

Roadwork Study Guide

Roadwork by Stephen King

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Plot Summary

Roadwork by Stephen King is a tragic tale about a man named Barton George Dawes and the curve ball the government throws into his ordinary and organized life. Barton and his wife Mary live at 1241 Crestallen Street West and have done so for what seems to Barton to have been forever. All of their memories, carefully constructed, and then just as carefully put away after Charlie died, are tied to this house. Looking around, Bart is reminded of Charlie every where he looks, and even though three years have passed since his young death, it still feels like yesterday. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that Bart is unable to move, and unwilling to be pushed out. Barton and Mary are given a year's notice when the plans for the highway extension are first announced. As part of the Eminent Domain clause, the government has the right to insist, and Bart and Mary are told they have no choice but to find another place to live. It grates on Bart. In fact, something in him revolts against the whole idea.

The months pass quickly, and before Bart and Mary know it, the month is November. In January they have to be out, and despite the date closing in, they still they have nowhere to live. Mary is getting nervous. She reminds Bart, but reminders are the last thing he needs. Bart is on the edge. On the outside, he functions relatively normally for the most part. He goes to work each day, and his routine is simple. Despite his seeming lack of direction though, on some level Bart is making plans. Unfortunately, the plans are not to move, and they do not include Mary. It isn't a conscious decision that Bart makes. It is as though a part of him operates entirely of it's own volition, and lately Bart is very good at separating himself from himself.

Instead of looking for a place to live, Bart secretly buys weapons, forces early retirement on himself by causing the closure of the Blue Ribbon Laundry, making absolutely no plans to move. Causing the end of his job also brings the end of his marriage, as Mary is unable to sit by and watch Bart self destruct. When she leaves, Bart slips further still. He manages to buy explosives, and when the twentieth of January finally comes, Bart is ready. He is calm, organized, but definitely not moving. Instead, he takes a stand against Eminent Domain laws. Bart decides that he will dig in, feeling like he must, convincing himself that there are no viable alternatives. At the last moment he refuses to leave, bringing media into the situation and drawing as much attention to his predicament as he can before he completes the construction crews demolition plans for them. A steady read that has the reader rooting for the underdog all the way through, Roadwork lays out the complexities of the human condition.



Part One: November 20-23, 1973

Part One: November 20-23, 1973 Summary

Barton George Dawes and his wife Mary have lived a long time at 1241 Crestallen Street West. Bart is reminded of Charlie, their son who died three years earlier, everywhere he looks. A year ago, Barton and Mary had been given a year's notice under Eminent Domain to move to make room for a highway extension. This grates on Bart, and something in him revolts against the whole idea.

Bart buys a gun from Harry, the owner of Harvey's Gun Shop. Bart lies about why he's buying a gun, pretending it's for a cousin, then spends time talking to Harry. He tells him that he works at the Blue Ribbon Laundry, spinning a series of half truths and outright lies before finally buying a .44 Magnum and a .460 Weatherbee. Harry says that ammunition for the Weatherbee will be available in a week. The Weatherbee is perfect, but Bart pretends to call his wife to confirm the nine hundred dollar purchase. As he fills out the federal paperwork, he casually discusses government interference with Harry, even mentioning the eminent domain law. Harry commiserates and promises to call when the ammunition arrives. Bart heads home to Mary, feeling as if the entire incident could have happened to someone else. It is just easier that way.

Once home, Mary reminds him that they only have until January twentieth and need to get ready. She empathizes when he says he's doing his best, saying she knows how much the house means to him, but he disagrees.

At work at the Laundry the next morning, he can see the oncoming construction. He thinks about how quickly landmarks have been destroyed by the construction, and daydreams away forty minutes. Feeling guilty, he talks to his alter ego, the half he calls Fred, and wonders whether he is losing his mind. He thinks about the letter from the Realtor handling the Waterford plant sale regarding the expiration of their option to purchase coming up soon. Phyllis tells him Steve Ordner wants Bart to return his call, and Bart wonders why. He asks Vinnie about Ordner. When Vinnie gets defensive, Bart lets him know he understands what happened.

Bart tells Vinnie how he started in the laundry business and how he wound up in his current position. He tells Vinnie that their original owners, Don and Ray, would never have allowed anyone to put in an eight lane highway that forced the demolition of their livelihood. Corporate types like Steve Ordner don't care about the business. He tells Vinnie he is closing the deal on the Waterford plant the following Tuesday. He returns Steve's call, agreeing to be there on Friday at eight, but saying that Mary is sick and won't join them.

Just before four-thirty the next morning, Bart wakes with a start from a nightmare. In his dream, he'd been at Pierce Beach with his son Charlie, and they'd been building a sand castle. Although they are miles from an ocean, the tide comes in, with the water slowly



demolishing the sand castle. Bart keeps trying to salvage it. Frustrated, he doesn't even notice Charlie isn't with him anymore. The lifeguard's whistle blows, and still he doesn't look up. There are screams, and somebody is crying when Bart looks up and finally notices the lifeguard giving Charlie mouth to mouth. Charlie is white all over, except for his lips, which are blue. He screams "Charlie!" and wakes up. He wonders if he yelled the name out loud, but Mary continues sleeping, undisturbed. After going into the kitchen, he realizes it's Thanksgiving and he does not have to go to work. He goes back to bed.

That evening he arrives at Steve Ordner's home. Steve gets right to the heart of the matter, asking Bart what's up with the new plant, why Bart had rejected a reasonable offer of \$450,000. Bart lays out several reasons, including that the new plant is further away from their customers, and that the new motels won't be up for at least a couple of years. Ordner rebukes each argument. Bart lets a bomb fall, saying that he estimates it will cost \$250,000 in renovations before they can run their business in the new plant. He claims increases in fees and too low of original estimates. Ordner blanches.

Bart lies again, saying that the other company that put in an offer on the place backed out. The Realtor is trying to push the sale through before their option expires so that they don't notice the condition of the place. If they allow their option to purchase to expire, they will likely get a much better deal. Steve reminds him that if he's wrong, his job is over. Bart realizes this. As he drives home, an internal battle wages with his other self about the lies he's just spun. He finally admits the real reason he doesn't want to move: he can't bear to bury Charlie again. Reluctantly, "George" admits it out loud, and "Fred" finally shuts up.

Part One: November 20-23, 1973 Analysis

Barton Dawes is a man with such emotional conflict that he finds it easier to dissociate himself from it. Often during the day he finds himself doing things that he couldn't explain later, but it was safer that way. A part of him just seemed to go dormant from time to time, and allow another part of him free reign. Once in a while, the dormant half would surface during it's counterparts' reign and he would ask himself what he was doing, but then he would just reset the breaker in his head, and everything was fine again. That thought is gone. It is with this alternate half in control that he finds himself in Harvey's Gun Shop, and the dormant, responsible part of him never surfaces once as he selects and purchases two new guns and ammo. He operates entirely normally, but later, stepping out of the store, he would head to the bus stop and forget all about the entire incident. Again, it is safer this way.

When he gets home, he gets himself a drink and Mary reminds him again that time is getting short. Having accepted their plight without so much as a kick, she had emotionally moved on already, but Bart was not having as easy a time with it as that. Despite Mary's assurances that she knows how he feels, he knows better. It goes much deeper than she realizes.



Bart is facing more than just removal from his home of over twenty years. He also has to leave the plant he worked his way up in over the same twenty years. Those who held the purse strings at the corporate level didn't much care about the Blue Ribbon Laundry. It was just a small part of their growing and diverse operation, but Bart felt like screaming when he thought about having to leave. He thought about how he made his way up through the ranks, and how with the help of Don and Ray he had returned to school for his degree. Part of it even bubbles to the surface as he berates Vinnie for being so loose lipped when he was invited to Steve Ordner's home. Vinnie didn't realize that he was just being used for information, and after a couple of drinks with Steve and his wife, Vinnie let on much more than he realized. It made Bart angry enough to warn him that if it happened again, he'd be gone.

When Bart calls Steve afterward, he feeds him a line about how Mary isn't feeling well, but he can meet with him Friday evening to talk about the Waterford plant. Steve sets the time for eight o'clock, and Bart barely hides his contempt for the man long enough to end the phone call. Throughout all of it, he has these internal conversations with himself, calling his alter ego Fred. What might be most frightening of all is that the conversations are two-way! At one point, he is reminded of his visit to the gun shop and asks his alter, Fred, if they really bought those guns the day before, but Fred switches the breaker off on that question, and Bart, or Geogie, as Fred calls him is silenced again.

Bart has a nightmare about his son Charlie that has him screaming his name, waking him up. In his dream they were at the beach, and Bart became so preoccupied with salvaging the sand castle they built that he doesn't notice Charlie is no longer with him. He ignores commotion around him in an effort to save the castle, and when he finally looks up, he sees the lifeguard giving Charlie's lifeless body mouth to mouth. He screamed Charlie's name and woke up. In real life of course, Charlie hadn't drowned, but Bart didn't feel any better knowing it. In fact, if he thought about it for a moment, the parallels between the dream and his life are closer than he would like to imagine.

In reality, Bart was avoiding the issue of moving on both the home and the business fronts, and if he continued to do so, the consequences would be dire. Without locking in a new plant, the Blue Ribbon Laundry would go under when their moving date came. The same could be said for his home life. If Bart didn't make some decisions soon, Mary would be right in her fear that they would wind up on the street.

Bart goes to Steve's at the prearranged eight in the evening, and is sent into the study. Steve gives him a drink, and starts asking questions. Bart starts slow, but by the time he's finished, he's told Steve some whoppers. One of the biggest lies is his assertion that the other company has backed down. They haven't. It is reasonable to assume that most of what he is telling Steve about the new plant is fabrication, not fact. Steve puts the entire matter in his hands after spelling out the consequences if he screws up.

Bart heads home, his alter ego screaming in his head, asking him what he thinks he's doing. Finally he can't ignore the voice anymore and he pulls over, admitting the truth. He doesn't want to move, but it has nothing to do with the years of memories, or the



neighbors he's come to know and trust. It's Charlie. He can't bear to bury him a second time. Once he's admitted it out loud, "Fred" shuts up and he drives home feeling as though they already live in a graveyard. He remembers something Tom Granger had told him and resolves to talk to him again on Monday.



Part One: November 25-28, 1973

Part One: November 25-28, 1973 Summary

Bart watches the ball game on the television, but "Fred" won't leave him alone. Fred reminds him that on Tuesday their option on the Waterford plant expires; they could lose the plant to McAn Shoes and he'll lose his job. At some point he'll have to tell Mary that they don't have a house to go to either. Fred suggests that Monday morning he should go to the agent and sign the deal.

"George" tells him to shut up and let him sleep. Fred tells him what he is doing isn't fair and then asks him about the guns. What guns?

Bart has dinner with Tom Granger, and asks if Tom remembers the name of the big guy that sat next to them in the new Italian place. Tom says that "Sally Magliore" is a mobster who runs a legitimate car lot.

Bart calls Magliore's car lot from a pay phone, and makes an appointment to see Magliore the following day. When he gets home, he tells Mary he'll do the shopping since she's sick, and that he'll be home late the following night because he is going to look at a house in Northside. He sits with her, watching TV and trying not to listen to Fred, but Fred reminds him of when he and Mary happily did extra work in their spare time in order to earn enough money for the TV. Those were happy times, and Bart wonders when the last time was that he saw her grin.

