

Shakespeare's Landlord Study Guide

Shakespeare's Landlord by Charlaine Harris

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Plot Summary

Shakespeare's *Landlord* by Charlaine Harris is the tale of a murder in the fictitious small town of Shakespeare, Arkansas. The murder victim, Pardon Albee, is the owner/landlord of an apartment building that is located near Lily Bard's house. Lily has lived in the house since she originally purchased it from Pardon Albee four years before. Lily is a house cleaner for a number of local residents. She also offers other services—pet sitting, house sitting, errand running, etc. However, since she had been a National Merit Scholar, it is not clear at first why she cleans houses. Lily is a quiet person who keeps to herself and does not socialize with her neighbors. Her only enjoyment is the three karate classes she takes each week. There is a mystery about her background, which the story reveals in gradual fashion.

As the story progresses, there are hints about Lily's mysterious past, her "scars," and the large amount of medical bills she had to pay off. She reacts emotionally and seems to relate to the rape of a neighbor's seventeen-year-old granddaughter. Although Lily has clung to her privacy and has avoided talking about her past, the Police Chief Claude Friedrich does a background check on her and learns what happened to Lily when she was living in Memphis. After graduation from college, Lily was living and working in Memphis. One night after Lily's car had broken down, she was walking along the road to get help. A van stopped for her, and someone forced her in at gunpoint. The man "rented" her to a motorcycle gang, who raped her and cut her with knives, mutilating her upper body. The motorcycle leader left her chained to a bed with a gun containing one bullet. He suggested she could either kill herself or her original captor when he returned to take her back—he had plans to rent her out again. Lily chose to kill the man and did so when he came for her. After that horrid incident, Lily left town and settled in Shakespeare.

The story opens with Lily practicing some of her karate moves. She takes karate lessons from Marshall Sedaka; she has advanced to green belt status. Her thoughts reflect on her appearance. She feels she is no longer pretty because of her scars. Lily has a difficult time sleeping and often goes walking late at night. After returning from her walk at 2:00 AM, she witness a person using her trash cart to deposit a body in the nearby park. She checks the body and recognizes the victim as Pardon Albee, owner/landlord of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. Not wanting to get involved in fear of her past being exposed, she contacts the police chief anonymously.

The Shakespeare Garden Apartments has eight units and is the backdrop for a real "who-done-it" with lots of suspects. There are apartment dwellers and other local residents who all could have a motive for wanting Pardon dead. Pardon was a nosy, rude person who enjoyed making sarcastic remarks to others. No one was sad to see him go.

Although facing criticism, suspicion and danger, Lily is determined to figure out who the murderer is. Unbeknown to her, she and Chief Friedrich are on the same wave-length

and have both narrowed their suspect lists down to the same culprits. Together, after a brutal physical confrontation, they capture the guilty party.

Lily not only solves a murder, she also finds her way to personal peace. After her past is exposed, she faces up to it rather than to move on and hide in another city. Lily Bard has made a new life in Shakespeare, Arkansas. She likes her new life and is not about to give it up.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

The story begins with the heroine (unnamed at this point) working out with a karate kicking bag. She speaks of "having been pretty" in the past. Comparing herself to her sister, Varena, she thinks that her sister is probably the pretty one now. She mentions that the one thing she does for herself is to have her hair permed and colored to light blond. She mentions that work out fans like the deep tans. She adds that the tans help to hide scars. She has not seen Varena in three years.

After working out, the heroine carefully locks up her apartment and goes for a walk. She mentions that it's 1:00 a.m., and therefore she would not be running into many people. She leaves her small porch, which is almost entirely covered by rose vines, and heads out of her compact yard. She takes in the neighborhood—the Shakespeare Garden Apartments behind her house and Carlton Cockroft's house, identical and uphill from her own house.

She walks for quite a while and returns through the Shakespeare Estes Arboretum, a large expanse that takes up a whole city block. She enjoys looking out of her window in the mornings, taking in all the trees and foliage of the arboretum. As she nears her home, she notices that someone else is out nearby walking in the dark. She hides behind a tree and watches the dark figure as he or she wheels a cart down the street. Suddenly, she recognizes that the cart is hers! It is the cart she uses to wheel her trash cans to the curb. Although it is very dark, she sees that her trash cans are not in the cart; rather, there is what looks to be something covered in plastic sheeting. The figure walks toward the park, and when he or she returns, the cart is empty.

She waits in the dark as the person walks up her driveway and returns to the street without the cart. The person walks across to the apartment building and enters. She watches—no lights go on and no one exits. The person must live there or is visiting someone who does. There are only eight residents who live at the apartment building. She walks to the park and feels around the dark, hearing the familiar sound of plastic rustling nearby. She opens the bag and finds a dead man. She recognizes the shirt and therefore knows who the dead man is.

She finally ventures back in her house, keeping the lights off. She checks on her trash cans and both are back in the cart. She knows her fingerprints are all over the plastic bag but knows she must do something. She does not want to call the police station and decides instead to call one of the apartment building residents—Claude Friedrich. She calls without identifying herself and simply says that a dead body is in the park. A short time later, she watches as Claude is outside talking with a police officer.

Chapter One Analysis

There are hints that the heroine does not like to be seen in the daytime. She goes for a walk at 1:00 when no one is around. She mentions that the tan helps to hide the scars. She used to be the pretty one, now her sister probably is. She hasn't seen her sister in three years. The reader wonders if she was perhaps badly injured. The question arises as to why she hasn't seen her sister in three years. Is she estranged from her family, and if so, why?

She witnesses someone who lives at or is visiting someone at the apartment building across from her use her cart to haul a dead body to the park. She is reluctant to call the police directly. It begs the question why she does not want to call them herself. She may be implicated since she discovered the dead body and her fingerprints are at the scene. Instead, she calls a neighbor—one who lives at the apartment building—and tells him there is a dead body. She must not suspect that this neighbor, Claude, is the murderer. This first chapter presents a scenario and also many unanswered questions. This presentation whets the appetite of the reader to get some answers.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

The heroine, Lily Bard, tends to Marie Hofstettler twice a week. Marie is an eighty-five-year-old woman who lives at the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. Lily is at Mrs. Hofstettler's apartment doing her chores when the radio news announces that the dead body found in the park is that of Pardon Albee, the apartment building's owner and landlord. Marie is terribly upset by the news. Lily is thinking about last night when she found the body. Marie calls the police telling them that she had been with Albee the day before.

Soon Chief Friedrich is knocking at Marie's door. It turns out that the "Claude" Lily called anonymously about the dead body is the town's new Police Chief. Lily lets the Chief in, and is not overjoyed to see him. She tries to remain as quiet as possible so the Chief does not recognize her as the anonymous caller who reported the dead body from the night before. Marie makes it a point to tell the single police chief that Lily is "Miss" Lily Bard. Marie tells the Chief that Albee had picked up her rent check the morning before. Marie heard noises coming from the apartment next to her—the one where the Yorks live. Marie added that they were out of town and weren't expected until that night. Lily says the noises were probably from her. She cleans their place and had been in the apartment the day before. Chief Friedrich focuses his attention on Lily. He makes an appointment to interview Lily between two of her engagements later that day.

Lily waits while the trash is picked up from her house. She quickly looks at the cart and sees no obvious sign of human remains. The trash truck moves on to the apartment building but does not stay long. Lily figures the Chief issued orders for the trash not to be hauled off.

Lily moves on to her next job at the Winthrop house. She is resentful of the mess that the seventeen-year-old son, Bobo, makes in his room. She is cleaning up his room when Mrs. Winthrop, Beanie, arrives home. Lily is quiet and not talkative as Mrs. Winthrop prattles on. She talks about Pardon Albee being found dead in the Arboretum. She has heard that Lily takes karate. She would like to get Bobo into karate and asks Lily where she takes her lessons. Lily responds that she takes lessons three days a week from Marshall Sedaka at his gym. Lily thinks to herself—those three days are the only highlights of her week. Mrs. Winthrop mentions that Sedaka and Albee were partners at the gym. Lily is surprised to hear this news.

