

# **Slade House Study Guide**

## **Slade House by David Mitchell**

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# Plot Summary

Norah and Jonah Grayer are twins who were born into a working class family. When their parents died, they were taken in by a wealthy land owner. While many twins develop their own language, Norah and Jonah developed the ability to communicate telepathically. When their ability was discovered, the twins were put under the care of a renowned mystic who helped them hone their abilities.

The story opens in 1979. Nathan Bishop, a young teenager, visits Slade House with his mother, Rita. They believe they are there to attend a music soiree. Nathan is a socially awkward youth and he begins to see that there's something wrong with the situation, but he can't be sure how to interpret the information. He goes through a chaotic period of time and dies in the attic of Slade House. In his final moments of physical life, Nathan watches his soul leave his body and hover above his head. Norah and Jonah suck up Nathan's soul, which feeds their immortality.

Each soul feeds their immortality for nine years. Nine years later, Fred Pink wakes from a coma and sees a news article about Nathan's disappearance. He reports to police that he saw Nathan and Rita in Slade Alley just before they vanished. Inspector Gordon arrives in Slade Alley to follow up on the report. There, he finds a woman he believes to be a helpless young widow. He falls under her spell and doesn't realize what's happening until it's too late to escape. Just before Gordon dies, Nathan manages to pass along a message. He's found a weapon, but doesn't say what that weapon is.

Nine years later, Fred Pink tells his nephew about the "Slade Alley Vanishings." His nephew is a member of the Paranormal Society at a local college. Sally Timms is also a member of that group. She's also an empath. Just before she dies, Gordon appears to her, holding a hair pin that was worn by Rita Bishop. Sally isn't able to escape, but she does find the weapon. Nine years later, Sally's sister Freya is looking into Sally's disappearance. Like the others, Freya doesn't know what's happening until it's too late. She dies, but Sally intervenes before Jonah and Norah can consume Freya's soul. Sally sticks the hat pin through Jonah's neck and Freya's soul escapes.

Jonah spends the next nine years inside Slade House, growing steadily weaker as he waits for the next opportunity to take the soul of an empath. Norah has found a young psychiatrist named Iris Marinus-Fenby, who says she likes to be called Marinus. Marinus is actually a member of the Horologists, an ancient group that fights evil. She knows all about Jonah and Norah, and she's there to stop them.

Marinus reveals her true identity, which makes Jonah furious. Norah continues to try to figure out a way to subdue Marinus but Jonah strikes out. He expects Norah to help him kill Marinus, but Norah doesn't. Marinus reflects the attack and kills Jonah. Marinus then sets off a bomb which creates a crack in Slade House. Without Jonah's help, Norah is unable to maintain the illusion, and the house dissolves. Marinus leaves Slade Alley as Norah soars above the neighborhood. She is intent on revenge but knows she can't

possibly do anything in her weakened state. She sees a young pregnant woman and Norah enters the body of the unborn baby boy, where she settles in to wait.



# The Right Sort, 1979

## Summary

The story begins with a chapter titled The Right Sort, 1979. Nathan Bishop and his mother, Rita, get off a bus near a pub called The Fox and Hounds. They are headed to a musical soiree hosted by Lady Grayer at the Slade House. Rita has written directions to the house and she is anxious that they arrive on time. She explains, as she apparently has explained already, that there will be people in attendance who care deeply about music, and that some of them will be in charge of awarding grants and hiring for music-related jobs. She says that she wishes Nathan had been able to remain at home but that Lady Grayer specifically requested that Nathan attend.

As they near the entrance of Slade Alley, Nathan has to step out of the way of a jogger. He's wearing a black and orange tracksuit. Nathan notices that Slade Alley is incredibly narrow, and that it looks like a place where homeless people might hide. He can't imagine that a lord and lady have their home there. Nathan notices a dead cat and asks his mother if they should bury it. She is impatient with him and presses for him to keep up. At one point, Rita simply says that the "conversation is over" as a means of pressing Nathan to hurry.

Rita is searching for a "small black door" in the alleyway, but they arrive at the other end without finding it. A workman walks near them. He's carrying a bucket and two ladders. Rita asks if he knows where Slade House is located. He says he doesn't and makes a rude comment about "Her Ladyship." He then walks down Slade Alley. Rita is obviously upset but decides they'll go back through the alley. They walk back down the alley and are surprised to find the small black door. Rita can't imagine how they missed the door during their first walk through the alley. Nathan is feeling foggy from taking a Valium, and he believes that's why he didn't see it. Rita discovers she can't make the door open. Nathan feels that his hand is being drawn to the door, and it opens.

They find themselves in a beautiful garden. The colors are brilliant and Nathan blames the Valium. He wants to ask Rita how there's room for such a huge garden and house in the small area between the alley and the next street, but he forgets before he can ask. A boy greets them and introduces himself as Jonah. When Rita asks, he agrees that he's Mrs. Grayer's son. Norah Grayer arrives just then. She greets Rita and Nathan warmly. She says Yehundi Menuhin, a world-renown violin virtuoso, is waiting to meet Rita. Rita is thrilled at the prospect. Norah suggests that Jonah and Nathan play outside for awhile. She says coffee eclairs will be available in a little while.

Nathan and Jonah take a seat outside. Nathan accepts a damson, which is a type of plum, from Jonah. He notices that the fruit "tastes of early August mornings." The boys talk for awhile. Jonah says he's just a few months younger than Nathan, and that he's taught at home by a private teacher. Nathan is jealous. Jonah asks about Nathan's father. Nathan says his dad lives in Africa where he trains soldiers. Jonah says his own



father died during a hunting trip “a long, long time ago.” Nathan thinks that it can't have been that long, but doesn't say anything.

Nathan is thinking that there's something odd in the garden but Jonah distracts him by asking about Nathan's recurring nightmare. Jonah says Nathan has a “haunted look” that tipped him to the nightmares. Nathan tries not to think about the time he was attacked by a dog. Nathan throws a rock into a pool. He hears the sound, but there isn't a visible splash. He doesn't comment on that and puts down other oddities to the Valium he took at home. He notices that some nearby shrubs look as if someone has drawn them into the garden. Nathan asks Jonah if he has nightmares. Jonah says he dreams about the horror of running out of food.

The scene abruptly changes and Nathan again puts that down to the Valium. Nathan feels strange and suggests that he might be a “different species of human, knitted out of raw DNA in a laboratory” who has to try to appear normal. Jonah nonchalantly says he and his sister “are a different species.” He says they can be anything they want, including human. Nathan suggests they play a running game he calls fox and hounds. Nathan fears that Jonah will make fun of him if he doesn't.

Nathan takes his place at a corner of the house. He sees a woman in a window. She is mouthing the words “no, no, no” or “go, go, go,” but when Nathan looks back, the woman is gone. Jonah yells for their race to begin and Nathan runs. In the game, the boys run in the same direction around the house. The one who is caught becomes the fox and the other is the hound. Nathan fears that he'll be the fox, so he pushes himself faster. When he rounds a corner of the house, he finds that the beautiful plants of the garden have died along with butterflies that were flitting around earlier. Then Nathan sees that the end of the garden, along with the door back to Slade Alley, is fading away. He doesn't know what to do.

Just then, Nathan hears Jonah approaching. He's relieved, thinking that Jonah will know what they should do. Then Jonah becomes a huge dog, prepared to attack. Jonah rushes to the house and literally falls into the kitchen. Norah Grayer is there with a tea tray. She asks Nathan what's wrong. She explains away the dog by saying it belongs to a neighbor. When he says the garden is vanishing, Norah says it's good for young boys to use their imaginations. When Nathan looks outside through a window, the garden is intact. Nathan knows that hallucinations are a side effect of Valium. He says he's fine.

Norah suggests that Nathan go upstairs where the music soiree is ongoing. He takes off his shoes and begins up the stairs. He notices that there are portraits on the wall beside the stairs. He sees a picture of a young girl, a military officers, and a lady in a hat. He reaches the first landing where there's a large clock. The clock has no hands, but the words, “Time is, time was, time is not” are on the clock face. He continues up the stairs and sees a portrait of the woman he'd seen in the window. Nathan believes her pulse is throbbing and he thinks she tells him to run away.

The next portrait is Nathan. In the portrait, he's wearing the exact clothes he has on. He doesn't know what it means. He considers that it might be a joke, but he's angry. He can



hear his mother playing the piano on the other side of the next doorway, and he steps through, but he wakes at his father's home in the Bushveld. Nathan believes he's been having a dream. His father is there with his pregnant girlfriend, Joy. They seem to have an ordinary morning together with Nathan. There's coffee. Nathan's mother doesn't let him have caffeinated drinks but his father insists he should drink it. Nathan raises the mug and "whatever's in there starts gulping me down."

When Nathan wakes, he's looking at a mirror. Jonah and Norah are there and Nathan can tell they are twins. There's a candle but the flame isn't moving. Nathan realizes he can't move. Nathan silently wonders where his mother is. Jonah responds that she had to leave. Norah says her "birth body" feels less and less like home each time she returns. Jonah says her soul would disintegrate without it.

Jonah and Norah argue. Norah says there will come a time with an "afterimage" of one of their victims will succeed in warning off their next victim. Jonah says they should enjoy the fruits of their labor. He points out that Nathan's soul will keep their immortality going for the next nine years. He then says that Nathan is "abnormal" because he hasn't yet realized that he isn't breathing. Norah and Jonah begin to chant while making figures in the air. Nathan's soul begins to leave his body through his forehead. He is amazed at how beautiful it is. Jonah consumes half by sucking it into his mouth while Norah consumes the other half. Nathan looks into the mirror again, and sees that his image is no longer there.

## Analysis

It's obvious from the earliest lines that there's something strange about Nathan. He takes things very literally. His mother tells him that he shouldn't dawdle. A few minutes later, she asks him what she said, and he repeats her instructions, but he doesn't realize that she intends that to be a reminder that he has to hurry. When he sees a dead cat, he suggests that they take time to bury it. When that isn't an option, he suggests they tell the owner. Rita says that they don't even know who owned the cat. She asks if they should go door-to-door, asking everyone if they have a missing cat. Nathan thinks that his mother has good ideas sometimes. He doesn't understand that she's being sarcastic. He is a young teenager, which means he might not know how to understand and react to some social situations. But Nathan's thoughts indicate it's deeper than that. He mentions being taught how to evaluate a person's words and facial expressions so that he can understand what's happening.

Nathan encounters two important people on the way to Slade House. The first is a jogger who is wearing an orange and black running suit. Other victims also encounter this same jogger. His identity is never explained. The other man they encounter is a workman named Fred Pink. His name is not revealed until a later chapter. Fred says he doesn't know where Slade House is, and he makes a rude comment that makes Rita angry. What isn't revealed in this chapter is that Fred is struck by a car just a few minutes after that encounter, and that he will be in a coma for the next nine years.



The door is an important symbol in the book. It's described as small and black by each of the characters. The door doesn't have a door knob and the ordinary person can't open it. Only an empath can make the door open. Nathan is an empath, though neither he nor his mother realize it. He says that he feels his hand literally drawn to the door, and he simply pushes it open.

Yehundi Menuhin is a real person and is really a well-known musician and conductor. Rita is very musical and hopes that she will secure a job or a grant through some wealthy patron that afternoon. Menuhin's presence is a dream come true for Rita. The twins feed on the dreams of others, pretending to fulfill their wishes so that their victims come willingly into the Slade House. This is one of the book's motifs.

