariums, then finds the remains of a plant that the Mbwun craved, known as the "Mbwun plant." Margo notes that the plant is either the result of a genetic experiment or of sophisticated grafting. She momentarily considers that Greg might have been feeding a second Mbwun, but dismisses the idea.

D'Agosta learns that a homeless man caught in the act of killing another man is in custody and has confessed to the killings. Pendergast soon reveals him to be schizophrenic, but both Pendergast and D'Agosta know that the police will now call off their search for the real killer. Pendergast says he's now planning to go into the tunnels again and tells D'Agosta that if he doesn't return in seventy-two hours, there's no need for a search and rescue mission. Hayward accompanies him to the city library, where he goes to a basement room and enters the tunnel through a trap door, believing this to be the nearest he can get to his tunnel. This time, he intends to sneak in and back out, planning to encounter no one. He is armed with a high-powered handgun, citing a previous encounter with the Mbwun and wanting to be prepared for whatever he encounters.

Margo is working with the plant specimen from Greg's burned lab when Dr. Frock says he'll be out of the lab the following day. She discovers that Greg was likely using the plant rather than engineering the plant. The plant, as Margo already knows, contains a virus. She now discovers that Greg must have been using the virus to create the drug from the plant. The plant also includes reptilian DNA which, Margo speculates, produces physical changes to the person who ingests them. Margo now believes that the original creature was the leader of the expedition that sent the fibers back to the Museum and that he found his way to New York after the original site of the plant was eliminated.

The action is again interrupted for another look at the "monster." This time he is reveling in the fact that he is now "complete." This creature knows that he has survived where the "other" failed, had taken "the next step" to the best use of the plant and its "payload," and had not underestimated the "Children's desperate thirst for ritual" as the other had. The entire chapter is filled with foreshadowing and hints but no concrete information.

Margo now tells D'Agosta her findings, though she knows Frock will be skeptical. She says that she believes Greg was distilling the plant for the drug quality, hoping to eliminate the physical side effect to create a drug that provided hypersensitivities that the Mbwun exhibited. D'Agosta says that Greg was a scientist and that he wouldn't have been taking the drug himself without being certain that his procedure was working.



Margo says he's right and they both know that means there are others who have taken the drug under Greg's observation.

A young man named Bill Trumbull is on the subway when the train comes to a halt. Some of the lights go out and there's a splash of what he takes to be red paint on the inside of the car in front of him, prompting him to race to the back of the car and jump out of the car with a friend just ahead of him. Then the creatures overtake his friend and Trumbull, having seen one of them up close, touches an electrified rail on purpose, killing himself. One woman, Alberta Munoz, survives and is in shock when she's brought to the emergency room. She is able to tell D'Agosta that the attackers had eyes like lizards and "old" faces, before breaking down and prompting the doctor to end the interview.

Margo presents her findings and theories to Frock, Waxie, and the police chief, Horlocker. Annette Wisher is holding another rally at the police station following the massacre in the subway tunnel and Horlocker is under pressure for results. He decides it's time for action, refusing to wait for Pendergast to return. Pendergast has reached the main waiting area of the old Astor line, called the Crystal Pavilion. Here he discovers many footprints, most barefooted and some with alterations that look like claws and webs, as well as a hut made of about 450 skulls.

Chapters 28 through 39 Analysis

D'Agosta tells Margo that no one at the police department is willing to commit any time to investigating Greg's death specifically. The general train of thought is that both Greg and Brambell were killed because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, and that neither holds the key to the killing spree. Information about the previous killings comes to surface when Margo finds the remains of the Mbwun Plant. The Mbwun creature craves the plant and the fact that the plant had been used in packing crates is the reason the creature had first been in the Museum. The plant had thought to be extinct, its own habitat destroyed and all those from the Museum being destroyed after the killings.

Margo offers up her opinion of Greg, including the fact that he was a person willing to thrust ethics aside in order to push his own career forward. She says that he would not have done anything criminal, but it's interesting that she wonders briefly if he might have located a second Mbwun creature and had been feeding it.

The smells described by Brambell and the man who lived next door to Greg's previous warehouse are another instance of foreshadowing.

Margo admits that she's never been completely satisfied with the results of the investigation following the previous incident involving the Mbwun. While she doesn't make accusations, she does say that the creature was taken away in a van bearing government plates and that she never saw any results of an autopsy or any other final records. Margo knows that there was a failed expedition, that the Mbwun plan was used

a packing material, and that the creature craved the plant, but admits to always wondering how it found its way to the Museum. As she finds additional information, she suddenly realizes that the answer lies in the leader of that expedition - a man named Whittlesey.