He gets groceries and runs into Jack Hobart—one of the neighbors already relocated to Northside. Jack isn't thrilled with the relocation; the people are unfriendly and the electricity bills are high. Bart invites Jack to come back and watch the game with him. When he calls Mary to let her know, he's surprised when she calls him George, a "game" name that Charlie originally started.

It is getting more difficult to shut Fred up, who continues to remind Bart that today is his last chance to go see Monohan and close the deal. Bart spends the day in the wash room so the noise can mute Fred. After work, he takes the car and heads for Magliore's.

Magliore is suspicious he may be a police officer or an FBI agent. While Bart is being searched, Magliore sees a photo of Charlie and asks Bart if he plays baseball. Bart tells him his son died of a brain tumor three years earlier. Magliore will let Bart know the following day if he'll help him. Bart reminds him of a dog that had been gentle as a lamb, but after being chained outside in the summer heat it slowly lost all its pleasant demeanor and had finally bitten a kid and was put down.

He lies to Mary, saying the house he supposedly went to see has termites. Bart dreams again, only this time the dog from Magliore's story bites Charlie.



The next day Bart learns that Johnny Walker was hit by someone in the intersection. Bart goes to the hospital and learns that Johnny died. When they ask at the laundry how Johnny is, however, Bart says he doesn't know. Phyllis tells him Ordner called, and Harold Swinnerton left a message that the cartridges have come in. It takes a moment for Bart to place the name. Bart asks Phyllis to get Ordner on the phone, and while he waits he writes out his resignation, boxes what few personal items there are and throws out the rest. He's quit. He calls the gun shop and tells them he'll be in the following day. When Ordner calls, Bart says he'll discuss it in person. Bart stays by himself in the plant until their meeting time at two.

He tries to explain to Steve that his rationale in letting the option to buy pass has to do with the corporate attitude he so dislikes. Frustrated, Steve tells him to go home. Instead, Bart finds Magliore at his used car lot. He tells Magliore he's looking for explosives—enough to blow up a road. Magliore refuses to help him.

When Bart gets home, Mary is crying. She questions if Bart is punishing her for having one child stillborn and another that self destructed. He begs her to stop crying, but she's beyond that.

Part One: November 25-28, 1973 Analysis

George and Fred continue their debates inside Bart's head. George did most of the talking at Steve's and now Fred berates him about it. The lies he told are all catching up with him. If he doesn't do something soon, the plant will close for good as they won't have anywhere to move to. Then he'll be out of a job, along with everyone else. Then, Fred continues, you'll have to explain it all to Mary, and that's only the beginning. Then comes the confession that you have no house to move to. Explain that! With any timing, you can lose your twenty-year job and your twenty-year wife all at the same time. Fred doesn't let it go there either. His voice is asking about the guns next, and neither Bart nor George have any answers.

Bart is telling so many half truths now that it's a wonder he can keep any of them straight. He takes Tom Granger to Nicki's diner, and over a meal neither of them enjoy, he tells Tom the same fairy tales he spun for Ordner the night before. Tom is gullible, and Bart almost feels guilty deceiving him, but Tom accepts everything Bart tells him without question. Bart gets one more piece of information from Tom. He learns the name of the "mobster" who had been seated near them the last time they ate out, and finds out about the "legitimate" business the man runs now. When they leave Nicki's, Bart doesn't go straight home. He stops at a neighborhood bar and uses the phone to make an appointment to see the mobster turned car dealer named Magliore.

At home, he finds Mary feeling ill, and agrees to do the shopping for her. They have dinner first, Fred pestering Bart non-stop. When Bart refuses to listen to Fred, Fred tries a new tactic. He reminds Bart of the earlier days with Mary. He gets Bart thinking about the way they managed to buy their first television set, and Bart wonders when he last saw the teasing grin she used to give him. He mourns for all that he has already lost.



When he gets to the grocery store, he runs into a former neighbor Jack Hobart. They wind up back at Bart's to watch the game, drinking beer but not really enjoying any of it. Jack and Bart feel the same way about the whole situation. The highway ruined everything.

When Bart gets to Magliore's, he finds out Magliore knows Bart has no intentions of buying two Cadillacs and instead figures that Bart is just one of many undercover agents sent in to try to trap him. Magliore gets Mansey to frisk Bart and has him empty his pockets onto the desk top. Calling Bart a shitbird over and over again, they accuse him of trying to set them up, but are unable to find anything on Bart to back that assumption. They are about to throw him out of the office when Bart loses his temper and calls Magliore a dork. The outburst so surprises Magliore that he stops Mansey and takes another look at Bart. They photocopy his identification, and tell him to return the following day at the same time. Bart agrees and heads home to Mary where he spins another lie. He tells Mary that the house he went to see is full of termites. Bart tells her he'll see if he can find an exterminator to go out there with him the following day after work. They go to bed, and Bart dreams of Charlie again. This time he is bitten by the Magliore's dog story, and amid the blood and terror, Bart wakes wondering why he still has these dreams. Charlie's been dead three years.

Everything comes to a head on the twenty-eighth of November. Bart goes into work as usual, but it goes bad from the start. Johnny Walker is in an accident, and Bart goes to the hospital, but finds his condition grim. He waits until he finds out that Johnny is dead. Arnie is there, but Bart is unable to offer condolences. Filled with his own misery, he goes back to the Blue Ribbon. He avoids questions about Johnny's condition, heading directly for his office. Phyllis tells him Steve Ordner and Harold Swinnerton both called. At first Bart can't place Harold's name, but then he remembers.

After that, he works on autopilot. He asks Phyllis to get Ordner on the phone, prepared now to take things all the way. He writes out his resignation, packs up his personal effects, and throws the stuff he doesn't care about into the waste can. Ron calls to tell Bart that Johnny is dead, and Bart tells him to close for the day. When Ron wonders as to the higher ups and closing for the day, Bart tells him he doesn't care. He quit. Ron tries to talk him out of it, but Bart is beyond saving. Ordner calls, fuming that Bart let the option on the Waterford plant run out, and Bart tells him if he wants answers, he should see him in person. Later, when Bart gets to Steve Ordner's home, he tries to explain the reasons that led to what he did, but none of it makes any sense to Steve, and he finally just tells Bart to go home. Bart leaves, but goes to Magliore's first. Their meeting doesn't go as well as Bart hoped either. He wants Magliore to get explosives for him, but Magliore isn't biting. He tells Bart he's crazy, and lectures him on what can and can't be changed. Bart leaves, confused and disappointed by Magliore's answer.

Going home to Mary is no improvement on his day. He finds her crying in the living room, and when she asks, Bart has no answers for her either. Unable to put her mind at ease, and in fact making things worse by confessing they have no home to go to soon as well, he watches her retreat upstairs and then turns the television up so he doesn't hear her crying.



Part Two: December 5-8, 1973

Part Two: December 5-8, 1973 Summary

Mary is gone. Bart sits in the living room, watching TV. He pours himself another drink, thinking about how his life is like a new ride at Disneyland called Self-Pity Land. The night before, he'd seen a public service announcement, where Virginia Knauer said that the blender is one of the largest energy consumption devices, next to electric heaters. He turned his on and left it going until the motor finally died, just for spite. If he'd had electric heaters, he would have turned those on, too.

He'd called Mary the previous evening, begging her to come home, but she'd refused. He cries.

A habit he's adopted is to stop at the platform put up to see the road construction. While there, he looks down, taking note of their progress, watching his life slip away. This afternoon he picks up a hitchhiker on the freeway. She's determined to get to Vegas. Although down to her last thirteen dollars, she refuses Bart's offer to drop her at a motel or pay for it. After Bart offers her a place to sleep at his house, it takes a while to convince her he's not interested in sex.

At his house, she cooks a roast, the best meal she's had in years, as she usually eats animal crackers. He goes to the cupboard and hands her a hundred dollars, no strings attached, but she refuses, thinking he wants something in exchange. Over drinks and watching TV, Bart says how he lost his job, his wife, and how soon his home will follow. He couldn't find a new home, he couldn't sign the company into a new plant in Waterford, and he couldn't convince Mary to come home. The girl offers to sleep with Bart, but he refuses.

Bart sleeps on the couch and dreams of Charlie again; Charlie is bitten by a dog and Bart is unable to prevent it. He wanders upstairs, where Olivia comforts him. They make love. In the morning, he makes her bacon and eggs, and she asks him what his plans are for his life. Bart doesn't know, so to avoid the issue, he asks her about her past. She talks about her ex boyfriend and how she wants to go to Vegas.

He drives her out of town, and when they part, she gives him a package of product four synthetic mescaline. He asks her to call him Christmas Day to let him know how she's doing, but she thinks he's going to do something crazy, and doesn't think she should keep in touch. Back at home, he can't bring the sweetness of the encounter back to mind. Instead, he finds himself horny, which just disgusts him. He drinks and masturbates in front of the TV.

On Saturday, Bart stays home. He calls Mary, who knows now that the plant closed. They agree to meet for lunch on Monday, but that she won't come home unless he sees



a psychiatrist. After hanging up, with his tears making him feel weak, Bart breaks two glasses, then calms down and cleans up after himself.

Part Two: December 5-8, 1973 Analysis

Mary is gone, and Bart spends his days feeling sorry for himself. He cranks the heat in defiance of a public service announcement about energy that annoyed him, and sits there in his shorts. He drinks himself sloppy, and then even tried calling Mary the night before, but crying and remorseful, he only manages to make Mary cry before she hangs up. He makes up stupid games that allow him to wallow in self pity further, like his home being a stop on a new Disney World ride called Self-Pity Land. Childish and angry, Bart still doesn't have a direction that makes sense, so he's going nowhere. At night he dreams about Charlie, and thinking about him in the daytime only makes him cry more. He thinks about the stillborn child they had first, and then he starts thinking about Charlie, and dissolves again with the unfairness of it all. Bart has orchestrated the collapse of his life, and doesn't know what to do now.

Bart's life takes on a routine of sorts. He drives the turnpike, he stops at the viewing platform, and just these normal actions make him feel like he is part of the real world. There isn't much else that does. Then he comes across the hitchhiker on her way to Vegas (or bust) and his life takes a turn that he doesn't expect. Just talking to someone else is nice, and since she really had no place to go that night, Bart felt comfortable offering her a place to stay. She has issues herself, having been taken advantage of in the past, and every time Bart tries to be nice to her, she thinks he has other motives. Finally, he gains her confidence enough that they go to his place and she thanks him by cooking a roast he found at the back of the freezer. They watch television afterward, and make popcorn, and Bart is suddenly telling her about leaving his job and losing his house. She can't believe that he would just let everything go. He tries to explain his lack of enthusiasm, and finds it difficult to do. When she is ready to go to sleep, he tells her to go upstairs and she invites him to join her. Having only been with three women and two of those had been before his marriage to Mary, he is understandably both exciting and frightening at the same time. He refuses, and falls asleep in front of the television.