Lily is mainly non-responsive, trying to hide her irritation at the perky Mrs. Winthrop. Lily wonders to herself how she wound up cleaning houses. She had been a National Merit Scholar, but here she is, cleaning up this teenage slob's room. But she perseveres—she is paid well and has to support herself. After Mrs. Winthrop leaves, Lily chides herself. She needs to be nicer to Mrs. Winthrop. She wants to keep the job. Lily feels a little unsettled about the news that Albee was partners with Sedaka. Lily finishes up to leave

—it is time to meet with Chief Friedrich. She is not looking forward to her interview with him.

Chapter Two Analysis

The reader learns that the protagonist's name is Lily Bard. The reader also learn that Lily is a housecleaner, hired help for quite a few people around Shakespeare. Her client Marie is anxious to talk to the police about the murder of Pardon Albee. Albee had stopped by her apartment yesterday. When Chief Friedrich comes by to see Marie, he makes arrangements to interview Lily later that day. Marie pointedly lets the single Chief that Lily is a "Miss." Perhaps a little match-making on Marie's part? The reader knows that Lily had nothing to do with the murder. However, why she is keeping quiet about seeing the perpetrator deposit the body in the Arboretum is a still a mystery.

At Lily's next appointment, she learns from her employer that Lily's karate teacher, Marshall Sedaka, was partners at the gym with the dead man. The news bothers Lily. Does she perhaps suspect Sedaka? The reader learns that Lily is a bright and well-educated person, having been a National Merit Scholar. Why, then, is Lily a house cleaner? Is the choice of such a job connected with her mysterious past? After this appointment, Lily is scheduled to meet with the Chief. She is not looking forward to it and maintains hope that he does not recognize her voice as the anonymous caller.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

Chief Friedrich is right on time for their interview. As Lily shows him in, she sees that he is taking in her sparsely furnished living room. Although she does not have much furniture, what she has is of good quality, bought on sale. The Chief starts off the conversation confirming that she bought her house from Albee. He asks Lily what she does for a living. When she replies that she cleans houses, he seems to know more. She amends her statement by adding that she house sits, gets groceries in for neighbors, pet sits, and does other chores for which she is paid. She thinks back to when she first came to Shakespeare. She had lived on her savings until she decided what to do to support herself. Much of her savings had been depleted paying medical bills.

She tells the Chief she had no relationship with the dead man other than one that was casual and in passing. The Chief asks Lily if she saw anything unusual the night before. Lily lies and says she had gone to bed at 11:00 PM and saw nothing unusual. The Chief tells her that a woman called him at 2:30 AM telling him about the dead body. He tells Lily he really needs to talk with that person. But Lily remains steadfast and does not reveal what she knows. There is something solid about the Chief that almost makes Lily want to tell him more, but she cannot risk allowing her past to emerge.

Chief Friedrich leaves, reminding Lily to call him if she thinks of anything else. Lily has to rush to her next appointment, cleaning Dr. Sizemore's office. John Sizemore is a local dentist. Lily reflects on how much information is left lying around the offices and houses she cleans. She knows enough about the townspeople to write a gossip column. That evening, she feels restless after dinner and switches on the TV. She accidentally comes across the news flashing images of exploding bombs, bodies in the street, and the desolate face of a woman whose family is buried under rubble. She hurriedly turns away as a tear runs down her face. Lily had not watched the news in years.

Chapter Three Analysis

Lily has a mysterious past which she desperately wants to keep secret. It is so important to her that she risks lying to law enforcement. But she fears that if she tells the Chief she saw the murderer deposit the body in the park, that her past will be revealed. She'll automatically be suspect and he'll conduct a background check on her. Then everything about her will be exposed. This chapter confirms that Lily suffered significant physical injury in the past. She refers to her vast medical bills. The Chief seems to suspect that Lily is the woman who called him about the murder. That Lily knows a lot about the townspeople from her work as a cleaning woman and household helper may be significant as the story progresses. Although she is stoic and remote, Lily is an intelligent, well-educated woman who is quick to grasp details.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four Summary

Lily is scheduled to help Alvah York do her spring cleaning. The Yorks have the apartment next to Marie's and across from Pardon's. As she passes Pardon's door, she reflects on his murder. Lily did not know what caused Albee's death. She did see that there was blood around his head. Both Alvah York and her husband, T.L. seem different from normal—like something is very wrong. Though T.L. tries to be his usual cheerful self, full of platitudes, Lily notices that he does not whistle as he walks down the hall. He always whistles.

Alvah is no better. She is still in her pajamas and had not cleared the breakfast dishes, which is not like her at all. Lily cleans up the dishes with no protest from Alvah. Lily senses that it might be better if she leaves and comes back another day. But Alvah is intent on doing her spring cleaning. Lily finally asks Alvah very directly what is wrong. Alvah is quiet for a time but finally blurts out what's bothering them. Alva sadly reveals that the man on trial and sentenced for rape in Creek County—Harley Don Murrell—was guilty of raping their beloved granddaughter, Sarah. Alvah is so upset that she expresses her hope that Murrell is murdered in prison. Lily tries to hide her terror but she relates closely to Alva's words. Her hand touches her tee-shirt and feels the ridges of her scars through the material.

The two women continue cleaning most of the house, but Alvah is unable to finish. Lily tells her to call her when she feels like finishing the rest of the house and their camper parked outside. Reflecting on the camper, she remembers the angry words the Yorks had with Pardon over the camper. He thought it was too large to park on the apartment grounds, but he had originally given them permission to park it there and they wouldn't move it.

Unfortunately, Lily runs into Deedra Dean after she leaves the York's apartment. She cleans Deedra's apartment on Fridays. The week before, Deedra had accused her of leaving her door unlocked after she left. Lily insists that she did not, but perhaps Pardon had been in there. He has a master key and was on his way upstairs when Lily left. Lily despises Deedra, who is promiscuous and has slept with every man in the building except perhaps for Pardon. Deedra is a spoiled young woman, overly made up, and with a chin that's so receding that it's almost not there.

Lily asks Deedra if she found out whether Pardon had entered her apartment last week. Deedra becomes very upset and tells Lily to forget about it. She cautions Deedra not to mention it to the police and warns her that if she does she will never work in Shakespeare again. Lily becomes angered and Deedra softens her tone.

Later that day, there is a knock on Lily's door. It is her handsome neighbor Carlton, looking a bit worried and wanting to talk to her. The two are not close, having been in



each other's company only a handful of times. Carlton tells Lily he is worried about her—a young, pretty woman by herself. Lily thinks about her scars, figuring he wouldn't think she was so pretty if he could seem them. Carlton tells her that he saw her walking out late the night of the murder. He tells her the police are suspicious of her—they might even think she was involved in his death. Lily remains stoic and unfriendly toward Carlton, who leaves in a huff—probably feeling that Lily had been unfriendly and ungrateful for his obvious concern.

Lily had agreed to clean the Shakespeare Combined Church preschool that evening. Lily thinks to herself that if she ever does return to church, it will not be this church. The minister is the Reverend Joel McCorkindale. Although McCorkindale on the surface seems like a dedicated minister, he makes the skin crawl on the back of Lily's neck. She has a strong feeling that he is capable of evil. There is something dreadful simmering right beneath the surface. Recently, McCorkindale won praise for taking in a drunk, Norvel Whitbread, and sobering him up. Lily sees Whitbread as rotten through and through.