Chapters 40 through 50

Chapters 40 through 50 Summary

After some talk, Horlock comes to the conclusion that flooding the tunnels is the best option available. He overrides objections but does agree to send police in to roust all the homeless living in the area where the water is expected to be initially poured in. The plan is that the water will rush to the lowest point - the Astor lines - and the creatures will be killed. Horlock, learning that none of the killings have occurred during a full moon and that the Mbwun shun the light, insists that the plan be put into action immediately with the hope that the creatures will all be in the lowest tunnels.

Annette Wisher has created another rally, this time with no permits. Smithback has exclusive information and that was printed in the Post just before the rally. Wisher calls for the residents of the city to take back their streets and for the officials to take action. They then walk along a designated route, stopping along the way to honor victims of violent crime.

Margo is showing D'Agosta the results of her own experiments with lab rats and single-celled organisms. She's discovered that the rats fought to the death and the survivor is hostile to the point of willingly attacking anyone who comes near the cage. The single-celled organisms are living fifty percent longer than normal as well as being aggressive, and Margo theorizes that was Greg's reason for ingesting the byproduct of the plant.

Pendergast returns, and as he tells Margo and D'Agosta what he saw in the tunnels, they realize that Greg had been supplying the drug but, near the end, was having trouble controlling the creatures he'd created. They theorize that having a ritual around the distribution of the drug allowed Greg to maintain some level of control. They consider the facts that they know already and wonder about some specific details -including why Greg was killed and the reason for the hut made of skulls.

Hayward was among the police assigned to roust those who live underground and tries to object that it won't be as easy as the leaders expect, but he's ignored.

Duffy, the man in charge of the city's water supply, sets the wheels in motion to dump the water into the tunnels. Just as he enters the commands into the computerized system that controls the water flow, he asks again if Waxie is certain, adding that he can't stop the flow once the drain on the reservoir has begun. Margo, Pendergast, and D'Agosta continue to study the problem from various angles. Margo is looking out over Central Park, noting the merging crowds following Annette Wisher's lead, then noticing that the water supply - located in the Park - has a greenish tint. She pauses and the others quickly see what she sees. They go to the water and discover that the Mbwun plant is growing freely here. Knowing that this is the reservoir that is going to be dumped to flood the tunnels, the three know that it will be disastrous if the water



reaches the Hudson River. Margo says that the single-celled organisms she'd tested had come from salt water and that even salt water won't kill the effects of the plant.

In the tunnels, Hayward meets a fellow officer named Carlin - a large black man who is also familiar with the tunnels and those who live there. When Hayward's group is ambushed, their leader breaks and runs, then panics and throws tear gas, which prompts other officers to do the same. Hayward and Carlin remain behind to save two officers who are wounded as many of the homeless begin to run away from the gas.

Margo, Pendergast, and D'Agosta convince Horlocker that the reservoir can't be drained, but Horlocker then learns that the sequence can't be stopped with the computers and orders Waxie into the tunnels below the reservoir to manually stop the draining.

Smithback is with Mrs. Wisher as her rally continues to move toward its ultimate destination - Central Park at midnight. The crowd is huge and Smithback is surprised to see a manhole cover suddenly rise into the air in front of him, a light cloud of gas erupt followed by a homeless person and then another. The scene is repeated at other manhole covers and the people of the tunnels are soon massing in the streets. When one grows angry and breaks a bank window, Mrs. Wisher calls for action among the rally attendees. There's soon a mob fight going on and Smithback finds a safe place to watch, already imagining the story he'll write. Then he sees a group of police pushing through the fighting but not trying to break it up. Recognizing Waxie, he realizes something bigger than the riot is taking place and hurries to follow the group.

In the control room under the reservoir, Smithback watches as Waxie, Duffy, and the other officers realize that they can't turn off the gates manually because of broken valves. Waxie continues to say that Duffy hadn't warned him that the process couldn't be stopped. Smithback fears that he left the riot to follow a lead that turns out to be nothing important. As Waxie and the others head out of the tunnel, Smithback realizes that he's going to have to get away from the entrance. Before he can leave, he and the others see movement in the lower part of the control room and the creatures swarm up, taking down all the police officers and then Waxie. Duffy is running but the creatures are closing in as Smithback races for the exit. There, he sees more of the creatures swarming in and is forced into a side tunnel which leads generally downward.

Chapters 40 through 50 Analysis

It's when Pendergast returns to the surface with items he took from the hut made of skulls that the term "reliquary" is first used. Pendergast says he took the items from a place that appears to be a shrine. Reliquary is defined at the beginning of the book as "a shrine or coffer for displaying an object, bone or body part from a saint or deity."

Pendergast has little belief in the abilities of Waxie. He's not alone. Duffy quickly realizes that Waxie is hoping to put the blame solely on him, he calls him incompetent



and fat. This is the same attitude others have had - including D'Agosta, who claims that he should have been promoted but that Waxie was promoted in his stead.