Throughout the story, there are small pieces of information that reader has to interpret. One of these appears when Jonah and Nathan are talking in the garden, long before Nathan has discovered there's something horribly wrong with the situation. The boys are talking about school and their eyes meet. Nathan then says, "His eyes hurt, so I look away." The word "his" apparently refers to Jonah, because the passage is presented in first person from Nathan's perspective. Nathan doesn't say which of the boys is hurt by Jonah's eyes, or why. The next sentence simply moves on to another thought. These passages are somewhat disturbing because it's impossible to know exactly what the writer intends to convey.

Jonah has an insatiable desire to tell people about himself. He often throws in pieces of the truth, though it's impossible to know what's true and what's part of the lies Jonah and Norah are weaving for that particular victim. For example, Jonah poses as a teenager, the same age as Nathan. He says he doesn't attend school, but is taught at home. Those two facts are part of the ruse. Then Jonah says that his father died during a hunting trip "a long, long time ago." That turns out to be true. The victims basically accept it all as true but the reader will begin putting pieces of the twins' lives together in coming chapters.

The woman obviously tries to warn Nathan to get out of Slade House but he doesn't understand. Norah and Jonah realize that the woman – who was their last victim – had tried to stop them from taking Nathan's soul. The woman is dead and what Nathan sees is her "afterimage." Norah says that the victims are becoming braver. Nathan and the victims that come after him will be even braver, which will eventually lead to the destruction of Slade House.

Jonah makes fun of Nathan in the final moments of Nathan's life. Jonah says that Nathan hasn't even noticed that he isn't breathing, and indicates that's a sign that Nathan is "mentally abnormal." Other victims react in exactly the same way. They don't realize they aren't breathing until Jonah or Norah point it out.

The twins tell Nathan that his mother had to leave. In reality, they kill any extra people who happen to be with the empath. This becomes an important issue in the disappearance of Sally Timms. The fact that the twins don't care at all about killing





innocent empathies indicates that they are heartless and selfish. The fact that they kill other people just to get them out of the way increases this image.

There are words and phrases used in the book that are specific to the story. For example, Jonah says they have had a successful orison, which refers to their current renewal of immortality through consuming Nathan's soul. These words and phrases occur several times throughout the book. In most cases, the reader can discern the meaning through the context.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What do readers know about Norah and Jonah Grayer up to this point? Make a list and add to it as more information becomes available.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Who is Nathan? What kind of person is he? Is he a believable character? Is he likable?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why are Nathan and Rita at the Slade House?

## **Vocabulary**

soiree, splendid, lattice, smothered, frightful, perspiration, cranial, circuitry, truancy, redundant, shriek, rapport, portrait, meditating, sniveling, ersatz, orison, reminisce, imbibed



# Shining Armor, 1988

## Summary

The next chapter is Shining Armor, 1988. Detective Inspector Gordon Edmonds of the Thames Valley Police is walking down Westwood Road as he looks for Slade Alley. Gordon is following up on a tip by a man named Fred Pink. Fred was in the alley nine years earlier when Nathan and Rita disappeared. Rita asked him if he knew where Lady Slade House was located. Fred was hit by a car just a few minutes after that encounter and has only recently woke. He looked through old newspapers to find out what he'd missed, which is why Gordon is now looking for Slade Alley. The general belief is that Rita and Nathan ran away to escape financial troubles and Gordon doesn't believe he'll find anything. He has been in some trouble with his boss, which prompts him to follow through with his assignment to look for Slade House.

A jogger dressed in orange and black runs past. Gordon happens upon an altercation between two workers and a traffic cop named Lech Walesa. Gordon steps in and breaks it up. Gordon says he's looking for Slade Alley and Lech shows him that they are standing literally in front of the opening to the Slade Alley. Gordon notices the air is cold in the alley. He soon finds the door in the alley. Though there isn't a door knob, he pushes on it and it opens. Inside, he's amazed to find a beautiful garden and no sign of any kind of alarm to keep thieves out.

Gordon finds a young woman in the garden and he introduces himself. It's Norah but she introduces herself as Chloe Chetwynd and says she is recently widowed. She says she doesn't know what to do about the door and Gordon offers to give her the name of a contractor who can secure the gate for her. As they are talking, Gordon hears footsteps that sounds like running children, but no children appear. Norah says it's the children next door. Norah offers to walk Gordon back to the door in the alley. On the way, she asks if there was another reason for his visit. He says not unless she knows Rita and Nathan Bishop. She claims she doesn't. She invites Gordon to tell her about them.

They take a seat and Gordon tells her that Nathan and Rita disappeared, and that Fred Pink claimed to have seen them in the alley, and that they were looking for Lady Norah Grayer. Norah, posing as Chloe, says it should be easy to track down a "Lady." Gordon says they've had no luck. They talk about the history of the house and Norah claims to have bought the house from a family named Pitt. Norah seems to be flirting a little. She asks if Gordon is married. Gordon suggests she should get a cat for company. Gordon turns to shake hands with Norah and believes he sees something in the window of the house, but can't be sure.

Gordon returns to Westwood Road where it's raining. He thinks about the woman he knows as Chloe. He is divorced and lonely, but knows that she is also lonely. She has a large house and probably a good amount of money, but has no one in her life. Gordon feels good about himself as he leaves.



He arrives again at Westwood Road a week later, on October 29. He parks in the same place and thinks about his earlier conversation with Norah. She'd sounded nervous but Gordon assured her he had been thinking about her. She asked him to take a look at the work done on her garden door. After their phone conversation, Gordon got a haircut and bought flowers and condoms. He thinks about his life. He's recently gotten a past due notice from his father's nursing facility and his credit card. He knows he's going to have to juggle finances. Added to that, a prisoner died in a cell and the officers involved – including Gordon – are in the spotlight. Gordon knows that the toxicology report will exonerate them, but there's tension in the meantime.

Gordon arrives at the doorway and is pleased that it seems securely locked. He's about to go around in search of the front entry when Norah emerges. She has a cat that she named Bergerac after a television detective. She invites Gordon in to inspect the door from the inside. Gordon and Norah are soon in a huge kitchen while Norah cooks a meal. While they are eating, Gordon clearly hears the voice of a young girl yell “Jonah” several times. He doesn't see anyone other than Norah in the room. He's immediately on his feet. Norah doesn't react and begins to explain. She says she hears the voices often, and that it's apparently ghosts that remain in the house. She's relieved that Gordon hears it because her husband never heard them. Norah says she has come to believe that there's a boy and girl who are twins, and that their names are Norah and Jonah. Gordon realizes that Fred Pink mentioned Norah Grayer, but he doesn't know if it's significant or just a coincidence. Norah, posing as Chloe, says she's never seen anything sinister from the twins. She says there's a third voice sometimes. This is a boy who mumbles “disconcerting” warnings. She says none of it is enough to make her want to leave Slade House. Norah says she isn't certain they are ghosts, but believes they might simply be children who are living in another time, and that they all overlap occasionally.

They talk a little more and then Gordon and Norah are in bed together, recovering from the exertions of sex. Gordon insists that he isn't sleepy but he wakes in the early hours of the morning. Gordon thinks that something isn't quite right. It occurs to him that a classy, wealthy woman like Norah wouldn't just go to bed with a common police officer on the first date. He thinks about it and realizes that they've dated multiple times over several weeks. He hears the shower running and Norah calls out, saying she can't open the shampoo bottle. Gordon thinks it's another ploy for them to have sex.

Gordon gets out of bed and finds a brown robe on the bed. He knows it probably belonged to Norah's dead husband, but he puts it on anyway. He heads upstairs. On the way, he sees a grandfather clock. Norah calls out to him again and Gordon starts up another flight of stairs. He sees the portraits lining the stairwell. He notes that one of the portraits is a young girl who reminds him of Julie. He brushes his lips against the portrait and continues on his way.

The next picture is a teenager dressed in a tweed jacket. Gordon and all the other officers have Nathan's picture above their desks so Fred Pink will see that they are taking his lead seriously. Gordon almost instantly realizes that he's looking at a portrait of Nathan. Just then, a “sulky voice” whispers “She's lying,” then, “She'll take your life,



and more.” The voice then says that there's “a weapon in the cracks.” Gordon realizes the voice is talking directly to him. He wants to ask the voice's identity, but he knows it's Nathan Bishop. The voice then says that “it's too late” for Gordon to escape, but that he should “pass it on” to the twins' next victim. The voice then says it's “all used up” and Gordon knows it's gone.

Gordon continues up the stairs and recognizes himself in the next portrait. He's wearing the same brown robe. He begins trying to come up with a rational explanation. He thinks Norah must have painted the portrait. If that's true, she must have lied when she said she didn't know Nathan. He figures the portraits must have been in the house when Norah bought it. He thinks about the warning but decides that it would be cowardly to run away, and that he might have imagined the voice altogether. He decides that he's going to get Norah out of the house and then call the police chief the following day. With that decision made, he opens the door he believes is the bathroom, expecting to find Norah in the shower.

Instead, he's in a long, dark attic. He finds a barred-off section that looks like a jail cell. Inside, there's a woman that Gordon believes is Rita Bishop. Gordon and the woman talk for a few minutes and she continues to insist that he isn't real. Rita says that Lady Norah Grayer, who might be using some other name, lured Rita and Nathan into Slade House. She says she doesn't know if Nathan is even alive. Gordon knows he should leave immediately and call for backup, but he wants to get Rita out as well. She points out the key to the cell and Gordon unlocks the door. He urges her to leave the cell with him. She asks if she's dreaming and Gordon assures her he's real. She then suggests that Gordon is dreaming her but he dismisses that idea as well. Then Rita holds up a lighter and the scene changes.

Gordon realizes the flame is frozen and that it's really a candle. He is unable to move at all. He begins trying to figure out what's wrong. He can see three faces and realizes one of them is Norah and the other is a man with very similar features. Gordon is the third face he sees.

Norah and Jonah argue. Norah accuses Jonah of making fun of her. Jonah assures her he isn't. He says her performance as Rita Bishop was excellent and that they've had another successful event. Norah says their very existence depends on finding a victim every nine years while their “birth bodies remain here in the lacuna” so that their souls remain anchored. She says everything has to go right. She says they've been lucky but that they can't expect that luck to go on forever. Norah goes on to say they need to protect themselves against enemies. Jonah responds that even the “Shaded Way” doesn't know about them.

Jonah then points out that “supper is served” and tells Gordon that he's going to be their meal. He points out that Gordon isn't breathing and Gordon begins to panic. Gordon wonders what he's done to deserve this death but Norah says it's just like a pig that died to provide bacon for breakfast. She and Jonah want Gordon's soul, and he can't escape.



Jonah suggests that he'll let Gordon go if he can recite the Lord's Prayer. Gordon tries but Jonah cuts him off when Jonah says "who" instead of "that." Jonah says that having a little despair makes a soul taste better. Gordon is amazed as his soul begins to leave his body and horrified as the twins consume it. He wants to tell them he'll get revenge, but he can't speak at all. After they consume the soul, Gordon looks at the mirror and sees that all three of them are gone.

## Analysis

When Norah and Jonah are arguing just before consuming Nathan's soul, Jonah says they have people around Slade House ready to bring back anyone who escapes their Open House. These people are later identified as Blackwatermen. The term is never explained. Jonah says they pay those people well to serve this purpose, just in case they are needed. Norah says Jonah doesn't understand human nature, which seems to indicate she realizes that a human might someday take pity on a victim and help that person escape rather than forcing him or her back to Slade House. There are several people seen outside Slade House, and some or all of them might be part of this support system Jonah mentioned. The jogger appears again in this chapter, just as Gordon is looking for Slade Alley. Like Rita and Nathan, Gordon doesn't talk to him. His purpose is not revealed but he continues to appear. The traffic cop may have been planted there to ensure that Gordon found the entry to Slade Alley.