The Church pays Norvel to do handy work around the building and grounds. He also has a free apartment at the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. Lily can smell the liquor on the so-called rehabilitated drunk's breath. Lily doesn't feel like putting up with Norvel, and they get into a spat. She threatens to tell the church about his liquor breath. Norvel reacts with anger, trying to gig her with his mop. Lily goes into karate mode and quickly has the stunned Norvel on the floor. Reverend McCorkindale rushes in and demands to know what happened. Lily replies that she had to put Norvel in his place. By the look on the minister's face, Lily determines that he thinks Norvel made a pass at her. McCorkindale tells Norvel to get on his way and promises to talk with Norvel about the incident later.

Lily continues getting the kitchen and dining room ready for the board meeting members who will soon be gathering. Once the meeting begins in the next room, Lily is able to hear the proceedings. She rolls her eyes when they discuss what disciplinary measures should be taken against a pre-school teacher who brought up the subject of evolution during dinosaur week. Lily recognizes the voice of Jenny O'Hagen. Jenny and her husband Tom are also residents at the apartment building. The minister tells the board members that Thea Sedaka is accused of slapping one of the children. She has separated from her husband Marshall and is under a lot of stress. Lily listens closely when she hears this news. Marshall is her karate instructor.

Lily rushes home to get ready for her karate class. As she arrives, Chief Friedrich is leaning against his police car in front of her house. Lily tries to hide her annoyance and tells the Chief she is on her way to class. The Chief responds that a small town is supposed to provide a calmer life-style, not like one in Memphis. Lily responds in anger, telling the Chief not to bring "Memphis" up. Jenny arrives late to her karate class. She is surprised to see that Carlton Cockcroft has joined the class. During a break, she talks to Carlton, who tells her he had been thinking about joining the class for a while—often seeing her heading off for class in her karate garb.

After class, she and Marshall have a quiet discussion. He senses that she is upset about something. Lily asks Marshall if it is true that he was Pardon's partner. Marshall confirms that they were partners. The business was set up that if either partner died, the business would go to the survivor. He also tells Lily that he and his wife have separated. Marshall has an appointment set up to speak with the police about Pardon's murder. Out of the blue, Marshall asks Lily how she got the scars.

Chapter Four Analysis

Lily's reaction to Alvah York's revelation that her seventeen-year-old granddaughter was raped is telling. She is disturbed and reaches at her chest—toward her scars. The Yorks are also residents of the deceased man's apartment building. Deedra Dean is also an apartment dweller, and one of Lily's clients. Lily's dislike for Deedra seems to stem from Deedra's promiscuous reputation. Perhaps Lily's feelings for Deedra and her emotional reaction to Alvah's grandchild's rape evoke bad memories from her past.

Lily's neighbor Carlton stops by to warn Lily that the police seem to be suspicious of her relative to the murder. Lily seems not to worry, but she is an expert at hiding her feelings. Carlton is described as good looking and single, which may foreshadow a future relationship in the story between the two. Lily overhears some gossip while cleaning the church for the board meeting. She hears Pardon was a part owner of the gym where she takes karate lessons. Since the information surprised her, she must have thought Marshall, her karate instructor, was sole owner. Marshall and Pardon's partnership agreement contained a clause that if either partner died, the surviving partner would have full ownership of the gym. The relationship sheds suspicion upon Marshall relative to the homicide. Lily also overhears that Marshall and his wife recently separated. At karate class, Lily is unnerved when Marshall asks her how she got her scars. She is a very private person and obviously hates to talk about the incident. The reader can gather that the cause of the scars must have been from a violent encounter that has left her traumatized.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

Lily makes a weak attempt at evading the question about her scars, but Marshall persists. Lily pulls off her shirt and shows the astonished Marshall the extent of her scars. They run around her breasts, down to her abdomen and across her shoulders. Lily then relates the horrid story of how she was so savagely injured.

Two years after graduation from college, Lily is working in Memphis at a janitorial/cleaning company as an office manager. She is dating the owner of another small local business. One evening she leaves work but pulls over on the side when her car conks out. She is walking off the exit when a van stops, and someone opens the door and pulls a gun on her. The two men in the van force her in and take her to a location in the woods. The man with the gun, Nap, "rents" her out that evening to a group of savage bikers who rape and cut her, making the scars that she will carry the rest of her life. When the bikers leave the next morning, the head biker gives Lily, still chained to a cot, a revolver containing one bullet. He tells her to either kill herself or shoot the guy that brought her here and who will be back to get her. She chooses to kill the man, appropriately dubbed "Nap." She shoots him in the eye, which causes his immediate death.

Lily is weak from blood loss and cannot unlock her cuffs. She is not strong enough to pull her and the bed out, and lays back down exhausted. Some time later, she is discovered by a neighbor who calls the police.

Lily's recovery is difficult not just for her, but for her family as well. Her parents are terribly upset with what their daughter had gone through. Deep down, Lily gathers, they are upset that she chose to kill her kidnapper. Lily's sister, Varena, quickly tires of tending to Lily's physical and psychological needs. She basically tells Lily to get over it. Sensing that her family and neighbors would never treat her the same, Lily decides to move. Ultimately, she selects Shakespeare as her new home.

Lily has not re-told her horrid nightmare to anyone in a very long time. The memories flooding back are overwhelming and disturbing. She thinks back about killing the kidnapper. She feels no remorse and thinks that she'd kill the others if she could find them. Her last thought before going to sleep that evening is that she would have to figure out who killed Albee.

Chapter Five Analysis

The reader finally knows what happened to Lily. She had been the victim of a brutal raping and mutilation at the hands of a group of bikers. Knowing what she endured, it is understandable how her life changed afterwards. Retelling the incident to Marshall brings back all the pain, hurt, and anger. She has not recovered psychologically.

Lily figures that the police consider her a suspect since Chief Friedrich apparently did some background checking on her and probably found out that she killed a man. Since she committed murder in the past, the police might well deduce that she do it again. The last sentence in the chapter tells the reader that Lily is going to start her own investigation and find out who killed her neighbor. Since Lily is the heroine of the story, a good guess is that she will find out who the murderer is. As she proceeds with her own investigation, it could well place her in danger.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six Summary

The next morning after a workout, Lily runs into Marcus Jefferson and his little boy, Kenya. Marcus had a disagreement with Pardon about having his little boy over. Pardon insisted that the apartments were for adults only. This was a point of contention with Marcus. Lily hurries on to her first appointment for the day—at the Drinkwater's house. As usual, they had left the back door open for her. She is upstairs and had been cleaning for about fifteen minutes when the squeak of the downstairs floorboards tells her that someone else is in the house. Lily readies herself to be on the attack should the person come up the steps. Suddenly, she hears the back door shut. She runs down but the person has disappeared in the thick woods behind the house.

Lily locks the door and starts back upstairs when she sees a white handkerchief covering something on the stairs. She had not noticed it when she raced down before. Underneath the cloth is a miniature gun and a tiny pair of handcuffs. After checking the house thoroughly, she finishes her work and goes home. There she is met by Chief Friedrich, who is waiting for her again. She is annoyed at his presence and lets him know. She does not want to talk about Memphis. He is there to get her corroboration on Tom O'Hagen's alibi. He claims that Lily saw him at the apartment in the afternoon before the murder. Lily thinks back and does remember seeing him. She had been there taking groceries to the Yorks. O'Hagen claims that he stopped by Pardon's apartment to pay his rent. He pushed the door open and saw the room in disarray. The Chief says that if what O'Hagen saw was true that Pardon may have been murdered that afternoon.

Lily tells the Chief about the incident at the Drinkwater's house and gives him the items left for her. She tells him that since he knew about the incident in Tennessee that perhaps someone at the police department is spreading the story about her. The Chief insists that he told no one else about her past. Later that night, Lily sees Marshall at the gym. He says that someone sneaked in Thea's place and left a rat on her table. Thea thinks that Lily may have done it. Lily is upset by this but Marshall calms her down, telling her that Thea is crazy and a little jealous of Lily. The two no longer deny their attraction for one another and make love at the gym.