When Pendergast learns that stopping the water depends on Waxie, he comes up with a plan to blow up specific exit points of the lowest tunnels, thereby trapping the water inside long enough for an herbicide to kill the plants and preventing the killers from escaping. Just as he's presenting his plan to Horlocker, police bring Mephisto in. Mephisto says that Pendergast doesn't have the knowledge of the underground to make the trip alone and agrees to help. There's a necessary level of trust here between Mephisto and Pendergast. Pendergast, exerting his power as an FBI agent, now takes over this aspect of the case and promises Mephisto that the city will address the "homeless rights" of the people in the tunnels if he does so. When Mephisto says that Pendergast lied to him on their first encounter, Pendergast counters that it was necessary because of Mephisto's paranoia.



Chapters 51 through 64,

Chapters 51 through 64, Summary

Margo, D'Agosta, Pendergast, and Mephisto are all in the FBI basement as Pendergast provides equipment for a trip into the tunnels. Margo is angry when she discovers that they don't plan for her to accompany them. She sits on the floor as they leave, angry that they're leaving without her and angrier that she can't simply let them go while she heads home to takeout and a good book.

Snow is in the office when a Navy SEAL team commander appears, demanding the services of a police diver. Snow explains that they're all out on a call and is commanded to accompany the team. He says he believes he can lead them to their destination and says the shortest route is through the raw sewage ponds.

Margo remains sitting on the floor of the FBI supply room for some time before suddenly realizing that Greg had been synthesizing vitamin D because it would be deadly to the creatures. She bases this assumption on the fact that she had killed off some of her infected organisms by leaving them under a light. She finds squeeze bottles, crushes up vitamin D tablets from the medical supply and pours the powder along with water into bottles. She then follows Pendergast and the others into a train tunnel. When she catches up with them, tells them of her discovery and insists on being allowed to go along until Pendergast gives in.

Smithback continues to run and then sees a flashlight. It's Duffy who had somehow managed to escape the earlier slaughter. Duffy is frantic and Smithback finally calms him enough to make him think about the layout of the tunnels and what their options for escape might be. It's now that Smithback learns that the reservoir is going to be dumped at midnight, flooding the tunnels, and that they have only ninety minutes to escape the coming flood. As they hear the creatures come closer, they hide in an overflow pipe and the creatures seem to rush on past. When they think it's safe to continue, Duffy climbs out and is immediately grabbed and killed. Smithback, wild with terror at the man's dying words, "those are my guts," begins to run aimlessly until an arm reaches out and grabs him. It will turn out to be D'Agosta's party.

Hayward and Carlin are finally above ground with an officer named Beal who will eventually be identified as the son of a state senator. While Hayward fully expects to be reprimanded for her actions underground, Carlin predicts that Beal - who has said that the team leader would have left him in the tunnels to die - won't let that happen. Carlin and Hayward go toward Central Park planning to make themselves available to help quell the riot.

Snow and the SEAL team enter the sewage system through a main tank then swim through pipes to another large, enclosed tank. They stop there briefly before splitting into smaller teams, each with a particular objective. Their instructions are to make their



way into specific targets, set charges, and meet back up at specific exit points. The final instructions are that they aren't to let anyone get in the way of their mission.

They split into four teams, three with instructions to seal off three channels and Snow remaining behind with a SEAL named Donovan. They have instructions to cover any team that can't finish the mission. Soon it's evident that only one team has succeeded. The successful team heads toward one of the other channels with Snow and Donovan heading into the other. Snow is repulsed by the sight of headless corpses. Donovan sets the charges and pulls the dogtags from his fallen comrades as they hear the slaughter of the first team. Snow and Donovan head for their pickup point and encounter another group along the way. Donovan says the only option available is to make use of the fire power.

Smithback is frantic at first but eventually calms down as Pendergast and Mephisto lead the team downward. Soon Pendergast is on familiar ground, recognizing the places he'd been on his previous trip to the Devil's Attic. Pendergast then hears something. The group initially thinks it might be the sound of the Navy Seals setting off their charges, but Pendergast says it's too early. When he locates the sound, he tells the others that they are directly over the Crystal Pavilion and that the sound is coming from that elaborate waiting room. They are in a control room above the pavilion and Pendergast uncovers an opening so that they can see in. Margo describes a scene involving some sort of ritual. As she watches the chanting figures, they carry in another of their kind.

Pendergast sets the last of his charges but they are discovered and are forced to begin using fire power, including a flame thrower, as they try to escape. They are eventually pushed back into the Astor Tunnel.

Snow and Donovan fire grenades into the midst of the group attacking them. When it seems they're all dead, Donovan slips forward in the tunnel. He returns in minutes but is attacked as he tells Snow to prepare to move. Snow can't get a shot but kills the three creatures huddled over Donovan's body as they cut off Donovan's head.