Norah poses as Chloe Chetwyck in this chapter. For the sake of continuity in this study guide, she is referred to as Norah. The reader should remember that Gordon is seeing her as Chloe until the final scene of the chapter.

The twins are able to read minds and they have the power of suasion, which means they can plant ideas and manipulate people into taking actions. This is how they know what each of their victims needs. Nathan really wants to visit his father, which is why the twins make him believe he was actually at his father's house in Africa. Gordon realizes that his relationship with Norah has moved too quickly, which is why the twins apparently plant false memories of several other dates, long conversations, and late night phone calls.

Several times, Gordon thinks about his former wife, Julie, and he compares her to Chloe by thinking about all Julie's imperfections. This is an example of the twins' ability to seem to fulfill dreams. They make it appear that they are providing something wonderful so that their victim willingly submits until it's too late to escape. In Gordon's case, Norah seems to be everything he could want in a wife, which is one of the things he really wants.

On the surface, Gordon seems to be an honorable man who really wants to do the right thing. Looking a little more closely, it's obvious that he's actually a selfish person who isn't as honorable as he first seems. He and his first wife divorced because they fought and Gordon wound up in trouble for hitting her. He is now in financial trouble and talks about trying to extend his limited finances to meet his obligations. When he thinks about



Norah, he sees a wealthy young widow and he almost immediately begins planning what he could do with her money. He quickly comes to believe that she loves him. He says he doesn't love her, but that it will happen in time. Gordon considers himself a good catch and he knows exactly how many sexual partners he's had. It all comes together to make him less sympathetic as a victim.

Gordon's encounter with the woman he believes to be Rita Bishop is obviously the twins' idea of a joke. They already have Gordon in the house and they could easily kill him without going through all that, but they are apparently amused by putting him through that brief interlude. He believes that he's saving her and he imagines the accolades he'll receive for his heroic efforts. This is yet another look into Gordon's character.

Nathan tells Gordon that a weapon "fell through the cracks." This becomes important later. The house doesn't actually exist in this time and place. While the casual observer would never see any part of the house or evidence of the twins' existence, items do sometimes "fall through the cracks" of the manifestation. The weapon Nathan mentions is a hat pin that was worn by Rita Bishop. A tape recorder will later fall through the cracks as well, and this will be the downfall of Slade House.

## Discussion Question 1

Describe Gordon. What are his strengths and his weaknesses? Do you like him as a character?

## Discussion Question 2

What pieces of information are revealed in this chapter regarding the twins' immortality?

## Discussion Question 3

What clues does Gordon have that there's something wrong at Slade House? Why do you think he ignores them?

## Vocabulary

alleged, altercation, privatized, provocative, sloughs, gentry, sinister, solvent, protocol, exploited, disconcerting, innocuous, gape, pantomimes, luggaged, blabbermouth, indestructible, eventually, flak, poofter, trundling



# Oink Oink, 1997

## Summary

Chapter 3 is titled Oink Oink, 1997. Sally Timms is a college student who is attending a meeting of the Paranormal Society. A boy named Alan Hardwick, who calls himself Axel, is upset that so few members of the group have attended. One of those is Todd Cosgrove, a math major who is the vice president of the club.

The group is meeting at The Fox and the Hounds, the pub just around the corner from Slade Alley. Angelica Gibbons, another of the members, suggests that those not totally committed to the club didn't attend because it's off campus. A senior philosophy major named Lance Arnott suggests that a group got lost on the way. The sixth and final member of those present is Fern Penhaligon, a freshman who is attending the meetings to do research for a drama performance.

Axel opens the meeting by presenting a "case study" that begins with the disappearance of Rita and Nathan Bishop, moving on to Fred Pink's report and Gordon Edmonds' disappearance. Gordon left behind a report of having met a woman named Chloe Chetwynd. An investigation ensued but no one ever found Gordon, Chloe, or Slade House. The six discuss possibilities, including that Gordon fabricated his initial report. Axel then reveals that Fred Pink is his uncle, and that's how the story came to his attention. He admits to a level of skepticism, saying Fred feels "chosen" to find out the truth about Slade House.

Axel points out that both Gordon and the Bishops went missing on the last Saturday of October, nine years apart. Following that pattern, the group is meeting on the last Saturday of October, nine years after Gordon's disappearance. He suggests they explore Slade Alley.

Sally thinks about her sister, Freya, who moved to New York. She is clearly self-conscious and shy. She likes Todd Cosgrove and wishes he would take some notice of her. They find Slade Alley and Sally is aware that it's a creepy place. Axel takes the lead and Todd brings up the rear, right behind Sally. They walk slowly with Axel warning everyone to look for Psychic Anomaly Indicators. Angelica, who acts as if she's a clairvoyant or mystic, says she's looking for breaks in the "membrane between worlds."

Lance finds the door into the garden of Slade House. They initially can't figure out how to open it, and Lance seems to be mocking them. Sally senses that she shouldn't trust him but her hand finds its own way to the door and it opens when she presses. They find themselves in a garden and discover that there are college students gathered for a Halloween party. A girl says several Erasmus exchange scholars live there.

Axel is obviously embarrassed. He says he should have done more research before leading the Paranormal Society into the alley. Sally and Todd reassure him that it's



alright. Sally tries to bring the conversation back to an earlier point when it seemed Todd was about to ask her something. He says he's forgotten, but suggests they go inside for "a quick drink and a chat." They find seats in the kitchen and Sally is soon pouring out her life story to Todd. She tells him that her father worked for Shell, which is like "Hotel California," because you can never leave. The family traveled a lot and Sally had a "breakdown" at age 12, which prompted her enrollment in a private boarding school. She says she hated the school. Actually, Sally was tormented at her school. She was always overweight, and was the subject of pig jokes. She had a terrible sexual encounter and the boy involved made her life even worse.

There's pizza available. Sally and Todd each have slices. Todd says his mother is blind and his father is older, which is why he chose to live at home and attend college. Todd says he'd like for Sally to meet his mother. She agrees that it's a good idea. Todd then says he has to find a bathroom, and he leaves Sally. Sally notices more food and goes over to inspect it. One plate of brownies have a sign that says, "Hash brownies" and the other says "No hash brownies." Sally chooses one from the latter plate.

Jonah introduces himself as Mike and asks if Sally is alone. He is incredibly handsome but she's very interested in Todd. She says she's with someone and is elated that she just turned down such a handsome man. Jonah then says that "some joker" might have switched the signs on the brownies, leading Sally to believe she ingested hash brownies.

Sally leaves the kitchen in search of Todd. She finds Fern along the way. Fern indicates she hasn't seen Todd, but that she's noticed that he's attracted to Sally. They talk for a few minutes. Sally then wakes to find that Fern is gone. She sees a man in a brown robe. She asks directions back to the kitchen but the man doesn't respond. He haltingly says that "they took away my name." Sally assumes that he's high. He then says that "they don't even let you die properly." He then asks if Sally is the next guest. He says he found a weapon "in the cracks," and displays the hair pin.

The next thing she knows, the man is gone. She realizes that she can see a door that looks like the door in the alley, but she knows it can't be. Sally fears she's hallucinating from the hash brownies. She decides to leave, planning to walk home. A girl gives her where to find Todd.

On the way, Sally finds that everyone is gathered around a television as if there's something important happening. When she gets near, she hears a reporter talking about the disappearance of a college student named Sally Timms. Sally's picture is being plastered on the screen. A boy who's watching says the police have found a mirror that belonged to the victim, which has made them think she might have been kidnapped. She's upset but mainly embarrassed that she's caused so much commotion and drawn attention to herself. She grabs a mask so that no one will recognize her. It happens to be a pig mask. She wants to find Todd, believing that he will help her straighten out the situation.





Sally rushes from the room, hoping to find Todd. She finds the clock and sees a nearby door. She goes inside and finds Axel and Angelica having sex. The scene is grotesque and Sally runs away as Angelica makes a comment about “oink oink.” Sally finds the stairs and begins to climb. When she finds the picture of Nathan, she compares it to the printout Axel provided. She then finds the portrait of Gordon and realizes that he was the man in the robe that told her about the weapon.

Sally next finds the portrait of herself. She says she really isn't even that surprised by the sight but she reacts and almost falls. Todd catches her. He says they have to get out of the house. Todd says that he put “the twins” to sleep, but that they'll soon be awake and hungry. He says they have to get out of the house. Todd says the twins want Sally's soul. Todd explains that Slade House is like a life-support machine that supports the twins, but the house is powered by empathths like Sally. Sally asks about Axel, Lance, Fern, and Angelica. Todd says they have “been discarded.”

Todd says the Slade House, the events, and the people, are part of a “shadow play” that the twins created. He says they'll wake if Sally interacts with any part of the shadow. Todd says he is “a kind of bodyguard,” and that he will try to get Sally to safety. He says she can't talk to anyone or speak, and that she can't let go of Todd's hand. He pledges to cloak them in an effort to get them out of the house.

They make progress and Sally is horrified to see another Sally and another Todd in the kitchen, talking and eating together. Axel appears and begs her to take him. Todd says it isn't Axel but Sally feels bad for him, and says he can come. His face immediately changes and Sally realizes her mistake. Todd steps between them and makes a sign in the air. As they near the gate, Fern calls out. She says that Sally lost her compact mirror, and she tosses it. Sally reflexively catches it.

Sally falls and wants nothing more than to lie there but Todd pulls her up. They reach the door and Todd says Sally has to be the one to open it. Sally is too afraid and Todd kisses her in order to make her forget her fear. She opens the door. Todd pushes her through but she wakes to complete darkness. She realizes she can see three faces in the mirror, and that she's still wearing the Miss Piggy mask.

Sally can't move or speak. She wonders what happened to the others. Norah says they are dead, including Todd. She then says that Jonah has manipulated Todd over the past few weeks in order to bring Sally to this point. Jonah says that everything Sally experienced after entering the door to the garden has been part of an orison created by Norah. He says the situation with Todd trying to help her escape was just another part of that.

Norah and Jonah begin their typical round of arguing. Norah points out flaws in their current event, saying that Sally had seen the door. Norah says they have been living like this for 60 years. She mentions the Shaded Way and Jonah says they are the “only people alive who could cause us trouble.”



They eventually turn their attention back to Sally. She watches in horror as her soul leaves her body. Like the others, she thinks her soul is the most beautiful thing she's ever seen. She watches in the mirror as the Grayer twins stand very still and the Miss Piggy mask falls to the floor.

## Analysis

Sally is lacking in self-esteem, at least partly because of her weight. She wishes she had snappy replies when others make rude remarks, but she is afraid to take the chance that others will laugh at her. Her fears and attitudes are largely traced back to a time spent in school when she was tormented. She had a horrible sexual encounter and that continues to haunt her. With that in mind, it's easy to understand why Sally is so upset when she sees Axel and Angelica having sex. The scene is grotesque and body parts are out of proportion, in keeping with her horrible memories.

Sally remembers that her father was an employee of the Shell company. That's a major corporation. Sally says that it's just like "Hotel California," a song made popular by the Eagles. In the song, guests "can check out, but you can't ever leave." Sally says the Shell company is the same way because her family could never escape from the company's demands. She seems to blame that for part of her childhood problems, including being sent to a boarding school where she was tormented. Hotel California is symbolic of the Slade House. "Guests" arrive at the Slade House but never leave, just like the guests in the song. Gordon refers to Sally as a guest. Most readers will understand the reference though there may be some who aren't familiar with the song.