Chapter Six Analysis

Someone follows Lily to her house cleaning job or else someone knows her schedule. The person has it in for Lily, knows about her past, and wants to upset her. Lily corroborates to the Chief O'Hagen's claim that he'd been at the apartment on the afternoon of the murder. This may eliminate O'Hagen as a suspect. Chief Friedrich swears he has told no one else about the incident in Tennessee.

Since Lily had just related the story about her past to Marshall and has told no one else, either Marshall or someone at the police department is spreading the story about the Memphis incident. Someone left a dead rat in Thea's house. Could this person be the same person who left the items for Lily? If so, why were Lily and Thea chosen as victims of these kind of sick pranks? But if Thea is jealous of Lily as Marshall indicated, perhaps Thea was the culprit and left the rat on her own table as a red herring. Lily must not be suspicious of Marshall since she makes love with him at the gym, or perhaps she was just swept away for the time being.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary

The next day Lily arrives at Deedra Dean's apartment on time. However, Deedra is still there and late for work. They discuss the murder, and Deedra reveals that she was at Pardon's apartment at 4:30 on the day of the murder. She knocked but there was no answer. The door was unlocked and she pushed it open, seeing Pardon asleep on the couch. She laid her rent check on the table and called to Pardon, but he didn't wake. She noticed that the place was in disarray, the couch pushed around, and the rug rumpled up. Lily tells her that he was probably dead. Lily wonders to herself that if O'Hagen was there at 2:30, saw Pardon's apartment in disarray but with no body, and Deedra saw it later with Pardon's dead body on the couch, where had the corpse been in between?

She thinks the body may have been stashed in the nearby utility closet. She has a key to it so she decides to look inside for any evidence that the body had been in there. Just as she is about to turn the light on, Chief Friedrich's voice is right behind her—asking her what she's looking for. He wagers that she is wondering just like he is how O'Hagen was in Pardon's apartment with no body and then Deedra saw it later when the dead body was on the couch. Lily readily admits that was what she was thinking. The Chief said they couldn't get in the utility closet because they couldn't find Pardon's keys, which Lily finds puzzling. She points out to the Chief that Norbert's job is to vacuum the lobby every Monday, but apparently someone else vacuumed that Monday since the cord was wound up neatly in place. When Norbert uses the vacuum, he leaves the cord in a twisted mass.

Later that morning, Lily is at the O'Hagen's. Jenny is her usual unfriendly self, but suddenly becomes very personable when she thanks Lily for backing up her husband's story. After finishing her day's work, Lily goes home where Marshall is waiting for her in the driveway. They plan to get together after karate class this evening.

Chapter Seven Analysis

As Lily cleans houses, she is amassing clues connected to the Pardon murder. She learns that Deedra saw Pardon's dead body on his couch at 4:30 while O'Hagen saw the rumpled apartment earlier with no body on the couch. Several other things seem suspicious to Lily: Pardon's keys were missing; Jenny O'Hagen is acting suspicious; and, someone other than Norbert used the vacuum on Monday. At this point there are plenty of suspects and red herrings presented to the reader—enough to have no idea who the guilty party is.

One thing that is enduring is Lily's relationship with Marshall. They plan to get together after class that evening. Has Lily completely ruled Marshall out as a suspect? Is he getting close to her because he thinks she might suspect him?

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

Lily is surprised to see Carlton at another karate class. She puts him through a few exercise drills which coupled with his already sore muscles from the last class almost do him in. Carlton admits that the reason he joined the karate class is twofold: First, he wanted to see why she enjoyed it so much, and second, Pardon's niece is meeting with him tomorrow to discuss her inheritance. The woman is meeting with him because he does the books for Pardon's properties. The niece is a tae kwon do instructor and Carlton did not want to seem like a wimp. Lily and Marshall make arrangements to see each other later.

When Lily arrives at her car, there is something laying on the hood. As she nears it, she sees that it is a Ken doll with fresh red nail polish painted over one eye and down its cheek. She immediately recognizes it as symbolic of the man she killed. Marshall and Carlton soon join her on the lot. Carlton volunteers to go with her to the police station, but Lily demurs. The only police officer on duty when Lily arrives is Tom David Meiklejohn, a rather menacing looking young cop who was recently divorced. He takes the doll as evidence, but tells her to come back the next day to make her report. He makes a not so subtle reference to her Memphis problem. She is disgusted with him and assumes he's the one spreading the story about her former life.

Lily is stressed out by the time she pulls into her driveway. She decides to take a walk. As she passes the house where Thea still lives, she sees a police car parked discretely near some tall shrubs. Since Tom David is the only cop on duty, Lily deduces that he's making a late night visit to her lover's ex. Lily winds up at Marshall's door, staying for several hours. Marshall reveals that his marriage had been a mistake. Thea was into sick, kinky sex, with which he was unable to abide. The two make love and drift off to sleep. However, after several hours, Lily awakens and decides to walk home even though it's the middle of the night by now. She passes Thea's house and sees that Tom David is still there.

Lily is in for a big surprise when she arrives home. Just as she is putting her key in the door, she hears the sounds of someone rushing toward her. She turns to be hit in the ribs by a long staff. She quickly assembles her karate skills and smashes her assailant in the nose, knocking him down. The perpetrator moans in pain and is unable to run off. The man is wearing a ski mask so Lily does not readily recognize him. Chief Friedrich hears the moaning and rushes to Lily's house. They pull the mask off and reveal the bloody face of Norvel Whitbread. Lily has broken his nose. Lily tells the Chief about the recent incident at the hospital when she dodged his broom and she brought him to the floor. The attack is probably revenge for that humiliation; plus, the strong odor of liquor was evidence that Norvel is inebriated. Lily gets Norvel to spill the beans about Tom O'Hagen's visit to the apartment complex on the day of the murder. Tom had been stopping by for a tryst with Deedra.

Lily calls Marshall, who comes right over. He is proud of Lily's skill in taking out her assailant and breaking his nose. Friedrich takes Norvel to the hospital, where he will be patched up before he's thrown in jail. Marshall tends to Lily's facial scratches and determines that her ribs are not broken. To ease her pain, he tapes her ribcage area. He insists on staying the night. The next day, Marshall takes off to open the gym and Lily dashes off to several cleaning appointments she has. They make plans to have dinner together that evening.

Lily's first appointment is at Dr. Carrie Thrush's office. Dr. Thrush is a young, new doctor and is struggling to make her practice a success. She insists on checking Lily's injuries and confirms that her ribs are bruised but not broken. Lily senses that Carrie is having a hard time financially, she does not accept pay for the cleaning work. She considers Carrie's professional examination as a trade for her cleaning work. Lily feels that Carrie, who is around Lily's age, may become a good friend.

Chapter Eight Analysis

Something awakened Carlton's interest in Lily. After being her neighbor for years, his sudden attention to her is somewhat suspicious. Although he offers another reason for coming to karate classes, he seems to focus special attention on his neighbor. Lily discovers that Marshall's wife, Thea, is seeing a divorced cop. She learns from Marshall that Thea had a lust for sick sex—one of the reasons they separated. Perhaps there are clues about the murder buried in this information that may emerge later. Thea's quirky private life may somehow prove to be a factor.

The attack by the drunken Norvel seems to be a stand-alone incident stemming from revenge and not connected to the person leaving symbolic images for Lily to find. Tom O'Hagen's visit to the apartment complex on the day of the murder while not innocent may have had nothing to do with Pardon's demise.

Marshall seems to have a slight discomfort when in Chief Friedrich's presence. A new character, Dr. Carrie Thrush, is introduced. Lily's positive feelings for the town's new, young doctor may lead to a supportive relationship for the normally anti-social Lily.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine Summary

Lily makes a statement to the police about Norvel's attack and the doll left on her car. She contemplates whether she should move on to another town now that her past has been exposed. But she's established a life in ,and perhaps her past will always catch up with her regardless of where she lives. Joel McCorkindale stops by and has an awkward meeting with Lily. He asks her to not press charges against Norvel. Lily responds that she will prosecute him to the full extent of the law. She chides the minister for allowing Norvel to deteriorate right under his nose. He makes a not so subtle threat that her violent past may force her to leave town. She threatens right back, promising to sue him for libel if he dares to try and get her employers to fire her.