Bart truly intends not to bother Olivia, but after having a nightmare about Charlie, he finds himself unable to be alone. He goes up to his room, uncertain when he goes in, but she pulls back the covers and invites him to get in. She discourages him from talking to much, making love to him before they both fall asleep. In the morning, he makes her breakfast and she asks him what his plans are, but Bart doesn't have any plans. He isn't at all sure what he's going to do, and rather than face that, he starts asking her questions about her past. She tells him a little about herself, including her foray into chemical abuse, and then gives him a foil pouch of mescaline that he can use or dispose of. He almost throws it away, but at the last moment pockets it instead. He asks her to call him at Christmas, just to let him know how she is, but she sees something in Bart that scares her. His demeanor is that of someone right on the edge, and she sees it. He goes home, and sitting in front of the television trying to remember the encounter he had with her. It doesn't work though, and feeling like a dirty old man



about it all, he begins to drink anyway. Later, he masturbates in front of the television, no longer caring about the rest.

On Saturday, Bart realizes that he and Mary have to talk. After putting it off as long as he can, he finally dials his in-laws and Mary answers herself. She is obviously bitter and resentful, and Bart actually takes some comfort by the information. He asks her to lunch on Monday and she agrees, but then adds that she can't help him anymore, and he needs a psychiatrist. Bart sends that barb right back by telling her that he already knows that, and then he hangs up. He tried to keep the conflicting emotions out of his voice when he talked to Mary, but once he hung up, his temper took reign and he threw things, broke things and even hit things before getting himself under control again.



Part Two: December 9-10, December 12 1973

Part Two: December 9-10, December 12 1973 Summary

On Sunday he goes for his usual drive, wanting to go further than 150 miles; however, this is the first gasless Sunday and all the filling stations on the highway are closed. He hears a rare comment from Fred, who retreats quickly. Bart hears a public service announcement about the fuel shortage. Then announcer states how many worried families are thinking about stockpiling fuel; however they don't realize how dangerous improper storage of fuel can be. One gallon is equivalent to twelve sticks of dynamite. Bart grins, the first time in a while.

By the time Mary arrives to meet him for lunch, he's been drinking scotch. After ordering, she asks what he wants. He tells her he'll see a psychiatrist if she wants him to, and Mary offers to find one the same afternoon for him. He complains about the cost as he is unemployed, and she reminds him that she's living on her parents charity, to which Bart responds nastily. Mary is horrified at his envy and cruel attitude toward her parents.

Mary tells Bart she'd decided to marry him only because she was pregnant, but then losing the the baby afterward seemed like a bad joke. Still, she'd come to depend on him, and when Charlie died, she looked to him. He lies, telling her he's going to get a job, and see a psychiatrist, and in a couple of weeks she can come home. Bart explains that maybe he can convince the government not to tear down their house. Mary is horrified, and Bart can't figure out what he's said. He snaps, saying she got the best of him and now the city is going to get the house. She runs out, and the restaurant is quiet for a few minutes. Bart picks up the check and leaves.

Bart buys Christmas presents with the insurance money he'd cashed in, noting but not caring that he'll broke by March. He buys Mary a silver owl pin with diamonds for eyes, and presents for their nieces and nephews. He watches boys with their fathers, oddly feeling no resentment, but only a kind of love for them.

Bart sees Vinnie, who says he has a new job with the corporation that pays better and has growth in its future. Instead of congratulating Vinnie, Bart says that the best thing he can do is quit, as his new job is a dead end. His future is too important to waste in such a nothing job with no potential. Although Vinnie tells him to leave him alone, Bart follows. Vinnie punches him in the eye, knocking Bart down.

Part Two: December 9-10, December 12 1973 Analysis

Gasless Sunday, Bart chooses to go for his usual drive anyway, but curtails it a little in deference of the fuel and it's availability. He doesn't want to get caught without and have



to walk. Fred makes a sarcastic comment, but Bart doesn't care. He finds himself listening to a public service announcement about the fuel shortage, and suddenly his options are open again. The explosive capability of fuel had not occurred to Bart, but he is sure glad that the helpful people at the public service announcements have brought it to his attention.

Bart goes to his luncheon with Mary, but arriving an hour and a half early, he is already half cut by the time she shows up, and makes no attempt to hide it. He offers her a drink, and when she declines, still orders another one half hoping that she'll stop him, but she doesn't. Instead, she asks him what he wants. Bart isn't really sure. He tells her he'll see a shrink, but balks at going right away. They argue about the financial security of her parents, whose charity she is dependent on now, and just when things are getting out of hand, the food comes, giving them an out of argument option.

Mary finally puts her burger down, and asks Bart his plans. Having always depended on him, she isn't sure how to function now, and wants to know what he's going to do. He tells her he's going to get a job, and everything is going to be fine. Both are lies. He tells her in a couple of weeks she can come home, but the word home brings her back to reality. They have no home soon. Bart tells her that he thinks maybe he can get them to change their minds now. He figures all he has to do is talk to them, and the sincerity in his voice makes Mary realize that he's truly out of touch with the truth. She tells him she has to go, and he snaps, calling her a bitch, and yelling hateful things at her that have her fleeing the restaurant in horrified surprise. He sits there until the stunned silence ends, and then pays the bill and leaves.

Bart goes out to do some of his Christmas shopping. He is spending his way through his life insurance so quickly that he figures he'll be broke by March, but he can't even think that far ahead. It's incomprehensible to him, so it doesn't matter. He buys Mary an expensive pin, and then buys gifts for the nieces and nephews, and is looking at the empty Santa throne when he notices Vinnie. Both have armloads of packages, and they stand there talking for a minute.

Vinnie tells Bart about his new job with the corporation. He's obviously excited about making more money and doing a job that he enjoys. He tells Bart about their plans for expansion, and how he'll be managing a total of four theaters by the summer. Instead of congratulating him, Bart tells him to open his eyes. He tells Vinnie that this is a dead end job, and that the corporate boys only gave it to him because they didn't think he could do anything else. Vinnie is slowly losing all the good cheer he has, but that doesn't stop Bart. He keeps needling and needling until finally Vinnie gets mad and walks away. Still Bart doesn't stop. He follows him, berating his job and it's lack of future. Finally Vinnie loses it, and turning he punches Bart right in the eye.



Part Two: December 17-19 1973

Part Two: December 17-19 1973 Summary

Bart is dreaming of the fuel shortage being solved when he's woken by Tom calling, reminding him that the Blue Ribbon is coming down today. Bart says he'll see him there. He tries to apologize to Tom, but Tom says he's working for Brite-Kleen now, with shorter hours and better wages.

Tom tells Bart that Steve Ordner is so mad that he's looking for a way to press criminal charges against Bart. He says that Johnny Walker's brother Arnie had committed suicide after his brother's death. Bart thinks about the reasons for which someone would commit suicide.

Bart goes to watch the demolition of the Blue Ribbon, feeling connected to it like a murderer is to his victim. At home he fills soda and beer bottles with fuel by siphoning it out of his car's fuel tank. He stuffs a rag into each one, fills a bucket almost to the brim, and puts it all in his car.

Later, he drives to the construction area and systematically burns everything, starting with the crane, which explodes. Gleefully, he drives around the site, throwing burning cocktails at everything he sees.

It is after three when he gets into bed, but his mind won't shut off. Finally he drifts off and dreams of taking his own life.

Part Two: December 17-19 1973 Analysis

Bart is having a nap and is wakened by the phone ringing. Tom is calling to remind Bart that the Blue Ribbon laundry is scheduled for demolition the following day. Surprised, Bart asks if he's going, and they agree that they will both want to watch the end of this portion of their lives. Bart tries to apologize for what he did with the plant, leaving Tom and the rest high and dry, but Tom assures him that he's doing fine. He was hired by Brite-Kleen and is now getting better wages and working less hours. The change is a bit hard to adjust to, but Waterford would have been a change too, so it's all good.

Tom tells him that Ordner is on the warpath, looking for a way to charge Bart with something criminally, but Bart isn't worried. He didn't do anything he needs to worry about. Tom asks Bart if he's heard about Arnie, and when Bart hasn't, Tom fills him in. Feeling the loss of his brother so deeply, he was unable to continue. He hooked up a hose to his tailpipe and sealed himself up inside, committing suicide. That shocks Bart a little, even though he thinks he understands.

Bart watches the demolition of the Blue Ribbon, feeling like a murderer. In a big way, the analogy is correct. Bart singlehandedly sunk the Blue Ribbon laundry, and when he



stood there by himself, watching the other employees watch the building come down, he felt the weight of his guilt, despite the fact that it seemed as though the employees were landing on their feet. Tom had a new job he liked and paid him more, and even Vinnie was in a new job that he liked better and was paid more for. Somehow, they didn't see it that way either. The employee's resentment is clear as they stand to one side, avoiding Bart completely. When he fills his LTD with fuel, he goes home and uses bottles set aside for recycling to make a carton full of Molotov Cocktails. He fills a pail with gas as well, and putting a lid on it he puts it in the trunk. The rest goes in the front seat beside him. Then he actually calmly goes in and watches television until Dick Cavett comes on and he decides it's late enough to go. If he stopped to examine his intentions for one minute, he'd realize that his guilt was forcing him into this behavior. He could cause his own arrest and maybe ease his guilt a little.

Instead, he takes his fuel filled bottles and drives to the construction site. Without any thought for the future of those employees either, he systematically burns the site to the ground. Instead of making him feel better—which it actually did to begin with—by the time he gets home, guilt has him paranoid about the many ways that he can get caught. When he finally passes out, he dreams about committing the cardinal sin of suicide, over and over in a dozen different ways. The last way repeats itself again and again, and he sees himself sitting in the LTD, reading a magazine while carbon monoxide takes his life.



Part Two: December 19, and 21 1973

Part Two: December 19, and 21 1973 Summary

Bart wakes the next morning feeling terrible. On a pop station he hears the announcer describe the fire and its results. Bart is a bit disappointed at how little time he cost them. He is already thinking about the next problem, what he will say to police when they show up—and he is pretty sure that they would. He keeps reminding himself that they have no real proof.

Later in the afternoon he calls Mary, hoping to meet with her and give her the gifts. He is unable to convince her he's tried to find a psychiatrist. She tells him to bring the presents on Friday while her parents are gone. She is now confident, secure, and no longer the timid girl who asked him what they were going to do less than a month ago.

Bart takes the presents to her, terrified she will ask him for a divorce. She invites him to join her for Christmas, but Bart declines, explaining that emotions run too high on Christmas, but says he'll accept for another time. Mary says that Wally Hamner invited them to his New Year's party and that she'd accepted for them both. He asks if Wally knows they were separated, but Mary says it doesn't matter. He kisses Mary goodbye, sad to notice the tears in her eyes. He tells her next year will be better.

Part Two: December 19, and 21 1973 Analysis

When Bart wakes the next morning, he would like to have the illusion that he imagined or dreamed the entire thing, but the smell of fuel is so strong that there is no chance of that. Instead, head pounding, he gets up. Going to the bathroom it gets worse, and by the time he is finished, the bathroom is fairly unlivable. He decides to shower later, and goes down for coffee and to listen to the radio for a report of last night's escapade. When he hears it, disappointment is the first reaction. All of his work only cost the company a couple of weeks to a month of stoppage. It wasn't what he'd hoped for. Once he'd heard the extent of their report, he moved on to more important things. He worries now about what he'll say to the police when they come. The question isn't whether or not they'll come. He's sure they will. The question now is what he'll say when they do.