At one point from inside Slade House, Sally sees the door to Slade Alley. She might have been able to get through it and escape if she'd had the presence of mind to do so, but she wasn't quick enough and the door disappeared. The orisons Norah and Jonah create are elaborate and detailed. This is one of several examples in which the orison fails to a small degree. Norah continues to worry that they'll eventually fail altogether but Jonah believes they are doing fine.

Shaded Way is never explained, and it's one of many details that are presented and left to the reader's imagination. If the reader is familiar with *The Bone Clocks*, some of these terms and phrases will hold greater meaning. Otherwise, the reader is left to figure out some details or to guess about meanings. This really doesn't detract from the book because of the overall fanciful nature of the story line.

Todd Cosgrove seems to be trying to help Sally escape, but it's really just Jonah toying with Sally. The twins seem to take pleasure in this kind of action. It's seen with Gordon when they set up the stage so that it appears Gordon might be able to rescue Rita Bishop. Jonah also torments Gordon by saying he can go free if he can say the Lord's Prayer, but he then refuses, saying Gordon got one word wrong. In Sally's case, the twins toss her the compact mirror that Freya sent Sally as a gift. Sally reflexively catches it.



## Discussion Question 1

Describe Sally. What is it about her character that makes her a good victim?

## Discussion Question 2

Describe Sally's interaction with Gordon. What does he try to convey? What she does think of him?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Sally come to be part of the group that arrives at Slade House? What are some of the things the twins do to torment her during her final hours?

## Vocabulary

teetering, fabricated, repress, intriguing, trundles, feeble, manifest, empath, emanations, dubious, reconnoiter, authentically, mullioned, besotted, idiotic, bigot, sociopath, behest, aberrations, superlatives, sojourn, histrionics, thrall, pique



# You Dark Horse You, 2006

## Summary

Chapter 4 is titled You Dark Horse You, 2006. Freya Timms says she has had a dream about meeting Fred Pink. In the dream, she changed her mind and decided not to go through with the meeting. She then hears Sally's voice telling her to "wake up" and Freya woke in the upstairs room of The Fox and Hounds. She was there in 1997 and believes that the entire pub is "seedier" than she remembered. Freya knows that Sally and her five friends, known as "The X-Files Six," sat in this very room on the night they disappeared. She knows that "several witnesses" saw Sally and the others that night, but those people couldn't say for sure which table Sally's group used.

Freya watches through the window as the man she believes to be Fred Pink stands on the sidewalk below, smoking a cigarette. It's really Jonah posing as Fred Pink.

Freya thinks about her life. She doesn't know what happened to Sally, which leads her to hope that she might be alive. Freya says that's a horrible feeling that's like bleeding. Freya feels guilty that she didn't invite Sally to visit in New York that summer before she disappeared. She had been so excited with her new life and the idea of having her "tubby, dory, nervy sister" prompted Freya to make excuses.

Freya is in a lesbian relationship with a girl named Avril. She texts to say she's meeting with Fred Pink, and that she'll be home when she can. Jonah returns to the room. Freya asks if she can record their interview and Jonah agrees. Jonah, posing as Fred, begins to tell Freya a lengthy, convoluted story, but he first claims that he feels guilty over the disappearance of his nephew, Alan Hardwick, and the others. He said there were supposed to be 20 or 30 people in the Paranormal Club, and that he knew the entities at Slade House wouldn't dare make that many people disappear. He claims he thought there was safety in numbers and that he would have told them not to go with only six people.

Freya says "Fred" promised to tell her the backstory of Slade House. He begins by saying that Jonah and Norah Grayer were born a century ago in the gamekeeper's cottage of an estate called Swaffham Manor. Their father died in a hunting accident. The owners of the estate, Lord and Lady Chetwynd-Pitt, allowed the mother and twins to continue to live in the cottage. The mother died of rheumatic fever in 1910 and the twins moved into the manor where they became the equivalent of adoptive children. Jonah says he got some of his information from the memories of Albertina Chetwynd-Pitt. She wrote that Jonah telepathically communicated an accident to Norah one day. Albertina witnessed the result of that communication. They contacted an army chaplain, Dean Grimond, who conducted a series of tests and concluded that the telepathy was real. He told the twins they shouldn't discuss their gifts in public to avoid the wrong kind of attention.



Jonah said some of the story is further corroborated by Dr. Leon Cantillon who also wrote his memoirs. Cantillon spent time in Algiers where he became interested in the occult and mysticism. When all three of her sons died in war, Albertina became chronically ill. Her husband sought Cantillon's advice. Cantillon performed a healing ritual that included cocaine, and Albertina claimed to have seen her sons, "happy on a higher plane." Jonah says that the twins were settled into their lives by that time, expanding their career and educational opportunities. Cantillon suggested that the twins go with him to study with an occult teacher, promising that they'd eventually be able to communicate with Albertina's dead sons on her behalf. The adoptive parents agreed but the twins wound up staying away for years instead of a few months.

The twin studied under the Albino Sayyid of Ait Arif, following a branch of the occult called the Shaded Way. Jonah says the twins would never be able to communicate with the dead because it's simply impossible. After years of study, the Sayyid one day announced that the twins had learned all they could. Cantillon began to try to figure out how to make money from the twins' abilities. He began to arrange seances and the twins, because of their mind-reading ability, were very popular.

The twins and Cantillon were comfortably wealthy because of the twins' popularity. They didn't hold any public performances. The twins didn't leave a written memoir of any kind, so there's no way to know for certain what their motives were. They knew the art of suasion, which is a form of mind control. They could have a wealthy person write them a generous check, then eliminate his memory of writing the check.

Jonah, as Fred, asks for a break to go to the rest room. He suggests bringing Freya a different drink since she doesn't care for the tomato juice, but she declines. Freya texts Arvil that she expects to leave the pub around 9:30 to be home by 11. Freya realizes she doesn't remember eating dinner, so she goes downstairs to the bar to see if there's anything available. She decides on a couple of packages of cashews and some tonic water. Norah is posing as the barmaid named Maggs. She berates Freya for "encouraging" Fred. Freya considers telling her relation to Sally, but she doesn't.

Jonah, posing as Fred, picks up the story in 1925 when the twins were 26. Cantillon wants to create a new discipline that he calls psychosoterica. The twins want to stop their public appearances and instead focus instead on their mystical teachings, looking into specific avenues. Their cross purposes create problems. Despite their objections, Cantillon writes a book. On the day the copies of his books are delivered, Cantillon mails out about 72 copies. Then the twins suasion him to climb up on his window sill and jump.

Jonah says that the twins bought Slade House in 1931. The location was perfect because they needed "lab rats" for their experiments. Freya's phone indicates she's received texts. Jonah says that Freya will die someday and that the person sending her texts will also die. He says the twins didn't want to die. Jonah asks why she is so certain that there isn't a way to achieve immortality. Freya says the person who discovered it would win accolades. Jonah points out that it is only worth something if it's not available to everyone.



Freya asks how the twins achieved immortality. Jonah says there were four stages. They created and protected a lacuna, which is a “small space that's immune to time.” They perfected “transversion,” which allows them to leave their bodies. They learned long-term suasioning, basically allowing their souls to occupy another body. The fourth part of the process is the orison. They lure an empath into a “reality bubble” they create. The catch is that the empath has to eat or drink banjax. It's a chemical that lessens the cord that holds the soul in the body, which allows the twins to consume it.

Freya has really had enough of the story at this point. She doesn't believe many of the “facts” presented. She asks what this has to do with Sally. Jonah, still posing as Fred, says Sally was gifted. He says he's now certain of that because he's interviewed relatives of the other five and none of them were. Freya is also an empath.

Jonah says he read Sally's psychiatric reports during his research. This makes Freya angry. He says he knows how miserable Sally was during her years at boarding school. Freya argues that Sally was happy there, but she doesn't seem really convinced. He then points out Freya's sexual orientation. Freya thinks that the man she believes is Fred Pink might be old and crazy with the ideas of mysticism, but that he's obviously observant and smart.

Freya tries to reason with Fred. She asks why the police didn't find Slade House if it's so near. Jonah says that Slade House was completely destroyed by a German bomb in 1940. He says that it's always 11 p.m. On Saturday, October 27, 1934, inside Slade House, because that's the day the twins brought the lacuna to life.

Freya interrupts, saying that she wishes she could believe the story, but that she simply doesn't. Jonah, still posing as Fred, offers to call her a cab. Freya believes it's only about 9 p.m. but she finds several messages from Avril. By the end of them, the messages are frantic with Avril saying she's called the police and that almost a day has passed. Freya rushes down the stairs to the main room of the pub and finds herself back in the upstairs room. She tries to rationalize what's happened. Her phone rings from an unknown caller. When Freya answers, she hears a voice that sounds very much like Sally. The voice makes a statement that includes “someone'll stop you one day” and the line goes dead.

Her phone rings again. This time it's Norah, still pretending to be the barmaid. Freya believes that she must be crazy. She calls for an ambulance and the voice promises help, then Freya realizes that she can't escape at all. The voice on the phone says it's “about time” she figured it out.

Freya realizes that she's frozen and can't move at all. Norah is angry that Jonah told Freya their entire life story. She says he has put them in danger by naming the Shaded Way. Jonah says their story deserved to be told.

Jonah tells Freya that she did change her mind about meeting Fred, and that a man in their employ sprayed her with a chemical that made her lose consciousness. She was then taken to Slade House. Jonah continues to talk about how Freya came to be there



while Norah continues to be angry that they almost lost Freya altogether. Jonah and Norah finally agree to stop their arguing and consume Freya's soul. Freya watches as her soul leaves her body. Just as the twins prepare to consume her, another presence arrives. Freya isn't sure who or what it is, but she notes specific things, such as the color of the fingernails and the fact that it's wearing the pendant Freya bought and sent to Sally. Sally stabs Jonah in the neck with the hair pins. He and Norah are unable to consume Freya's soul and it escapes, even as she dies.

## Analysis

An important part of the structure of the story is that scenes come to inconclusive ends, sometimes in the middle of a thought or event, and another scene opens. This gives a disjointed and chaotic feeling to the story that helps keep the reader from guessing what's really happening. This is seen clearly in Freya's case. She believes she had a frightening dream in which she changed her mind about meeting Fred Pink and that Sally was trying to warn her about something, then she is sitting inside The Fox and the Hounds, the pub around the corner from the entrance to Slade Alley. It's not until the end of the chapter that the reader discovers that Freya was really in Slade House and that the twins made Freya believe she was in the pub. The fact that this is common throughout the book makes it possible for the author to misdirect the reader's attention and to keep the twists as surprises until the right moment.

As is the case with the second chapter, one of the twins is posing as someone else. In Chapter 2, Norah pretended to be Chloe. In this chapter, Jonah is pretending to be Fred Pink. For the purpose of clarity, he is referred to as Jonah throughout the chapter.

By midway through this chapter, there are some details that are becoming evident even though they have not been spelled out. Every victim consumed by the twins have to do some specific things. The major one is that they have to consume the "banjax." The word is really a word that refers to an old-fashioned dance. In this context, it's food or drink. The victim has to eat or drink something before the twins can consume them. It becomes an issue in Freya's case because she doesn't like the tomato juice, which is the first banjax item offered to her. It's obvious that she almost takes a drink several times but that it's just not appealing and she continues to turn it down. It will become an even bigger issue in the next chapter.

Jonah is telling Freya the entire history of how the twins became immortal. He's pretending to be Fred Pink and, as such, should be angry and hostile about the twins. Instead, he tells Freya that the twins were able to read minds during their seances, and that they told their clients what they most needed to hear. He says that imparted a bit of hope that made the lives of their clients better. He is defending the twins and their actions, which would be extremely out of character for Fred Pink, considering the twins had killed his nephew. This is one of several clues Freya has that there's something wrong, but she is so skeptical of the man she believes to be Fred Pink that she can't truly evaluate him.



