

Sole Survivor: A Novel Study Guide

Sole Survivor: A Novel by Dean Koontz

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Plot Summary

Sole Survivor is the story of one man's struggle to come to terms with the loss of his entire family in a plane crash. When faced with a mystery that challenges the reported reasons for the crash, Joe Carpenter embarks on a journey that changes him mentally, emotionally, and physically. This journey brings him the salvation he did not believe could transpire.

It is the one-year anniversary of the crash that took the lives of Joe's wife and two daughters. After waking from another nightmare, he calls his mother-in-law. They chat about the day and the significance it holds for both of them. Joe goes back to sleep for a few more restless hours before climbing out of bed to start the day. He is going to the cemetery to mark the tragic anniversary. Before he gets to the cemetery, he stops at a beach in Santa Monica so he can drink a few beers and stare at the surf. He is interrupted by two young men who tell him he is being watched by two guys in Hawaiian shirts. Shrugging off their concern, Joe makes a trip to a public restroom. When he arrives back at his spot on the beach, he notices two young women nearby who seem to be keeping him under surveillance as well. Believing that they have made a mistake, he gathers his belongings and continues his journey to the cemetery.

He reaches the cemetery and is shocked to discover a mysterious woman photographing his family's grave markers. Surprised by his approach, she tells him that she is not ready to talk to him yet. She soon runs away as a white van approaches at high speed. Two men from the van take up chase leaving a bewildered Joe to stand there in his confusion. He decides to check out the van and discovers that it is full of surveillance equipment. He also discovers that his car has been tagged with a tracking device. He leaves the cemetery and heads to his old place of employment. Upon arrival at the offices of the Los Angeles Post, he goes to his old desk and starts gathering information concerning who owns the white van. His search provides him with more information than he was expecting, thus opening him to a whole new mystery he feels compelled to solve.

Based on some of what he discovered at the Post, he sets up a way to meet the mysterious woman from the cemetery. She turns out to be Dr. Rose Tucker who claims to have survived the plane crash. Adding this knowledge to what he uncovered in his research, he prepares to meet with several of the families who lost loved ones in the crash of Flight 353. His visits only add to the sense of something being not quite right with what the investigators claimed happened to bring down the 747. Following his reporter's hunches he makes contact with the lead investigator who canvassed the crash site. What she tells him only leads him deeper into the intrigue.

When he finally meets Dr. Rose Tucker, she explains in detail precisely how it was she survived the crash as well as the reasons for being chased by the two men at the cemetery. This ultimately fuels his impetus to help her bring down her former employers. By doing so, he brings about his own salvation.



Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter One

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter One Summary

Sole Survivor is the story of how one man comes to terms with the tragic loss of his wife and their two daughters. Joe Carpenter is a man on the edge of life. It has been a year since his beloved family perished in a horrible plane crash in Colorado. A former crime reporter for the Los Angeles Post, Joe has spent the last year simply existing. He has turned his back on friends, family, and his job. Now he seeks just for the release that will allow him to once again be with the family he so painfully misses. Sole Survivor is a look at the roles grief and vengeance play in a person's life.

Waking from a nightmare at two-thirty in the morning, Joe Carpenter reflects on the downward spiral that has been his life since the death of his wife and children. As he looks around the small apartment he now calls home, he momentarily reflects on the large house he once owned. Unable to go back to sleep, he grabs a beer out of the refrigerator and stares into the darkness outside his window. He realizes that he has just been going through the motions for the past ten months waiting for the day when he would go to sleep forever. In an attempt to pull himself out of his current funk, he calls his mother-in-law who lives in Virginia. Beth McKay is the only person he can call at such an early hour in the morning. The two of them talk about such things as Joe's eating habits to the way the sunrise looks at that moment in Virginia. Beth tries to comfort her son-in-law through the strength of her faith in God. Unwilling to allow himself to feel the sympathy behind the words, Joe ends the conversation just as Beth explains that the sun has fully risen over her home. Joe finally falls asleep to be plagued once again by a sense of never-ending despair.

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter One Analysis

In the first chapter, we are introduced to the main protagonist, Joe Carpenter, a former crime reporter for the Los Angeles Post. Through his dark musings on life, we learn about the untimely deaths of his wife and children. We also get a glimpse into the depression that has surrounded Joe's every thought and action for over a year. Grief has caused him to exchange the family home in Studio City for a small apartment over a garage in Laurel Canyon. He has turned his back on anyone and everything formerly associated with what he considers his former life. After yet another dream in which his wife, Michelle, makes an appearance, he wakes to the emptiness that has been his life for the past year. Joe attempts to console himself through the use of beer and long moments of staring out the window into the darkness of the world at 2:30 in the morning. Failing to achieve any comfort from this, he calls the only person who will understand the importance of this dreadful day. It is Beth McKay, his mother-in-law. In spite of the three thousand miles that separate them, she answers the phone with only one ring occurring. Beth instinctively knows who it is just as she knows the importance



of this day. It is the one-year anniversary of the death of her daughter and granddaughters.

As they exchange pleasantries, Joe recalls the day of the funeral. Beth had been the one whom Joe and Henry, Michelle's father, leaned on to make it through the services. It was not until much later that night in the comfort of the home in Studio City, that Beth finally broke down and allowed her grief to flood her heart. Joe attempted to console her but she shrugged him away. So great was her despair that a simple hug was enough to break her self-control and she dissolved into gut-wrenching sobs. Throughout this scene, Joe did the only thing he could think of doing, which was cleaning the pool. Even in his memories of that moment, he was detaching himself from the world around him. Once Beth felt she had control of herself, she led Joe back into the house so she could tuck him into bed as a child.

Shaking free of this memory, Joe asks Beth to describe the sunrise that must be starting outside her kitchen window in Virginia. She tried to keep her tone lighthearted as she describes the various shades of blues and reds beginning to spread over the landscape. She then leads the conversation gently back to the reason for Joe's early morning call. He stoically yet painfully tells Beth that he does not believe he is ready to go back into the world. Beth uses her faith as a means of conveying Joe through his fears and depression. Joe steadfastly clings to his grief as if it were a lifeboat in a stormy sea. He tells her that he has no interest in going back to work when she suggests he return to his journalism. He does not wish to continue living if it means doing do without his family. Joe explains to Beth that he is merely waiting for the day when he can be reunited with his wife and daughters. He hopes that day will be soon. As the conversation comes to a conclusion, Joe attempts to get some sleep. He will need it for the day ahead.



Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Two

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Two Summary

This chapter takes place a few hours after Chapter 1. Joe is traveling toward Santa Monica when he has an anxiety attack. He has suffered these several times over the past year, sometimes having more than three in one day. This attack strikes him while he is on a busy California highway outside of Los Angeles. Once he is able to pull over to the side, he attempts to get himself back under control. He struggles to get his breathing under control as his mind replays the horror of the plane crash that killed his family. When he gets himself under control, he moves his car back onto the highway to continue his journey.

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Two Analysis

This chapter provides an example of how Joe's grief has been debilitating him. As he is driving along the freeway, his breathing becomes labored. Sensing he is having an anxiety attack, Joe starts to panic as his breathes become shallow and quicker. Since he has had these before he knows what to expect. This knowledge helps to fuel his panic attack rather than help it subside. As he silently repeats 'no' to himself, he steers the car to the shoulder so he can park and regain control. Once stationary, Joe focuses on breathing deeply. This is not an easy task as his mind is assaulted with sights and sounds of the plane crash. He imagines that he hears the screams of passengers. He sees laptops, luggage, and other objects being thrown about the cabin of the airplane. He feels the sensation of the plane as it plummets out of the air. He can smell the burning fuel. He can also hear his wife as she consoles their two daughters telling them how much they are loved. He feels the impact and disintegration of the plane as it explodes into the ground. All of these images bombard him as he sits in his car yet he was not on the plane. His anxiety attack is triggered by his own thoughts on what he believes happened in the crash. He plagues himself with these images as a means of overcoming his guilt for not perishing with his family. He gets his breathing back under control as the last images dissipate. He looks into the traffic around him and for a brief second thinks now would be a perfect time to put an end to his misery. For a reason unknown even to him, he stays in the car. As his breathing comes back to normal, Joe pulls back on to the highway and continues his journey to the cemetery.



Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Three

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Three Summary

In this chapter, Joe has managed to reach the beach in Santa Monica. This is the last place he stops on his way to the cemetery to visit the graves of his family. He comes here to mentally prepare himself for the visit. He has brought a cooler of beer with him and heads for a secluded place away from the crowds. He can sit on the sand, watch the ocean, and drink a few beers in order to steady his nerves. As he sits there, he is approached by two teenage boys. They keep their eyes focused on the ocean as they ask if he is selling anything illegal. He explains he only has beer in his cooler and he is not sharing. They shrug off the refusal. One of the boys tells him that he is being watched by two guys who could be cops. Joe looks in the direction they mention and sees two guys in chinos and Hawaiian shirts carrying what could be walkie-talkies. He thanks them for their information and they leave in search of girls further along the beach. Joe drinks a second beer then goes in search of a public restroom. Along the way, he notices that the men have moved into different positions on the beach but they continue to casually keep him in their sights. He keeps an eye on them until he enters the lavatory.

Joe wants to know if the two men are still out there but he does not want them to know he has caught on to their surveillance. He spies a young man in the bathroom and offers him money to see if the two guys are still staking out the place. While waiting for the young man to return, Joe periodically watches a group of men placing bets on a wounded cockroach as it crawls in circles around the floor. After splashing some water on his face, Joe tries to block out the voices of the men and looks at his reflection in the mirror. He is appalled by what he sees, which throws him even further into his depression. Hearing the return of his spy, he inquires about the men in the Hawaiian shirts. The young man says one of the two men is pretending to watch people playing chess. He also describes two young women he spots on the beach, one of whom he thinks is deaf because she keeps fumbling with what could be a hearing aid. Joe growls at the young man when he continually refers to the women as 'bitches'. Shrugging off Joe's suspicious attitude, the boy grabs the money offered and leaves. The combination of the heat of the day, the smells of the bathroom, and the noise of the group of men betting on the cockroach sends Joe into a sudden rage. He purposely steps on the cockroach as he retreats back to the beach. One of the gamblers grabs his arm on the way out of the bathroom. A fight ensues and Joe breaks the guy's nose after banging his head off of a stall door. Joe finally leaves and goes back to his spot on the beach.

He returns to his towel and cooler to discover two young women resembling the ones the young man described sitting close to his spot. He notices the hearing aid but believes it is more of a communication device. He drinks another beer then decides to continue his journey to the cemetery. He ignores the young ladies believing that they and the two men will discover they are watching the wrong man.



When Joe finally arrives at the final resting place of his family, he is surprised to find a woman standing near the markers taking photographs. He is shocked to discover her there and can barely speak as he approaches the graves. She is surprised by his sudden appearance but chats with him briefly before she notices a white van driving toward them. With an expletive she takes off leaving a bewildered Joe to stare after her. The van comes to a screeching halt and the two men from the beach leap out and take chase after the unknown woman. Joe does not have a cell phone with him in order to call for help. He also does not want to run after the two men in case they really are police officers. His notion that they are ends when one of them takes out a gun and starts shooting at the fleeing woman. Joe decides for whatever reason he wants this woman to escape. He is also curious to find out more about the men in the van so he decides to check out the vehicle.

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Three Analysis

This chapter provides the reader a deeper look into the battle raging in Joe's psyche. He wants to lose himself in the rhythm of the surf as he sits at the beach. He feels that if he can just go on like the surf without any thought beyond the simple actions of existing then perhaps he can endure the heartache of his loss. He contemplates what it means to just allow the mechanical aspect of life take over so that feelings will be less prominent in his life. He really does not wish to talk to the two young men who let him know that he is being watched by two men who could be cops. He really just wants to ignore everyone but the two teens have piqued his curiosity so he looks toward the men with moderate interest. Once the two teens walk away, he slips back into the comfort of his depression. He dismisses the two men as easily as if he were dismissing a rock in his shoe. He cannot think of a reason why they would be interested in him. So he goes back into his internal world of despair where the day's date runs through his mind on an endless loop. Along with the repetition of August 15 in his mind, the images of the remains of his wife and children also visit him. He finds it difficult to believe such large presences in his life have been reduced to bits and pieces that fit into coffins made for infants. The constant replaying of the events of the crash have reduced Joe to just existing. He has convinced himself that he is an empty shell incapable of feeling anything but pain, loneliness and despair. He feels that way until he yells at the young man he pays to spy for him outside the restroom. Something about the young man's indifference to life at such a young age collides with Joe's depressive state resulting in an explosion of anger. He unleashes a verbal torrent at the young man, especially when he continually refers to two women outside as "bitches." The storm dies out when he realizes his despair is the same as the young man's indifference. Resigning once again to his melancholy, Joe lets the young man escape back out to the beach.