Later he calls Mary to arrange a day and time to give her the gifts he bought, and winds up arguing about the psychiatrist that he promised he'd go see. He lies to her, but she knows he's lying and calls him on it, which only makes him angry. When he gets off the phone, he realizes that she has grown a great deal in a very short time, and she is no longer the Mary he married. If she asks him for a divorce, he'll agree.

Bart goes to Mary's parents' house to drop off the gifts. It's an awkward and stilted meeting with both of them trying to make light of a situation that isn't. Bart is terrified that she will ask him for a divorce, but instead she asks him where he'll be eating Christmas dinner. She even invites him to join her, but he refuses, telling her another time maybe.



Mary stops him as he's on the way out to tell him that she accepted an invitation for both of them to attend a New Year's party at Wally Hamner's. She asks him if he wants to go, and he tells her he'll think about it. The idea appeals to him, and after kissing her goodbye and noticing the tears in her eyes, his mind wanders back to Wally and the invitation.



Part Two: December 24-26 1973

Part Two: December 24-26 1973 Summary

Bart finds a place to fix the window of the car, saying it had been damaged by a rock. He takes his clothes to the laundromat, and reads an article in the paper about the damage done to the construction site. He naps, and when he wakes it is to the sound of bells that he thinks are from a fire truck at first, but then realizes it is just the Salvation Army Santa Claus.

Olivia calls, unhappy, having been raped while on drugs. He tells her he's thinking of committing suicide. He tells her old age is like driving through snow that gets deeper and deeper until finally you just can't move. She tells him he should call a help line, but he won't. Against her protests, he says he'll send her five hundred dollars.

Early in the afternoon, Mary calls to pass on a Christmas wish from Bob and Janet. He tells her he'll come to the New Year's party. Later Magliore calls, and congratulates Bart for his recent attack on the construction site. Bart accuses him of lying when he says that what Bart did didn't even slow them down; they're right back to work. Magliore says that some things you just can't get rid of.

The mail brings Bart letters, one from "them"; they want him out—now. Bart is the only one left on Crestallen Street. The City Council letter reminds him that he won't be paid until he sends in a relocation form. They remind him the demolition date is January 20, 1974, and that under the Eminent domain law, he has to be out by January 19th.

Later he thinks about Charlie. The tumor was about the size of a walnut, but it was deep inside the brain, and inoperable. He remembers the look on Mary's face, the way the tumor began taking Charlie's ability to form sentences, the phantom smells he smelled, and even the obscenity that he lapsed into now and then. Charlie had died in October after three weeks of being comatose. Bart never cried, but Mary sure had. Bart wonders if that is why she managed to heal while he still feels like committing suicide.

Charlie and Bart were so close that it was almost silly. The names George and Fred came into play almost like a vaudeville parody that they did together.

Part Two: December 24-26 1973 Analysis

Bart spends the day covering his tracks. He goes to a laundromat to wash his clothes, and while they're washing he takes his car into a shop to have the window fixed. He tells them a kid with a snowball that had a rock in it did it, and then goes back to the laundromat. He reads someone's discarded newspaper and reads about a local politician who wants to send a message to the "Huns and barbarians" responsible for the destruction of the construction site. He doesn't even read the entire article. He dozes off while waiting for the dryer. The sound of bells ringing wakes him. At first he



thinks fire trucks, but then he sees the Santa outside, and leaving he empties his pockets into Santa's pot.

Christmas Day and Bart is alone. He wakes to a collect call from Olivia, and talks to her for a while, but she is no happier than he is. He tries to help her, suggesting that despite her desire to leave Vegas she should give it a month to see if she can settle in. She argues. Her time in Vegas so far included a man she met who drugged and raped her, a lousy job, and a distinct lack of connection to anything good. Bart listens to her, and before he can think about what he's saying, he blurts out a truth of his own. He tells her he has been thinking about committing suicide. He tries to explain it to her, how mired in life he feels, but she's young and can't comprehend it. He tells her he'll send her five hundred dollars—no strings, addressing it to her General Delivery, Vegas. When she argues, he repeats himself, adding that there will be no return address on the envelope, so she should really pick it up. Then he hangs up.

Mary calls, feeling sorry for him, and invites him to come for leftovers, but Bart lies, telling her he has other plans to go out. The disappointment in her voice is noticeable, so Bart adds that he's decided to go to the New Year's party. That cheers her up again, and he hangs up. The next time the phone rings is an even bigger surprise. Magliore calls to congratulate him on his recent adventures, without saying too much on the phone of course. He tells Bart that he surprised him, actually managing to do something. Then he tells Bart that unfortunately, it didn't slow the construction company down one bit. They had duplicates of everything, he tells him, and they were up and running the next day. Bart hadn't managed to buy himself an extra twelve hours. Merry Christmas.

Bart looks through his mail and gets a few painful reminders. All center around his moving, and everyone else's desire to see him gone so that the property can be razed for the new highway. He even gets one from the councilman who reminds him of the Eminent Domain law which requires him to be out by January 19th and his concern that as yet no relocation paperwork had been submitted. He wanted to make sure Bart realized that until that happened, he wouldn't get his money. Bart throws it in the garbage.

He sits later thinking about Charlie, remembering the tumor that took him, and recalling the origins of "Fred" and "George". He thinks about how Mary seems to have gotten past the tragedy while it still soured in him daily. It just seemed wrong to Bart that something so perfect could be taken away.



Part Two: December 31, 1973

Part Two: December 31, 1973 Summary

On New Year's Eve, Bart drives to Wally's party. Two blocks away, his hand goes into his overcoat to find a small foil pouch, marveling at how small it is. Surely something so little wouldn't be too terrible. He takes the mescaline, then is joined by Tina Howard Wallace. Wally joins them outside, thrilled that Bart attended. Wally Hamner knows how to throw a party, and even has a theory built around party size and the inevitability he calls the Pleasure Principle. Mary sees him and introduces the man she's been dancing with as Dick Jackson. Mary leaves for the kitchen, and Dick's wife comes over looking for a bathroom. He shows her where it is, leaving Bart there just as the mescaline is starting to unravel his brain. From then on, some words amuse him to no end, his cigarette takes on a beauty he'd never noticed before, and his legs feel jittery.

Bart confesses to Mary that he's hallucinating on mescaline. Bart escapes Mary's concern, slipping into Wally's den. There he meets Phil Drake, a former priest who left his mother church and now spends his time ministering to kids in Bart's condition. Phil offers to take Bart home, and Bart is relieved. Bart asks Phil whether he thinks the soul goes to heaven, and even asks about suicide, but he doesn't get any answers. Once at home, Bart sees on the TV screen the familiar ball, poised for the drop from Times Square. He thinks about New Year's and suddenly makes a resolution of his own. When the ball drops and the date 1974 flashes across the screen, he swings hard at the screen with a hammer. He kicks out the plug and sleeps on the couch.

Part Two: December 31, 1973 Analysis

Bart goes to Wally's party, deciding to take the Mescaline Olivia gave him before going in. By the time he gets a drink and finds Mary, he is beginning to feel the effects and having a hard time hiding it. She asks him if he's alright, and whether or not he wants a doctor, but Bart finds that absurd. When he tells her he is hallucinating on Mescaline, her demeanor changes from concern to disappointment, and Bart shakes her off. He makes his way through the house and finally finds Wally's den, slips in and closes the door behind him. He doesn't have long to appreciate the sound muffler before a voice greets him and he finds himself face to face with Phil Drake. Phil knows a lot about drugs, having looked after street kids who did drugs, and he estimates that Bart is peaking now. Relieved, Bart asks Phil about his belief where the soul is concerned and whether or not a person committing suicide would still be accepted into heaven. Phil doesn't know and admits that he isn't affiliated with the church anymore. He does offer to drive Bart home and Bart gratefully agrees. They slip out and talk little on the way home. The passing lights are as much as Bart can handle.

Once Phil gets Bart home, he calls a cab and asks Bart if he'll be alright. Bart says he will, and sits in front of the television after wishing him a Happy New Year and watching



the cab pull away. On the screen is the familiar ball, poised for its drop, and Bart is suddenly inspired to make a resolution. He gets a hammer from the kitchen, and when the ball hits the bottom and the screen flashes the new year, Bart swings into the screen as hard as he can. It sputters and dies, and Bart kicks out the plug to be safe. Then he lays on the couch, fully clothed and with every light burning, and sleeps like a baby.



Part Three: January 5, 7 1974

Part Three: January 5, 7 1974 Summary

It has taken days for Bart to feel normal again. In a way, it helped him. Bart feels as though his brain has been swept clean. Mary calls him on the first, cautiously feeling him out, but Bart has an absolutely sane and normal conversation with her. However, he can't understand why he killed the television. He goes shopping and enjoys the normalcy of getting groceries until a woman in front of him has a brain hemorrhage and dies in front of him. He wonders about the significance of this omen.

On the way home, Bart finds himself wondering what happened to Charlie's clothes. He goes up into the partial attic and begins randomly opening boxes. He finds three boxes filled with Charlie's clothing. Eventually, the smell of mothballs drives him back downstairs, shaking. He drinks so much that he no longer thinks.

Mid-morning on the seventh the doorbell rings, and Bart opens it to see a congenial looking man standing there with a briefcase. Phillip T. Fenner introduces himself as a lawyer working for the city council. Bart calls Mary, trying to find out what she's told Fenner about him. He tells her that Fenner is looking for enough information to call for a competency hearing. She recalls that she did tell Fenner that Bart is going to be seeing a psychiatrist.

Fenner gets defensive, saying that the city made a fair offer, and that he has to move. Bart hints he may hire his own lawyer to tie up the future of this house and their roadwork indefinitely. Fenner offers Bart an extra five thousand dollars, but says that's as high as he can go, and they won't tell anyone about the girl. Bart realizes he's been watched or bugged, which changes everything. If it gets out about the girl, he and Mary are done for sure. At three he calls Fenner and tells him to send the form, saying that he'll bring the signed form to his office on Wednesday, but until then they have to leave him alone. Bart tells him that he also wants a cashier's check waiting for him when he brings the form in.

Part Three: January 5, 7 1974 Analysis

Bart gets past the vacuuming his mind received from the mescaline, but it takes several days before he feels any semblance of normal. He manages to assure Mary that he's fine when she calls him the day after the party, but he isn't as sure of that as he says he is. Bart still can't figure out why he broke his television. He had really liked it, and now missed it. It bothered him that he did it.

When a woman collapses in front of him in the grocery store, he's convinced it's a sign of some kind. She dies after getting the same walleyed look that Charlie used to get when he had his seizures. What it does is remind him of his son, and on the way home he can't stop wondering what happened to his clothes. After having a drink, he is



inspired to look for them, and after some searching he finds three boxes. He goes through them, trying to picture Charlie in them, and remembering until the smell of mothballs overcomes him. He goes back downstairs, and drinks until he doesn't think any more.