Lily takes some pain pills she received from Dr. Thrush. The medication knocks her out and she misses her dinner with Marshall. Marshall comes by first thing in the morning to check on her. Lily and Marshall watch a red car drive by. He tells Lily that it's Thea. Lily has noticed the car passing by before. Lily recounts the entire story of the night of the murder to Marshall. Marshall understands why she hasn't told the police what she saw. Lily and Marshall head off to the gym for a work-out. Marshall finds out from a friend that Thea is telling everyone that she is going to "put him through the wringer" in divorce court. The friend also confirmed that Thea is seeing another man. Lily begins to think that her relationship with Marshall may hurt him in the divorce. She suggests to him that they stop seeing each other for a while. Marshall does not respond.

Lily literally runs into Thea at the grocery store. That is, Thea purposely rams her cart into Lily's. The two have a few words. Lily warns Thea to stop driving by her house or the police will be at her door. She also hints that she knows Thea is seeing a cop. Thea is red-faced with anger and whispers to Lily that she will "get her." Chief Friedrich is waiting for Lily at her house. After a few pleasantries, the Chief tells Lily point blank to tell him what she saw the night of the murder. Lily, almost relieved, relates everything to the Chief, explaining that she tried to keep herself out of it for fear of exposing her past. Lily and Friedrich go over the movements of the apartment residents on the day of Pardon's murder. After discussing details of the case, the two have dinner. The Chief helps Lily clean up and bids her goodnight. Lily briefly wonders how he would be in bed

Chapter Nine Analysis

Thea and Marshall seem to present a looming presence in the story. Although the reader only learns how strange Thea is, most of these accounts are coming from one source—Marshall. Marshall seems eager to tell Lily details about Thea and to attempt to make a connection between the two women. Perhaps it is not ominous—he might enjoy being fought over by two attractive women.

The minister pleads his case for Norvel, begging the question why a man of the cloth would defend the actions of a violent drunk. When she refuses to drop charges against Norvel, the Reverend threatens to force Lily from town—not your typical holy man. Earlier in the book, Lily's thoughts about the minister are very negative—that his evil is brimming very near the surface. One could speculate that more than caring for Norvel, he may be covering for something for his own sake. Were they involved in a crime, a murder, together?

A key focus among several townspeople is who will inherit Pardon's properties. Carlton and Marshall and several others have asked Lily this very question. Perhaps the motive of the murder was the acquisition of Pardon's property holdings and estate. A romantic sub-plot has emerged—who will Lily wind up with? The three possibilities are Marshall, Carlton, and the Chief.

Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten Summary

While cleaning the Althaus home, Lily ponders the list of suspects. It is almost a certainty that the killer was an apartment house resident. The Yorks were out of town, the Chief is not suspect, certainly not old Mrs. Hofstettler. Lily could not envision Deedra whacking Pardon over the head. That leaves Tom O'Hagen and Marcus Jefferson. O'Hagen was open about Pardon's house being in disarray when he stopped by. Would he have mentioned that at all were he the killer? Marcus had a disagreement with Pardon about his child being allowed to stay with him. But would that lead him to murder Pardon? The drunken Norvel had no known issue with Pardon. Besides, Norvel was probably not strong enough to wage the violent attack that killed Pardon. No one had a motive—the act was one of impulse. Pardon, who was found to be obnoxious, finally said the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time.

Since Pardon's body apparently had not been temporarily stored in the utility closet—no physical evidence there—where was the hiding place? Lily's thoughts move to the garage...perhaps the body was hidden in one of the stalls. After her last job of the morning, Lily walks over to the apartment garage. The assigned stalls are similar to a horse barn, individual stalls but no front gate. Lily carefully looks at each parking spot, but nothing unusual strikes her. Unfortunately, she runs into Norvel, who is out on bail. They exchange a few acrimonious words before T. L. York appears and tells Norvel to get lost. Lily is heading to the York's apartment anyway to pick up her pay. Although T.L. looks like his old self, Alvah's face is still sad. With no joy, Alvah tells Lily that their granddaughter's perpetrator has killed himself.

After a few late day jobs, Lily forces herself to go to karate class. She is not looking forward to seeing Marshall. She is in luck, however, as Raphael is heading the class. Looks like Marshall did not want to face Lily just yet. All her classmates greet her warmly and congratulate her on using the skills she learned in class to a real life situation. There seems to be a new respect for her. That night Lily is restless and goes for a late night walk. She cannot shake the sense that Pardon's body may have been temporarily concealed in the apartment garage. There was something about the garage that is eating at her.

Lily visits the garage again. Most of the residents appear to be asleep. Lily sneaks in the main building and knocks on Deedra's door. Deedra answers right away and is angered to see Lily at her door. At Lily's request, Deedra repeats her movements the afternoon of the murder. Lily urges her to repeat every detail. Finally, Deedra utters the words that trigger a memory in Lily—she had trouble backing out because the York's camper was partially blocking her. The Yorks should not have been there at that time! Lily knocks on Claude's door, but there is no answer so she decides to proceed alone. She quickly moves back to the garage and stands at the rear of the garage building. As she moves, she hears a slight clink. Lily picks up the item and sees that it is Pardon's missing key



ring. She concludes that the only place the body could have been hidden was in the York's camper.

Lily moves to the camper door and turns the knob. Out jumps a dark figure, who is flailing at and striking her. Lily employs all the best moves she's learned to fend him off. She manages to stay on her feet and finally is able to land a hefty blow to his neck. The figure staggers back, and just as Lily is prepared to inflict more harm, the Chief's voice just behind her tells her to hold off. The person regains his strength and throws himself on the Chief. Lily sees that her assailant is T. L. York. The Chief and York wrestle to the ground. Lily steps in trying to hold T.L. back. They are still grappling with each other when the Chief's gun goes off and T. L. screams in pain, finally giving up.

Chapter Ten Analysis

Lily runs down the list of possible suspects and comes up with nothing. She concludes, therefore, that rather than the murder being motivational, it was most probably an impulsive act. Pardon had a way of enraging people with his harsh sarcasm. He popped off one time too many. Something is nagging at Lily about the garage—that had to be where the body was stored temporarily.

After speaking with Deedra once again, she realizes where the body was stashed. When Deedra came home to pay her rent, she pulled into her garage spot and ran in with her check. She sees the sleeping (dead) Albee, leaves her check, returns to her running car but has a problem backing out because the York's camper is now there partially blocking Deedra's car. That was at 4:30 in the afternoon. They were not due back until much later that evening. They pulled the camper in so they could stash the body. Lily deduces that the Yorks, or at least their camper, had to be involved in the murder.

Chief Friedrich was on the same trail and luckily comes to Lily's rescue when T.L. jumps out of the camper when she tries to enter. After quite a tussle, the Chief and Lily have their man.

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Eleven Summary

Lily has no broken bones, but the doctor orders her to stay off her feet for at least a week. Chief Friedrich volunteers to stay with Lily until she can recover. T. L. will recover—the bullet hit him in the leg. Marshall is out of town caring for his sick father, but he calls every other day to check on her and sends a large bouquet of flowers.

Chief Friedrich tells Lily that he had whittled down his suspect list to Norvel and the Yorks. He soon dismissed Norvel as a possibility and kept a watch on the Yorks. When Deedra left after paying her check, she almost ran into the camper. The Yorks weren't expected home until that night, but obviously paid an earlier visit home. Lily also put two and two together about the early arrival of the camper. Prior to that, she felt unsettled when she saw that someone had watered Alvah's plant before Lily got there. It is obvious now that Alvah was there and watered the plant. Lily also thought it odd that the curtains were missing from the window. Alvah always waits for Lily to help her with spring cleaning. They weren't missing from spring cleaning, the Chief relates. T. L. had torn the curtains down to wrap Pardon's body in. Forensics have matched the fabric.