Joe is still reeling from this sudden burst of anger so he leans against a sink to get his breathing under control. The stench of the bathroom, the heat of the August afternoon, and the sounds of a group of men gambling over a dying cockroach fuels a second outburst for Joe. Wanting to escape a claustrophobic physical atmosphere, Joe breaks up the group of men as he heads for the door. He deliberately steps on the cockroach in an effort to destroy his anger. This action only proves to be more fuel for the anger he



wants to stop. One of the men in the group accosts Joe as he is leaving. Joe's response is to grab the man, twist his arm behind his back and ram the man's head against a stall door until the man's nose breaks. Fueled by his guilt and self-loathing at his actions, Joe leaves the bathroom to return to his towel and cooler of beer. The beach is more crowded than when he arrived which merely compounds his current state of unhappiness. He drinks another beer hoping to regain the momentary peace he had achieved before going to the bathroom. As he looks once again toward the ocean tides he realizes that the surf operates like a machine. It just rolls in and out with no thought or feeling. At this point he realizes that he must stop railing against things that cannot help but be what they are. The ocean cannot change what it does and therefore Joe believes he must finally accept his family is gone. Since nothing can be done then, everything is meaningless and not worthy of battling. Joe finally sees that peace may be within his reach.

While he spends a few moments adjusting to this new line of thought he notices that the young women his teen spy had described had moved closer to his towel. He sees them look toward him the way the two men in Hawaiian shirts had. He still cannot think how they could be interested in him. He has spent the better part of the last year keeping to himself. Despite his possible hope for peace he still sees his life as worthless. Little does he know that his world is about to be altered once again. He still maintains an indifference to life at this point which is why he blatantly ignores the two bikini clad girls as they try to blend in to their surroundings all the while maintaining their surveillance of Joe. His ability to see through their act is due to his former life as a crime reporter. This ability is beginning to resurface as he continues working with the anger that has made itself known to be alive in his psyche. He leaves the beach to continue his journey to the cemetery.

Joe reaches the cemetery while two funeral services are taking place in separate areas of the grounds. This is rather fitting to his state of mind. He thinks back to the day a year prior when he was one of the black clad mourners come to say farewell to loved ones. The oppressive heat of August in California adds the feel of Hell as he walks through his despair that has become reality. Lost in his sad reverie he walks among the grave markers that have been scattered in a well-manicured landscape. The pristine look of the cemetery feels out of place as Joe contemplates his surroundings. He purposely chose the spot on a hillside because he believes Michelle and the girls would want the beautiful scenery more than the cold unfeeling marble of a mausoleum. He uses this notion as a way of reinforcing his need to just give in to the routine of life the way a river flows with no thought of where it is going. He knows that beauty surrounds him he just chooses not to feel anything about it. When he arrives at the grave sites he is surprised to see someone standing over the graves. He is even more surprised when he discovers it is a woman he does not know and she is taking photographs of the markers. She hears him approach and turns with a look of surprise as well. Despite the shock of seeing Joe the woman speaks with quiet authority and tells him she is not ready to speak to him yet. This comment only works to enhance the uneasiness Joe has been feeling all day. He has come to the cemetery seeking a small amount of solace as he copes with the first anniversary of his loss. Instead he confronts a mysterious woman taking photos of his loved ones graves. He stammers the same



serious of questions which shows how he is not prepared for any surprises. As his mind reels with the shock of seeing this strange woman he is sent further into confusion when she sees a white van pull up near them and two men get out. The woman reacts by running away from Joe and the men. While this action further adds to Joe's surprise it also sets the wheels of change into motion once again. Joe watches the two men chase her across the cemetery and reacts to this by hoping the woman escapes. This is a new feeling for Joe since he has spent the better part of the previous year avoiding people as much as possible. A portion of Joe's mind wants him to continue avoiding humanity so he can hold onto his grief. Another portion of his mind wants him to help the stranger by simply wishing her to escape her possible captors. This new desire to help someone else is what propels him to look for a cell phone. He wants to call the police in order to further assist a complete stranger. For a brief moment in time he feels a connection to the world around him that he has been ignoring for the past year. Joe has allowed his grief to be replaced by compassion which in turn opens a larger chink in his psychological armor.



Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Four

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Four Summary

The chapter opens with Joe approaching the white van that the two men just left. He looks in one of the windows for cell phone. Not seeing one he opens the door to look in the glove compartment. A voice from the back of the van startles him by asking if he caught Rose. There is a moment of silence as the two men eye each other both realizing they are not who the other expected. Without a second thought Joe goes to the back of the van and proceeds to get into a fight with the stranger. After he knocks the man out Joe checks the man's pockets for identification. He finds a license for Wallace Morton Blick. Joe leaves the unconscious man lying on the road and proceeds to check the interior of the van. The whole back of the vehicle has been transformed into a moving surveillance outpost. As he looks around the van Joe notices multicolored blips on a computer screen. He realizes that one of the blips is his car. These men have been tracking him. He also notices a copy of the magazine WIRED and one for mercenaries who had once been part of Special Forces. Joe leaves the van and heads to his car. As he prepares to leave the cemetery, the two men return from chasing Rose. One of them shoots out the back window of his car. He escapes the cemetery and drives toward the San Fernando Valley.

At a stoplight, he takes a moment to survey his surroundings. He sees evidence of life taking place around him as some old cars drive by. As he continues his drive, he sees people playing frisbee with a dog, two young girls crossing the street holding hands, more evidence of life continuing despite his loss. When he drives through Burbank ,he has turned his thoughts to anger as he thinks back to the men in the van and this woman known as Rose. His anger stems from a lack of knowledge concerning the surveillance from the beach to the incident at the cemetery. He remembers then that his car has been equipped with a tracking device. He pulls to a curb and searches his whole car until he finds the transponder. He throws it into the back of a passing truck thus throwing the people after him off his trail. He is startled by the sounds of a helicopter overhead. Fearing this may be the same group of people, he gets back in his car and drives to his next destination.

Part One, Lost Forever: Chapter Four Analysis

This chapter shows how Joe begins to accept whatever changes have been occurring to him. His thoughts have been progressing from a more self-absorbed tone to one of communion with others around him.

When the two men stopped the van, they left both front doors open and the engine running. Joe goes to the passenger side in search of a cell phone. His desire to assist a complete stranger still in control he opens the glove compartment. All he finds are some breath mints and the vehicle registration papers. He crushes the envelope in his hand



when he jumps at the sound of a man's voice coming from the back of the van. What happens next sets the stage for the epiphany Joe has by the end of the chapter. He is still feeling a slight adrenalin rush after running to the van. His nerves are on full alert. So when he gets into a fight with this new guy, it is pure instinct. What started as small outbursts in the bathroom at the beach has now become the boiling kettle with beating a man unconscious as the pressure release. Joe does not allow the man's larger size to intimidate him. Rather than allow himself to be surprised by his actions, he simply gives in to his desire to take a stance, to stop running away from what he does not understand.

Once Joe realizes he has knocked the guy unconscious as well as break the guy's nose, he is horrified by his actions. He has believed that his anger was under control ever since he married Michelle. Losing her and the girls has numbed him for a year. He has not yet grasped the notion that his anger and despair are levels of the same pain. All he knows is that he is confused by his reactions and does not know how to get himself under control.

He turns his back on his unconscious opponent and begins to examine the inside of the van. This shows another example of his reporter instinct. His need to understand what is going on drives him to search the pockets of the third mystery man. Uncovering at least the identity of the man allows Joe the opportunity to get a little closer to his own mysteries. Thinking through the events of the day rationalizing his actions and reactions will eventually open the cage in which he has locked himself. Discovering the surveillance equipment does tilt Joe's world a little more but he keeps his balance by using his investigative instincts. Rather than stand still letting the images on the computers wash over him Joe jumps to action by getting closed to the screens to see what they can tell him. It is only after he allows himself to look at the red and green blips on the monitors that he begins analyzing what he has found in conjunction with recent events. He wants to get close to life now rather than run away from it until he just fades away.

When Joe finds the two magazines, he does not get rattled. He merely files away the information so he can utilize it later. This is another example of Joe's re-emergence from self-exile. In Chapter One, Joe tells his mother-in-law how he is unsure he wants to go back to being a reporter. Roughly twelve hours later here he is in the back of a stranger's van searching for clues and answers to what has been occurring since that early morning phone call.

Adrenalin rushes do not last long and as this current one dissipates Joe's sense of self-preservation. He revives and he runs to his car. He has already fought but now it is time to flee. His actions betray the sense of unreality that has overwhelmed his senses periodically throughout the day. His thoughts are reeling with the discoveries that the people who have been following him are probably not police. He just wants out of the cemetery as quickly as possible. Although his fear of discovery by the two men in Hawaiian shirts motivates him to fast action, he checks to make sure there are no vehicles in his immediate path. Once again his instinct to live kicks in when he needs it. Seeing a maintenance worker's vehicle far enough behind him, he begins to leave his



parking space on the service road. He wants to leave the way he came in but this requires a three-point turn. This action shows that Joe is still trying to piece his life together with more of the past than the present. He wants to leave the way he came in because it is quicker however to do so requires a complex maneuver. If he wants to go back to the way his life was it is going to take a great effort to cast aside his ever-growing will to live. As Joe performs the three-point turn he feels rather than hears the glass breaking as pieces of his back windshield pelt him. Someone has shot out his rear window. This kicks his adrenalin into gear again and he allows instinct to guide him. He senses movement out of the driver's side window so he turns to see one of the men in Hawaiian shirts running toward him gun aimed at the car. At that moment Joe hears shouts outside his broken window and sees Blick trying to stand up. When a second bullet hits the car Joe reacts by accelerating the vehicle and speeding through the open gate to the cemetery.

Joe does not begin to calm down until he has to stop for a red light at an intersection in the San Fernando Valley. He watches a small group of vintage cars pass and begins to relax by recalling the types and styles of reminders of a gentler time in life. He finds the sensation a bit unusual, almost new considering a long time has passed since he last felt relaxed. He gazes out the window of his car and believes he can actually feel a change in the air. The site of two young girls crossing the street holding hands, the colors of the zauschneria flowers, and the heat of the summer sun all blend to create a sense of change for the better in the day. Joe soon realizes the change is within himself. He no longer wishes for the embrace of despair that had held him for a year. He wants to live as fiercely as he wanted to die just this morning. Once again his anger is his key to this change. By physically releasing his pent up frustration he has shifted his awareness of his anger. He can now recall moments when he wanted to unleash it before but could not allow himself the chance to do so.

Images of family doing things he knows they never will stirs the smoldering anger. Rather than focus on what he has lost he looks at what Michelle, Christie and Nina will miss. This shows a stronger concern for his family than himself. His anger has burned away the ice around his heart and started it on the road to healing. This is a tiny step for his thoughts turn once again to all that has transpired thus far today. He comes to the conclusion as before that these people somehow believed he would lead them to the mystery woman known as Rose. He also wonders what all this could have to do with the deaths of his family. Was there something about the flight and subsequent crash that was covered up by investigators? Why had Rose taken photographs? Why did she tell him now was not the time to talk? She hinted that he would understand like the others. Joe believed she held answers. Now maybe the people though she told him things. Perhaps his raid of their van may have told him something to make him dangerous to their plans. Joe feels instinctively that too many coincidences points to something being off kilter about the plane crash. And he knows as sure as Rose stood before him at the cemetery that she has answers. He needs to find her without leading the 'bad guys' to her. This means he has to find the tracking device they hid on his car. He stops along the street he's driving then climbs out to perform the search. He looks in all the obvious places to no avail. He finds it attached to the rear bumper near the energy absorber.



Placing the device here could be seen as a reminder that what lies behind Joe will have an effect on him in the future.

The sound of a helicopter startles him and he looks up to see one flying closer than one would have believed safe. It passes over him to another location. Not knowing if his paranoia is justified Joe decides to through the transponder into the back of a passing gardener's truck. He does not openly rejoice at his trickery but he does feel a boost in the hope area. This changes to uneasy awe when he sees the helicopter circling in a tight formation around one area then moving a few blocks away. With his reporter's instincts on fire, he goes in search of who may have the money for this kind of endeavor.



Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Five

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Five Summary

Joe returns to his former place of employment. He wants to dig up as much information as he can on the identity of the van's owner. He knows the offices of the Post will be slightly more active than a morgue which suits him fine. The fewer people he sees the fewer lies he has to tell. He is greeted at the office building by an old friend and co-worker, Dewey Beemis. Dewey is a twenty-year veteran of the Post, having been one of the first employees at the Post's inception. They exchange pleasantries until Dewey realizes he has prattled on about how well his children are doing. In a flash, a look of pity steals into his eyes as he remembers Joe lost his family. With a halt in their conversation and a lingering uncomfortable silence Joe heads toward the elevators. Dewey reappears beside Joe and hands him an envelope brought in by a woman for Joe. He states the woman claims she is sharing information for a story in which Joe had some interest. Dewey proceeds to tell Joe how difficult it had been to get in touch with him since his info at work was not up-to-date. When Joe admits that he has been very depressed Dewey simply reminds him that friends are important.