Margo and her group are attacked and one of the creatures reaches out and grabs her. She prepares herself for death but is taken to the Crystal Pavilion by the beast instead. She is soon joined by the others, none seriously injured and all apparently to be used in the ritual ceremony currently underway. When the creatures bring their "shaman" into the light, Margo discovers that it's Dr. Frock. He calmly says that it's unfortunate that she came along on the venture and that he hadn't anticipated her presence, then "welcomes" the others.

Pendergast questions Frock and he says that the items from the ritual are pieces of his "best wheelchair," which he no longer needs. He stands up to prove the point, saying that he is "cured." Frock says it's easy for others to judge him but says that he was forced to give up field work after having contracted polio. He then reveals how the situation came to pass.



Frock says that Greg came to him after he realized that he'd made mistakes with his work, including selling the drug to others and using it himself before it was perfected. Frock took over the research, caused Greg's death, and perfected the drug so that it heals rather than disfigures. He says the plant needs to be in the tunnels where "his children" live because they hate the sunlight. He then points out that draining the reservoir was his idea. He says that humans have become degenerate and that he had always planned to release the plant into the ecosystem in order to give the evolution of all creatures a boost. Margo begins talking, first asking Frock why he killed Greg and then pointing out that Greg had discovered that he couldn't help those he'd deformed with the drug. She asks Frock what will happen when they discover that he also can't help them. She seems to be getting through to some of the creatures but Frock begins yelling again.

Just then, a series of explosions hit them as Snow reaches their location and begins firing. Mephisto, armed with a grenade himself, takes a second to remind Pendergast of his promise to fight for the rights of the homeless in the tunnel then sets the charge, killing many, including Frock. As Margo, Smithback, D'Agosta, Pendergast, and Snow race down a tunnel, they're chased and Margo stops to face the pursuers with the bottles of vitamin D, which she sprays on them, burning them instantly and killing those she sprays. They race away from her and she sprays the remainder on the walls, ceiling, and floor of the tunnel before racing away with the others.

Snow says they'll have to swim out and D'Agosta says he'll remain behind because he doesn't know how to swim. Smithback won't hear of it and forces him into the water. Margo is separated as the water from the reservoir floods in, creating currents. Hayward arrives at the command post just as the reservoir begins to dump and Horlock is told that all the herbicide had been applied prior to the dump. The reservoir overflows as the computerized program allows more water to flow in than is being dumped and floods the park, abruptly ending the riot that is still going on among the homeless who were driven out of the tunnels.

Snow's group makes it out of the tunnels and finds Margo later, having followed the route the original two bodies had apparently followed. She has a broken leg but is otherwise fine. Pendergast says he isn't certain that the containment was successful and says that the only way to know is to wait and see. A year later, Pendergast, Margo and D'Agosta meet for a seafood lunch. Pendergast said that if he could eat seafood in a year without getting a buzz, he'd be relieved. The details of their conversation at that lunch are not revealed, but Pendergast was apparently smiling as they left. Mrs. Wisher joins the government as a community liaison and a pocket park is built to Pamela's memory. Smithback's book is a raging success and Margo urges him to donate half his earnings to help the homeless, which he does. Hayward turns down a promotion to finish her degree.



Chapters 51 through 64, Analysis

D'Agosta briefly talks with Margo about her tenacious insistence that she go into the tunnels with them. He had previously suggested that her encounter with the creature those months earlier had changed her, and it seems that it has. At that time, it seems that she was somewhat mousy with regard to her personality. Since then, she has begun carrying a handgun and practices regularly so that she's a very good shot, has begun working out and now runs on a regular basis, and is in much better physical condition. She admits to nightmares and it seems that the encounter with Mbwun more than a year ago has created some serious psychological trauma for her.

As Snow and the others dive into the sewage tanks, Snow is wishing that he hadn't been in the office on this particular night and that he hadn't suggested this as an entry point. He does, however, see this as an opportunity to redeem himself in the eyes of his peers and when panic threatens to overtake him, thinks only of this point. It seems sufficient to get him through.

Margo and the others come to the conclusion that Greg was likely killed by a competitor - another "shaman" of sorts. As Margo watches, another creature that seems to be a leader of some kind is carried in. While the fact that this one is being carried could be merely a part of the ritual, it's actually a foreshadowing that Dr. Frock is involved. Margo also comes to the realization that the curved legs is a sign of scurvy - additional support for her theory that the creatures cannot tolerate vitamin D and that's the reason that they avoid daylight. It's also here that the team realizes that their theory - that the creatures don't kill on full moons because of the light - is incorrect. It seems more likely now that they are simply involved in this ritual on the nights of the full moon.

The creatures who are addicted to the Mbwun plant require a specific hormone. That hormone is also found in a particular human gland which is why the creatures originally killed. Now there is a plentiful supply and Margo figures out that they are killing not for the hormones, but for the bones. Frock has had the creatures use skulls and long bones to build a hut that he says will be the base for his new religion.