The Chief relates to Lily how the violence was sparked between T. L. and Pardon. When T. L. stopped by to pay his rent that afternoon, Pardon brought up some nasty remarks he'd heard about the York's granddaughter. After the stress of his granddaughter's ordeal and the related criminal trial, T. L. could not take any more and struck out at Pardon. He did not intend to kill Pardon—Pardon moved just enough that T. L.'s blow to Pardon's neck proved fatal. The Yorks wrapped Pardon in the curtains, placed him in the camper, and rode around for a while. They were panicked, not knowing what to do with his body. That's when O'Hagen stopped by. Later they returned Pardon to his apartment until they could dispose of him that night. And that's when Deedra saw him on the couch when she stopped by to pay her rent. The camper was there because Deedra had a difficult time backing out. Later, T. L. remembering Lily's trash cart, decided to haul Pardon's body to the park late at night when no one was around.

The Chief mentions that Marshall is due back in town. Lily is just about asleep, groggy from the pain pills she is taking. The Chief is more than curious about her feelings for Marshall. All that Lily offers in response is one thought—she wants to go to sleep.

Chapter Eleven Analysis

Of the apartment residents, among those least suspect were the Yorks. However, just as Lily surmised, no one really had a strong motive—the murder occurred as an impulsive act, a reaction to some sarcastic remarks coming from the notoriously sardonic murder victim, Pardon Albee. Lily comes to the same conclusion as that of Chief Friedrich, who had the Yorks under surveillance for some time.



The conclusion of the story leaves the reader with several unanswered questions. Marshall will be returning from his father's sick bed. Lily does not seem overly-anxious to see him. Perhaps Lily does not have strong feelings for him. Chief Friedrich has cared for Lily during her recovery from injuries resulting from her physical confrontation with T. L. Lily seems attracted to him. So, there it is not clear which man, if any, she will wind up with.

Not only did Lily help to solve the mystery of who killed Pardon Albee but she found peace. Even though her past is exposed, Lily chooses not to move away. She has learned to face her past tragedy. She likes the new life she made for herself in Shakespeare and intends to stay.

Characters

Lily Bard

Lily Bard is the heroine of "Shakespeare's Landlord," a fictional novel about murder in the small town of Shakespeare, Arkansas. The "Landlord" is Pardon Albee who is the owner/landlord of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. He is found dead one dark evening. Lily Bard, a young woman in her early thirties, lives in a house directly behind the apartments. She purchased the house from Albee some four years before. Lily sometimes has a hard time sleeping and is on a late, late night walk the evening of the murder. She witnesses a stealth body using her own trash can cart to haul a large plastic container to the nearby Shakespeare Arboretum. After she sees the dark figure return the cart, Lily rushes down to the park and finds Pardon Albee's dead body inside the plastic bags. Not wanting to become involved, she anonymously telephones Police Chief Claude Friedrich, an apartment resident himself, telling him that there is a dead body in the park.

Lily is an anti-social person, leaving contact with other people to the many clients she has in her house-cleaning/house service business. As the story progresses, there are a few hints about Lily's mysterious past and the scars she bears on her chest. Even though she tries to remain a stoic and remote persona, she reacts emotionally when learning of the rape of a neighbor's teenaged granddaughter.

Since moving to Shakespeare, Lily has always remained extremely private and has avoided discussing her past with anyone. However, once a police investigation is underway, Police Chief Friedrich conducts a background check on her and learns what happened to Lily when she was living in Memphis. Although at first upset that someone in Shakespeare now knows about her past, she feels a certain relief and unburdening that the Chief has found out. He seems to be a kind man and offers his support and understanding.

A short time after Lily graduated from college, she was living in her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. She had an office job at the Queen of Clean janitorial service. She had a boyfriend with whom she was very serious and basically was leading a full, happy life. One evening after work, Lily's car broke down and she was walking to get help. A van stopped for her, forcing her in at gunpoint. The man who was referred to as "Nap" because he kidnapped young women—"rented" her to a motorcycle gang for the weekend. The four men raped her repeatedly and cut her with knives, mutilating her chest and upper body. The motorcycle leader left her chained to a bed. He gave her a gun with one bullet suggesting she could either kill herself or shoot her original captor, Nap, who was due to return and pick her up so he could rent her out again. Lily chose to kill Nap. When he appeared, she drew the gun and shot him in the eye. He died immediately. After that horrid incident, Lily left town and settled in Shakespeare.



Lily becomes romantically involved with Marshall Sedaka, the owner of the Body Time Gym where Lily religiously attends karate lessons three times a week. Her training comes in handy as she is attacked several times during the course of the murder investigation. Although not a cop, Lily is able to gather and analyze enough information to determine the identity of the guilty party at about the same time the Chief arrives at the same conclusion. Not only does Lily help solve the Shakespeare murder but she winds up finding peace. Although her past has been exposed, she decides to face up to her former tragedy and stay in Shakespeare. She has made a life there and she is not about to give it up.

Marshall Sedaka

Marshall Sedaka is the owner of the Body Time Gym. Lily takes karate lessons from Marshall three times a week. Marshall, who is thirty-five years of age, is married to Thea Sedaka who works at the Shakespeare Community Church as a pre-school assistant. Ultimately, Marshall separates from his wife and becomes Lily's love interest.

Marshall is one-quarter Asian and makes the most of this heritage by maintaining an inscrutable visage. He has a somewhat triangular face and his complexion is a pleasant combination of Caucasian pink and Asian ivory. While Marshall presents a handsome package, his nose is somewhat flattened undoubtedly from some past physical encounters. Although not towering in height, he is several inches taller than Lily. Although he has a distinctive cat-like look facially, his body belies that image and is more like that of a sturdy bull dog. His superior strength and potential to be a dangerous adversary to anyone making the mistake of attacking him is without question. Marshall's grandmother was Chinese and his grandfather white. Marshall has straight black hair and dark eyes. His expressive eyes are topped by equally mobile eyebrows that with easy transition express surprise, disappointment and disapproval.

While preparing the meeting room for a Board meeting, Lily overhears that Thea is being accused of slapping one of the children. Thea is under a lot of stress due to her strained marriage. Lily also learns that Marshall's silent partner at the gym was none other than the dead man, Pardon Albee. This tells Lily that Marshall had a lot to gain from Pardon's death as their partnership was set up to give the surviving partner full ownership upon the death of the other. For a moment, therefore, Marshall seems a viable suspect to Lily. However, since Lily was so familiar with Marshall's overall body image, she was sure that the person depositing the body the night of the murder was not Marshall.

Marshall has enough respect for Lily's abilities that on occasion has her lead the class in some exercises. Marshall apparently has observed Lily closely enough to notice that she bears some unusual scarring. One evening after class, he musters the nerve to ask her how she got the scars. Lily's past is what she tries to stay away from. But with Marshall's sympathetic manner, she opens up to him and reveals the horrible circumstances in which she was scarred—both physically and emotionally—for life.



This incident leads to a closer relationship between Lily and Marshall. Marshall soon tells Lily that he has separated from his wife. His wife, Thea, he tells her is a strange person. She is into kinky, sick sex, something that he will not take part in. Lily and Marshall become heavily involved in a sexual and romantic relationship. Near the end of the story, Lily suggests they spend less time together. She is afraid their relationship will hurt him in his divorce. When Lily is injured while helping in the capture of the murderer, Marshall is out of town tending to his father who had a heart attack. But Marshall is attentive to Lily, calling her often and sending flowers. The story ends with Marshall making his way back to Shakespeare and to Lily.