Joe goes to the third floor cubicle that been his home for so many years. He muses about the differences between his beloved Post and the far more prestigious Los Angeles Times. He reminisces about meeting, dating and subsequently marrying Michelle while they had both been employed here. He steels himself against the flood of memories and goes to his old desk in the Metro area of the office. Randy Colway now has his old workstation. Joe spends time staring at the pictures of Randy's family then turns on the computer and searches the files for the information he wants. He is surprised when the van comes back registered to a corporation called Medsped, Inc. He searches for information about this company and gets leads to a company called Teknologik which now owns Medsped. There were a lot of articles on Teknologik so he prints out the more important ones. While the printing takes place, Joe searches the Post archives for articles concerning the crash. While reading the articles he has another mini anxiety attack. He regains control and remembers his conversation with Rose. This leads him to believe he must visit the family members of the crash victims who are in southern California. Remembering the envelope Dewey gave him, he opens it and finds a note. The note was written by the woman from the cemetery and she claims to be the sole survivor of the crash.

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Five Analysis

This chapter carries on with the sense of purpose Joe starts feeling in Chapter Four. He shows up at his former job site knowing the memories this place will bring back. He needs information though and this is the best place he knows where he can find it. As



Joe pulls into the parking lot he notices the attendant is a reflection of the environment. Gone are the days of well-groomed and polite parking lot attendants. They have been replaced by a young man fed on a diet of angst and indifference. Rather than wear a uniform complete with name tag he is in baggy jeans and a black t-shirt with FEAR NADA in red letters displayed proudly on the front of the shirt. He also has a shaved head and an expression of bored acceptance on his face. He checks windshields for proper parking stickers but could just as easily be figuring out how much each vehicle could get at a chop shop. Joe has a current sticker because the boss refused to accept his resignation after the crash. Parking in the employee lot, Joe proceeds to the building that had once been his home away from home.

The theme of home and belonging to a family is prevalent throughout this chapter. Along with the sense of belonging, there is the sadness associated with the passing of time. He recalls with nostalgia his early days of chasing leads and writing articles that were gritty and honest. In those days, if Joe and his colleagues uncovered a corrupt city official, then their stories reflected it unlike the notion of today that if it has been printed in the newspaper then it must be true. The theme of family in all of its glory and despair transpire within the walls of this building. Joe recalls how he met Michelle when she worked here. Their entire relationship from inception to its untimely end is played out between the many cubicles in this old building.

Dewey Beemis is introduced in this chapter. He is likeable and a respected member of the Post's extended family. He is the older uncle who tells remarkable stories of life at family gatherings. Dewey started working as one of a handful of security guards when the paper first went into business. The owner was vain and believed he could surpass the Los Angeles Times. When cutbacks at the Post began, Dewey managed to save himself by becoming the only large black man who could be a security guard as well as a receptionist. He can type 80 words a minute and is vastly knowledgeable of computers and the accompanying jargon.

Joe and Dewey quickly fall into small talk as if they were in frequent contact. Dewey shares current information about how well his children are succeeding in college. He beams with pride until he sees the momentary flash of pain in Joe's eyes. In his excitement at seeing his old friend Dewey has forgotten the fact of Joe's family dying in the crash of Flight 353. This kind of awkward moment can transpire in extended families when a long period of time transpires between visits. The uncomfortable silence that follows the feeble attempt to change the subject further solidifies the sense of family. It points to the same expressions caused by the earlier awkward silence. Joe needs to escape the silence so he tells Dewey he needs to do some work. Mistaking this for an admission that he is returning to the Post, Dewey tells Joe the boss will be happy to know this news. Not wanting to remove Dewey's hope, Joe gives a non-committal response while he walks toward the elevators.

He is surprised when Dewey stands beside him outside the elevator doors bearing an envelope he has been trying to give to Joe ever since he returned to the reception desk and remembered it was there. As he turns over possession of the letter-sized envelope, Dewey explains it was left by a woman claiming Joe needed the information because it



pertained to a story in which he had a vested interest. To further illustrate the sense of family surrounding this chapter, Dewey gently but with great concern in his voice tells Joe of the difficulties he encountered while attempting to deliver this letter over the past few months. He does not chastise Joe as if he is a child caught skipping class. Instead, he gently reminds Joe that there are people willing to help him journey through his despair if he will just allow them to participate in his life. Joe responds by saying he has begun to pull himself together and is progressing out of his hole. Dewey reminds Joe that ladders work best when a friend helps to hold them in place. Joe nods his thanks and disappears in the silent elevator.

Once on the third floor, Joe heads directly to his old desk in the Metro section of the office. In spite of the sadness that blankets his memories Joe finds solace in the familiar surroundings. Sometimes the most effective ointments burn a little before the soothing aspect of their nature takes effect. Joe tests the boundaries of his newly found acceptance with living. He first puts the familiar aches of despair into their proper compartment by performing the search on the registration forms he stole from the white van at the cemetery. His mind reels with the countless possible explanations when the van turns out to be registered to a corporation heavily involved in several different medical fields. Once again Joe's reporter instincts carry him through the despair and into curiosity. He calls up as many articles as he can on the company Medsped, Inc. What he reads leads him to another company, Teknologik, which now owns Medsped, Inc. Joe loses himself in his thoughts concerning why these companies had fleets of helicopters and possibly white vans at their disposal. He understands the conveyance of some bacterial materials for the sake of military contracts but he could not see a link between them and the crash of Flight 353. This begins to change when he once again reads the Post articles that have been archived which pertained to the crash.

Joe prepares himself by drawing on images of ocean waves pounding the beach in an endless repetition. He believes this will help him maintain his sense of professional distance. He skips over photographs of the crash site at the moment in favor of articles involving the National Transportation Safety Board lead investigator Barbara Christman. There are some pictures associated with these articles that mainly pertain to victims who had been residents of southern California. As fate would have it the family card is played when a number of photos with Michelle and the girls smiling out of them are among the articles. Seeing the pictures reminds Joe that he deliberately attempted to remove all the snapshots and photographs in essence all visual reminders of their faces out of his life when he packed them all in a box and locked the taped box in the back of his closet. He does not rid himself of the pain. He keeps it hidden where he believes he has control over the recommended daily allowance of pain and guilt. The pictures remind him of the little song he would sing to Nina. As her laughter sounds in his ears, he catches himself mouthing the lyrics aloud. This sends him back into his despair and he breaks down in sobs while his self-control escapes through tears. When the sobs subside, he tries visualizing the pounding surf and other actions made monotonous by their meaningless repetition. His confidence gains a marginal hold on his emotions so he searches the files for the passenger manifest for Flight 353. He locates it and is rewarded for his tenacity when the list is limited to only those victims in southern California. He prints the list that includes town names of where the victims had lived.



He looks blankly at the list and recalls the words Rose had spoken to him at the grave site. He had understood her unwillingness to talk then as a sign she would say more when the right time presented itself. She also said he would understand as the others had. Joe believed Rose had spoken to the relatives of victims and that he must do the same. He has his emotions under control for the moment therefore he believes he cannot wait for Rose to return. His emotions are about to get hit again.

As he gathers all the reports he printed, he spots the mysterious envelope from earlier. He is inclined to believe that a well-meaning fan has written him something akin to Martians being real and living in neighborhood near him. Keeping his thoughts light but wary ill prepares him for the three lines he is about to read. This scene is the first in a new series of shocks and personal reconciliations that take Joe to areas his fragile psyche has visited briefly in the weeks directly after the crash. It is difficult to imagine the type of individual responsible for such innocent seeming sentences. Who would have the nerve to claim to be the sole survivor of a plane crash so devastating that metal and human beings were reduce to mere piles of ash? Anger grips him at the cruelty someone would have to feel to say this to someone who lost loved ones in that crash. He sees the name Rose Tucker on the bottom of the note but he is too caught up in his righteous indignation to gain a sense of how significant that name is. Only after he rails at imagined demons, does he hear the voice of Wallace Morton Blick say the name of Rose. This simple name is the stone on the track that derails Joe's train of thought. As comprehension begins to shed more light into Joe's darkness, he becomes aware that he has been drawn in to a mystery that at the moment is presenting more questions current clues are incapable of answering to Joe's satisfaction. He wants desperately to go back to the comfort of his old thoughts. He had himself convinced that mechanical failure is what brought down the plane. Yet the doubt that had always lingered where he was never satisfied with NTSB findings, now came to the foremost portion of Joe's thoughts. No longer capable of reigning in his curiosity, he allows himself to jump headlong into the search for Rose's truth.



Part Two, Searching Behavior : Chapter Six

Part Two, Searching Behavior : Chapter Six Summary

Joe is still in shock over the revelations on the three lined note. He calls the front desk to ask Dewey questions concerning the lady who brought the note. When Dewey grows concerned by the tone of Joe's voice Joe eases his mind by saying the note was legitimate. When Joe hangs up he gazes at the passenger manifest seeking Rose Tucker's name. He found her name with the title Dr in front of it. Her home address in Manassas, Virginia is also provided. He returns his gaze to the computer and begins searching photos of the crash hoping to match a photo of Rose. Unfortunately he cannot locate one that would confirm his suspicions that Dr Rose Tucker and the author of the note are the same person. While he looks at the photos he also searches for any evidence that a survivor could have come out of such atrocity. Fighting his anger at such claims he gives in to his curiosity and calls information in Virginia to get Dr Rose Tucker's phone number. Incredibly it is answered and during the ensuing small talk Joe identifies himself as Wallace Blick. There is a change in tone in the voice on the other end of the line causing Joe to hang up quickly. After a brief interruption by a fellow reporter Joe calls the number Rose provided at the bottom of her note.

The phone is answered by a woman who tells Joe he has the wrong number. After a brief flirtatious game between Joe and the woman he calls "Demi" an arrangement is made for the two to meet the following night at a coffee shop. Before ringing off the phone Joe is told to dispose of the note. He hesitates to agree and is told the number won't work anyway before the connection is broken. He immediately calls the number again only to discover that it truly has been disconnected. As he replaces the phone in the cradle it startles him by ringing. He answers on the third ring. The man Joe had spoken with when he called Virginia is on the other end of the line. Joe again identifies himself as Wallace Blick. The voice on the other end calls him Mr Carpenter. Thoroughly spooked Joe slams down the phone and starts to leave the cubicle. The phone starts ringing again and continues to do so even while Joe chats with a former colleague he bumps into on his way out. The former co-workers exchange information regarding Teknologik before Joe continues to leave. He makes one more stop before reaching the first floor. He stops in a restroom to dispose of Rose's note.

As Joe leaves he is flagged down by Dewey who says that the FBI want to talk to him. Believing it's the same man who called him earlier Joe continues to exit the building without even talking to Dewey. When he gets in his car his head is full of conspiracy theories. He muddles through them as he leaves the parking lot and drives toward his next stop on his current journey for truth.



Part Two, Searching Behavior : Chapter Six Analysis

In this chapter, Joe begins to see the reach of the people who have been following him. He also sees further disintegration of his notion of family. His friendship with Dewey although strained from lack of communication between them is about the only thing left of his previous life as a reporter at the Post. His old cubicle has been given to another reporter in much the same way a college student's bedroom back home goes to a sibling still living there. The pictures of family in the cubicle are no longer his possessions. He has been replaced. Realizing this just adds to Joe's sense of grief and lack of connection with the world. Despite this, he continues to search for information concerning what has been happening to him since he got out of bed this morning. Joe really wants to live but he just has not convinced himself yet. This chapter sees Joe moving closer to comprehension in this area.

We see more of Joe's tenacity when he calls downstairs to talk to Dewey about the woman who gave him the note. As the description is being given and it matches the woman Joe met in the cemetery, his curiosity is once again aroused. Unsure of what to expect, he calls information in Virginia to get Dr Rose Tucker's home phone number. The cultured voice that answers surprises Joe. He had thought perhaps this would have been a dead end. When he is asked for his identity, he lies. Instinct warns him to give a false name. When he chooses Wallace Blick, the man on the other end of the line becomes concerned causing Joe to hang up quickly. By not using his own name, Joe is telling himself that his own identity is important to him despite all of his previous grief. When the other man grows wary, Joe realizes that perhaps he has gotten into a game he may not be able to play. However, this does not dissuade him from calling the number on the bottom of the note Rose gave him. In spite of the fear he is experiencing, his desire for the truth is stronger and motivates him to follow through with his own investigations.