When Pendergast tells Frock that it's not too late for him to return to the surface, he says there's nothing to return to. He says that up there, he's bound to a wheelchair. In fact, Margo had noted that his wheelchair looked a little ratty and wondered if he were making it alright, but hadn't asked. He now says that people looked upon him as the "ridiculous" honorary curator and that he had no life at all after contracting polio. Margo later says that she'd had no idea how deeply Frock was impacted by the polio.

Another aspect of the story is more fully explained as Margo and the others talk to Frock. Frock says that he had the foresight to break off the valves so that the reservoir dump could not be aborted since having the water pour into the tunnels was part of his bigger plan.



Characters

Margo Green

The assistant curator of the New York Museum of Natural History. Margo is among those who were involved with the first murders of Mbwun, also known as the "Museum Beast," and is among the first to recognize the current situation as being related. Green is brilliant in her field but is rather naïve when it comes to people. She tends to take people at face value, including her mentor, Dr. Frock. When it's revealed that Frock is involved, Margo is disappointed in him.

Margo is suffering from something that seems to resemble post traumatic stress disorder following the original murders. She has a new image in that she is no longer the mousy victim she apparently was in the first situation. Now, Margo has a permit to carry a handgun and does so, practicing diligently. She also has begun a regular exercise routine, including running. All these things are evident when she again encounters D'Agosta as the new situation begins to unfold. In this case, Margo is ready to meet her fears. She insists on going into the tunnels with D'Agosta and the FBI agent, Pendergast. She says that she can help them, and when the time comes, she does so. It's Margo's realization that the creatures are intolerant to vitamin D that gives her group time to escape - a fact that Pendergast notes and comments on, saying that Margo is welcome to come with him on any mission.

It seems that, as one of only two women involved in the main story line, Margo would have had a romantic interest, but this is not the case. She has something akin to a hero worship complex for Frock up until the moment she realizes what he is, but there is no overt love interest. It's also noteworthy that she blames herself for the death of a fellow researcher, Greg Kawakita, because she didn't answer his phone call. Looking back, she can see that he was likely reaching out to her for help and the fact that she ignored that seems to weigh on her conscience.

Bill Smithback

A reporter for the New York Post. Margo Green notes that she always reads the Post because she can't possibly miss any story with Bill's byline, the two having met during the original case of "museum murders." Smithback is self-centered and searching frantically for a way to climb to the top of his field, though he realizes that he must have books behind him to achieve the kind of success he wants. When he covers that brutal murder of Pam Wisher, he immediately begins seeking a way to get inside the family home in an effort to follow the story. When he arrives and Mrs. Wisher tells him that he's painted an untrue picture of her daughter, he has the good grace to be ashamed.

Smithback becomes embroiled in the heart of the battle by accident, having followed what he hopes is a lead into the tunnels. When he sees the brutal murders happen to



those he followed, he runs away. When he takes a second to realize that he might have a guilty conscience later, he simply hopes that he'll live to have time to think back on his guilt.

Despite his bad qualities, Smithback pitches in when he's in a position that requires it. He is clearly frightened when he finally encounters Margo and the others in the tunnel, but does take a weapon and helps fight when the time comes.

Dr. Frock

The elderly scientist who is asked to work on the case after Pam Wisher's body is found to have been chewed. Frock is confined to a wheelchair, having contracted polio on an expedition. When Greg contacts him with his fears about his own research, Frock takes over and soon comes to realize that Greg is on the verge of creating a drug that will heal and prolong life. Frock prompts Greg's killing, taking his role as the "shaman" of the creatures created by Greg's drug which is a byproduct of the Mbwun plant. Frock can soon walk, though he continues to hide that fact from his colleagues, walking only when he is in the tunnels. He is planning to give the evolution a boost by releasing the plant into the general water system which will eventually mean the ocean creatures are infected by the viral aspect of the plant. Frock is among the creatures when Margo and the others reach the tunnel and apparently dies in the fire there.

Vincent D'Agosta

The police lieutenant in charge of the scene when Snow finds the two skeletons. D'Agosta is a tough police officer who has been passed over when it came time for promotions in favor of another officer who is obviously more politically correct and willing to play the political games to rise in the ranks. D'Agosta is the first to call on Margo Green for her expertise when the body of Pam Wisher is discovered, but he is also the first to say that Margo may not be mentally and emotionally strong enough to endure the rigors of the situation.

Greg Kawakita

A scientist and colleague of Margo Green, Greg leaves the Museum months before this story begins. Margo says that Greg tried to contact her at one point, but that she didn't answer the phone. She later realizes that he was calling on her for help. Greg's body is the second found by police along with Pam Wisher. Greg had discovered a way to use the Mbwun plant, apparently hoping to eventually use it for its ability to prolong life.