Claude Friedrich

Claude Friedrich is the Shakespeare Police Chief and Lily's neighbor. Lily places an anonymous call to him the night she finds the dead body in the Estes Arboretum.

Pardon Albee

Pardon Albee is the owner/landlord and a resident of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. He is found dead by Lily Bard in the Shakespeare Estes Arboretum.

T.L. and Alvah York

T.L. and Alvah York is an old couple who live in the apartments. They are devastated that their seventeen-year-old granddaughter was the victim of a rape.

Norvel Whitbread

Norvel Whitbread is a drunken employee of the Shakespeare Community Church. He has several physical confrontations with Lily. Norvel comes up with the short end each time.

Reverend Joel McCorkindale

Joel McCorkindale is the minister of the Shakespeare Community Church where Lily does some work. Lily does not trust him and thinks there is evil in him just brimming below the surface.

Carlton Cockroft

Carlton Cockroft is Lara's next door neighbor. He is young, handsome and single but Lily views him as a womanizer. She is surprised when he shows up at her karate class.

Deedra Dean

Lily cleans Deedra Dean's apartment once a week. Lily does not like the promiscuous Deedra who she considers to be a self-centered airhead.

Thea Sedaka

Thea Sedaka is Marshall's estranged wife. He tells Lily that Thea is strange and into sick sex. Thea is accused by the Church's pre-school of slapping one of the children.

Objects/Places

Shakespeare, Arkansas

Shakespeare is the town where Lily Bard, the story's heroine, lives and works. It is also the site of the murder of the landlord of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments.

Shakespeare Garden Apartments

An eight-unit apartment building owned by murder victim, Pardon Albee.

Memphis, Tennessee

Lily lived in Memphis before moving to Shakespeare. She left Memphis after she suffered mutilation at the hands of a motorcycle gang.

Queen of Clean

Right out of college, Lily had a desk job at Memphis' largest janitorial service—Queen of Clean.

Estes Arboretum

The Estes Arboretum is a large park in Shakespeare and the location where Pardon Albee's dead body was deposited.

Creek County

Alvah and T. L. York's granddaughter was raped by a man found guilty in the Creek County Courthouse.

Body Time Gym

Lily works out at the gym and takes karate lessons there three times a week from owner Marshall Sedaka.

Shakespeare Combined Church

Lily cleans the meeting hall at the church. She tangles several times with the church's drunken caretaker, Norvel Whitbread.

York Camper

The body of Pardon Albee was temporarily stored in the camper belonging to T. L. and Alvah York.

Drinkwater Home

Someone sneaked in the Drinkwater House while Lily was cleaning it, leaving her a hateful reminder of the horrid incident she endured in Memphis.

Themes

Mystery

The book, *Shakespeare's Landlord* by Charlaine Harris, opens with the heroine, Lily Bard, witnessing a furtive figure in the middle of the dark night depositing something in the town's large park, the Shakespeare Estes Arboretum. After the person disappears into the night, Lily rushes to the park and finds the dead body of the resident landlord/owner of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments, Pardon Albee.

The book is rife with mysterious movements by the myriad of viable suspects. Just about everyone disliked the obnoxious Pardon Albee, and there were many people who had run-ins with him. Many had motives to see Albee six feet under. Since the story is told from Lily's point of view, the only person the reader has certainty as to his or her innocence is Lily herself. As the quiet, stoic Lily goes about her duties as house cleaner to many of the apartment residents as well as other townspeople, she learns bits and pieces about them that could point to their involvement in the homicide.

Even Lily's handsome, fit karate instructor, Marshall Sedaka, has something to gain from Albee's death. To her complete surprise, she learns that Albee was Sedaka's silent partner at Body Time, the gym owned by Sedaka and where he conducts his karate instruction. Lily becomes romantically involved with Marshall, who reveals that the Body Time partnership was set up for the surviving partner to gain full ownership upon the death of the other.

Romance

Lily Bard, the story's heroine, is a young woman in her early thirties. Her chest and shoulders had been horribly scarred by a motorcycle gang who raped and mutilated her after she had been kidnapped by a man who "rented" her out to the gang. After the incident, she moved from Memphis to Shakespeare, Arkansas, to start a new life. Lily lives a very private life, never bringing up her past. When her handsome karate instructor, Marshall Sedaka, asks her about the scars, she opens up for the first time since the incident. He is kind and understanding and does not let her scars stand in the way of his feelings for her. They become involved in a serious, sexual relationship.

There are also hints of other men who are interested in the pretty woman. She does not feel pretty any longer but there are at least several men who disagree. Lily's handsome neighbor, Carlton, shows up at her karate class. She is surprised to see him; he claims he just wanted to see what she enjoys so much. There is apparent sexual tension between the two young people. Although she rejects his advances, their attraction lingers for the reader.

An older man also finds Lily fascinating. Chief Claude Friedrich, the town's new police chief, seems to keep hanging around Lily. Although at first, Lily is a suspect in the

murder like just about everyone else, the Chief begins to enjoy her company and admire her intelligence and abilities. Lily has a few passing intimate thoughts about him as well. When the Chief and Lily apprehend the murderer in the final chapter of the book, it is the Chief who stays with her all week during her recovery from the injuries resulting from the apprehension.

Violence

The basic plot of Shakespeare's *Landlord* is the mystery and investigation of the homicide of the apartment building owner/landlord. Thus, the very story at its root relates to violence. However, there are other elements within the story that depict violence.

There are many allusions to Lily's mysterious past and her scarred upper torso. Though she tries to maintain a tough exterior, she reacts emotionally when learning of the rape of a neighbor's seventeen-year-old granddaughter. Although Lily has clung to her privacy and has avoided talking about her past, during the course of the homicide investigation, Chief Friedrich does a background check on Lily and learns what happened to her when she lived in Memphis. While living in Memphis, one day after work, Lily's car had broken down and she was walking down the road to get help. A van stopped for her, forcing her in at gunpoint. The man "rented" her to a motorcycle gang who raped her and cut her with knives, mutilating her upper body. The motorcycle leader left her chained to a bed with a gun containing only one bullet. He suggested she could either kill herself or her original captor who was due to return and pick her up so he could rent her out again. Lily chose to kill the man and did so when he came for her.

After enduring that horrendous episode, it is understandable why Lily would pursue karate with a vigor represented by her three lessons per week schedule. Lily vows to never again be indefensible against someone meaning to do her harm. She advances in her karate classes up to "green belt," a medium level of ability. Lily's skills come in handy when she has to fend off several assailants during the course of the homicide investigation. Each time, Lily musters up all her skills and gets the better of them. On one occasion, she sends the man to the hospital with a broken nose.

Style

Point of View

The book, *Shakespeare's Landlord* written by Charlaine Harris has the sub-title, "Introducing Amateur Sleuth Lily Bard." The book tells the tale of the mystery and subsequent investigation of the murder of the owner/landlord of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments from Lily Bard's point of view. As such, the reader knows that the only person not suspect in the murder is Lily herself.

Lily is a reserved person who keeps to herself. She has a past that she does not want exposed. Therefore, when she witnesses the murderer disposing of the body of the diseased—Pardon Albee, landlord of the apartment complex—she anonymously calls the small town's new police chief Claude Friedrich, a single man who himself is a resident of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments.

Since Lily cleans house, house sits, run errands and provides other such services for residents of the apartment building and other townspeople, she learns much about the people she works for. She is quiet and smart, she listens and learns, and is able to deduce a lot about the people and whether they could be possible murder suspects.

Lily's main joy in life is her three karate classes each week. She has taken up karate to fend off any future attacks on her person. When she lived in Memphis, she was brutally attacked in a gang rape and mutilation that left her scarred for life in more than a physical way. The reader is given her insight in learning to deal with that life-changing tragedy. In the end, through her help in finding the murderer and in finding her own peace, she draws on the tragedy of the past to become a stronger and wiser person. Even though her past is exposed, she chooses to stay in Shakespeare where she has made a new life, one that she is not willing to give up.