There's another clue that something isn't right when Freya goes down to the bar in search of something to eat. She notes that the entire room looks like a set for a staged play. If Freya is open to the idea that there's something supernatural at play, she might have looked more closely at the pub and at the man she believes to be Fred. The fact that Freya feels guilty over Sally's disappearance makes her a vulnerable victim for the twins.

Freya receives a phone call from a voice that sounds very much like Sally. It might actually have been Sally because the voice is pledging revenge. It's left to the reader to decide if it's Sally or if it's Jonah and Norah, continuing to torment Freya.

Sally appears just before the twins are able to consume Freya's soul. She doesn't communicate directly with Freya and Freya may not have actually figured out that it was Sally until the moment of her death. There are clues that make it clear to the reader that Sally is present. She had bright blue fingernail polish at the time of her death, and Freya notices the same bright blue fingernails. Just as she dies, Freya sees the pieces of jewelry that makes it clear that it's Sally.

The twins argue at length about Jonah's actions when he told Freya all about their lives. Norah correctly believes that Jonah shouldn't have given Freya so much information. Jonah says that they have a fascinating story and he's obviously anxious to tell someone the details.

## Discussion Question 1

What makes Freya vulnerable as a potential victim for the twins?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Jonah tell Freya all the information about his childhood?

## Discussion Question 3

What happens at the moment of Freya's death?

## Vocabulary

hemophilia, credibility, dialect, anecdote, virtual, recluse, corroborate, contentious, raffish, occult, ethereal, consummate, repatriation, jurisprudence, syllabus, canny, daft, suasion, satirical, sporadically, monogamous, lucidity





# Astronauts, 2015

## Summary

The final chapter is titled Astronauts, 2015. Norah is in the body of a thin young man named Bombadil. Norah gets a message from a Blackwaterman who says the “guest” has parked near the Slade Alley entrance. Norah admits that she'd worried the winter weather might delay the guest. Norah begins making plans for what she'll do after they consume this next soul. Jonah has been forced to remain in Slade House for the past nine years because of the horrible wound Sally inflicted in his neck. Norah knows that consuming this next soul will provide the recovery Jonah needs. She thinks that they might visit the Riviera once they are back to full strength.

Just then, Norah sees the guest walking down the street. Her name is Dr. Iris Marinus-Fenby. She's a psychiatrist at Dawkins Hospital. She's dressed for the cold weather and is carrying a khaki-colored canvas bag. Norah spent a few days in the body of a patient there, studying Marinus. In 2008, Marinus got Fred Pink's notebooks and wrote a series of academic papers about abduction psychoses. Norah believes Marinus is interested in Bombadil because he reminds her of Fred Pink.

Norah, as Bombadil, suggests they go immediately into the alley. They quickly find the doorway to the Slade House garden. Marinus says the door wasn't here three years ago when she was researching Fred Pink's papers. Norah says the door appeared only a couple of days earlier. Norah makes up all kinds of things as she tries to get Marinus inside the wall. She says that people who explore this kind of phenomenon are called astronauts. She says she has already been inside but photos she took inside were wiped. She says that's typical of orisons.

Norah touches the door, alerting Jonah that she is present and about to bring Marinus inside. Jonah is angry. He says he's surprised Norah bothered to show up. They argue briefly with Jonah making it clear that he feels Norah hasn't been a faithful sister. Norah says she's bringing Marinus inside and that Jonah had better have the garden projected in order to lure Marinus to her death.

Once inside, Marinus seems to be enthralled by the sights and at least slightly worried about the doorway out. Marinus throws a rock and listens to the sound, bites a leaf to taste it, and places her hand in the grass, noting the impression. She seems amazed as she says that it's “real.” Norah agrees that it's real, though it's a “orison.” Marinus seems upset, saying they've treated people who said they've seen things such as this. Norah says most are delusional, but that some have actually seen it. Norah says that Marinus is flexible, and that's why she was invited into the orison. Norah suggests that Marinus can learn a lot by looking around inside the wall.

Marinus says Fred Pink thought Slade House was dangerous. Norah says it seems to be abandoned. Because the twins haven't consumed a soul in 18 years, some of the



details are gray rather than appearing in color. Marinus asks about Bombadil's past experiences. Norah pulls from his real memories and says he's been in two others.

Norah picks and eats a strawberry, offering one to Marinus. Norah and Jonah had decided this would be the banjax they offered Marinus. She refuses, saying that eating is forbidden in all the mythical stories she's read. They continue walking toward the house with Marinus seeming to be amazed by everything she sees. Norah comes to believe there's something wrong, but she can't figure out what. She wants to stop and think it over, but she knows Jonah's powers are being taxed to the limit. All of a sudden, a bunch of leaves rise from the ground and attach themselves to the tree. Norah knows Jonah's strength is failing and she begins to try to rush. She points out that Fred Pink might actually be alive inside the house as a means of making Marinus hurry.

The back side of the garden begins to vanish. Marinus asks how they'll get out. Norah says it's only fog and that they are not in danger. Jonah has more trouble trying to keep the orison intact. At Norah's command, he calls down, pretending to be Fred Pink. Marinus and Norah start up the stairs. Norah slaps Sally Timms' portrait, blaming her for their current problems.

The house begins a final collapse. Once she's fairly certain Marinus is in the attic, Norah jumps out of the body and her soul rushes through the attic door, leaving Bombadil to die. The attic has been changed to look like a hospital room at Royal Berkshire Hospital. Marinus is on the bed. Jonah and Norah pretend to be doctors. The wake Marinus and tell her she's been in an accident. They give her a pill and tell her it's to stop any minor internal bleeding before they finish their tests. Marinus asks why she would take the "poison" the twins are offering.

Marinus makes it clear she isn't accepting any of their lies, and hasn't been from the beginning. She says members of the Shaded Way haven't used the banjax for decades. Jonah is furious and telepathically tells Norah to kill Marinus. Norah telepathically reminds him that means they'll die. Marinus answers them aloud, making it obvious she can hear their thoughts. The twins want to know how Marinus knows about them. She shows them the recorder. Marinus explains that the bodies of their victims are never seen again, but that inorganic matter sometimes falls "through the cracks" of Slade House.

Eventually, Marinus gives Norah enough information so that she knows Marinus is a member of the Horologists. After a few more minutes of talk, Marinus has driven Jonah to a high level of anger. Norah tries to stop him, but Jonah attacks Marinus. As it's obvious he's about to attack, Norah is torn. Marinus responds with a counter attack and Jonah is quickly dissolved into a pile of dust. In the following moments, Norah remembers her mother demanding that Norah take care of Jonah. She has done that for more than a century and knows that she let him die because her sense of self-preservation is stronger than her loyalty.

Marinus asks why Norah didn't help Jonah with his attack. Norah says it's because it was too likely that they would die. Marinus says she's sorry for Norah's grief. Norah is



angry at that comment and asks why Marinus didn't kill her. Marinus says the Deep Stream, which governs her actions, doesn't believe in "cold-blooded murder." She killed Jonah because Jonah attacked. She didn't kill Norah because Norah didn't attack. Marinus then says she has another plan to stop the twins. She steps to the wall and fiddles with a device. Norah thinks it's a cell phone but it's actually a bomb detonator. Marinus left her canvas bag outside. Norah now realizes that she knew Marinus left the bag outside, but she didn't have time to figure it out at the time. Marinus says she and Norah can argue about which of them is good and which is evil, but that she doesn't want to have that conversation because they'll never agree.

Norah says Marinus, as a member of the Horologists, will be reincarnated soon. Marinus says she has been "sentenced" to immortality, which is the opposite of Norah's decision to kill for it. The bomb doesn't destroy Slade House outright, but has created cracks. Norah realizes that her skin is sagging and that her body is suddenly very old. She is soon riddled with the inability to think coherently. Marinus says Norah's mind is aging.

As Slade House crumbles, Marinus leaves the property. Norah's soul flies above the property and watches. She pledges revenge but knows she would die if she simply attacked right now. Instead, she looks around and sees a pregnant woman in the property that was once occupied by Slade House. She rushes down and enters the body of the unborn child. Then settles in to wait.

## Analysis

As has been the case in some of the earlier chapters, Norah is pretending to be someone else. In this case, she has suasioned a young man named Bombadil and is literally using his body to put forth a certain impression to Marinus. For the sake of clarity, she will be referred to as Norah except in the case of direct quotes.

There seems to be a discrepancy in this chapter as Norah is luring Marinus into the house. Earlier, Norah remembered that Marinus found Fred Pink's journals and that Fred died in 2005. Now, Norah, still posing as Bombadil, says that it's possible Fred Pink is still alive inside the mansion. Marinus says it doesn't seem likely after nine years. It's left to the reader to decide why Norah believes this is a plausible lie. Marinus goes along with it because her ultimate goal is to get inside the house where she can try to kill the twins and destroy Slade House.

Marinus's history is not detailed in this book. While this book can stand alone, it's obvious that the person who has read another of this author's books, *The Bone Clocks*, will understand more about some aspects of the story. Marinus is an ancient soul. In the previous book, she was in several bodies as she battled evil. She mentions the Deep Stream, which governs her actions as a Horologist. These pieces of information are not vital to understanding the basic premise of the story.



Norah slaps Sally Timms' picture as she passes it on the stairs, even though she knows it's a ridiculous action. She blames Sally for their current situation. This is an important look at Norah's character. She is usually very level headed and has a strength of character. But ultimately, she's angry at the situation and Jonah is trying her patience even further than normal.

Marinus makes an important observation when she says that the use of banjax is outdated. She says that Jonah should get out more, like Norah has done. This indicates that Jonah has usually wasted his time while Norah has at least spent her time a little more productively. However, both could have apparently learned things that would have made their orison and their open houses easier.

Jonah's character is one of the book's themes. Marinus is able to goad him into a fight. Jonah becomes angry and it's obvious to Norah that he's going to battle Marinus. Jonah fully expects that Norah will join him in the fight against Marinus. He's furious and he can't imagine that Norah isn't feeling the same. Norah is angry, but she is still looking for a way to save herself. She tries to make Jonah stop, but he's too angry to listen. When Jonah is just about to attack, Norah wavers. She doesn't know whether she's going to help him. She knows he'll die without her help but she believes they'll both die if she helps him. When the moment comes, she steps aside and lets Jonah die alone. This is an important look at their characters and of what's important to each of them.

Marinus says that she and Norah don't agree on which of them is evil and which is good. This is an indication that Marinus understands that the normal laws and rules don't really apply here. This is so far outside the "normal" actions that it's a matter of perspective. This brings out the question of whether Norah and Jonah were justified in their actions as they sought immortality. Marinus says Norah and Jonah killed innocent people but Norah says that isn't very different from what Marinus does. Marinus counters, saying the Horologists are "sentenced" to immortality.

The book is very open-ended. Norah literally jumps her soul into the body of an unborn child and settles in to wait. It's easy to imagine that there will be a future battle between Norah and Marinus.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Who is Marinus and how does she bring an end to the Slade House?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Jonah die? What does this say about his character?



## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the author left the book so open-ended? What do you predict will happen in the future?