When the doorbells rings that morning, Bart is so ready for companionship of any kind that he would likely have let anyone in—even the enemy. Phillip Fenner isn't the enemy, but he's their legal council, which is almost as bad. He starts out smiling, but when Bart confirms that he's already been nosing around, his demeanor changes. Now less congenial, he tells Bart that he has to move, period. Bart disagrees. He reminds Phillip that he can find a lawyer interested in going up against the eminent domain laws, and avoid having to move for week or even months. Bart actually thinks he might have the upper hand until Phillip tells him that they are willing to up the evaluation another five thousand, and no one will hear about the girl. That they know about Olivia scares Bart. What else do they know, he immediately worries, but since nothing is mentioned he figures he's safe. He gets Fenner's number, telling him he'll call him later. At three he calls Fenner back and tells him he'll sign the form, but he has some conditions. Fenner is tense, but he needn't be. All Bart wants is a cashier's check when he gets there, and to be left alone until the very last day. Fenner has little qualms about agreeing, but when he adds how happy he is that Bart is being rational, Bart tells him where to go and hangs up.



Part Three: January 8-11, 1974

Part Three: January 8-11, 1974 Summary

Bart visits Magliore, who isn't happy to see him, but who warms as Bart talks. When Bart tells him about the five thousand dollar bribe and the knowledge of Olivia, Magliore makes a quick call and gives someone Bart's address, telling them to take the van. Later, Magliore tells him he is lucky he wasn't tailed. He reminds Bart that he is asking him to commit a cardinal sin; he's never been responsible for someone he didn't know. Magliore still isn't ready to commit.

He is filling out the forms at home when Magliore's men show up with their van. They sweep for bugs and find several. Fortunately, none are in the garage. One is amazed at how Bart destroyed the TV with only one hit. Bart grinds the bugs under his heel.

At the bank, at 2:30, Bart writes out a deposit slip and a withdrawal slip, both for \$32,250 exactly. The cashier provides it to him in cash. He refuses a zippered bag and puts the bundles of cash into his overcoat pockets.

At home, he finds an envelope and his checkbook, adds up the new balance, noting that it comes to \$35,053.49. He puts Mary's name and address on the envelope, slides the checkbook inside, and puts enough stamps on it to send it first class. Then he makes himself a drink.

By late that night, Bart sits in his living room, listening to the radio. Earlier, he'd taken a couple of ten dollar bills and bought himself two rock and roll albums—Let It Bleed by the Rolling Stones and a Crosby, Stills and Nash album that had rubbed him so wrong that he'd broken it over his knee. He thinks about the things he's done in the last two months, remembering his mescaline trip, Olivia's touch, talking to Magliore, and so much more. As bad as some of it had been, some of it was quite wonderful. He thinks again about Olivia and the realization hits him that he's free. His mind takes him to half a dozen other destinations before he comes back to where—the world is round. That's the deadly truth of it, he tells himself. He can't escape it. He finally falls asleep and dreams of Charlie.

Magliore calls Bart the next afternoon, stating he will do the deal for nine thousand dollars. Magliore tells Bart he never wants to see him again—or even read about him in the paper for that matter. Bart has a financial matter regarding a trust fund, not for his wife, for which he needs Magliore's help. Magliore says he will think about it and let him know on Tuesday if he will help.

After he hangs up, Bart finds himself thinking about Olivia again. He calls a travel agency, but quickly hangs up.



Part Three: January 8-11, 1974 Analysis

Bart goes to Magliore's again, presumably to convince him to change his mind. Magliore is reluctant, but listening to Bart he is interested. He sends his men to sweep Bart's house, and several listening devices are found. Bart signs the papers, and makes himself a drink. He is a man with a plan. One of Magliore's men asks how many times he hit the television, and Bart say only once. When they leave, he makes himself a drink.

Bart is getting his affairs in order. He begins by getting his check—a cashier's check so that he didn't have to wait for his money. Waiting for Magliore to make a decision but having already made his own, Bart takes and cashes this check in it's entirety. Then he goes home, balances his checkbook, and gets it ready to mail to Mary. This is a man who is making plans. He has resolve and a destination in mind, and for once, the voices of reason in his head are entirely quiet. Perhaps those parts of him as well have given up. He rewards himself with a well deserved drink when he is finished.

Bart waits, but still hasn't heard from Magliore. He buys a couple of records, finding Let It Bleed by the Rolling Stones to be the frame of mind that suits him best. Sitting there, he thinks about the things he's accomplished or screwed up in the last two months. Funny, as hard as it's all been, there are still some highlights. He remembers the New Year's party at Wally's and he thinks about Olivia, and even thinks about Mary and how he mishandled their lunch at Handy Andy's. His thoughts drift back again to Olivia, and he realizes for a minute that he's actually free. He entertains the idea of just leaving. Driving to Vegas to find Olivia, he would then take her away from it all. Starting in the South Seas, he takes them on a wild ride in his mind, seeing all the cities he's ever wanted to, but all roads lead home. When his thoughts return, he stops thinking about leaving.

Magliore finally calls, and after some arrangements are explained, they have a deal. Bart asks a favor of him involving a trust fund and at first Magliore declines, but relents when Bart tells him it isn't for Mary and there is no way it will ever trace back to him. Hanging up, he finds himself thinking about Olivia, and the urge to travel hits him again. He gets out the Yellow Pages and actually dials the number for one, but loses his nerve and hangs up when they answer.



Part Three: January 12-15, 1974

Part Three: January 12-15, 1974 Summary

Bart goes to the bowling alley to meet Magliore's men, who are bowling in lane sixteen. They shake hands and bowl a few frames, although Bart is seriously out of practice. Five frames later, Bart is enjoying himself even though his score is half of theirs. Ray tells him about the forty sticks of Malglinite they have for him. Each stick is four inches long and each comparable to sixty times that of a stick of dynamite. There's also four hundred feet of fuse, which requires an electrical charge to set it off like a battery. Bart can cut lengths of fuse and splice them together if he wants it all to go at once. They leave to go to the tavern for the exchange. Once there, Ray checks the money before making the transfer of the wooden crate to Bart's wagon. Ray tells him the fuse is in the bottom and suggests he should bowl more often to make use of the powerful swing he has. Then they leave him there.

Bart opens the crate at home, checking underneath, seeing that the fuse is there too. He tries not to think about the box in the closet, but it's as though evil emanates throughout the house and Bart is unable to escape it.

The next day, Bart drives down to the Landing Strip to look for Phil Drake, finding him in a diner. Bart puts a roll of bills on the counter, and tells Phil it's for his place and to further the good work he is doing. Phil says he can't accept it, as it feels like Bart is getting ready to commit a cardinal sin to him and by accepting Bart's money, Phil feels like he would only be accelerating the process. Phil has a process of eliciting donations to keep his coffeehouse open, and considers it his penance. His penance doesn't include necrophilia though, and that's what this money feels like.

Drake says he does things this way because he's locked in. Bart realizes that he's locked in also, and everything he's done so far has been leading up to an eventuality. Bart makes one last effort to climb back into life by proposing to Drake to close his business, form a partnership, and go into business together. Drake doesn't take Bart up on his offer, and won't take his five thousand dollars, so Bart stuffs it into the coffee cup of an old boozer.

Bart buys a Die Hard battery with cables. He thinks for a moment about what would happen if the police showed up with a search warrant now. He had guns in the garage, wads of cash in the kitchen, and explosives in the closet.

On Tuesday Bart goes to see Magliore, apologizes for being a pest, and asks Magliore to do one last thing for him. Bart tells Magliore about Olivia, asking Magliore to find her, and invest fifteen thousand in whatever he wants, but to pay Olivia the dividends. If Magliore can't find Olivia, then he should keep the dividends himself then as nuisance pay. Magliore says that this sounds a lot like a last will and testament and that Bart is creeping him out, but in the end he agrees, on the condition he never hears from Bart



again. Magliore tells Bart that he makes no sense to him, and Bart agrees. It's a senseless world.

Part Three: January 12-15, 1974 Analysis

Bart follows Magliore's instructions, and meets his men at the bowling alley. They bowl a few frames and then Ray describes what he has for Bart and how to use it. When he's done, he asks if Bart has questions, but there are none. They finish their game, and head to the exchange spot at the tavern up the highway in separate vehicles. Bart is waiting for them when they get there, and strictly business now, Ray asks him immediately for his end, the money. He looks at it quickly, and then helps transfer the heavy crate to Bart's wagon. They leave him there after advising him to bowl more often.

Bart takes the crate home, and hauls it into the living room to check its contents before putting it in the living room closet. He tries to forget about it, but it calls to him like a great evil emanating from the closet and encompassing everything.

Bart is finalizing his affairs. Despite his occasional drift into fantasies about leaving, he is putting things in order and there is no room in his plans for a future. He hasn't so much as looked for a place to live or a job. Instead, he's bought explosives, and now heads to the Landing Strip to look for Phil Drake. He finally finds the drop-in coffee house Phil told him about, and when he finds Phil, he tries to give him a roll of bills amounting to five thousand dollars to go towards the charity work he is doing, but Phil refuses. He says his penance is to convince people with too much money to share with those who haven't any by telling them true stories about the very sad cases he sees. He can't accept Bart's money because it feels too much like necrophilia to him.

Bart tries to convince Phil that he has no intention of committing suicide, but Phil doesn't believe him. The evidence supports him. Bart asks Phil why he does things the way he does, and Phil tells him it is the way it is . . . he's locked in. With horrible clarity, Bart suddenly realizes the truth of Phil's statement and how it applies to him. Everything he's done for the last two months has been leading to one eventuality, and for the first time, Bart sees that he is locked in too. Phil asks if he's alright, and Bart tries one more time to build a life line. He offers Phil a business partnership. He tells Phil to walk away now and go into business with him, but Phil thinks he's kidding. Frustrated, Bart leaves, dropping the five thousand dollar roll into an old boozier's coffee cup on the way out.

Bart gets the jumper cables and battery he needs, and adds them to the closet, feeling every bit like something out of a Reader's Digest story. One thing he lacks is fear. His future is already decided. There is nothing to fear.

Bart continues his personal countdown. Turned down by Phil, there is no turning back now, and Bart gets organized. He sees Magliore, and sets up a trust fund of sorts for Olivia. He gives Magliore fifteen thousand dollars to invest as he sees fit, and pay the dividends to Olivia, plus three thousand for his trouble as a finder's fee of sorts.

Magliore agrees, but the whole thing creeps him out because of its similarity to a last will and testament. His only condition is that Bart never call him again. Bart agrees, they shake, and Bart leaves.



Part Three: January 16-19, 1974

Part Three: January 16-19, 1974 Summary

On Wednesday Bart mails the checkbook to Mary, and then treats himself to a movie—*The Exorcist*.

Mary calls, pleased, thinking he's sold the house. He lies, saying that he's found a big house in the country and he's going to get it together. He says that by paying her out, he's agreeing to her idea of divorce. He reassures her there will be no animosity. She tells him she's going back to school. He searches his mind for something memorable to say. Finally, he asks if she remembers the first day Charlie went to school. He remembers how strong Mary was when it was time to leave him behind, and how he had waffled, wanting to take his son home instead, and feeling like a traitor.