Dr. Simon Brambell

The New York City Medical Examiner. Brambell is called in to work on the case of Pam Wisher along with Margo Green and Dr. Frock. When Brambell discovers the small



triangles that appear to be metal in the back of the second victim, he realizes that it had to do with a surgical procedure and begins trying to identify the body through that procedure. When he is on the verge of finding out the identity, he is murdered. The police believe it to be a random killing, though some - including D'Agosta - disagree. Brambell's work pays off and it's his information that leads Margo to learn the identity of the second victim.

Tail Gunner

The man who tells Bill Smithback that Mephisto knows about the Pamela Wisher murder. The man claims to be Mephisto's "chief runner," and tells Smithback that he's part of an underground gang known as the Route 666 Community.

Mephisto

The leader of an underground community. Mephisto says that he hasn't been near the surface in many years and gives Bill Smithback a brief history of the people he leads, saying that the community has a teacher, young people, and that many are escaping the dictates and ills of society. Mephisto is among those roused from the tunnels before the reservoir is dumped and agrees to help lead a group into the lowest tunnel in an effort to seal that tunnel. He gives his life to give Margo and the others time to get away. Along the way, he gives Margo a photo and a note. The photo is of a young boy playing, obviously Mephisto. The ink on the note is washed away by the time Margo checks it.

FBI Special Agent Pendergast

Pendergast is a self-confident agent who is really free to follow any case he desires, an apparent perk allowed after the initial case of the Museum Beast. Pendergast finds his way into the tunnels, initially contacting Mephisto and later going all the way into the Astor Tunnel where he gathers some information about the beasts living there.

Annette Wisher

Mother of the murdered girl, Pamela, who begins a "Take Back Our City" campaign and who works with Smithback as he continues his own investigations.

Pamela Wisher

The debutant who is one of the first two victims discovered by Snow.



Waxie

A captain in the New York City Police Department and D'Agosta's superior, Waxie is out of shape and opinionated, usually without basing those opinions on solid police work and information. Waxie is, as several people say, fat and lazy in addition to being a careless officer. Waxie gives the order to drain the reservoir, accepting the fact that the process couldn't be reversed, then tries to lay the blame for that situation on someone else. He's among those attacked and killed by the beasts as he tries to manually stop the dump.



Objects/Places

Reliquary

According to a definition at the beginning the story, a reliquary is a "shrine or coffer for displaying an object, bone, or body part from a saint or deity."

The Cloaca Maxima

The name of the waterway where Snow goes on his first dive as part of the police scuba team.

Route 666 Community

An underground community led by the man who calls himself Mephisto.

The Physical Anthropology Lab

Where Margo goes to retrieve the skeletons for Dr. Frock.

Palyhymnia Club

Where Smithback is when he is asked about the bodies being moved and realizes where they've probably been taken.

Mbwun

Also called the "Museum Beast," this is the formal name of the beast responsible for the first museum murders.

Linnaeus Hall

The multi-media room in the Museum where Margo Green and the others involved in the case meet to confer.

The Drake

Where Pendergast lives.



The Devil's Attic

Originally known as the Astor Tunnels, this is the very lowest part of the tunnel system below New York and the place where a colony of killers is rumored to be living.

Crystal Pavilion

A waiting area located in the Astor Tunnel and where Pendergast believes he'll find the central area of those who have colonized the Devil's Attic.

Wrinklers

The name given to the creatures killing people. It seems that the homeless who live in the tunnels came up with the name.

Moles

The name given to the homeless who live in the tunnels.



Themes

Good versus Evil

The "good guys" are constantly battling the "bad guys" throughout this story. The most obvious case is when Margo, D'Agosta, Pendergast, Mephisto, and the Navy SEALs actually fight the creatures, but there are other instances as well. One of those occurs before the story starts as Greg Kawakita realizes that he's started something that he can't take back, and looks for a way to battle the evil situation, even though that situation is of his own making. While Greg obviously had some level of "good" still in him, he sought help from a person who was not able to fight that evil when he asked Dr. Frock for assistance.

There were other instances of the good versus evil theme taking place above ground. Though not as overtly "evil," the police officer named Waxie is representative of all that is evil in a person - laziness, sloppy work and a willingness to get ahead without meriting the advances. His counterpart - or the "good" - is D'Agosta. D'Agosta notes that his own merits have been overlooked chiefly because he wasn't willing to play the political games necessary, those same games at which Waxie excels.

The Quest for Power

Dr. Frock is a prime example of this theme, but his personal role in this theme begins long before the story begins. Frock had been a brilliant field researcher and it was during an expedition that he contracted polio. The disease crippled him and ended his career as a field researcher. While he was also a brilliant scientist and apparently spent many years working on various projects, he seems to have felt useless without his ability to walk. It's interesting that he hid that feeling so well that no one seemed to realize the depth of that emotion.