A woman's voice answers the phone and Joe asks to speak to Rose. He is informed that he has reached a wrong number. This time he chooses to use his own name when identifying himself. The conversation turns into a linguistic dance that ends in an arrangement to meet in person. By opening himself to the experience of flirting, Joe has let down his guard allowing him access to the possibility of more information concerning Rose. This also shows that Joe is getting comfortable with the idea of living again. The incident at the cemetery was the impetus to jump start his life again. His desire to know what is going on has also reawakened some of the questions he has had concerning what truly happened the night Flight 353 crashed. For the first time since he met Rose, he is utilizing his anger and grief as a means of gaining answers rather than a means to his early death. This feeling is only fleeting however for fear shall raise its ugly head once again as the phone rings before he has a chance to hang up with Demi.

He is still trying to process the upcoming meeting with a woman who may be able to supply him with the answers he seeks when he is startled and fumbles the receiver. He answers the phone as if he still works at the Post. The voice on the other end of the line is male but Joe does not recognize it right away. Only after the caller identifies Joe as



Mr. Carpenter, does he realize it is the same man whom answered Rose Tucker's number in Virginia. This sends his fear into overdrive. He thought he had managed to evade whoever had him under surveillance yet they found him in the one place he once felt safe and secure. Since he is already having difficulties digesting the events of the day, this phone call just pushes him once more into flight. So he scoops up the articles he has printed out and races for the lobby so he can leave. On the way out, he runs into Dan Shavers a former coworker.

Shavers is a bit of an arrogant twit but he has extensive knowledge of Teknologik. In spite of his fear, Joe stands still long enough to question Shavers about the medical company. He finds out that they are big in medical technology and have extensive monies available. This knowledge starts more conspiracy theories to play through Joe's head. He imagines that at any moment he won't be able to leave the building because someone will be waiting to put a bullet into him as he leaves the elevator. He pictures men in suits racing down the hall to kidnap him. He allows his paranoia to have its lead and it carries him to the first floor past Dewey. Stuck in his throes of anxiety, Joe keeps walking past Dewey waving goodbye but not stopping to chat. Dewey is on the phone at the time but tries to wave Joe down insisting that the phone call is for him. Joe slows down a moment because he wants to give off the appearance that everything is okay. His quick departure through the front door however belies his anxiety. This causes Dewey to follow after him to the parking lot all the while trying to get him to stop. Joe only stops once he gets into the safety of his car. He allows himself to completely give in to the paranoia and fear that have been ebbing and flowing since the voice in Virginia identified him as Mr. Carpenter. As he plays over the myriad of scenarios in his head, he begins to wonder if the plane crash was truly due to mechanical error as reported. He begins to think that the crash was intentionally caused by the medical company. He also begins to think that they are after him based on what they believe he may know about Rose. In spite of this fear, he galvanizes himself to solve the mystery presented to him by Dr Rose Tucker.



Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Seven

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Seven Summary

The chapter begins with Joe at a bank in Studio City. He has come here to withdraw funds in order to use money for transactions rather than his credit cards which can be traced. Once he leaves the bank he goes to the first of the families he intends to visit to ask if they have been visited by Rose. As he is driving to their home he experiences what is known as searching behavior. He sees his wife and daughter in a woman and child at a strip mall he is passing. He pulls in to the parking lot fully aware of what he is doing yet incapable of stopping himself. He apologizes for his mistake after he talks to the woman and the store owner becomes alerted to her distress. Joe leaves the store has an anxiety attack in his car but keeps moving toward Malibu. He buys some items at a K-Mart in Malibu, gets a motel room, and then proceeds to visit Clarise and Bob Vadence. The three share their stories of grief. Then the Vadences show Joe a videotape of Bob's mom committing suicide. He leaves their home to visit the Delmanns with his head full of more questions than answers.

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Seven Analysis

Joe drives to his bank in Studio City to make a cash withdrawal. He keeps his account here despite the distance from his new home. It provides a sense of stability in a world gone topsy-turvy. When he explains to the young teller that he wants to withdraw twenty thousand dollars, the friendly atmosphere gets a little chilly with suspicion. Joe is beginning to feel his paranoia increase with each passing moment. He has known these people for years. He has gone to church with the teller and her family. His account has been in good standing for many years. The quiet scrutiny is enough to trigger another anxiety attack. Joe is able to keep his breathing under control and when the transaction is concluded he exits quickly into the hot August afternoon.

In this chapter, Joe experiences what is known as searching behavior. This is a common occurrence when a parent survives the death of a child. They can suddenly see their deceased loved one wandering the street, in a grocery store, any where. In Joe's case he sees his wife as well as his daughters. After he leaves the bank, he passes a small shopping plaza. He crosses three lanes of traffic to enter it because he believes he has seen Michelle and Nina. He watches the woman with the young girl as they leave the Ford Explorer in which they came. He parks his car near theirs takes the time to compose himself and then enters the store. He is aware of what he is doing but cannot stop himself now that he has started acting upon his compulsion. He speaks



aloud unaware that the little girl will hear him. She does and tells him that he stinks. Joe laughs and states he should buy some soap. When the mother shows that she is wary, the shop owner shows his concern by approaching the scene. Joe quickly explains that he has made a mistake by thinking he knew these people. They looked like friends of his but he was wrong. As he leaves the store, he tells the mother that she needs to keep her daughter close.

Joe leaves the parking lot while experiencing a brief anxiety attack. His breathing is compromised by the heat as much as his adrenalin. He reminds himself that others from the group he once attended had experienced the physical aspects of pain. The Compassionate Friends helped him cope during the first few weeks after the crash. As he closed himself away from the world, he ceased attending meetings. Joe once more turns to anger to escape the despair. He remembers making a vow to find any and all parties responsible and to see to it they would have justice visited upon them. This causes him to laugh knowing the people from whom he is running would have no qualms about killing him on the spot. Accepting this allows him to also accept that he will not stop before he sees this scenario through to whatever ending may come.

Joe has begun his quest to speak to surviving members of the victims having vowed himself to do so in Chapter Six. After stopping at a K-Mart and purchasing new clothing and other items to become presentable to the world, he rents a motel room near the beach and cleans up from his long day. Once he believes himself refreshed and changed he goes to visit the widow of Thomas Lee Vadance in Culver City. He is surprised when he finds out Nora Vadance is not the Mrs Vadance he has come to see. The woman who answers the door is Clarise, her daughter-in-law. She and her husband, Bob have come from Miramar, California to settle the Vadance estate. Joe introduces himself and tells his reason for the visit. He also tells them that he could come at a better time. Neither Bob nor Clarise want him to leave so he enters their home. Through a common bond of misery, the three of them share memories of Bob's father who had died on the plane that took Joe's family.

As the visit progresses, Clarise tells that Rose has been to visit Nora. She and Bob told the story equally of how Rose brought a snapshot of his father's headstone at the cemetery. They explained how she carried it with her everywhere until the morning of her death. Joe is curious to know as much about the visit Nora had with Rose. The conversation leads to Nora's death. Joe hears from Clarise that Nora committed suicide and there is a video as proof. Joe watches the video which leads to a discussion of what could lead someone who had been happy one week earlier leave the world in such a horrifying manner? They also talk about the video. Joe heard no noise from Nora as she stabbed herself. No scream at all. He adds this to all the other odd events from the day. As he leaves the Vadance home, they exchange brief small talk before Joe heads into a gloomy evening. He has one more family to visit before he goes back to the motel room.



Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Eight

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Eight Summary

Joe arrives at the Delmann residence and finds it in a more light-hearted atmosphere than the Vadence home. He is greeted at the door by Georgine. She whisks him into the house so he can share drinks and talk about the anniversary of the crash. He is greeted by her husband Charles and a former reporter for the Post, Lisa Peccatone. The two couples discuss the events of the crash as well as Lisa's having once been a college roommate of Rose Tucker. Lisa also tells the group that she was supposed to meet Rose at LAX on the night of the crash. As they chat Charles goes to the kitchen for champagne. Moments later, they hear gunshots from upstairs. Joe finds Charles dead in the master bedroom. He hears a scream from downstairs and races down to find Georgine eviscerating herself. Lisa, meanwhile, screams as well then sets herself on fire with oil lamps that are on the kitchen counter. Joe barely gets out of the house in time before it bursts into flames.

Part Two, Searching Behavior: Chapter Eight Analysis

Joe has come to the home of Charles and Georgine Delmann who lost their daughter in the crash of Flight 353. The atmosphere is almost festive rather than somber as he expected on this the first anniversary of the crash. This shocks Joe into thinking that the woman in front of him could be the world's most horrible mother. Georgine pulls Joe into a room at the back of the house where they are joined by Charles and a young woman with whom Joe had once worked at the Post, Lisa Peccatone. Lisa and Joe exchange quick banter the way old friends can when a great deal of time passes between visits. As the chit chat subsides, Georgine requests a bottle of wine to be opened so Charles goes to the kitchen to retrieve the refreshments. The conversation that takes place sheds a little more light on Rose. Joe discovers that Lisa was once a roommate of Rose while attending UCLA. Rose has already visited the Delmann's and gave them a photo of their daughter's site.

Lisa recalls her college days with Rose and explains to Joe that Dr. Rose Tucker is a geneticist. He reveals his knowledge of Rose working for Teknologik. Conspiracy theories though not mentioned as such are certainly the source for conjecture. The subject matter turns from what Rose did as an employee there to how it could be possible for the corporation to have the money necessary to take the actions it does. The notion of the military as a backer is mentioned. Before any serious discussion can begin, there is the sound of a gunshot from upstairs.



Since he has seen the tape of Nora Vadance, Joe believes he knows what has happened. Georgine yells her husband's name as she begins to run for the staircase. Joe convinces her to stay downstairs and call for help. He takes the stairs with great speed and finds Charles Delmann dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head. As Joe tries to make sense of what has happened, he momentarily focuses on his own breathing. While listening to the air wheeze in and out of his lungs, he also hears the sound of numbers clicking on the old electric clock near the bed. He feels as if this has some sort of meaning but before he can get it to surface someone downstairs screams.

When he reaches the kitchen, he finds Lisa standing in the glow of three oil lamps clasping her head in both hands. He does not see Georgine but a sound from further down the kitchen draws his attention. It sounds like a copper gong. Joe sees the pots and pans swinging but does not register a breeze. As that thought turns in his head his eyes turn to the sight of Georgine on the floor still clutching the kitchen knife she has buried in her abdomen. Roiling from the stench of recently voided bowels Joe turns to gauge Lisa's state of mind. He spots the three glasses of wine and the bottle Charles had left on the counter. When he moves to leave Georgine's body, he hears the sound of glass breaking and ducks to avoid being hit by shards of broken glass.

The glass was actually from the three oil lamps Lisa was breaking. Joe watches in horror as she splashes the burning oil all over herself. He tries to reach for her in an effort to extinguish her but he is so transfixed that he stares as Lisa turns herself into a living torch and begins catching the house aflame. The fire alarm pulls him out of his shock and he escapes into the night. He expected hot air to catch him as he opened the front door. Instead, he felt an icy drill try to go through the base of his skull. Once he clears the porch, the pain eases. He reaches his car and notices blood on his hands. He wipes them with a napkin from his fast food dinner. He drives into the night trying to make sense of a world gone mad in a day.



Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Nine

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Nine Summary

The chapter opens with Joe once again at the beach. He walks past a number of groups milling about different bonfires. He takes notice of several of the groups as he strolls along lost in his thoughts of the events of the past few hours. He cannot believe that three people killed themselves in front of him. He stops walking when he sees a group of bald people wearing blue robes. He thinks they must belong to a cult since they all look pretty much the same. He spends a few moments around their bonfire before moving further along the beach to a more secluded spot. He finds that he cannot gain the peace the ocean usually brings him so he leaves the beach.

He uses a payphone a few blocks away from his motel so he can make a few long distance calls with his phone card. He contacts the main offices of the NTSB seeking the number for Barbara Christman, the lead investigator of the crash of Flight 353. His attempts reach a dead end. Next he calls the three men who were part of the team of investigators who lived in Colorado. On the third try he reaches Mario Oliveri. He tells Joe that Barbara lives in Colorado Springs. Calling directory assistance, Joe gets Barbara's home phone number. Their conversation is brief. Exhausted, Joe returns to his motel room and falls asleep after a few moments of relaxation. In the morning, he drives to LAX and purchases a same day round trip ticket to Denver. He hopes he can make it before something bad happens to Barbara.

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Nine Analysis

Joe is once again at the beach when this chapter begins. It is nearing evening and he is walking along a section where bonfires are permitted. He passes groups of people from all walks of life hanging around in specific cliques. There were teenagers, college students, families, and a white-haired storyteller entertaining a dozen or so people with an otherworldly tale of the supernatural. Joe walks past these groups watching them as warily as they watch him. He continues down the beach and passes a group of twenty-something guys with surfboards. The strutting and posturing of the surfers make Joe uneasy so he continues his trek down the beach. He thinks to himself that Teknologik could have any number of operatives hidden here and he would never realize it until too late. He passes by another bonfire where a large group of people are gathered. He believes they are part of a cult because they are all wearing identical blue robes and white tennis shoes. They also share a lack of hair and wear a gold earring in their left ear. He has carried his empty dinner bag along with him and chooses this bonfire in which to dispose of it. He wonders what they believe about the afterlife as he watches the paper bag burn. He questions his own beliefs as he moves to the surf so he can wash his hands with sand and salt water. Incapable of losing himself to the surf, he goes back to his motel room.