They decide she'll get the divorce, and she asks if he's slept with anyone else. He lies again and tells her no. Neither has she, she tells him. When he says goodbye to her, he tells her he loves her. It was more habit than anything else, but it isn't such a bad ending, he decides.

Bart calls Ordner, learning that the board decided to get out of the laundry business but will keep the laundromats and change the name to Handi-Wash. Bart tells Ordner to fire Vinnie, as his job will eventually sour, then tells Ordner not to take his frustration with him out on Vinnie. When Ordner objects, Bart calls him on the fact that he tried to hang Bart, looking for information that maybe he might have washed his sheets for free or tucked into petty cash now and then. Ordner is shaken, trying to figure out who told Bart, who lies and tells him it's someone on the inside, and asks him to think some more about Vinnie, reminding him that he never knows who Bart might talk to next.

It comes to him that a sure sign of insanity is a man standing by himself in a house on an empty street and laughing, but even that doesn't stifle his laughter.

The next evening, carefully loads the guns. The huge Weatherbee takes eight shells. He takes an ornamental pillow outside to try out the gun. When he pulls the trigger, it explodes in his hands. His shoulder hurts. The damage the gun did to the car and garage amazes him. The bullet continued through the station wagon and out the other side of the garage where it left a ragged hole. In the house, he's unable to stop crying, overcome with great racking sobs bordering on hysteria.

Part Three: January 16-19, 1974 Analysis

The next day he mails the checkbook to Mary, and takes himself to see the *Exorcist* afterwards.



Mary calls, and after congratulating him on the sale of the house, she asks if the reason he sent her half was his way of acknowledging their divorce next. Bart says yes, and tells her that he's found a house in the country. The lies come easy. Mary tells him she's going back to school, and they talk a little bit about Charlie, bringing Bart a flood of memories. They agree she'll pursue the divorce, and when he says goodbye after assuring her he won't contest it, he tells her he loves her. It is automatic, but a nice way to say goodbye for good he decides afterward.

Bart calls Ordner in an effort to save Vinnie's life. From Bart's perspective, the corporation is paying Vinnie just enough to hold him hostage financially, but without helping him realize that he is trading his future for the small gratification now. Bart had tried to explain it to Vinnie, and Steve knew it, but Vinnie had hit him. Now Bart tries to appeal to Steve, but it falls on deaf ears. Bart believes Steve is taking out his frustration about Bart on Vinnie, and backs it up by telling Steve that he knows about the attempts to find out whether Bart had taken money out of petty cash or had ever done his personal laundry. That startles Steve, and he wants to know who told Bart, so Bart lies and tells him it's one of his insiders. When Bart hangs up, he's laughing. It strikes him that only a lunatic would stand in an empty house, on an empty street, laughing his head off, but it doesn't stop him.

The next evening, he brings in his guns and gets them ready, still not thinking consciously ahead. He loads them both, and wonders if the Weatherbee is everything he was told it was. He takes a pillow from the couch and goes outside to test fire it once. He positions himself the way he remembers from hundreds of western and war films, and slowly squeezes the trigger. The resulting explosion takes his breath away, leaves a welt on his shoulder despite the pillow, and opens a hole in the garage that continues through both sides of the station wagon and out the other side of the building. He examines the holes, amazed, before going in to make himself a t.v. dinner and a pot of coffee. After finishing, he lays down on the couch and is overwhelmed by self pity. Seeing no exit plan, he sobs until he is almost hysterical, unable to stop himself.

Roadwork

Summary

Analysis

B



Part Three: January 20, 1974

Part Three: January 20, 1974 Summary

When Bart wakes he at first panics, thinking he'd slept too late, but then he gets ahold of himself and gets busy. He bolts and locks the doors and windows, hauls the box of explosives out of the closet, and muscles it up the stairs. He begins peeling back fuse wire and rigging sticks together. He puts a few in each room upstairs, making a small bundle for Charlie's room, and continuing downstairs after throwing the coil of fuse over the railing. He wires every room downstairs as well, hooking up the positive side to the battery. He moves the easy chair into the kitchen and turns it upside down next to the window. Now he feels ready.

Just after ten one police car and a green sedan pull up, and though the police get out of their vehicle, they are relaxed and obviously expecting no trouble. They stand, leaning against the hood, talking to Fenner, who gets out of the sedan. Then everything just stops. Time seems suspended while Bart carries on a conversation in his head with Fred. Telling himself it's time to put up or shut up, he takes in the scene as it unfolds in front of his eyes. He tells Fred he's going ahead now. Fred asks if he plans to wait for the media, and George responds with the affirmative. Fred and George continue their discussion in Bart's head, Fred pleading with George not to hurt anyone, but telling him that despite his earlier reluctance, this seems right now. Fred tells George he's scared, but George is in complete control.

"Roll it", Bart says out loud, and time starts again for him. He shoots out the tire of the police cruiser. The living room window and the tire explode. The policemen return fire. Bart fires again and Fenner's briefcase explodes, then fires again and hits the sedan, blowing out its tire. They exchange a bit more gunfire before Fenner yells at everyone to stop so that he can talk to Bart. Instead, Bart empties the Magnum into the sedan, yelling. He continues to yell nonsensically. Finally the police tell Fenner to shut up, afraid that he's just encouraging Bart.

Five police cruisers arrive, flanking him, but he continues to shoot. One bullet hits a policeman in the forearm, and he immediately loses all interest in Bart. By the time the local news van finally arrives, Bart has also taken a bullet in the thigh. Seeing the van, he yells until he gets Fenner's attention and tells him he wants to talk to the news people, promising to stop shooting if he can talk to them. Fenner still refuses, but a reporter tells Bart he hears him, that Bart has offered to stop and Fenner isn't capitulating. Bart tells them that the house is wired with explosives and he threatens to blow the whole house up if his conditions aren't met. He wants them to stop trying to enter his house, and he wants to talk to the news people. A reporter comes in and offers to tell Bart's side if he'll leave the house with him. Bart has no side. Fifteen minutes pass before they begin lobbing tear gas at the house. Bart turns on stereo. Mick Jagger is singing "You can't always get what you want . . ." when the first cannister finds its way into the house. "But if you try sometimes, you might find, you get what you need . . ."



continues on the stereo and Bart grabs the red alligator clip and attaches it to the negative pole, saying, "Let's see, Fred". He closes his eyes and thinks that he is exploding from the inside out, and then white.

Part Three: January 20, 1974 Analysis

This is Bart's big day, and when he wakes up he at first thinks he overslept, but then he gets with it. He secures himself in the house, and then rigs both stories and the garage with the crate of explosives he got from Magliore. He has all fuses linked to a main battery in the kitchen, and he's hooked up the positive side. He has barricaded himself behind an armchair and has his rifles within easy grasp. Now he is ready.

Oddly, after all of the internal arguing that George and Fred have done, they seem to be at peace with the direction things have gone in. The only concern Fred has is that George be careful enough not to hurt anyone else. The time for arguing is done. Fred admits that he's scared, but George tells him it's all fine. He has everything under control.

When the two cars pull up, time seems to stop for Bart. Like a movie on pause, he takes in the entire scene. The policemen don't look worried, expecting no trouble, and Fenner is talking to them out front while Bart carries a conversation on in his head with George and Fred. Then, snapping out of it, he says "roll it" to himself out loud, and begins the final chapter of his life. He shoots out the front tire of the police cruiser, and they return fire. From there it escalates until Bart shoots one officer in the arm and takes a shot himself in the thigh, but never once does he think about giving up. In his mind, there is no other way. He waits until the media arrives, and then negotiates with the police. Telling them he has explosives, he asks to speak to the press. At first Fenner refuses, but Bart convinces them it would be in their best interest. The reporter who approaches seems fearless. He confirms out loud that Bart has promised to stop shooting if he can talk to media and that the person who seems to be in charge has refused. It is a gutsy move, and it works. He is allowed to go into the house. He spends a few minutes with Bart while the rest of his crew is setting up their camera across the street at Bart's request. He gets the basics from Bart, and tries to talk him out of his plan, but Bart has another agenda. Within fifteen minutes, with cameras rolling, tear gas is dispensed inside the house, and Bart gives up. He just hooks up the other side of the battery and blows himself up, and the entire house around him. Fortunately, he'd warned the reporter to tell everyone else to move back, and there are no other casualties.



Characters

Barton George Dawes

Barton Dawes lives at 1241 Crestallen Street West. Ten months earlier, after surveyors had done their job, the Dawes's received a letter from the state explaining that the 784 highway extension would be going through their property. They had a year to move. Eminent domain rules meant that despite having lived in his home for twenty years and brought his children up there, the government could just decide to take it all away from him, and he has no recourse. Barton is almost sick every time he thinks about it. It is this law that sets the stage for this story.

When Barton began receiving those letters announcing his forced move, something in him snaps. His personality fractures, and increasingly he finds himself doing things he doesn't remember. In the beginning they are just stupid things, but as the moving date draws closer, the fractured side is more and more in control. When his son Charlie had been alive, they had played a game where he was George and Charlie was Fred. Like a vaudeville pair they joked, and after Charlie's death, Bart took on both characters, hearing the voices in his head. At times, George would make decisions that Bart would scarcely remember, like the decision to buy a .44 Magnum and a .460 Weatherbee on his way to work one morning.

Bart also is responsible for the permanent closure of the Blue Ribbon Laundry. Another victim of the eminent domain statute, the Laundry had to move and Bart was responsible for closing the deal on the relocation plant. Instead, he let the option to purchase lapse, allowing another company to buy it out from under him. Bart hands in his resignation the same day and that is the last straw for Mary. She leaves him, and his downward spiral continues. He tries to buy explosives from a local mobster/businessman, and when Magliore refuses telling Bart he thinks he's spun a main, Bart is disappointed at first, but then he hears a public service announcement extolling the dangers of improper gasoline storage, and he gets another idea. He fills his tank, and when he gets home, he siphons off enough fuel to fill a box full of recyclable bottles. Taking them and a pail of gasoline as well, he does considerable damage to the construction site, but doesn't manage to delay them.

Feeling more and more trapped by his situation, Bart begins giving away his money. He makes a deal to sell his house and signs the papers, but he only if he gets an immediate cheque. They agree, and he uses the money to get explosives from Magliore who, having seen the news, has newfound respect for Bart—even if he is crazy. Bart wires his house for the end of days and when Fenner and the police arrive to evict him, they find themselves in a battle they were not prepared for. Bart shoots both cars and puts several bullets into the siding of the house next door before hitting one policeman in the upper arm and taking a bullet himself in the thigh. After telling a reporter his brief story and allowing them to set up on the lawn across the street, Bart fires a few more



shots before the tear gas is thrown in. Then Bart gives up. He knows it's over, and connecting the second alligator clip, he excuses himself from life.

Mary Dawes

Barton's wife of many years, Mary lives with him at their home on Crestallen Street West until Bart begins to unravel. He refuses to sell their home, despite the eminent domain laws that force the issue, and lies to her about looking for an alternate place to live until she finds out that Bart has been lying to her. When she learns that he let the option to purchase the property for the plant lapse, costing everyone their jobs she moves out, returning to her parent's home. Immediately, she begins to grow. She goes out, buys new dresses, and even broaches the subject of divorce first. When Bart realizes the spiral he's in, he finally sells the home, mailing Mary her share and by doing so announcing his agreement to divorce. Mary is thrilled, and tells him of her plans to finish her schooling.