## Vocabulary

protagonist, quotidian, nomenclature, flummoxed, ontological, apostasy, corporeal, festooned, pauperdom, sentience, antiquated, imbibes, risible, encumbrance, assiduously, colossal, equidistant, inexorable, transverse



# Characters

## Jonah Grayer

Jonah is Norah's twin brother. He is the more hot-headed of the two but is also more optimistic. Each time they take a soul, Jonah is elated at the situation and counts it a success. Norah is prone to evaluate the event and point out what almost went wrong, and what could have gone wrong. This always irritates Jonah, who doesn't want to talk about it and apparently doesn't think about it much until it's time for the next event.

Jonah plays several roles in the story. He pretends to be Norah's son when Nathan and Rita Bishop arrive. He doesn't appear at all when Gordon arrives until it's time to take Gordon's soul. He is present and moves around at the party where Sally and her friends die. He pretends to be Fred Pink when he's talking to Norah. One of Jonah's biggest faults is that he wants to tell his story. He tells Freya all about his life as a child, his education by the famous mystic, and his immortality. He acts as if he is Fred, relating information he's gathered, but his need to tell Freya their story turns out to be a fatal mistake because he even allows Freya to record it. That recorder falls into the hands of the Horologists, which leads to Marinus visiting Slade House.

Jonah seems to be totally devoted to Norah, but he's also self-centered. He apparently spends a lot of time playing, even when it means leaving Norah behind. He is angry with her at the end of the story, saying that she abandoned him over the past nine years while he was stuck in Slade House. When Marinus provokes the twins, Jonah responds in anger. He attacks Marinus and apparently fully expects Norah to help with that attack. Norah is more interested in self-preservation, and she doesn't join in the attack. Jonah dies because he allows Marinus to provoke him.

## Norah Grayer

Norah is the twin sister of Jonah. She is half of the immortality process. Norah spends a lot of time thinking about the next Open House and how to ensure that their immortality continues. She evaluates their performances at each event and points out flaws. While it seems that she might be overreacting, the fact that they later fall to Marinus is an indication that she was correct in thinking so much about the events.

Norah seems devoted to Jonah in some ways, but it seems that she isn't as devoted as he believes. When the fight occurs between Jonah and Marinus, Norah considers her options. She knows that Jonah is weak from Sally's attack, and that he can't defeat Marinus by himself. Norah admits for a moment that she doesn't know what she's going to do, but when the time comes, she steps aside and lets Jonah die. She seems to be holding onto the hope that she might be able to survive or even to defeat Marinus, but she knows it can't happen the way Jonah goes about it.



An important aspect of Norah's character is her disdain for others and her belief that she is superior. Like Jonah, she has no compassion for their victims. When Marinus asks her about her actions, Norah defends herself. She puts literally no value on the lives of anyone else.

Norah plays several roles over the course of the story. Most notably, she is a wealthy music patron in the first chapter. She uses her own name, which sets other chapters in motion. She also pretends to be a helpless young widow in the second chapter.

There are no real details about how Norah and Jonah spend their time between Open House events, but conversations between Norah and Jonah indicate that she travels and tries to continue her education. She studies, but apparently not to a great degree. She tells Jonah that there's information he should be accepting, but Marinus points out that there is a great deal of new information while Jonah and Norah are using outdated processes. This is yet another case of Norah's sense of self-importance.

## **Nathan Bishop**

Nathan is a young teenaged boy who is extremely socially awkward. He doesn't understand situations and has trouble reading facial expressions and evaluating words. For example, he mistakes his mother's sarcasm for a good idea and doesn't understand that they aren't going to follow through on it.

Nathan and his mother arrive at Slade House in 1979. Nathan gets a brief warning from one of the previous victims, but he doesn't understand it until it's too late. He is afraid several times during the hours leading up to his death, but he doesn't know what to do about the fear. Nathan, like other victims, doesn't realize he's not breathing until Jonah points it out. He is in awe at how beautiful his soul is, and is horrified when Jonah and Norah consume it. Nathan manages to tell Gordon that he has found a weapon, but isn't able to say what the weapon is or where to find it.

## **Gordon**

Gordon is a police officer. He is lonely because of a divorce, and is vulnerable because of that. Gordon arrives in Slade Alley because of a witness who says Nathan and Rita were in the alley just before they disappeared. He is able to enter the door at the Slade House because he is an empath. He is the kind of person who is ready and willing to help Norah and he doesn't sense any danger until it's too late to escape. Nathan tells Gordon about a weapon, and Gordon finds it. Gordon shows Sally the hair pin, which ultimately leads to Jonah's death. Gordon is a likeable character but some readers will like him less because he seems so gullible.



## Sally Timms

Sally is a college student who joins the Paranormal Society by mistake. She is an empath, but doesn't know that until it's too late to escape Slade House. Sally is shy and feels that she's too fat to be attractive. She doesn't have the courage to speak out in her own defense, and she has been routinely tormented by her peers to the point that she expects nothing less. Sally almost manages to escape when Todd Cosgrove realizes what's happening, but she is tricked into staying. Sally realizes that Gordon and Nathan were also victims of Norah and Jonah, and that's probably why she capitalizes on Gordon's information about the hair pin. Nine years later, Sally stabs Jonah in the neck just before Jonah and Norah are about to consume Freya's soul.

## Freya Timms

Freya is Sally's older sister. She is a journalist and is determined to figure out what happened to Sally, which is why she's open to meeting the man who identifies himself as Fred Pink. Freya believes she is getting information directly from Fred and doesn't realize until it's too late that she's been talking to Jonah, posing as Fred. Freya feels guilty that she didn't invite Sally to visit, which is part of the reason she is so determined to find out what happened. Freya dies and the twins are just about to consume her soul when Sally intervenes, stabbing Jonah with the hair pin.

## Dr. Iris Marinus-Fenby

Known as Marinus, she is a member of an ancient order known as the Horologists. She is actually an old soul that has been reincarnated multiple times, bringing her to her current body and appearance. She seems to be an innocent empath which is why Norah lures her to the Slade House. Marinus knows all about Jonah and Norah because the Horologists have possession of Freya's tape recorded interview with Jonah posing as Fred. Marinus has a plan to destroy Slade House and to bring an end to the twins' immortality. She manages to kill Jonah by prompting him to attack her, but Norah gets away.

## Fred Pink

Fred Pink is a worker who happens to be on the street near Slade Alley when Nathan and Rita Bishop are looking for the Slade House. Rita asks Fred for directions, and he makes a rude comment. He is struck by a car a short time later and remains in a coma for nine years. When he wakes, he looks back through old newspapers, catching up on what he'd missed, and discovers the stories about the disappearance of Rita and Nathan. Fred then alerts the police, which leads to Gordon's death.





Fred next brings the situation to the attention of his nephew, Alan, who is a leader of the Paranormal Society. Fred believes that Alan will have a large group with him, which will make him safe from Norah and Jonah. Alan, Sally, and their four friends go missing.

Fred later spends some time in a mental hospital where he meets Marinus. When Jonah pretends to be Fred, he says that Fred was consumed by guilt. It could be assumed that Fred would have felt that guilt, but Fred is never seen again in the story. He dies before Freya's meeting with Jonah.

## **Todd Cosgrove**

Todd is a member of the Paranormal Society along with Sally Timms. Sally thinks he's attractive and she wants him to like her. Jonah manipulates Todd throughout the the final hours of Sally's death so that it seems he likes her as well. It also appears that he has some sort of mystical ability and that he might be able to help Sally escape. It's later revealed that it's Jonah pretending to be Todd, and that Sally isn't really about to be saved at all.

## **Rita Bishop**

Rita is Nathan's mother. She believes she's arriving at Slade House to attend a musical soiree. She is demanding with regard to Nathan. At one point, she says that he should be practicing his own music more than an hour a day. Rita dies as collateral damage when the twins consume Nathan's soul.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Open House

The Open House event at Slade House occurs on the last Saturday of October every nine years. This is the day that Norah and Jonah take the soul of an empath to power their immortality for another nine years. The term "open house" seems to indicate that people have the option of whether to enter, but the twins actually create the situation that manipulates them into entering.

## The Clock

The clock is at the top of the stairs at Slade House. It is a large clock and it has the words, "Time is, time was, time is not" engraved on it. Each of the victims notices the clock, which doesn't include hands to show the time. The clock is a symbol of the twins' immortality. Time has literally stopped for them and they remain young adults, apparently for eternity.

## The Door in Slade Alley

The door opens into the garden of the Slade House. It's small and black, and it doesn't have a door knob. This door is a symbol of the power of the empath, though most of them don't realize they have a power at all. The door will only open when an empath touches it. Nathan, Gordon, Sally, and Freya are all empaths, and all of them open the door.

## The Hair Pin

Rita Bishop is wearing a hair pin when the twins capture her. The top of the pin looks like a fox. Nathan finds the hair pin and tells Gordon that he's found "a weapon." Gordon locates the hair pin and shows it to Sally. Sally uses the hair pin to stab Jonah in the neck, saving Freya's soul from being consumed.

## The Portraits

The stairwell at the Slade House is lined with portraits. Inevitably, each victim starts up the stairs and finds them. The final portrait in the row is always the current victim. Their reactions vary, depending on the personality and attitudes of the victim. Nathan is furious and thinks that someone is playing a joke on him. Gordon, who feels that he's strong and in complete control, feels that his hostess has probably painted it as a gift.



## Souls

The twins have literally achieved immortality by feeding on the souls of innocent empaths. The souls leave the bodies of the victims through the center of their foreheads, and each victim believes that their soul is the most beautiful thing they've ever seen. The souls are vital to each of the victims but have also become vital for the twins. The symbolism is strong in that the twins are consuming the very essence of their victims.

## The Banjax

The Banjax is the word the twins use to describe the food each empath has to willingly consume before their ritual can be completed. Marinus refuses to consume anything and calls this part of their ritual outdated.

## Miss Piggy Mask

This is the mask Sally wears to try to disguise herself after she hears the news report that she's been reported missing. The mask is significant because Sally had been tormented about her weight and had been called a pig. It's a full turn of events that she seems to have found someone she could care about in Todd Cosgrove which may help her get past the horrific nickname, only to die in the Miss Piggy mask.

## Astronauts

When Norah poses as a young man showing Marinus Slade House, she says that the people who explore these kinds of places are called "astronauts." In a traditional sense, astronauts are people who explore new places. In this case, the astronauts are people who explore mystical places. The astronauts are symbolic of the people who can find and gain entry to places such as Slade House.

## Heroism

Many of the characters who fall victim to the twins are hoping to be heroes in one form or another. Nathan is an exception because he's simply lured in by his unsuspecting mother. Gordon is initially following up on a lead in Nathan's disappearance. He wants to be Chloe's hero and then wants to save Rita. Sally isn't really interested in heroism, but Axel believes they could be heroes if they discover the truth about Nathan and Gordon. Freya would feel that she was a hero of sorts if she found out what happened to Sally. Finally, Marinus feels that she would be a hero if she brought an end to the twins and to Slade House.



# Settings

## Slade House

Slade House is the place where Norah and Jonah live as young adults. Slade House doesn't physically exist by 1979 when Nathan becomes one of the twins' victims. The house was destroyed during a war years earlier but it remains a manifestation of the house because the twins keep it alive. The house seems typical of wealthy families during the early 1900s. It's a large dwelling that some refer to as a mansion. The house has staircases and many rooms. There are portraits along the staircase and the victims see portraits of other victims, with their own as the final one in the row. There is an elaborate garden that is also part of the manifestation, but the entire property can be whatever the twins want it to be at any given time.

## The Attic of Slade House

The attic is an important room in the house because this is where the twins take the souls of their victims in order to power their manifestation and their immortality for another nine years. The attic seems typical of the house, though it morphs to be whatever the twins need it to be. For example, they make it into a hospital room when Marinus is there. There is a mirror in the room and the victims are forced to watch as Jonah and Norah literally feed on the souls of their victims.