Setting

The majority of the story takes place in the fictitious small town of Shakespeare, Arkansas. Like many small towns, Shakespeare has a large park at its center. Shakespeare's lush park is named the Shakespeare Estes Arboretum. Lily Bard enjoys looking at the Arboretum's many trees and bushes every morning from the front window of her house. Located directly behind Lily's house is the Shakespeare Garden Apartments, where the resident owner/landlord, Pardon Albee, is the victim of homicide, the investigation of which is central to the story's plot. Tying the two locales together is the fact that Albee's body is found wrapped in plastic bags in the Arboretum.

Much of the story takes place in the various houses and apartments around Shakespeare that Lily cleans. Lily cleans a full range of households, from the relatively small units at the garden apartments where she cleans for the Yorks, the O'Hagens, and Deedra Deane, to the large houses like those for the Winthrops and the Drinkwaters.

She also cleans offices for professionals like doctors, dentists, and lawyers. Lily has the job of setting up the large banquet room for a meeting of the Shakespeare Community Church. The author provides a rich and colorful description of these settings, enabling the reader to visualize Lily's working environment.

Much action also takes place in Lily's own small house, which is located directly behind the Shakespeare Garden Apartments which was owned by the homicide victim. Lily works out every day at the Body Time Gym. She works in both the weight room and the aerobics room where she takes karate lessons three times per week.

Language and Meaning

Generally the language used in Shakespeare's Landlord is comprehensible and straightforward. The book is written from the Lily Bard's point of view. Lily is a well-educated and intelligent person, which is well reflected in her dialog and her thought processes as she does her work and tries to determine who might have murdered the apartment building's owner/landlord. Since the story takes place in the fictitious small town of Shakespeare, Arkansas, the dialog of some of the townspeople is written in southern vernacular, giving the words authenticity.

Lily Bard is a karate fanatic and takes lessons three times per week at the Body Time Gym. She works out at home and at the gym's weight room as well. Her regimen has made her very fit and able to fend off the assailants she encounters during the course of the homicide investigation.

Japanese words relating to karate are interspersed with English when Lily is at the gym or speaking of her work-outs there. She pulls on her "gi" when preparing for her karate class. Lily refers to the class being in "shiko dachi" which means legs straddled, faces calm, and arms crossed over chest. When Lily leads the class in stretching exercises she announces, "Kiotske!" (attention) and "Rai" (bowing in respect). There are also references to "goju karate" and "tae kwan do" (Korean marshal arts).

Structure

The story is told in a straightforward manner and generally in a chronological order. There are eleven chapters that are numbered but not titled. The story progresses from Lily Bard's witnessing of a furtive figure disposing of something in the local Arboretum. After the person disappears, Lily rushes to the park and finds that the dead body of the owner/landlord of the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. The main focus of the story from that point is a whodunit replete with a myriad of suspects ranging from the residents of the apartment building to other townsfolk who may have a motive to murder the generally detested Albee.

There are several subplots, one of which involves Lily's mysterious past. There are hints and foreshadowing of a tragedy she was made to endure in the past. The details of her ordeal are gradually revealed throughout the story. Finally, she relates to her karate

instructor details about the vicious attack and mutilation she was made to endure at the hands of a violent motorcycle gang some years before. This is the only flashback portion of the otherwise chronological structure of the story.

Another subplot of the story is Lily's psychological journey. Extending beyond the natural pain of her physical injuries and scars were the more overwhelming emotional damage that was done to Lily as a result of this horrendous episode in her life. As Lily struggles through her day-to-day duties, she not only helps to find the murderer of Shakespeare's landlord, she is able to find peace within herself. After her past is exposed in Shakespeare, she entertains the idea of moving on and hiding in another small town. She dismisses that. She has made a new life for herself and is not willing to give it up.

Quotes

"I hadn't seen a soul all night, but suddenly I was aware I was not alone. Someone was stirring in the darkness on the other side of the street. Instinctively, I concealed myself, sliding behind a live oak on the edge of the park. Its branches overhung the sidewalk; perhaps their shadow had hidden me from the presence across the street." p. 5

"I worked the bag up a little at the side and found a hand; I put my fingers on the wrist, where a pulse should be. In the chilling Shakespeare night, I squatted in the middle of the trees, holding hands with a dead man. And now I'd left my fingerprints all over the plastic bags." p. 9

"It was hard to remember why I'd chosen housecleaning as my means of support. I was a National Merit Scholar, I reminded myself, dragging the plastic wash basket behind me as I worked my way across the room. . .I was top of my high school class. I finished college. My grade point average was 3.9." p. 26

"'We didn't tell anyone around here,' she said with great weariness. 'But that man over in Creek County—that Harley Don Murrell, the one who was sentenced for rape—well, that man...the girl he raped was our granddaughter Sarah.'" p. 42

"As far as I know, Joel McCorkindale has never broken the law. Probably he never would. But I feel his potential to do something truly dreadful simmering right beneath the surface. I have lived one step away from losing my mind for years. I am quick and accurate in spotting unstable streaks in others." p. 53

"Four men and one woman took me to an abandoned shack in the middle of some fields....They attached the chain through my handcuffs to the metal head rail of an old cot. I was still blindfolded. The men drank, ate, and raped me. When that got old, they used the knife on my chest. They cut a circle around the base of each breast. They cut zigzags in the flesh covering my chest. They cut a target on my stomach, with my navel as the bull's-eye. They laughed as they did this, and I, chained to a dilapidated bed, screamed and screamed." p. 74

"Rooster had a wonderful idea as they packed up their gear the next day. He had a cheap little revolver he'd picked up on the street, and left it with me. He also left me one bullet. 'Now, you can use this on yourself,' he said genially. 'Or you can save it for Nap, when he comes back to get you, and use it on him.'" p. 75

"I could tell he was angry that I was too damaged to be useful for a while. I opened my eyes and looked at him, straight at him, and what he saw made him stop in the act of picking up my discarded blindfold. I raised the gun and pointed as carefully as I could, then fired. It caught Nap in the eye. He died far too quickly to suit me." p. 77



"I did not believe in the underlying goodwill of men or the unspoken sisterhood of women. I did not believe that people everywhere are really the same, or that if you treat people kindly you will get kindness in return. I did not believe in the sanctity of life." p. 80

"The disappearance and reappearance of Pardon's body, and its ultimate disposal in the park via my cart, had opened a vein of curiosity and anger in me. For one thing, it revealed unexpected depths in one of the people I saw often—for I didn't think it possible that the killer could be someone other than an apartment resident." p. 111

"Now that my past was out, should I move? Before, the answer had always been yes. But I'd been in Shakespeare for four years now, longer than I'd been anywhere since I was raped. For the first time, I wondered if I might not just weather it out." p. 161

"The blow that had killed Pardon had been delivered by someone strong and someone furious. This murder, I thought, pausing to stretch my back muscles, had been a murder of impulse, though whose impulse, I hadn't the foggiest notion." p. 189

Topics for Discussion

Describe the incident in which Lily received her scars. What long-lasting effects did this incident have on Lily?

Describe what Lily witnesses the night of the murder. What actions does Lily take? How does she notify the authorities?

The apartment complex near Lily's house is the Shakespeare Garden Apartments. Name at least three residents of this apartment building and describe how they are or are not suspects in Pardon Albee's murder.

What is Lily's educational background? Why did she chose to become a house cleaner?

Name the items that were left for Lily to find for the purpose of scaring her. Who else in town also claims to be receiving such items?

Marshall becomes Lily's love interest. What is the name of his wife from whom he is separated? What is she accused by the preschool of doing?

There are two people who first find out about Lily's background. Name the two people and describe how each found out about her past.