Perhaps Mary should have looked a little closer at what Bart was doing. As his wife of so many years, she should have recognized his fall from sanity, but she doesn't. She believes the half baked story he tells her about finding a house in the country and looking for a new job. Perhaps, not knowing what else to do, she just chose to believe the lies instead. Still, the warning signs are numerous. When Mary goes to Wally's New Year's party and sees Bart high on mescaline for the first time in his life, she should have seen that he was in trouble. Calling him the next day, she suggests he go to a psychiatrist, which doesn't really do much good.

Mary, however, blossoms after leaving Bart. No longer dependent on him, she is fearful at first, but finds her confidence quickly. Despite staying with her parents temporarily, she doesn't wallow. Largely, the difference between them is that she allowed herself to grieve when Charlie died, and Bart died a little with him instead.

Charlie Dawes

A blond haired, blue eyed boy, Charlie is the second child of Bart and Mary Dawes. Charlie died years before the story takes place, but still deeply affected Bart and Mary both. While Mary grieved and healed though, Bart held it all in and it becomes a driving force in his later decisions. Charlie was diagnosed with brain cancer. A tumor the size of a walnut was lodged deep inside Charlie's brain, and it was determined almost immediately that surgery was not an option. The Dawes lost their only living son, (as their first child had been stillborn) several months later.

When Charlie was alive, he and Bart were extremely close. They played a game where they behaved like a vaudeville duo where Bart was "George" and Charlie was "Fred". When Charlie passed away, Bart, in his grief, absorbed both personalities, and heard both voices in his head. Three years after his death, Charlie still came to his father almost nightly in dreams.



Olivia Brenner

Bart found Olivia Brenner hitchhiking on the side of the freeway not long after Mary left him. She is young, vital, and has an edge a person who has been badly taken advantage of would have that often comes out in conversation. Every kindness is perceived as an attempt by that person to get into her pants in her mind. Skeptical, and sarcastic, she and Bart sort of hit it off. Two damaged people finding each other, he convinces her to stay at his home overnight, and after much reluctance, she accepts.

Olivia makes it to Vegas, and even calls Bart on Christmas like he asks her to, but the news she has isn't good. She met someone after just a few days in Vegas who drugged her and then raped her. Discouraged and hurt, she wants to leave, but Bart tries to convince her to give it a month before she gives up. Then he tells her he is sending her some money to General Delivery. She argues, but he insists he'll send it anyway without a return address, and hangs up.

Before Bart makes his final stand in the Crestallen house, he sets up a trust fund for Olivia through Magliore.

Salvatore Magliore

A large man with thick glasses, he had the nickname Sally One Eye because of a cataract he had in one eye. He is supposedly a crook of large proportions who runs the legitimate business called Magliore's Guaranteed Used Cars. Magliore becomes an important part of Bart's plan. Bart needs explosives, and has no other sources. Finally, showing initiative that proves Bart intends to follow his course of action with or without help, Magliore relents and agrees to provide him with what's necessary.

Magliore is a businessman now, but admits to even having killed people in the past, but no one that didn't deserve it. He gets Bart what he asks for, but that doesn't end things. Bart calls him again, needing just one more thing. Reluctantly, Salvatore sees him, and Bart asks him to set up an investment fund for Olivia that pays regular dividends. He agrees, adding only one term of his own. He wants no more contact with Bart whatsoever. Bart agrees and they part after shaking hands, Magliore leaves with a strange kind of respect for Bart.

Steve Ordner

A corporate man in every way, Steve represents the outfit that owns the Blue Ribbon Laundry, among other interests. Under this corporate umbrella, the Blue Ribbon stopped being the family run and cared for business that Bart had worked his way up in and with to a balance sheet that decided the survival and quality of their work. Steve is the one who fires Bart when Bart lets the option to purchase the Waterford plant lapse, letting it go to another firm instead, and ultimately forcing the demise of the Blue Ribbon Laundry.



Steve threatens to fire Bart, but Bart resigns first, and offers to explain himself in person, but Steve is not satisfied by the explanations he finally gets. Bart asks him if the closure of the Laundry will affect him personally at all, and Steve has to admit that he really doesn't care because it won't. With the truth out in the open, there is little left to say, so Bart leaves.

Don Tarkington

Founding father of the Blue Ribbon Laundry, and the first to give Bart a decent job. Run as a family business, Don and his son even help Bart through the extra schooling he would need in order to advance further with them, even shouldering the cost for the courses with a no interest loan. When the course is finally complete, they celebrate, buying Bart a watch that is engraved with their congratulations. Overcome with emotion, Bart is loyal to the end, even behaving in a manner he hoped honored their memory when the time to move came.

Ray Tarkington

Son of Don Tarkington, he helped to run the family business until a large corporation bought them out.

Phil Drake

Former priest, Bart meets Phil at Wally Hamner's party when he hides in Wally's den to escape the din of the party. High on mescaline, Bart is hallucinating and wants to leave but is afraid to drive, so Phil offers to take him home. Later, when Bart is settling his affairs, he looks for Drake. After finding him Bart tries to give him a five thousand dollar contribution to his efforts to help those less fortunate, but Phil won't accept it. He explains to Bart that his penance is to chase wealthy people for donations to keep his coffee house afloat, and he has no desire to take money from a man who appears to be settling his affairs.

Dave Albert

A reporter/cameraman, Dave is among the first group of television people to arrive. He hears Bart's request to talk to them, and with bravery that borders on stupidity, he tries to get closer. Tackled by police, he still ends up talking to Bart after Bart threatens that otherwise he'll blow up the house. Dave, dressed in a plaid shirt, hammers on Bart's front door, and Bart lets him in. He tells Dave to get his crew to set up across the street in five minutes or he's in trouble. He tells Bart that it doesn't look like he's the kind of guy that would hurt anyone, but Bart is insistent. Dave asks Bart about the explosives, ever the reporter, and Bart tells him he found them in his Christmas stocking. Dave likes the line and tells Bart he'll use it. In the few moments he has with Bart, he discovers the root of his issue—the extension. Scribbling furiously, he writes the particulars down and then



tries to talk Bart out of the house. He promises to tell Bart`s side, but Bart lets him in on his reality. There is no side. Then he is told to go away.

Dave Radner

Dave runs the wash room at the Blue Ribbon Laundry.

Walter Hamner

Wally is a friend to both Mary and Bart, inviting them both to his New Year's party. A master at throwing a successful party, Wally had theories about parties that included the Pleasure Principle Push and the Tidal Effect to explain people's behavior. These observations, he claimed, were based on many years of study that resulted in his ability to throw a successful party.

Ron Stone

Ron is the foreman at the Blue Ribbon Laundry. He began his day at seven and has worked there for thirty years. Decades of trying to make himself heard over the variety of machines running have conditioned Ron to bellow everything he says, intimidating some employees.

Harold Swinnerton

Owner and proprietor of Harvey's Gun Shop, Harry survives his brother Harvey and now runs the gun shop on his own. A competent clerk, he easily aids Barton in the purchase of a handgun and a shotgun.



Objects/Places

Harvey's Gun Shop

Gun shop run by Harry, where Bart purchases a .44 Magnum and a .460 Weatherbee. Harry happily supplies Bart, thinking the Weatherbee is a gift for Bart's cousin.

784 Extension

Name of the highway extension that is going directly through the house Bart and Mary own and the business that has been Bart's life for many years, the Blue Ribbon Laundry.

Blue Ribbon Laundry

Owned by father and son, Don and Ray Tarkington, the Blue Ribbon Laundry is the job Bart worked his way up in. Don and Ray saw something in Bart, putting him through school so that he could advance further still in their business. When big business buys the company, Bart is running it, and as a direct result of his refusal to move, the Laundry goes under.

Waterford

Name of the district that should have housed the new plant for the Blue Ribbon Laundry. Bart lets the option to purchase the Waterford plant expire, allowing another company to purchase it out from under them.

Magliore's Used Cars

Legitimate business of mobster Salvatore "One Eye" Magliore, who after first refusing, finally agrees to sell Bart the explosives he wants. Located off highway sixteen, it is about one mile past the bowling alley.

Product four synthetic mescaline

Chemical that Olivia gave to Bart as she was leaving for Vegas, telling him that it is the cleanest, heaviest chemical ever made, and adding that maybe he should just flush it when he gets home.



Brite-Kleen

Name of the company that Tom took a job with after the Blue Ribbon closes.

Eminent Domain

State statute that ensures Bart can do little but take fair market value for his home and move—even if he doesn't want to, along with his neighbors and even the plant he works in.

Principle of the Pleasure Push

Theory extolled by Wally Hamner that maintains that if enough people get together they will be pushed into having a good time.

Tidal Effect

Another theory by Wally Hamner with regard to parties that states that as a party continues, people will naturally migrate to the four corners of the house.

Handy Andy's

Restaurant that Bart meets Mary in for lunch after their separation.

Southern Comfort and ginger

Bart's preferred drink.

Norton

The district in which Magliore's Used Cars is located.



Themes

Fight versus Flight

Barton Dawes is a man of principles. He lived most of his life in the same home with his wife and suffered more than his share of heartache there. Despite that, memories of Charlie are everywhere, and in these memories he still has a bit of Charlie in his life. When the municipality tries to tell him that eminent domain statutes ensure that he must move if they deem it necessary, Bart loses it a little. Already on thin and shaky ground after losing his son, Bart has no inner resources left to fight the statute forcing him out. The trouble is that Bart doesn't want to move. Despite having almost a year's notice and being offered a fair market value for the home, Bart is unable to leave the memories of Charlie behind. Digging his heels in stubbornly, he neglects and puts off looking for another place to move to, until even Mary gets nervous. Bart lies to her, telling her he's looking, but doesn't. Meanwhile, a similar situation plays out at work for Bart. He is the one who must find the business another location as the extension goes through their building as well. He does the same thing at work as he does at home. Nothing. Instead, he lets the option to purchase an alternate plant lapse, forcing the permanent closure of the Laundry. Bart is not remorseful though. He considers it a triumph because since the business was taken over by a larger corporation, it had lost its family atmosphere and concern for employees that it used to have. He hopes that the former owners would have done something similar had they still been there. Bart is the type to fight.

Mary, on the other hand, is the type to take flight in situations of duress. Though she also lost her son, she grieved and let it go. When Bart neglects to find them a new place to live, she gets more and more worried. She doesn't take the matter into her own hands and go out looking herself though. When Bart hands in his resignation, she sees it as a last straw. She packs and goes to her mothers. Flight instead of fight. When Mary sees Bart at Wally's Hamner's New Year's party, and he confesses that he's done mescaline for the first time and is hallucinating, she tries to help at first, but as soon as Bart tells her to back off, she does instantly. Flight—not fight.

George versus Fred

Both of these personalities are fighting for control of Bart. Beginning as a vaudeville type game he played with his son, the names and persona's evolved and when Charlie died, Bart began hearing both in his head. At first, it all seems harmless enough. George is a dominant personality. Filled with outrage at being told they have to move, George begins making plans of his own. He never intends to leave. George buys guns, and as soon as the purchase is made Bart manages to forget it. George siphons fuel from his car's tank and makes small bombs, using them to do extensive damage to the construction site, and even purchases explosives from a local mobster.