## The Garden of Slade House

The garden is beautiful, which is a big surprise to those entering from Slade Alley for the first time. The alley is in the middle of a business district and Nathan notes that there doesn't seem to be room for such an extensive property between the alley and the next street over. The garden is the first thing all the victims see so it's important that the twins portray the right image. With that in mind, the garden is completely inviting so that the victims are caught up in the beauty and don't think about anything else during those initial moments in the house. When Nathan is alone outside, the garden begins to disappear, which makes him anxious. A similar event occurs when Marinus is in the garden, but that's because Jonah is too weak to keep the garden intact.

## Slade Alley

Slade Alley is a narrow alleyway near The Fox and the Hounds pub. There's a sign that indicates the alley's existence. Some of the victims note the strange shape of the alley. It goes in for a little way, then makes a sharp right turn, then a left. The doorway to Slade House is located in the alley, and that's the only entrance to the mystical dwelling. The alley becomes notorious because several of the victims are last seen in or near the alley.

## The Fox and the Hounds

The Fox and the Hounds is a pub near the entrance to Slade Alley. The pub seems typical of British bars of this time and place. Nathan and Rita get off their bus near the pub. Gordon parks at the pub and has a drink there. Sally and the other members of the Paranormal Society meet there to discuss their plans. Freya believes she is at the pub but it turns out to be an illusion created by the twins.



# Themes and Motifs

## Vulnerability

Each of the characters is vulnerable, but in different ways. Nathan is perhaps one of the most vulnerable because he doesn't have the mental capacity to comprehend what's happening. Even when he begins to realize that there's something wrong, he can't begin to imagine what that something might be or what he should do about it. He has been taught to think about facial expressions and words, and to analyze what most people would make of those. He tries to apply that to his current situation, but he doesn't even begin to come up with the truth. When he sees his picture at the top of the stairs, he can only imagine that his mother might have helped with its creation as a prank. He is angry at her over the picture and he plans to tell her so.

Gordon is an adult with the ability to reason and figure things out. Gordon's vulnerability comes from his loneliness. He is divorced and describes a lonely existence that focuses on his job. He seems to have few friends and very little social life. When he meets Norah, who is posing as a helpless young widow, he's immediately drawn in. After they have sex, Gordon thinks that their relationship is moving too quickly, but he immediately has memories of several additional dates, dinners, and evenings spent together. He accepts this without question. The other important aspect of Gordon's vulnerability is that he wants to be needed. When Norah pretends to be so helpless and frightened, Gordon sees himself as the person who can provide security for her. He apparently wants to have that role in someone's life.

Sally's vulnerability comes mainly from her insecurity about her appearance. She is overweight and has been tormented because of that. She lacks self-confidence and is unable to form bonds of friendship. When someone makes fun of her, she simply accepts it as a matter of course, but wishes she could come up with witty responses like another girl in their group. Sally is excited when she believes she's attracted the attention of Todd Cosgrove, and she hopes that it will be a sincere relationship. She's so anxious for that kind of connection that she remains at Slade House when she might otherwise have left.

Freya's vulnerability comes directly from Sally's disappearance. Freya is a young, independent woman living in the United States at the time of Sally's disappearance. She is exploring her sexual nature and is enjoying the freedom of being so far from home. Sally wants to come visit, but Freya puts her off. She claims that she's too busy with her new job to spend time with Sally, but she actually just doesn't want to put aside her current enjoyment to deal with Sally's presence. Freya's guilt makes her vulnerable to Jonah's manipulation. When he promises to tell her a story that will explain Sally's disappearance, she remains to listen, even when she feels that it's probably a waste of time.



The final example of this theme is seen in a reverse situation. Norah believes she's luring Marinus in as their next victim, but Marinus is really planning to stop the twins. Jonah is vulnerable because he's spent the previous nine years in Slade House, growing weaker from the hair pin that Sally stabbed in his neck. Norah is weaker because, for the first time, she and Jonah aren't united in their actions.

## Fulfilling Dreams

The twins are able to lead some of their victims in because they are offering to fulfill dreams. In the case of Rita and Nathan, Norah pretends to be a wealthy woman who has assembled a group of music lovers. Rita believes that some of them are talented and famous musicians, and that one of them in particular is anxious to meet Rita. To be singled out in that way is a dream come true for Rita. She is also hopeful that one of the wealthy patrons will secure a job or a grant for Rita to continue to work in the music field. The mother and son are in a precarious financial situation and Rita sees this as a golden opportunity. She is anxious to make a good impression and the twins seem to fulfill her dreams. Nathan overhears her talking to guests and agreeing to perform.

Gordon is a divorced police officer with serious financial problems. Norah, posing as a frightened young widow, would fulfill Gordon's dreams of being in a committed relationship. He is lonely and he is amazed that he and Norah have such a strong connection. Norah is in a huge mansion and is obviously wealthy, which fulfills another of Gordon's dreams. He imagines marrying Norah would bring him a substantial fortune. With that money, Gordon could eliminate his debts and stop worrying about money. He is quickly imagining the life he will have as Norah's next husband. When he finds the woman he believes to be Rita Bishop, he knows that the situation is not as he believed, but he continues to try to figure out a way to explain it so that Norah isn't responsible.

Sally's dream is to fit in and to have friends. Norah and Jonah arrange for that to happen by manipulating the situation around Sally. They manipulate Todd Cosgrove into words and actions that encourage Sally's hope that they have a connection. While Sally and her friends are in Slade House, Jonah approaches her. He's the epitome of a handsome young college student. Sally has already imagined that she has connected with Todd, so she refuses Jonah's advance. This is also very exciting to her. She can imagine telling those who once tormented her about the attractive young man she turned down.

Freya's dream is obvious. She feels guilty for Sally's disappearance and she wants to find Sally, or at least find out what happened to her. Freya's dream is very simple and the twins capitalize on it by offering her information. Jonah pretends to be Fred Pink and gives Freya lots of information leading up to Sally's disappearance.

Another important example of this theme is seen in the twins' lives and their efforts at immortality. They are gifted, even as youngsters, and they study under well-known mystics to hone their abilities. They dream of being immortal and they have achieved it, to a degree. The only thing wrong with their plan is that they have to renew the energy



every nine years. Both dream of a successful “Open House” and of living their lives in any way they please.

## The Lure of Mysticism

The Grayer Twins are arguably the most important example of this theme. The twins were able to communicate with each other telepathically as very young children. They developed this ability without any outside help or interference. When they used it to help someone in need, their secret was out. Several people tested them in an effort to ensure that it was real and that it wasn't some trick the twins had perfected. When they satisfied some adults that their ability was real, they attracted attention. Their adoptive mother lost her sons and that prompted her willingness to send the twins away to learn to hone their skills. The fact that there was a world-renowned mystic who was willing to help teach the twins, and that there was a man who put the twins in contact with this mystic, are indications of the level of interest in mysticism.

The twins' adoptive mother wanted them to learn to communicate with the dead so that they could talk to her dead sons for her. Jonah points out to Freya that it's really not possible to communicate with the dead, but that the twins learned other mystical skills. They became famous for their ability to read minds, which they used to pretend to talk to dead people. They offered pieces of information that the living desperately wanted to hear, which made them a great deal of money. The fact that people were willing to believe that the twins could talk to the dead is yet another example of this theme.

With regard to the twins, the final and most important piece of information related to this theme is their immortality. The exact details of how they came to discover their ritual is not revealed, but they do learn to consume souls of innocent empaths so they can remain young people in the prime of their lives.

Alan Hardwick, who prefers to be called Axel, is a major example of this theme. Alan is the president of the Paranormal Society, a club of college students who want to discover mystical places and events. As the chapter opens, Axel is upset that only six members of the club have shown up for their current exploration into Slade Alley. One of the girls says that her friend won't be coming back because she was “underwhelmed” with their last experience. She says the friend expected to see a ghost and was disappointed that it didn't happen. Axel points out that it's a paranormal event, and that the club members can't expect to just have a paranormal experience on demand. The fact that the club usually has many more members is a sign that there are a lot of people interested in this kind of experience.

Another example of this theme is seen in the fact that there are so many empaths available for the twins to consume. Nathan, Gordon, Sally, and Freya are all empaths. None of them realize their ability until they are caught up in Slade House and it's too late to leave, but each of them has a special set of skills that the twins needs.





Finally, Marinus is an example of this theme. Marinus has lived many lives, always searching out mystical evil and fighting those who prey on the innocent.

## Jonah's Character

Despite the fact that Jonah and Norah are twins, they are very different. Norah is self-confident but she isn't nearly as self-confident as Jonah. Norah and Jonah argue at length, especially during each time they are about to consume another soul. While Norah constantly looks at the things that almost went wrong and the things that could have gone wrong, Jonah is optimistic. He believes it doesn't matter how close they came to disaster as long as they are ultimately successful.

Another important aspect of Jonah's character is his need to torment his victims. When Gordon is already paralyzed and the twins are about to consume his soul, Jonah promises to release Gordon if he can accurately recite the entire Lord's Prayer. Gordon tries to do it but he misses one word. Gordon says "who" and Jonah says the word is "that." When Norah asks him why he makes this promise, he says that the emotion will have a positive effect on Gordon's soul.

Jonah also has a deep desire to give the victims information about himself. He tells each of them small details just before the twins consume their souls. He takes that to a much deeper level with Freya. As they are preparing to kill Freya, Jonah pretends to be Fred Pink and pretends that he has all the details about the twins' lives and how they came to be immortal. He prepares to tell Freya the entire "back story," acting like he's a mortal man who became consumed with guilt and has done extensive research. He holds onto that lie until just before the twins are ready to consume Freya's soul. He goes so far as to let Freya record the conversation, which turns out to be a fatal mistake.

He tells her their entire history, leaving nothing out. This information includes the fact that their victims have to willingly eat or drink banjax, a chemical substance that seems to be ordinary food. The victim has to consume the banjax so that their soul is loosened from their body. The twins can only consume the soul after the victim has consumed the banjax.

Another important part of his character is seen when Norah brings Marinus to the Slade House. Jonah is already angry with Norah, saying that she has left him alone at times during the nine years he was forced to remain in Slade House. When Marinus begins taunting the twins, Jonah becomes angry. It becomes obvious that he wants to attack Marinus and that he isn't really thinking through the situation. Norah knows that they can't maintain the Slade House for another nine years, and that means they'll both die if they kill Marinus. Jonah can read her mind so it's easy for him to know what she's thinking, but he refuses to try to work through the situation with Norah. Marinus turns the attack back on Jonah. That results in Jonah's death and the destruction of Slade House.



## Memories

All the characters have memories that are important to them, and some have memories are falsely planted by the Grayer twins. These memories shape the characters, sometimes making them more susceptible to becoming the twins' victims. Because the twins can read minds, they know about these memories and can use them to their advantage.

Nathan has memories of being attacked by a vicious dog. When he hears a small dog yapping, his immediate reaction is fear. After he analyzes the situation, he rationalizes that it's a small dog and is less dangerous than the huge dog that attacked him. Inside Slade House, Jonah asks Nathan about his nightmares. Jonah then frightens Nathan with the image of a dog that seems about to attack. In Nathan's case, the memories are real and Jonah uses them to manipulate Nathan.

Gordon's memories are more complex because some are real but others are fictional. He has memories of a failed marriage. With those memories, the twins are able to make Chloe seem to be exactly the kind of woman Gordon wants. She is, in many important ways, the exact opposite of Gordon's former wife. Gordon, however, realizes that it doesn't seem right that a woman like Chloe would fall into bed with him on their second meeting. When he is thinking over that idea, he suddenly "remembers" several other dates, shared meals, and long phone calls. These memories are planted by the twins in an effort to keep Gordon on track with their plan.