Using a pay phone a few blocks away from the motel, Joe attempts to locate the phone number for Barbara Christman the Investigator in Charge of the search for the cause of the crash of Flight 353. He first tries the main number for the NTSB in Washington, DC. Following the voice prompts, he twice receives an error message stating there was no such extension. Not giving up, Joe tracks down the members of the Go-To Team who would have come from an office in Colorado. He tracks down Mario Oliveri who had been head of the human performance portion of the investigative team. They search for the part that human error may play in the event of a crash. As Joe questions Mr Oliveri the man grows suspicious about Joe's desire to speak with Christman. He asks Joe if he is probing the crash of Flight 353. Joe agrees that he is then proceeds to ask if Mr Oliveri noticed anything unusual about what happened. Oliveri directs Joe to the public records but Joe pushes his questions causing the former team investigator to request a number where he could reach Joe should he get more information. Joe says he will call if necessary as a precaution against the people chasing him. He gives Oliveri two days to think about clearing his conscience.

Joe calls the Colorado Springs directory assistance and is provided with a listing for Christman. She answers before the third ring. The conversation is terse at first with Barbara being standoffish while Joe probes for the answer he seeks. She deftly keeps her story to the official account. Before he can speak again, she breaks the connection. She does not answer when Joe calls back and lets the phone ring for a very long time. Joe walks back to his car as he plans his next move. He had been watching moths fly around one of the lights above the payphone. This triggers a memory but he cannot discern what it is. He sees them as the wicks from the oil lamps Lisa used to burn herself. Not trusting his thoughts, Joe drives back to his motel. His attempts to sleep are haunted by memories of the day. Playing specific scenes over and over in his head, he is tortured by the nagging sense of a connection between the moths, the oil lamps, and the alarm clock in the Delmann's bedroom. After a few restless hours of sleep, Joe drives to the Los Angeles International airport where he purchases a roundtrip ticket to Denver for the day.

He notices two men in blue robes from the beach the previous night. He pays little attention to them other than a passing thought about their watches and laptops. He believes the group does not follow a stereotypical vow of poverty like so many other cults. He proceeds to board the first plane he has been on since before the crash. He spends the flight thinking about what he is going to say when he meets Barbara. Once the plane lands in Denver, Joe rents a Ford and drives to an unscheduled meeting with Barbara Christman in her Colorado Springs home.



Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Ten

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Ten Summary

In this chapter, Joe meets Barbara Christman. They drive around and talk about the investigation. Joe explains how he has not read any of the reports concerning the accident because it would be too painful. There is a lot of incredulity on the part of Barbara as Joe tells her about Rose. In an effort to convince him of the impossibility of that happening Barbara takes Joe to the exact site of the crash. Upon arrival they have to make a bit of a walk. The entire time that they are at the site they discuss the investigation from Barbara's professional point of view. Joe learns that Barbara and her family were threatened with violence should she persist in taking her investigation along the route that disagreed with the public reports. Despite the warnings, she gives Joe a typed copy of the transcript from the black box recorder. Joe reads them and is appalled.

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Ten Analysis

Joe arrives at the home of Barbara Christman. They have a brief conversation in which Barbara gives him instructions to meet her a few blocks away where she will pick him up in her car. He agrees and they drive around the Denver area as Barbara begins to tell Joe everything she knows concerning the investigation and her findings. Joe asks her who she fears if she is going to all the trouble of not having this conversation in her home. She claims no knowledge of the shadowy people other than the deep connections they seem to have in order to cover up certain aspects of the truth.

Joe presses Barbara about her investigation when she turns the conversation to his first suspicions concerning a possible cover up. Joe mentions Rose Tucker and her claims to be the sole survivor of the crash. Barbara reacts with the disbelief he expects. She disputes him every time he counters her recollections of the investigation. She adamantly adheres to the idea that no one could have survived let alone walk away from the crash. It was a head-on impact which means it did not roll but slammed nose first into the hard ground. Joe admits that he has not read anything concerning descriptions of the actual crash itself. All this time he has allowed his imagination to fill in the gaps between the stories he has heard. Joe continues to argue against Barbara's logic until she decides to take him directly to the site.

Turning her Ford off the state road Barbara proceeds to within two miles of the crash site over roads not intended to be driven. She and Joe walk the rest of the way to the crater born a year ago by a metal comet. Barbara tells the story of how Flight 353 departed New York City bound to Los Angeles. The plane was flying a different route than normal based upon weather patterns along the normal flight path. The plane had been following everything perfectly until the last checkpoint. For reasons still unknown,



the plane veered off course regained course then lost it again before plunging into the ground.

Barbara and Joe stop walking midway around the huge depression and look at more of the site Joe has only seen in photos. They discuss the black boxes and where they are taken for investigation. Joe persists in wanting to know the precise details of the crash including where and how the wreckage is collected. He also wants to understand how many of the three hundred and thirty victims were identified through partial remains. Joe wants the brutality of the situation to numb him from all feeling.

Barbara continues telling her version of the events that happened after the crash. She tells how members of the investigation team spent eight months sifting through all collected evidence only to reach no official cause for the crash. Joe proceeds to ask why she left the investigation before the findings were released. She tells Joe that she took retirement when she did because two weeks after the crash she was threatened in her hotel room in San Francisco. Two men strapped her to a chair and told her they would kill her son, daughter-in-law, and the grandchild yet to be born if she did not cease in her attempts to go public about missing evidence. To emphasize how serious the men are the older of the two describes how a random person will be killed on the spot. He believes this act of violence will keep Barbara from lying to him and continuing her campaign for the truth, Just before they leave her room, the older man renders Barbara unconscious with a quick chop to the side of her neck. She feels herself topple over just before she blacks out. When she regains consciousness, she is upright on the chair again having been put that way by one of her assailants. She manages to escape her duct tape bonds and prepares to call someone to talk to. She realizes that she cannot do that so she consumes two small complimentary bottles vodka to steel her nerves. She also investigates her surroundings. As she checks the door to the adjoining room, she notices new switch plates have been installed. Discovering the method the assailants used to get into her room does little to ease her fears. She takes a shower in an attempt to clear away some of her stress. It does not really help and she has a sleepless night. In the morning, she packs to move to a different hotel. At the front desk, the clerk explains the heavy police presence was due to the murder of one of the hotel staff members. The young man was shot in the precise manner described to Barbara the previous evening. She finds a new room in a different hotel and collapses on the bed so she can cry out her frustrations and fears.

Barbara comes out of her memories and Joe tells her he does not want her to give him the information from the cockpit voice recorder. He does not want to put her into any more danger than she already was. She tells him it is her decision to make. They argue for a few moments as Joe tries to convince her that she would be putting her family in danger despite all of her precautions. Barbara tells Joe that she no longer believes her house is being watched even though she did not want to talk there. She also tells Joe that if the shadow men wanted to make her disappear for good they could easily do so by setting fire to her home and she would never make it out. Realizing he cannot argue with her in light of what he witnessed at the Delmann's home, he drops the subject. After a few moments of silence so she could collect her thoughts, Barbara begins the story of

what was discovered on the tapes and the price the information cost one of her colleagues.

Mihn Tran was the electronics engineer responsible for gathering what little information he could from the damaged tapes. What he discovers is enough to cause him to call Barbara at two in the morning with his findings. He was going to call Bruce Laceroth, Head of Investigations Division as well as the five board members. He called Barbara first knowing she would record the conversation for her own records. It remains unclear if he ever called anyone else because he was killed in a fire nearly two hours after he and Barbara spoke. As the conversation continues, Joe learns that the copy Barbara had made was somehow stolen and replaced with a blank tape while she had been out of her room for a meeting. She also tells Joe how she was intending on having Mario Oliveri listen to the tape as well. She told him instead however she kept to herself the transcript she had written. Her trust levels were close to non-existent at the time so she kept them to herself until now. She handed Joe three pieces of folded paper containing the written words of the final conversation between the pilot and co-pilot of Flight 353. Only asking questions to clarify jargon, Joe reads the words in shocked silence. When he finishes, he folds the papers and puts them in his jacket. He and Barbara share a moment of silence before preparing to leave the crash site.



Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Eleven

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Eleven Summary

Joe and Barbara have come to the exact spot where the plane made impact. Barbara continues to tell Joe about the investigation including the finding of a row of seats still intact. This incites another argument between them. Barbara insists that there was no way anyone could have survived. She believes that Rose is just crazy and lying to Joe. On the other side of the argument, Joe holds to the notion that Rose is being totally honest. As they leave the crash site and walk back to Barbara's vehicle Joe sees flashes of movement in the trees. He thinks they may have been followed but cannot verify it. On the drive back to Colorado Springs, Barbara tells Joe of something a little peculiar that occurred the night of the crash. Not wishing to add to his delusions she explains that a farmer and his wife were visited by someone they believed had witnessed the crash. Joe wants to meet the people so Barbara takes him to meet Jeff and Mercy Ealing.

Upon arrival at the farm where the Ealings reside, they are greeted by Jeff and a few other men as they prepare take care of a sick mare. Jeff directs them to Mercy who is in the house baking. As she continues her work, Mercy tells Joe and Barbara about the visitor they had the night of the crash. She describes the woman as petite, in her forties, and black. This fits the woman from the cemetery Joe met just the day prior to this visit with the Ealings. Joe presses for more information. He asks if the woman's name was Rose Tucker. Mercy states the name she was given was Rachel Thomas. Through the course of the conversation, Mercy tells how she drove Rachel and the child she had with her to Pueblo. Seizing on the mention of the child, Joe questions Mercy concerning hair color, eye color, birthmarks, and anything that would prove the child was one of his daughters. The description Joe provides does not match the child Mercy saw. Feeling that her memories are not helping she apologizes but then drops a bombshell. She remembers Rachel calling the child Nina, which is the same name as Joe's youngest daughter.

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Eleven Analysis

While Joe and Barbara stand looking at the crater where the plane impacted with the ground, Barbara tells Joe about the section of three seats that were found intact. Joe is excited and hounds Barbara with questions. He wants to know if they could tell what section of the plane the seats would have been in. He asks if there were any burn marks. He wants to know if there was blood on the seats. He also asks if the lap belts were still connected. All of his questions ignite a new spark of hope within him. Barbara responds by saying the seats were probably from economy. She tells him there were no burn marks on them. She states that the upholstery was virtually intact. As for the lap belts, she claims to be unsure but they probably were. When Joe says that his family was in economy Barbara pauses before she tells him his family was not in those seats.



He admits that he knows they are dead and not coming back. And in a moment of honesty, he also admits that he is not in denial. This is a big step for Joe. While he has always known that they were gone, he has not admitted to his moments of denial. With this declaration said, Joe takes another small step toward healing. When Barbara realizes he is not talking about his family, she sees he is back to his belief that Rose may have actually been the sole survivor.

Barbara does not want to be harsh with her next comments but she believes this may be the only way to get Joe to honestly understand what transpired when the plane crashed. She tells him that the plane hit nose in after falling four miles straight down. It did not hit and bounce as happens in the vast majority of plane crashes. She regales him with specific details on how the flesh of the passengers would have been stripped completely from their bones and the bones themselves would have been like toothpicks in a vice. Barbara goes on to explain that the jet fuel would have also ignited creating a fireball so intense that even steel would disintegrate. Joe attempts to counter this point by suggesting that there has been pictorial evidence of complete towns being wiped off the map by a tornado and yet through all the devastation one building had been left intact. Barbara retorts that weather phenomena and physics do not act in the same fashion. Joe changes tactics and states that Rose has shown the families of the victims something that has renewed their hopes. The two of them continue to argue faith versus reality with Barbara asking Joe that if he is such an atheist how could he possibly believe that Rose's survival was a miracle. Joe makes no claims to either accusation. He states that he is merely indifferent to a God that would willingly allow such a catastrophe to befall which in turn keeps him from believing in miracles. When pressed for an explanation as to how Rose could have survived if not for the hand of God and an army of His angels Joe's reply is full of less conviction than what he had previously exhibited. He cannot explain what he thinks Rose is offering the families if it isn't hope of a spiritual nature. He merely shrugs and says the answer lies somewhere between amazing and logical. At the sound of thunder Barbara tells Joe they should start to head back to her car. Before leaving though, Joe pauses to realize that he has come to what the Compassionate Friends refer to as the Zero Point. That is the precise moment of the child's death, which triggers time to set your internal clock to zero.