When Greg Kawakita comes to Frock with his problem, it might be assumed that Frock would have immediately called for help to contain the issue. Instead, he saw the opportunity to complete Greg's research, and does so successfully. The end result is that he's then able to walk and becomes something of a "shaman" to the creatures who have become addicted to the Mbwun plant, continuing his exploitation of them. While that's all reprehensible, the truly horrible part in Frock's quest for power comes when the plant is in plentiful supply. Then there is no longer a need for the creatures to kill humans - a good substitute for the hormone on which they are now dependent - but Frock continues to direct them to kill. The goal by then is simply to gather enough skulls to complete the building of a hut of skulls that Frock will use in his new religion.



The Need to Face Fears

Margo Green is a young woman in a field traditionally populated by "geeks." It's fully acceptable for the scientists to be "frumpy," as Bill Smithback describes her. But Margo comes to realize following her first encounter with the Mbwun that she has to find a way to face her fears. She believes that the way to do so is to make herself less "frumpy" and less of a target. Toward that end, she buys a gun, gets a gun permit, and learns to shoot very well. She practices regularly and exercises regularly as well. When the time comes for D'Agosta and Pendergast to return to the tunnels for the final showdown with the creatures, Margo insists on going along. When Pendergast refuses, Margo is angry - partly at him for his refusal but also at herself for not being able to simply walk away from the situation.

It's D'Agosta who says that Margo seems to be trying to find a way to face her fears. Though Margo laughingly calls him a "pop psychiatrist" after that remark, it seems that D'Agosta is - at least to some degree - correct in his analysis. Margo does come to the point of facing down her fears and even Pendergast says that she's welcome to come along on any mission.

Another character who faces this same situation is Snow. He's determined that he won't be the one who washed out during the initial exercises but when faced with the two skeletons, he does panic. He can't find it in himself to get past this though he seems to have a need to. When he is called on to go with the Navy SEALs, he is both reluctant and determined. He is also the only one of that group to survive the encounter with the creatures.



Style

Point of View

The book is written from the perspective of several characters at different times. For example, Bill Smithback serves as the perspective when he is in the tunnels with Duffy, Waxie, and the other officers. The reader continues to see the action through Smithback's perspective until he encounters Margo's group, also in the tunnels. At that point, the perspective changes to that of Margo, though Smithback remains a part of the coming events. The changing of character perspective may be distracting to some readers but is overall an effective way of presenting the information.

The fact that various characters are used as the main perspective probably means that readers will tend to identify with those characters over others. This may also give a clue to the reader that these characters are not "expendable," and will survive their ordeals.

Setting

The book is set in modern day New York City with scenes divided between the New York Museum of Natural History and the tunnels beneath the city. While the setting under the city may seem to be the work of an overactive imagination, the author includes a post script at the end of the book explaining that there are communities of people living in the tunnels under the city, and that there are thousands of people populating these communities. According to this explanation, an elaborate private railway also existed, though it was not called the "Astor Line" as it is named in the book.

The setting of the Museum, the Police Department, and other scenes in the story seem believable and are described in sufficient detail so that most readers can picture these settings. Likewise, the underground settings are described in great detail, though some people may have trouble imagining the magnitude of the underground tunnel system of the city, let alone imagine that people actually choose to live there. Despite the fact that the tunnels may be difficult for some readers to understand or believe, the details provided mean that most readers will be able to picture the various underground scenes, making the story much more vivid.

Language and Meaning

The book is written in a very straightforward, easy-to-read style. There are some twists and turns that some readers may find difficult to follow, though these all seem to be explained eventually. For example, when Waxie and Duffy reach the tunnels under the reservoir, they discover that some of the valves have been broken off, which could have happened in any number of ways. However, one of them is "packed with lead," indicating that they were tampered with on purpose. It seems fairly easy to imagine that the creatures had something to do with the breakage, but it seems incredible that they



would have packed one with lead without some driving reason. It's much later revealed that Dr. Fronk prompted the vandalism because he wanted to have the reservoir dumped in order to release the plants. There are other examples of this same type of situation, and all seem to have some resolution. For the most part, the resolutions seem reasonable and most readers will likely be able to accept them as such.

The book is divided between dialogue and exposition. The dialogue is reasonable and believable with only a few exceptions. The exposition does have some lengthy descriptions. For example, there is an entire passage dedicated to the preparation for the final trip in the tunnel. In that chapter, D'Agosta, Pendergast and Mephisto talk about the weapons and supplies they'll need. There is extensive talk of various models of weapons and other gear. Some readers may find passages such as these tedious.