Sally's memories of being tormented because of her weight sets her up for the Miss Piggy mask and the sex scene. She is extremely hurt by those memories and fears being back in that situation. She also has complicated memories of her time and interaction with Freya. She wanted to visit Freya in New York, but Freya put off the visit and sent Sally gifts instead. Freya remembers those things as well, but from her own perspective. She distinctly remembers that she didn't want to deal with Sally while she was learning about her new sexual orientation and enjoying herself.

Freya's arrival at the pub is another important example of this theme. She believes she fell asleep for a few minutes and dreamed that she'd changed her mind about meeting Fred Pink. She literally comes to herself at The Fox and the Hound, the pub where Sally was last seen on the night of her disappearance. Freya knows what the room looks like because she visited it during earlier searches for information. She's actually already in Slade House and the twins have manipulated her memories. She believes she dreamed she changed her mind, but she actually did change her mind. The twins were prepared, and Freya was kidnapped.

Finally, the fact that the victims are able to hold onto memories for a short time becomes a major example of this theme. Nathan remembers that the previous victim tried to warn him. He tries to warn Gordon, and adds that he's found a weapon. Gordon actually gives Sally the weapon. Sally then uses the weapon to stab Jonah.



# Styles

## Point of View

The story is written in first person from five different perspectives. The perspective changes in each chapter. The first four chapters are written from the perspective of the victim. The final chapter is written from the perspective of Norah, who believes she is luring another innocent victim into the Slade House but who is actually about to die herself. The limited perspective means the reader only knows what that person knows at any given time, though the story builds so the reader has past knowledge while the victim doesn't. For example, when Gordon arrives at Slade House, he believes he's helping a young widow. The reader already knows that Nathan died there and that Gordon is going to be next. However, Gordon gains some additional information so the reader begins to learn more of the twins' back story. Other characters gain tidbits of information, usually as the twins are about to consume their souls.

The biggest piece of information about the twins comes in the fourth chapter. Freya is a journalist investigating her sister's disappearance. Jonah, posing as Fred Pink, gives Freya a great deal of information about the twins and their past history. Through this conversation, the reader learns how the twins came into being and how their powers developed.

The perspective is limited by the knowledge and weaknesses of the reader. For example, Nathan is a very teenager. He is socially awkward and doesn't always understand situations. When he sees the Slade House garden disappearing, he doesn't know what a person in that situation is supposed to do. Gordon's perspective is limited by the fact that he can't imagine the helpless young widow at Slade House had anything to do with Nathan's disappearance. These limitations are meant to build suspense and they are used to keep pieces of information secret until the author is ready to reveal them.

## Language and Meaning

The story is written in modern English but with many British words and phrases. These are not overwhelming and the American-speaking reader will have no trouble understanding the meanings. The use of the British terms is necessary in order to make the dialogue seem more authentic. For example, Nathan refers to his mother as "mum."

The story is fanciful but is set in a believable place and time. The fact that there are magical doors and soul-consuming immortals means the story is unbelievable, but the events are set in what could be almost any working class neighborhood. The story is divided into narrative and dialogue, and the dialogue seems typical of the time and place.



The fanciful aspect of the story means the author has created words and terms that don't exist, and in some cases, has used words to mean something new entirely. For example, Marinus is a member of the Horologists. The word is real and refers to people who make or repair clocks, but that's not how the author uses it. In this case, the Horologists are an ancient group of people who fight crime.

The story is meant to be a stand-alone novel, but the person who has read *The Bone Clocks* will have a deeper understanding of the events. Dr. Iris Marinus-Fenby appears in that story as well, and the reader who remembers that will know that Norah hasn't lured an innocent victim into the Slade House. The final scene of the story is open-ended, which indicates that the author may intend to write a sequel.

## Structure

The book is divided into five chapters. Each of the first four chapters is dedicated to one of the twins' victims. The first chapter, *The Right Sort*, is written from the perspective of a young teenager named Nathan Bishop. Nathan is the first victim the reader sees die. In this chapter, the reader begins to learn about the twins but Slade House and the details remain a mystery. The second chapter is *Shining Armor*. As the title suggests, a man who believes he's a knight in shining armor arrives in the story. He's a police officer and is the next victim.

The third chapter is *Oink Oink*. This chapter is about Sally Timms, a young college student who becomes the twins' next victim. The fourth chapter is *You Dark Horse You*. In this chapter, Sally's sister Freya is researching Sally's disappearance. She does die, but Sally intervenes before the twins can consume her soul. That puts the twins in a precarious position as Jonah is severely injured.

The final chapter is *Astronauts*. *Astronauts* is a term that refers to those people who explore places such as Slade House. In this chapter, Norah believes she is luring an innocent empath, Dr. Iris Marinus-Fenby, to the Slade House. Marinus is actually a member of the Horologists, an ancient order of people who fight evil.

The main story line is presented in chronological order. The reader sees each of the four victims in the order of their appearance. The next step of the story is the arrival of Marinus, which also appears in chronological order. Some of the back story is presented through a series of small pieces of information, such as conversations between the twins as they are devouring their victims' souls. The majority of the back story comes when Jonah, posing as Fred Pink, tells Freya all about the twins and how they came to be immortal. The back story is not presented in chronological order and the reader has to build on the pieces of information to come up with a complete story.



## Quotes

Do you ever think you might be a different species of human, knitted out of raw DNA in a laboratory like in 'The Island of Dr. Moreau,' and then turned loose to see if you can pass yourself off as normal or not?

-- Nathan (The Right Sort, 1979 paragraph 95)

**Importance:** Nathan has a lot of trouble trying to act like everyone else. He tries to appear “normal” and has been taught how to respond in specific situations. He is talking to Jonah, who is pretending to be a young teen. Jonah says that he and his sister are a different species, and that they spend all their time pretending to be normal.

Look at that mauve vein in her neck, it's throbbing, and a murmur's in my ear saying, 'Run now, as fast as you can, the way you came in'... and I say, 'What?' and the voice stops. Was it even there?

-- Nathan (The Right Sort, 1979 paragraph 120)

**Importance:** Nathan has just seen the picture of the most recent of the twin's victims. The young woman died just nine years earlier and there's a small bit of her still present at Slade House. She's trying to warn Nathan to get away, but he puts it down to the fact that he took Valium earlier.

Would it kill you, sister, to once, just once, say 'Top job, a superb orison, you've landed us a juicy, tenderized soul to pay the power bills for the next nine years – bon appetit!'

-- Jonah (The Right Sort, 1979 paragraph 163)

**Importance:** Jonah and Norah are arguing, as has been their habit each time they are preparing to consume a soul. Norah is criticizing everything that almost went wrong and Jonah is saying it doesn't matter because they were ultimately successful.

Majorly pointless, I suspect – unless the names Norah Grayer or Rita and Nathan Bishop mean anything to you, on the off chance?”

-- Gordon (Shining Armor, 1988 paragraph 73)

**Importance:** Gordon is talking to Norah Grayer, though she has introduced herself as Chloe Chetwynd. This is another piece of the complexity of the story line with Gordon arriving at Slade House without realizing he's there.

Hang on, Gordon Edmonds, hang on. 'Second encounter'? This is your fifth visit to Slade House, you plonker.”

-- Gordon (Shining Armor, 1988 paragraph 189)

**Importance:** Gordon thinks that it's strange that a woman like Chloe Chetwynd is interested in him. Suddenly, Gordon has memories of several dinners and telephone calls. The twins apparently implanted the memories as a means of changing Gordon's thoughts. This is an important look at the twins' characters. They already have Gordon



captured in the house but they are toying with him, just as they continue to do in the final moments of his life.

There's something mocking about how Lance says this, and a voice in my head says, 'Don't trust him, he's toying with all of you.' Then something strange happens: My hand decides to press itself hard against the door, and a zap of heat goes through my palm."  
-- Sally (Oink Oink 1997 paragraph 124)

**Importance:** Sally and the others are discussing how to get inside when “a voice” warns Sally that something's wrong with the situation. If she had listened at this point, she could have stayed outside Slade House. Sally doesn't know she's an empath and actually doubts her own thoughts on this subject.

First I recoil in case it's a threat, but actually he's offering it to me, like a gift. The non-spiky end's decorated with a fox's head, silver, small but chunky, with jeweled eyes."  
-- Sally (Oink Oink 1997 paragraph 239)

**Importance:** Gordon has just given Sally the hair pin, which he said he found “in the cracks” of Slade House. Marinus expands on that idea later, saying that people disappear without a trace but that some tangible items, including the hair pin and the tape recorder, literally fall out of the house and are recovered by people in that present time. The pin is a symbol of hope and Sally uses it to stab Jonah, which directly leads to the downfall of Slade House.

Slade House is their life-support machine, Sal, but it's powered by souls, and not just any old souls. It's like blood group: The type they need is very rare and your soul is that very rare type."  
-- Jonah, posing as Todd Cosgrove (Oink Oink 1997 paragraph 293)

**Importance:** Sally believes she is talking to Todd and has, up to this moment, believed she was having a bad reaction to the drug-laced brownies. This is one of many cases in which Jonah offers up pieces of information about himself to his victims. He has no intention of letting her leave the house, but is tormenting her with the fear and the possibility that she might escape.

No, the Grayer twins' seances weren't real; but yes, the hope they gave was."  
-- Jonah, posing as Fred Pink (You Dark Horse You, 2006 paragraph 61)

**Importance:** Jonah is defending the twins and he goes so far as to say that they gave people the same kind of hope religious leaders offer. This is one of Freya's clues that Fred Pink isn't legitimate. He claims to be furious with the twins because they killed Axel Hardwick and the others, but he puts a positive spin on their motives here.

... the occult's like any religious order – or any bunch of extremists, come to that. It's all beer and sunshine and 'We are your family' as long as you obey orders, but once you get your own ideas or start talking out of school, the knives come out."  
-- Jonah as Fred Pink (You Dark Horse You, 2006 paragraph 107)



**Importance:** Jonah is explaining why the twins killed their benefactor, Leon Cantillon. In this passage, he refers to the occult, which is how the twins came to learn the principles that led to their immortality.

Two twists of fate set her on the path that has delivered her to our aperture. The first is that in 2008 she obtained the notebooks of Fred Pink, the former Dawkins patient who died in 2005.

-- Norah (Astronauts, 2015 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** Norah is thinking about how Marinus came to Slade House. At this point, Norah believes she found Marinus and that she has lured her to the house. This thought is used to explain how Norah found Marinus. She goes on to say that Marinus wrote academic papers on people who have abduction psychoses, based on Fred's journals.

As I pass Sally Timms's portrait, I slap her, a gesture as petty as it is pointless. She caused this trouble, or her 'ghost' did.

-- Norah (Astronauts, 2015 paragraph 155)

**Importance:** This is an important look at Norah's character. She is usually level-headed and the one who thinks things through, but she's frustrated by Jonah's situation. It's interesting that she spent so much time during previous events telling Jonah all the things that almost went wrong or that could have gone wrong. However, now that it has gone wrong, she blames Sally instead of Jonah.

Why in the eleven thousand and eleven names of God would I oblige two parasitic soul-slayers by imbibing their poison?"

-- Marinus (Astronauts, 2015 paragraph 216)

**Importance:** This is the first time Marinus has shown her true self. She has pretended to be an innocent victim following Norah's lead up to this moment, then outright refuses to take the pill the twins are using as banjax.