Fred, on the other hand, is the voice of reason. Whenever George does something that is morally or ethically questionable, Fred steps up to play devil's advocate. Fred spends most of his time trying to get George to be reasonable. When George is less than forthcoming, Fred asks him point blank questions like "What about the guns, George?". Fred is the voice of sanity right up until the very end. George overwhelms him completely for a little while, but when Fred returns towards the end he is all out of fight. Instead, he begs George to make sure no one else gets hurt. As it is a simple request, George is happy to oblige.

When Bart connects the second terminal, causing the final explosion, Fred and George are finally at peace, both believing all is as it should be.

Eminent Domain versus Right to Property

Eminent domain statutes basically state that the government can expropriate any property they deem necessary as long as they give adequate notice and pay fair market value. While it should be understood that if construction of this kind is absolutely necessary, the government should have the right to insist and assert themselves, it should also be reasonable. If the construction proposed is unnecessary, as it was in this case, there should be a venue where the average homeowner can have some say. In the case of Bart and Mary Dawes, the eminent domain law cost them their home and Bart's place of employment he'd had for years. Each had special emotional significance to Bart. The house was filled with memories of his son, and to leave it was the equivalent of losing Charlie all over again, and the Blue Ribbon Laundry was the job he grew up in. It was run by Ray and Don Tarkington, who had once seen something special in Bart. They paid for his schooling, helping him to advance in their company, and rewarded his education with job advancements. It was a family run business with heart.

Bart missed his former employers. Bought out by big business, the Blue Ribbon Laundry was now owned by a corporation that cared little past the bottom line. If the company made them money, it stayed open. It was as simple as that.

In this particular case of eminent domain, the extension proposed was only built to satisfy a quota which would ensure the communities further federal funding in that arena. There was no benefit to traffic flow or commuters, no traffic patterns considered, and had actually no basis in practicality whatsoever. As such, without viable reason, the people being displaced should have a means to argue or disagree with the decision where location of this extension was concerned. Had there been such a forum, perhaps Barton would not have taken his own life and the Blue Ribbon Laundry would still be there.



Style

Point of View

Roadwork is told in the first person, with the perspective switching between Bart's combined personalities. It is a straightforward read none-the-less, the author having done a great job of drawing the reader into the psyche of this main character. Bart has a complex emotional make up that includes his own personality as well as the vaudeville like character he played with his son Charlie—named George, and since Charlie's death his part in the vaudeville named Fred as well. When Charlie died, Bart didn't grieve the way his wife did. Perhaps that's why she healed to some degree while Bart is now fractured emotionally into these other personalities. At first, they're just voices in his head. George talking to Fred, Fred answering, and it all seems quite harmless, but Bart finds himself stepping out now and then. He goes into the gun shop on his way to work one morning for example and buys two guns. He purchases a .44 Magnum, and a .460 Weatherbee—almost a thousand dollars worth—and as soon as he leaves the shop the entire incident could just as well have happened to someone else. In a sense it did. George did the shopping while Bart was on his way to work.

George is a confident, defiant personality that seems to have increasing control as the date for the demolition of his house approaches. Bart listens while George and Fred have discussions in his head. Fred is the voice of reason, trying to keep George from going to far, or making a mistake he can't fix. Fred tries to talk George out of letting the option to buy the Waterford plant lapse as the deadline approaches, but George shuts him out, and Bart is just along for the ride. In the end, all three seem to find agreement in the course of action taken. Even Fred doesn't argue, asking only that George not kill anyone. That is a request George has no problem with, and Bart makes sure that everyone backs up well before he connects the second terminal.

Setting

Most of Roadwork centers around two psychologically important locations. The first is Bart and Mary Dawes's home on Crestallen Street West. Bart and Mary have lived there a long time. All of their memories are ingrained everywhere Bart looks. Especially important, this home hold all of his memories of his son Charlie. Here, he took his first steps, spoke and smiled, and cried and lived. Now, since Charlie's death, this is all Bart feels he has left of Charlie.

Roadwork is about an extension being built through their home. It is about a statute called the eminent domain law that gives the government the right to expropriate your home or business or land for purposes of their own providing they pay you a fair market value. After living in his home for twenty years, making love to his wife, raising his son and surviving his death, Bart simply can't face leaving. In an effort to slow down the



construction crew, he burns and firebombs their site one late evening, but that doesn't even slow them down.

This story is also about the Blue Ribbon Laundry where Bart works. He started his job there in 1953, and this story is told in 1973/4. For twenty years, he worked his way up in the company, and the original owners, Ray and Don Tarkington, felt like family. They even helped Bart through school so that he could continue to advance with them, giving him a congratulatory watch when he finished. Now, run by a corporation, it has lost its family feeling to Bart. He resents the intrusion on the Blue Ribbon Laundry by the eminent domain law almost as much as he does about his home.

Language and Meaning

Written in straightforward English, the novel *Roadwork* is an examination of the human condition, the fragility of life, and the sometimes senseless power of government. The author takes the reader into the psyche of the main character, Bart, while he has a complete breakdown. With arguing personalities in his head, one for peace and restraint and the other for vengeance and defiance, Bart slowly shuts down. Bart loses everything. For reasons he can barely make sense of himself, he forfeits a deal on a plant suitable to move the Laundry to and loses it to another company. Without remorse, he writes his resignation and submits it. He settles his financial affairs, makes sure Mary is looked after, provides for Olivia, and then makes his final stand in his home of twenty years.

Bart is a weapons novice, but with a little explanation, he manages to competently rig his entire home with enough explosives to remove it permanently from the block, which is exactly what the demolition crew has in mind. Holding off the police just long enough to ensure that the media can set up their cameras, Bart finally gives in once they have. The cameras are rolling when tear gas finds its way inside and rather than risk capture, Bart connects the second lead and blows himself and the house up.

Structure

Roadwork by Stephen King is written in three parts, each part spanning the period of one month beginning with November 20th, 1973, and ending with part three in January, 1974. Written originally under the pen name Richard Bachman, *Roadwork* was published shortly after the death of Stephen King's mother. He is the first to admit that it might not have been his best work, but it is also one of his first attempts to write something of a more serious nature. This novel is a sharp look at the conundrum of human pain, and a definite leap from his style of writing to this point.

Each part of this novel is divided into the days of the month it covers, each chapter covering a particular day within its month. Told from the perspective of the main character, Barton George Dawes, the first part of three deals with the month of November, 1973 starting on the twentieth and continuing forward. This first section deals with Bart's employment at the Blue Ribbon Laundry, and his inability to cope with



the coming highway extension that will force his relocation, both at work and at home. As he is the man in charge at the laundry, the corporation that owns it leaves it up to Bart to handle the plant's move. A site is chosen and an offer made, but rather than deal with it before the option to purchase lapsed, Bart lapses. Distressed, and breaking down emotionally, he buys a two guns, he quits his job after forcing the plant's closure because they have nowhere to go, and even tries to buy explosives from a known mobster before going home to Mary. His wife of many years is less than impressed, and cries herself to sleep.

The second part of this novel deals with the month of December. Mary leaves Bart, and he slips even further. He uses gasoline to burn as much of the construction site one late evening as he could, but it didn't slow their progress at all. He hears from Magliore, who decides to sell Bart the explosives after all, and now Bart is set. He sells the house and uses the money to buy the explosives. What remains he disperses, giving Mary their checkbooks. On New Year's eve, they wind up at a party together and Bart does mescaline for the first time, given to him by a hitchhiker he had picked up.

The final section deals with the month of January, and Bart's last stand in his house. He rigs the place from top to bottom and after stalling until the media can arrive and set up, he then makes a very public spectacle of his final exit.



Quotes

"What does eminent domain mean to someone who's lived in the frigging house for twenty years? Made love to their wife there and brought their kid up there and come home to there from trips? That's just something from a law book that they made up so they can crook you better." Nov. 20, p.20

"Christ, if Don and Ray Tarkington were alive, they'd have those cheap highway department f**ks in court with so many restraining orders on their heads that they wouldn't get out from under until the year 2000." Nov. 21, p. 38

"If we fail to exercise our option and then somebody else does go in there, I'd have to shoot you out of the saddle. . ." Nov. 23, p. 51

"Then what about the guns, George? What about the guns?" Nov. 25, p. 59

"Pardon me while I just throw my head back and scream for the grin that's never there on your face anymore. Okay?" Nov. 26, p. 74

"He look like prime Effa Bee Eye to you, Pete?" Nov. 27, p. 84

"I don't work for the big bosses anymore. I just wrote my resignation." Nov. 28, p. 97

"I can't explain. I listened to myself. But people talk a different language inside. It sounds like the worst kind of shit if you try to talk about it. But it was the right thing." Nov. 28, p. 104

"I knew this guy was a fruiter." Nov. 28, p. 106

"It isn't the Trained Dog Ethic I object to anyway. It's the fact that the masters are mental, moral and spiritual idiots." Dec. 6, p. 128

"Improper storage of gasoline is illegal . . . and one gallon of gas has the explosive potential of twelve sticks of dynamite." Dec. 9, p. 155

"Maybe they won't tear it down, Mary, they might change their minds, if I go and talk to them, explain the situation, they might just. . ." Dec. 10, p. 162

"The job you've got is a short term plum, a long term lemon." Dec. 12, p. 167

"Raped! That's when some stupid jock playing Friday night hippie plays hide the salami with you while your brains are somewhere behind you, dripping off the wall!" Dec. 25, p. 202

"I'm thinking about killing myself." Dec. 25, p. 203



"We both think you've gone off your rocker, Barton Dawes, and that's the plain truth with no shellack on it." Jan. 7, p. 247

"You know, it's been my experience that when anybody says that they're ready to stop screwing around with the little lies and they're about to tell a real whopper." Jan. 7, p. 249

"Well, I'll tell you this. I have enough marbles left to know I could get myself a lawyer who doesn't like the eminent domain statute - one who still believes in that quaint old adage that a man's home is his castle." Jan. 7, p. 250

"A man with his feet planted in this world does not give money away on a whim." Jan. 13, p. 271

"I do it this way because it's the only way. I'm locked in." Jan. 13, p. 273



Topics for Discussion

Why does Barton fall off the rails? Describe his mental state, and the reasons for it.

What happened to the Dawes children? What is their significance to Bart's frame of mind?

Why does Bart let the Waterford Plant deal lapse? When did Bart decide his job was over and which of his actions support this?

Part one is primarily the story of two endings, and one beginning—each earthshaking in their own way to Bart. Describe each, and its effect on him and his life.

Who are Fred and George? What is their significance?

What did Bart and Mary do to get their first television? How much did it cost?

What did Bart want from Salvatore Magliore? Why did Magliore decide not to help Bart?

What story does Magliore tell Bart, and why does he tell him it?

Bart tells Olivia he is sick. What ailment does he have and how and why did he get it? What could have been done to help him?

What could Mary have done different to help Bart? Could this entire issue have been avoided, and if so, how?

How does Bart describe life to Olivia? What does he encourage her to do and why?

How many people contributed to Bart's end? How did each contribute and why?