On the way out of this wooded area, Joe believes he sees something among the shadows. He thinks it is a white flash of some sort which immediately sets him to thinking that he was followed from Los Angeles. This event will come back to haunt him when he finally gets the opportunity to have an in depth conversation with Rose. He files this information away in his head and gets in the vehicle with Barbara so they can leave the crash site. On the drive out of the woods, Barbara relates some information she is hesitant to share with Joe for fear it will fuel his belief in a survivor. She tells him of a rancher and his wife who are visited the night of the crash by someone claiming to be a witness. As feared this adds more fuel to Joe's delusions. In an attempt to bring him back to a realistic view, Barbara takes him to see the couple in question.

They arrive at the entrance road to the ranch and see that there is a huge sign suspended between two posts bearing the words LOOSE CHANGE RANCH. The names of Jeff and Mercy Ealing are printed beneath the ranch name. As they pull up



near the house, Mr Ealing exits the house to join an older gentleman already on the porch. Barbara and Joe chat with Jeff for a few moments concerning the night of the crash. He gives the description of the visitor as a petite black woman around the age of 40. He proceeds to explain that the crash had awakened him and Mercy. She called the Pueblo County Emergency Rescue while he drove toward the crash site to see if he could be of any assistance. The police had already started to block off the roads so he just turned around and came home. He was sitting up with Mercy drinking coffee in the kitchen when there was a knock on the door. Jeff wants to talk to them a little more but he is waiting for the vet to arrive to help nurse a sick mare. He excuses himself when the vet arrives and tells them to talk to Mercy because she knows more than he does.

When Joe and Barbara enter the house, Mercy is busy baking cookies. She ushers the visitors in and waves them to the kitchen table while she gets coffee and a plate of cookies for them. While checking on more cookies in the oven she relates what she remembers of the night of the crash. When she tells them that the visitor gave the name of Rachel Thomas Joe is struck by the similarity in initials to Rose Tucker. He continues to file away the information as Mercy relates the events of the evening. The woman calling herself Rachel explains that she was driving to Pueblo from Colorado Springs when she sees the plane over her just minutes before the crash. She had sent her car down an embankment when she swerved after slamming on the brakes. The car had rolled over before coming to a stop. She was filthy but unharmed when she arrived at the Ealing residence. She wanted to call for a taxi to take her the rest of the way to Pueblo. Mercy explained that taxis did not come to the ranch so she drove them herself. Joe and Barbara question her about Rachel's car and how it was going to get towed. Mercy said Rachel figured she would be back in the morning as it was too late to call someone at that hour. Joe becomes increasingly anxious as Mercy relates details of the trip to Pueblo. When Mercy tells them that she just dropped Rachel off at the house, she shared with a friend Joe goes from anxious to incredulous. He cannot believe that she would just drop the woman off then leave without making sure she was okay. Mercy explains that she merely dropped them off and they went to the house.

Picking up on the word "them," Barbara questions Mercy who reminds her that Rachel had a little girl with her who was the daughter of her partner. Joe fixates on the notion that a child was with Rachel and questions Barbara as to why she didn't tell him that. Barbara claims to have forgotten that information and explains she was lucky she even remembered how to get to the Ealing home. With his mind firmly on the notion that a child was involved, Joe begins questioning Mercy in earnest. He is beginning to experience another episode of searching behavior. Each question comes faster than the last. He quizzes Mercy about the little girl's eye color by stating that it's quite possible for a blond to have eyes that are not blue. He makes Mercy look at his eyes before he asks again about the color of the little girl's eyes. By this time, Mercy is growing a little frightened by Joe's reactions. She says she cannot say for certain that the little girl's eyes looked like his. Fully in the throes of the searching behavior, Joe asks Mercy to remember what she can about a mole or birthmark on the little girl's face. He wants to know what kind of smile the girl had. He is so caught up in the moment that he puts his hands on Mercy's shoulders and implores her to remember the details. After a few moments of silence, Mercy apologizes for her poor memory. This breaks Joe free from



the behavior he cannot control. He apologizes for his actions as he resigns himself to the idea that the little girl was not his precious Nina. Mercy again apologizes for not being able to recollect the details Joe seeks. But her next comment nearly sends Joe to his knees. She tells him that she remembers Rachel calling the little girl 'Nina.'



Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Twelve

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Twelve Summary

This chapter picks up directly after Mercy tells Joe Nina's name. Barbara and Joe go outside to discuss the ramifications of this announcement. Barbara wants to know why Rose would like about her name but use Nina's real one. Joe believes that the people after Rose have no concern for the girl. They argue again as Barbara believes Joe is once again caving to his desire to find his daughter alive. She insists that if Rose lied about her name then she lied about the name of the girl as well. Joe and Barbara return to the kitchen where Mercy is still making cookies. They discuss the night of the crash a bit longer before Joe and Barbara leave to head back to Colorado Springs. Joe has to return to Los Angeles so he can keep a meeting with the woman he calls Demi. When they reach Barbara's home Joe thanks her for her help. He also apologizes for getting her into possible trouble with the men after Rose. Barbara tells him she wanted to help and not to worry about her family. Joe leaves Barbara for the airport and the flight back to LA. To pass time on the flight, he reads the transcripts again. He gets angered by them and this leads to thoughts of his parents and their deaths. When the plane lands and the passengers begin disembarking, Joe sees a man he recognizes as having been the storyteller at the beach. Thinking he has been followed after all, he heads for a pay phone to call Barbara.

Part Three, Zero Point: Chapter Twelve Analysis

Joe and Barbara are shocked by Mercy's revelation of a child having been with the woman calling herself Rachel. They move to the back porch in order to take in some air and get their emotions under control. Barbara insists that the chances of even one person surviving the crash let alone two is simply beyond comprehension. Joe then admits to her that he has been withholding information from her concerning Rose. He tells her Rose is a scientist who has been working on some secret project being funded by either medical or military monies. He goes on to tell her what Lisa Peccatone told him at the Delmann's that Rose had been coming to LA with something that would set the scientific world on its ears. She wanted a reporter she could trust as well as several witnesses to this meeting. Barbara stares at Joe in disbelief wondering if he has taken leave of his senses. Having spent years as an investigator of crash sites she has seen people put aside rational thought in favor of grief induced hope that the outcome of such a tragedy was merely a dream from which they could wake and find their loved ones alive and well. She looks for signs of this in Joe's eyes. He meets her stare for stare and knows with his reporter's instincts what she is thinking. She asks if Rose's world shattering project was some kind of invulnerability lotion applied to the skin like sunscreen. He laughs for the first time in a very long time and tells her that it isn't anything like that. However he cannot tell her what it is simply that it is something big.



Barbara decides to play devil's advocate with Joe and agrees to accept that two people survived the crash. The woman gives Mercy a name that isn't her own yet she tells the little girl's real name. Barbara doesn't understand why she would do that. Joe tries to explain that the people after Rose have no interest in the girl. Barbara counters his argument by saying that if the people found out that Rose saved the little girl then that would make the little girl every bit as dangerous to them as Rose. She believes that Rose would have used a different name to save the child just like she gave a false name for herself. Joe doesn't want to believe Barbara could be right so he responds the way a child does when an adult uses logic to win an argument. Joe has nearly allowed himself to collapse into the hope that this little girl truly is his daughter and he does not want the truth of the mind to win over the truth of the heart. When Barbara batters at him with the notion that this could be a false name he responds petulantly by claiming Rose used a miraculous coincidence then by saying the girl's name was the same as his daughter's. Barbara continues to hammer at him that he has to allow for the chance that the little girl truly is not his daughter. He finally caves and tells Barbara she is right. They each repeat that the girl might not be Nina as if this mantra will bolster Joe's already broken soul. By the time they are ready to go back inside to talk to Mercy Joe wants to smack Barbara for being correct with her assumptions and taking the air out of his hope.

Back in the house they have a last brief conversation with Mercy before they leave. Mercy tells them that Rachel told her the girl's name because the poor child looked exhausted from her ordeal. Mercy was concerned that Nina might be suffering from shock but Rachel reassures her that everything is fine. Besides she's a doctor so she would know. Mercy also relates how Rachel claimed to have been visiting relatives in Colorado Springs for the weekend and brought Nina along since the girl's parents were out of town. She also found it a little odd that a black woman and a white child would be traveling together in this part of the world. She took it as a sign that God was working more of His miracles when the races could get along so well. Joe asks her how she can hold onto her faith in a world so full of heartache and despair. She explains that she has had her moments where ranting at God for her miscarriages and other troubles seemed like a great idea. But she just thinks how there are many things to be happy about, too. She goes on to say that this world is but one we visit on our way to something better. Somewhere in Joe's heart he finds it comforting that this woman should be named Mercy. She has proven that it is a name she can live up to by being the kindhearted and loving individual who shares cookies with complete strangers.

As Joe and Barbara head back to her home, they continue to discuss Rose and Nina. Barbara wants to know where Nina has been this whole year. If she truly is Joe's daughter Rose would have turned her over to him. Joe believes Rose has kept her safe because she would have been a target had she come back to him. The people after Rose would have had an easy time of finding her and disposing of her as they have so many others over the past year. Barbara then asks if they should have had Mercy give them the directions to the house in Pueblo where she dropped off Rose and Nina. Joe says it would have been a waste of time because in his gut he knows that they never went inside the house. If Rose fears that she is being tracked by her former employers



then she would have just used the house as a drop off point and found another way out of Pueblo and back to Los Angeles.

Once back in Colorado Springs, Joe and Barbara say their good byes. As he glances at the mini lakes the rain made in the parking lot near his car, he is hit with the sense the world as he knew it has shifted into something more beautiful and frightening. There is an intersection now for him which connects that which science can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt and that which still cannot be explained but exists only through strong belief. This shift signals another breakthrough for Joe. Life is no longer so cut and dry. The shades of gray are vast and many and they do not need to be as feared as he once believed. As he bids farewell to Barbara she extracts a promise from him that he will not cave in to the new sense of hope coursing through him. He must keep her voice as a second conscience that will keep him from collapsing into the idea that his daughter survived the crash. There are still many answers to this mystery and if he collapses now they will never be uncovered.

Joe arrives at Denver International Airport happier than he has been in a year. In spite of telling Barbara that he will keep in mind the possibility that the girl with Rose is not his daughter he feels in his heart that it truly is. He feels that he is no longer going to be chasing after the delusions he has chased for so long. No more will he be seeing his daughter in every little blond girl he passes. She is alive and merely waiting to be reunited with him. In this state of euphoria, he stops at a restaurant in the airport after returning the rental car. He relishes the food he is eating as if is the first time he has ever eaten a club sandwich and french fries. His new found desire to live brings a new attitude to everything for him, including the enjoyment of something so simple as eating. He leaves the restaurant and heads toward the boarding gate. He is overcome by a sense of nausea perhaps from having eaten more than chocolate chip cookies in the past two days. He finds a restroom and enters but rather than vomit, he finds himself sitting in a stall and crying. The events of the past few days have finally caught up to him. The adrenalin rushes have run their course for the time being leaving him vulnerable to emotions he has not felt in a year. Overjoyed by the thought of seeing his daughter again along with the possibility that the girl is not his Nina, crash into him like waves battering his emotional stability. When he composes himself, he leaves the restroom and boards the plane bound for Los Angeles. When the plane takes off he has a brief anxiety attack. With the knowledge of what transpired in the cockpit on Flight 353 he imagines one of the pilots deciding to point the plane toward the ground.

Joe pulls out the copy of the transcripts Barbara gave him and reads them once again. Something about the language and the way Captain Blane was speaking bothers him. He writes down all the lines attributed to Captain Blane and looks at them by themselves. He is struck by what he sees as childish phrases being said through an adult voice. The more he looks at the words, the angrier he grows. He realizes that his anger is irrational but it fits with what he is reading. It's also irrational for an adult to be saying how cool it is to be crashing a passenger plane full of innocent people into the ground. The anger he feels at this moment is at a level of intensity he has not felt since he was a teen. He recalls in great detail the anger he felt after watching his father slowly die from complications brought about by rheumatoid arthritis. He recalls the summer he



was 16 and had joined a boxing group at the local YMCA. He was not permitted to compete with the group because he had severely beaten two opponents. He was using his anger as a way to beat all of his frustration out of the hopelessness he felt for being unable to save his father. He also used his anger to rail at God for making his father sick in the first place. He vandalized a church as a way of getting back at a God who could create such pain and suffering. It was not until he married Michelle that he got his anger firmly under control. A year after her death, he can feel his hold on it slipping as he reacts with a simmering rage to the words he reads in front of him. The only thing that truly gets him back under control is the memories of his love for Michelle and their two daughters.