Structure

The book is divided into four sections or "parts," and sixty-three chapters with one section falling after the end of chapter sixty-three. The first section is titled "Old Bones." Part two is titled "Cui Ci Sono Del Mostri," which translates to "Here There Be Monsters." The third part is titled "Hut of Bones." The three parts are roughly equal in length, ranging somewhere near one hundred, fifty pages each. The exception is the final part which is titled "Last." The chapters vary in length, ranging from just three pages up to ten or more. The chapters basically cover a single event or segment of an overall event.

Each of the larger sections is headed by a graphic that could resemble tribal art of some kind. This lends an air of the mysterious and unknown.

The book builds on a previous book, "Relic," though reading that book is not necessary to understanding the story line of this book. There are several details of the previous story that are used as foundations for this story, but those are outlined adequately to provide readers all the information they need. It should be noted that the book has an open-ended conclusion in that it is possible that some of the Mbwun plant escaped the plan to contain it. While a year passes without that being the case, it seems that the writers left the storyline open on purpose for the possibility of a sequel.

Quotes

"Beneath Fernandez's open suit, Snow could see a T-shirt with the Police Scuba team's unofficial motto: *We dive in shit and look for dead things*. Only this time it wasn't a dead thing, but a massive wrapped brick of heroine." Chap. 1, p. 6

"I have said my community is a safe haven. And so it has been, until a year ago. Now, we are under attack. Those who venture beyond safe areas disappear or are murdered. Murdered in the most horrific ways." Chap. 6, p. 48

"Even though he was officially in charge, it didn't hurt to let Waxie take some credit. The more visible you were at the beginning, the closer they mowed your ass at the end." Chap. 13, p. 85

"And just look at you: all muscled up like some gazelle. Where's the frumpy, slope-shouldered Margo I used to know and love?" Chap. 15, p. 94

"He assumed, in a surprisingly detached sort of way, that it was an arm; it had to be an arm, yet it felt slippery and so very strong. Then, almost immediately, he felt a curious digging sensation just below his Adam's apple. Yes, it was a most curious sensation, indeed." Chap. 21, p. 139

"Imagine tunnels thirty stories underground. Walls tiled in big murals. Imagine waiting rooms, stuffed to the gills with mirrors, sofas, fancy stained glass. Imagine hydraulic elevators with parquet flooring and velvet curtains. Now think of what all that would look like after being doused in raw sewage, then sealed up for a century." Chap. 28, p. 198

"Then, with a final nod at D'Agosta, he swept out of the office and into the corridor beyond, the silk nap of his black suit shining dully under the fluorescent lights, the last of the great explorers." Chap. 30, p. 214

"If he fails us again, we are ready to mount a recall campaign. And when we're finished with him, he won't be able to get a job as dogcatcher in Akron, Ohio." Chap. 34, p. 227

"Now, only a miracle can stop the flow. And in case you hadn't heard, they don't allow miracles in New York City." Chap. 44, p. 299

"Smithback jerked his head back instinctively at the sight, but not before his brain had registered something out of his worst nightmare, worse for being vague in the dim light: narrow lizard's pupils, thick wet lips, great creases and folds of extra skin. It suddenly dawned on him that these must be the Wrinklers Mephisto had referred to." Chap. 50, p. 346

"Snow looked down at the foamy, scum-laden surface, nose wrinkling involuntarily, regretting he'd been in the office that evening, and deeply regretting he'd suggested this as an entry point." Chap. 56, p. 386



"Go back to what, may I ask? Being a helpless, superannuated, slightly ridiculous curator emeritus? One whose years are rapidly dwindling? Surely Margo's research showed you there is another side effect to the new drug: it eliminates the concentration of free radicals molecules in living tissue. In short, it extends life!" Chap. 61, p. 433

Topics for Discussion

Describe the incident in which the first two bodies are discovered. What is eventually revealed about the way those two bodies wound up in that particular place?

Describe the relationship between Margo Green and Dr. Frock. Between Greg Kawakita and Dr. Frock. What is the significance of each relationship?

How does Dr. Frock come to be confined to a wheelchair? How does this impact him and his life? Do others realize the depth of his loss? Support your answer.

Margo Green was among those who were impacted by the original "Museum Beast" murders. What impact did that situation have on her as a person? How does it change how she might have acted in the current situation? Why do you think so?

Compare D'Agosta and Waxie. Compare D'Agosta and Pendergast. What is it about each of their personalities that make them play the role they play in the situation?

What is the significance of the ritual in which the creatures drink?

What information does Margo gain from the burned out rubble of Greg's laboratory?

Describe the clash between those following Annette Wisher for a "Take Back Our City" rally and the homeless flowing out of the tunnels.

The author concludes the book by saying there is documentation supporting the fact that thousands of homeless people live in the tunnels under New York. Using clues from the book, write as many details as possible about life there. What would make people live in that environment?