When the plane lands in Los Angeles, Joe thinks he recognizes another passenger as having been the storyteller from the Santa Monica beach. Since he is already enthralled in paranoia he begins to think that this man followed him to Colorado Springs. Having managed to once again get his anger under control Joe replaces the anger with fear. He exits the plane and immediately looks for a phone somewhere in the airport. He believes he has brought harm to Barbara and her family and wants to call her for reassurance. This is another example of the change that has been occurring to Joe throughout the story. He puts Barbara and her family ahead of himself in his thoughts. As he moves through the airport, he constantly scans the people around him wondering if he is going to be captured or worse at any moment.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Thirteen

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Thirteen Summary

Immediately after he disembarks from the plane after it lands in Los Angeles, Joe calls Barbara from a pay phone. He firmly believes he has been followed and wants to warn her. After they speak briefly, he retrieves his car and leaves the airport. In an effort to throw whoever is following him off his trail he decides to sell his car. He stops at Gem Fittich Auto Sales, pays for a new car with cash, and continues on his way to the coffee shop where he is to meet Demi. He arrives at the coffee shop and intends on looking around a bit before the meeting. He is approached by a young black man on roller skates. He is handed a cell phone that rings almost immediately. He is told to go to a bookstore a few blocks away. From there he is instructed to climb into a car and drive to Santa Monica. Through a series of phone calls, he is directed to a restaurant, Santa-Fe-by-the-sea. It is here that he meets Demi who in turn takes him to Rose.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Thirteen Analysis

Joe finds a payphone and calls Barbara at her home. Still in the throes of paranoia, he begins to think that even calling might not be a good idea. If he was followed to Colorado there is a very good chance that the people who have been after him have managed to get a tracing device on Barbara's phone. With this in mind, he calls her anyway. As he waits for her to answer, he glances around his location and notices the storyteller chatting with a young man in a Dodger's cap. The two men appear overconfident in their ability to keep Joe in their sights as they do not hide that they are watching him. He keeps this in mind as he hears Barbara answer and turns his attention to his conversation with her. Before she gets a chance to say much beyond how she was thinking about him, Joe launches into a long comment in which he thanks her for taking him to the crash site. He had been seeking closure since losing his family in the crash and felt that the only way to do so involved a visit to the exact spot where they died. In the event that there were people listening to their conversation, he explains that he was merely lost in his grief and despair when he thought the accident could have been anything more than a simple accident brought about by human error. He has created this story as a way of hopefully keeping Barbara and her family safe. At this point in time, he is truly remorseful for getting Barbara even more involved than she already was. He ends this portion of his conversation with a thanks to Barbara for reminding him that he needs to stop looking for villains outside of movies because sometimes God does allow bad things to happen to children.

Barbara waits a moment before she responds giving herself time to assess the way Joe has been speaking. When she replies, she tells him she hopes that he can truly find peace and that the visit to the site can provide the closure he has been so desperately seeking. She goes on to tell him that always seeking vengeance will never help him heal. Her responses let Joe know that she has understood his subterfuge. They



continue chatting for a few more moments mentioning how easy it is to get trapped in thoughts of conspiracy theories when the world has become so full of strangeness. Barbara tells Joe that his arguments are really with God. He agrees and tells her that they cannot be easily won especially when all he wants is an understanding of why God lets such sorrow and despair to exist. She reminds him that some things are just not ours to understand. She signs off the phone by telling Joe she will continue to pray for him. He tells her goodbye. As this final part of the conversation is taking place, Joe notices that the two men have broken off their own conversation with the storyteller departing the area. He hangs the phone back on the receiver and continues his journey toward the exit. As he takes the escalator, he manages to glance back to see if he is being followed. Sure enough the man in the Dodger's cap is strolling behind him blending in with the moving crowds. Realizing that there is probably a large group of people here for the sole purpose of his capture, his mind races with a way to leave the airport and shake this new surveillance crew. Curious of the time, he looks at his watch and determines that he has an hour before he meets Demi. If he cannot make that meeting, all his actions of the day will have no meaning.

He finds his car in the parking area where he left it. He takes notice of the other vehicles around him and realizes that most of them are cars. There is a pickup with a camper shell as well as three vans and a Volkswagen minibus all of which could be set up for surveillance rather easily. He gives them very little notice as he opens the trunk to retrieve some of the cash that he hid there after leaving making the large cash withdrawal from his bank. He gathers monies into an envelope that he carefully hides in the front waistband of his trousers. This accomplished he climbs into the driver's seat and prepares to exit the airport grounds. Before doing so he transfers money from the envelope in his waistband to the pockets of his jacket. He starts the car and heads to the cashier's booth. He believes that the people after him could have easily put another transponder on his car thus enabling them to follow him from a safe distance without him catching them. It is not until he is exiting the cashier's booth, that he notices the pickup truck with the camper shell following at a safe distance behind him.

Joe keeps his speed through traffic at a pace to match the other drivers around him. By doing so, he not only blends in but he does not tip his hand and reveal that he knows he is being followed. This also affords him time to think of a way to once again lose his tail. When he sees a sign for Gem Fittich Auto Sales, a plan formulates and he puts it into action. Pulling alongside the curb a block away from the dealership, Joe gets out and opens the hood. He believes that he has found a way to ditch his surveillance. As he stands at the front of his car he fiddles with the spark plugs and distributor cap loosening them so that when he tries to start the car it will fail. While he is doing this he sees the pickup with the camper shell drive past him. He continues to tamper with the engine all the while keeping an eye on where the pickup parks. He sees it turn a block away and park in front of an abandoned lot. Giving the engine one more look he slams the hood checks his watch and walks down the street in the direction he had just driven. When he gets to the dealership he takes the flight of stairs to the office. Upon entering he sees Gem Fittich sitting behind a desk with his legs propped on it watching a baseball game. Gem immediately stands and offers his hand to Joe. They exchange a few pleasantries but when Gem moves to turn off the television set Joe tells him to



leave it on. Sensing he is a baseball fan Gem tells him he may not want to watch it as the home team is apparently losing. Joe goes along with it simply because he wants the sound of the ball game to stop any observations of his actions that may be taking place from the pickup. It might be a block away but if there is any sophisticated surveillance equipment in it as Joe suspects he does not want to give them a clear notion of his plans.

As Joe and Gem begin to discuss a car for Joe to purchase, a tall man appears at a bus shelter across the street from the car lot. He has arrived here from the direction where the pickup is parked. Joe tells Gem that he has the cash up front and that he also wants to test drive the car alone. This causes Gem to become suspicious. It is at this same moment that both men notice the man trying to look nonchalant at the bus shelter. Gem asks Joe what the man wants which prompts Joe to tell him intentions with the vehicle. He has already placed the cash on Gem's desk so he tells him to pick up the cash and put in his desk drawer. Since this is going to be a test drive and Gem already has a copy of Joe's license made from the copy machine near the desk no other paperwork needs to be filed. Joe wants to avoid a paper trail in order to keep Gem from getting into danger. Joe tells Gem that he is going to take the Subaru a few blocks away and abandon it. He will call Gem when the coast is clear and Gem can retrieve the car at his leisure. Gem is not really thrilled with the idea but Joe convinces him that he can keep the money and he'll have the car back to sell again. Gem is still unconvinced and wants to know what will happen if the authorities ask him why he let the guy drive off alone even if he did have a copy of the man's license. Joe is prepared with an answer and tells him to say that the guy matched the license and he looked honest. Also there was no way to leave since he was waiting for a phone call from someone who had been in earlier and was interested in buying his best car on the lot. Believing Joe has it all figured out, Gem proceeds to question him about the identity of the guy after him. Joe and Gem get into discussing the facts that Joe is not dealing drugs which is the downfall of the youth of America according to Gem. Joe responds to Gem's question about the man being a police officer by telling him no. Joe proceeds to tell Gem that the men are sort of part of the government and not at all like any cops he would know. When Gem turns over the keys to the vehicle he mentions how times are strange. This causes a momentary pause for Joe because he realizes that he and Gem share a common belief that a life changing event is in the works. Both men are lost in a shared melancholy. Joe finds the vehicle in the lot and drives off when it starts on the first try. He sees the man from the bus shelter hurrying to the pickup with the camper as he approaches a traffic light. Rather than stopping Joe accelerates through the intersection making the visual contact with his pursuers that more difficult for them.

Joe abandons the car about two blocks away from the coffee shop where he is to meet Demi. As he approaches the storefront on foot he realizes he does not have time to check out the surroundings as he had planned. So he stands outside the store as instructed and waits for his contact. As he stands there waiting, the noise from the wind chimes above the door trigger memories that make him extremely uneasy. The chimes have reminded him of the sounds the copper pots made in the Delmann's kitchen. This in turn reminds him of the three oil lamps that had been on the counter which Lisa had used to set herself aflame. Caught up in this sudden flood of memories Joe recalls the



sound made by the clicking numbers on the alarm clock in the Delmann's bedroom when he found Charles dead. Unsure why he is having these flashes he prepares for what he hopes to be a major insight that could help explain the strange events that have been surrounding him. Elusive as always no insight solidifies itself in Joe's mind. Perhaps this is because Joe is no longer an outside observer capable of objective viewpoints. He is now embroiled in a story the scope of which is too far-reaching for him to comprehend any other way but subjectively. Lost in his thoughts he pays little attention to the young man skating past him on the sidewalk. It isn't until the guy stops and hands him a cell phone that Joe is even aware of his existence. The skater wheels away before any questions can come from Joe and then the phone rings. When Joe answers it, he gives his name after being prompted. When he tells the voice on the other end that he is waiting for Demi, he is instructed to walk a block and a half south, turn right and keep walking until he comes to a bookstore. Once inside, he is to go to the biography section and wait for further instructions.

He reaches the bookstore and goes inside. The clerk directs him to the biographies after Joe inquires about them. As he walks further into the store he walks further into the mystery. He hears the front door being locked just as he reaches his destination. A large black man is there and tells Joe to assume the position against a shelf of books. Joe finds himself obeying the instructions and notices that he is in front of a biography of Henry James. This point of fact will come back to him later as he remembers that Henry James wrote a ghost story titled *The Turning of the Screw*. This little bit of foreshadowing will help Joe better understand the information Rose imparts to him when they finally have their face-to-face chat. In the meantime, Joe is given instructions to leave the bookstore and get into the Mustang parked at the curb. He is to drive to Wilshire and turn left. He will be contacted again when that happens. Before he leaves the store Joe wants to know who owns the Mustang. When asked if it matters, Joe responds that it probably doesn't. He then leaves to carry out the instructions.

As Joe is driving through the underpass at the San Diego Freeway he is contacted once again and given further instructions. He is told to drive to Santa Monica without any stops where he will be contacted with yet more instructions. Joe agrees to no stops. He is also told not to use the phone because the people monitoring him will know if he does. Before ringing off the phone, the voice on the other end asks why he wanted to know who owned the car. Joe explains that he was being pursued by some seriously wicked people and did not want the owner to get into any kind of danger. This shows that Joe is once again putting the safety of others before his own. This experience is changing him whether he admits it to himself or not. The voice on the other end tells him that everyone is in danger then disconnects the call.

While Joe is still many miles away from his destination at the ocean, he is struck by the memory of the biography of Henry James. He cannot figure out what this could mean until he remembers the title of one of the author's most famous stories, *The Turning of the Screw*. He remembers that this book is concerned with ghosts which leads him to remember the events which transpired at the Delmann residence. The way the lights would flicker almost as if in response to the shotgun blasts as Charles Delmann killed himself. The movement of the copper pots hanging in the kitchen when no one had



gone near them. He recalls the flames of the oil lamps flickering as if a breeze had blown them but no windows had been open. He also remembers the way the numbers on the alarm clock had moved almost in slow motion. All of these thoughts brought to mind many old horror movies in which the presence of ghosts would be announced by a combination of the occurrences he was remembering. He tells himself that this is an insane way to think the mere byproduct of an overactive mind in a stressful situation. Yet he finds himself still trapped by memory in the Delmann home recalling the icy needle he felt on the back of his neck as he escaped the inferno. He tries to tell himself in retrospect that what he felt was the result of a mind already overstressed by witnessing the horrifying deaths of three people with whom he had just been sharing drinks and conversation. He cannot allow himself to believe that these events were triggered by a ghost. However he can also find no rational explanation for what happened. As he tries to desperately cling to what he believes is rational thought, he begins to question not if but how the events at the Delmann's could be tied to Nora Vadence and even the crash of Flight 353. He is still contemplating these notions when the phone rings.

He is two miles away from the Pacific ocean when he answers the cell phone. He is told to turn from his current road onto the Coast Highway. He is to travel this road until the mysterious people guiding him call again. When he reaches Malibu he is directed to take a route that will lead him to Santa-Fe-on-the-Sea which is a seaside restaurant. He is also told to leave the cell phone in the car when he gives the Mustang to the valet. He is expected as a reservation has been placed there in his name. Upon arrival he does precisely as he is told. He enters the restaurant and notices how it is decorated in so many of the pastel colors associated with classic southwest Navajo art. He looks around the restaurant and notices several Hollywood actor types some of whom are dressed as shabbily as he feels. He hasn't shave since before his trip to Colorado and his stress levels have him feeling like a train wreck. The hostess takes him to a table near the window and informs him that he will be eating alone as his dinner partner has been delayed. Frustrated by yet another setback but not wanting to appear so, he agrees to play along with the charade. His waiter appears and he orders a Corona before heading to the restroom to make himself a little more presentable. He returns to his seat and settles in to view his surroundings while waiting for his meal. As he ate he entertained thoughts of just how plastic and fake Hollywood was. What little substance there was in the town was used up by people trying to be someone they aren't. This leads him to the realization that it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor ultimately we are all driven by the same hopes, dreams, and despair.

As Joe finishes his meal and dessert, he notices a heavysset black woman escorting two men to a nearby table. The older of the two has sad eyes that are rather large as well as lips to envy Mick Jagger. He also has a nose like that of a gibbon monkey round and bulbous with tell-tale signs of a life soaked in alcohol. The younger of the two seems habitually nervous with a smile that could cause him to start laughing at awkward moments. His face is also very pink as if he has just scrubbed it with boiling water. There is a familiarity about them that Joe cannot seem to place. He continues to watch them as a young brunette woman who had been sitting with one of the Hollywood star-types takes an interest in the older of the two new customers. Joe is amused by the little



scene as the young woman joins the two newcomers after her current date heads to the bathroom. Sitting and conducting people watching is something that Joe has not done since Michelle died. This was an action they used to do together at shopping malls and other public places. For Joe to be doing this now shows that he is acknowledging that there are some actions from his former life that can still be experienced. This is another way for Joe to see that life does continue despite personal tragedy. He is curious to see what will happen when the actor-type comes back from the restroom and sees his date with the other men. However his waiter appears before this transpires and lets him know that his dinner is on the house. He is then directed to the kitchen where he is to meet with the mysterious Demi. While he is crossing the restaurant to enter the kitchen he walks past the table where the two new men were seated. He looks at them and the brunette and suddenly remembers why they seemed familiar to him. They match the description of the two men who had attacked Barbara in her hotel room. This revelation immediately deflates any happiness he had been feeling during the dinner. He had been incapable of outsmarting the Teknologik thugs and had brought them to Rose

Inside the kitchen, he finally comes face-to-face with the woman he has called Demi since their first phone conversation. She is the heavysset black woman he witnessed lead the two leather clad thugs to their table in the dining room. She introduces herself as Mahalia and apologizes for not being able to have dinner with him as she would have enjoyed herself immensely. She goes on to explain that there had been a change of plans and that Rose was waiting for Joe in the basement. The conversation that transpires shows Joe exactly how committed Mahalia and her associates are to Rose and her cause. Joe explains to Mahalia that he recognizes the men she seated as being the enemies. She tries to convince Joe that it would take an act of Universal proportion for those men to be who he says they are. Nonetheless she tells Joe to stay in the basement until well after closing so they can assess a way for Joe and Rose to escape should his warnings prove warranted. Joe is already thinking about escape routes so Mahalia informs him of the many different ways to get out of the basement. One way will bring he and Rose right up into the middle of the dining room so that will not suffice. The other route is through the basement door which used to be the way customers had at one time come into the restaurant. It was not torn down during the renovations but merely covered by plywood. If necessary Joe and Rose could go in that direction since it faces the cliffs and is impossible to see. Her confidence does little to keep Joe's panic from escalating. He is convinced that Mahalia and her group are mere amateurs in comparison to the resources Teknologik has been throwing his way since the start of this whole endeavor at the cemetery. When he continues to air his concerns, Mahalia relates to him how her family has survived the horrors of the KKK in Mississippi and floods and hurricanes as well. They will get through whatever trials and tribulations they have to because they are Baptists. Joe doesn't see the correlation but takes her at her word. What else can he do? This meeting with Rose is important to his sanity as well as his personal growth. If it does not take place, he will be trapped in his misery forever and all the chaos he has witnessed over the past 72 hours will have been for nothing. Keeping this notion firmly in mind, he enters the room in the basement where Mahalia has brought him. There sitting at a long table is Rose. The answers he has been seeking are about to be delivered.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fourteen

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fourteen Summary

The bulk of this chapter takes place in the basement of the restaurant Santa-Fe-by-the-Sea. Through 12 pages of dialog Joe and Rose discuss the events of the past few days. Joe is intent on finding Nina while Rose is intent on worrying about what she believes is the murder of the people with whom she has spoken. After yet more insistence by Joe to discover the whereabouts of Nina, Rose gives him the Polaroid snapshot she took of the headstone at his family's graves. He experiences strange sensations that Rose calls synesthesia. This leads to a discussion of science possibly being able to offer proof that there is an Afterlife. Joe loses his temper when he feels that he is being played for a fool. He angrily asks why she is being chased by Teknologik and tells her that he was followed here. When a commotion breaks out in the restaurant above, Rose and Joe escape through a basement door. They are overtaken by thugs from Teknologik who in turn are outsmarted by people from the group of blue robed individuals Joe saw on the beach before he left for Colorado. Their rescuers introduce themselves as Mark and Joshua.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fourteen Analysis

The opening scene of this chapter occurs immediately after the end of Chapter 13. Joe is standing on the threshold of not only the basement room but also the answers to all the questions he has had since seeing Rose in the cemetery. He can hardly believe the time has come to discover just why Rose has been photographing the headstones of the crash victims. He will be able to uncover the reason behind Rose's visits to surviving family members. He may finally be able to put his grief and despair to rest. But first he must get through this interview. When he enters the room Rose is sitting in one of the chairs near the work table. She somehow seems smaller and more frail than he remembers. Yet she still maintains a presence that belies her physical appearance. Joe is in equal parts intrigued and afraid of what he is about the discovery. After all this time, all this running for his life he is with the woman who can explain everything. He believes he should be elated but he feels as if he is a condemned man facing his final meal before the walk down the long green mile to his demise. Joe pulls out a chair and sits opposite of Rose. He reaches a hand across the intervening divide and she grasps it as a drowning swimmer grasps the rope that has been thrown to haul her to safety.

Rose starts the conversation by saying how horribly wrong everything is going because the people she has spoken to are all being killed. When Joe tells her that he was in the house when Lisa and the Delmanns died, Rose reacts as if she has just received megawatt voltage of electricity. With disbelief she asks if he meant he was there at the exact moment of their deaths. Joe explains that he was and that they just killed themselves. Rose is surprised by the revelation that Joe got out of the house alive. He tells her that Charles and Georgine were already dead but Lisa was still burning as he



left. Rose proceeds to explain that she thought she was doing the right thing by talking to the family members. Now she believes that she is responsible for all the deaths that have been occurring. Joe says nothing to convince her otherwise sensing she is experiencing a similar sense of survivor guilt like his own. Instead he questions her about being the only survivor. Rose explains that she was indeed on Flight 353 providing the exact seat number and location as proof. By now Joe does not need the proof but understands her need to provide it. This is one of the steps toward personal salvation and freedom from survivor guilt.

When Joe mentions that she was not alone when she walked away from the flight, Rose is momentarily surprised. She asks how he knew. He asks her if she remembers the Ealings. Rose smiles a sad and wistful smile as she says the name of their ranch. He tells her that he had visited with them earlier that day. Rose remarks that they are such a quiet and loving couple living in a peaceful setting. She feels more guilt for having intruded on their world. Joe tries to console her while asking her to tell him what she has told the other families. Rose wants to refuse because she is now more aware of the danger she puts people in with her revelations. Joe tells her he doesn't care about the danger because he's practically dead as it is. If the men from Teknolgik kill him then they would just be helping him to end the grief and despair of the past year. Rose tells Joe that he has so much to offer the world in his remaining years. He shrugs the compliment aside and asks her for the one answer he has been seeking since talking to Mercy Ealing. He asks her the whereabouts of his daughter Nina. In response, Rose hands him the Polaroid snapshot she took that fateful afternoon he found her in the cemetery. While he is holding it Rose proceeds to ask him a series of questions that almost seem like a guided meditation. Since he believes that Nina survived with Rose, he tells her that only Michelle and Chrissie are buried. As he continues to hold the photograph Rose repeatedly tells him to open his heart and mind to truly access what he is seeing. Rose asks him what he sees and he lists the objects that appear to him visually. She probes him to look beyond the five senses and to open himself to that which cannot be detected by the naked eye. As he does so, he begins to believe that he can actually feel the texture of the photo itself. He senses the contours, the smoothness of the surface, and the many pits that could be where the colors in the photo meet. Eventually he even believes that he can feel the actual colors. When he thinks the words "blue" and "bright," the room around him actually takes on a tint of blue to his eyes. He is so shocked by this that he drops the photo breaking the connection.

Rose looks at him with such intensity that he sees not only her compassion and intelligence but also the vague notion that she has become obsessed with an idea she so strongly wants him to see that it is almost palpable. When she repeats the words 'open your heart and mind' Joe is convinced that she is truly trying to hypnotize him. Feeling as if he is being played for a fool he begins to get angry with her. He knows that it is irrational to do so but it reminds him of how angry he had been at Barbara when he knew on some instinctual level she had been right. Not wanting to accept what he has spent a lifetime disbelieving he is convinced that Rose had coated the photo with some form of psychotropic drug that would allow the holder to hallucinate the minute it came into contact with their skin. Rose tries to explain that this would be impossible since a drug of that nature would take longer than the few minutes he held it to take effect.



When Joe angrily counters that he is not a pharmacologist privy to that type of information Rose calmly tells him to consult one. She continues to explain to Joe in a calm voice that what he has just experienced is something known as synesthesia. This is a process that occurs when one modality experiences a sensation from a stimulus in another modality. Such as when someone plays a few bars from a favorite song and the person smells a certain scent rather than hearing the song. Joe thinks that this is all nonsense especially when Rose explains that synesthesia is often experienced by mystics. As Joe scoffs Rose explains that many people from all walks of life believe that synesthesia is a glimpse into higher states of consciousness. Joe becomes incredulous at this point refusing to even open his mind and attempt the little experiment again. To him this borders on acceptance of a higher power that allows bad things to happen to innocent people. He refuses to allow himself to be duped any further and starts to demand to know where his daughter is located.

Rose sidesteps the question for a little longer. She asks Joe what he would think if he were to find out that she was one of a group of scientists who had discovered proof of an afterlife. He tells her that he would be more difficult to convince than she was. She then asks if he would be willing to know their was an afterlife even in that knowledge was both awe-inspiring and frightening at the same time. It is his turn to sidestep the questions by insisting on knowing just what it was that she was trying to bring to Los Angeles that cost the lives of the people on Flight 353. In his anger he lets Rose know that there are two men from Teknologik upstairs in the restaurant. This brings Rose out of her scientific reverie where she was calm and forces her back into the fear that had been keeping her running for weeks. As the two keep arguing about the role Teknologik has been playing in all of this they hear sounds of a scuffle from upstairs. Rose tells Joe that if Teknologik has men in the restaurant then they can be certain there will also be some along the beach. Joe tells her that Mahalia is trying to figure out the best way for their escape. Rose realizes that Mahalia and her friends can no longer keep them safe. Joe explains how Mahalia has the elevator to the basement hidden behind cases of restaurant supplies. In her fear she tells him that it won't matter. If Teknologik and its thugs know where she is they can remote her and Joe. She doesn't answer Joe's insistent pleas to know where Nina is other than to tell him she is dead. He does not believe her but there is no more time to argue. With the flickering of the basement lights, they are alerted to someone coming downstairs. Not wanting to wait to see if it's the good guys or not they escape through the exit that Mahalia had described earlier. Once on the beach, they are overtaken by more members of Teknologik. The one man in particular is the white-haired storyteller Joe recalls from the beach and flight from Denver.

This man tells Joe and Rose to stop running or he'll put bullets through their skulls. Just as Joe and Rose are about to give up hope more men converge on their location. The newcomers are here to rescue Joe and Rose. They are members of the group Infiniface. They manage to subdue the thugs from Teknologik but not before gun fire has erupted. As Joe and Rose begin running for safety once again, Rose stumbles. She tells Joe she just has a few bruised ribs from a previous fall in their escape from the restaurant. It is not until later when Joe and Rose are alone in the car heading to Big Bear Lake that Rose discloses she has been shot. With the help of two of the members

of Infiniface who introduce themselves as Joshua and Mark, Joe and Rose leave the beach to the sounds of a helicopter approaching their location.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fifteen

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fifteen Summary

Joe, Rose and their two rescuers run along the beach and through a guarded property. The security guard is quickly subdued. Mark tells him that he will notify the police when they are half an hour away from the property. Joshua goes ahead armed with the remote control they took from the guard in order to open the front gate. Mark stays behind with Rose and Joe so he can explain that the group to which he and Joshua belong have been following Rose's research for quite a while. By this time, two cars have approached the estate in which they have been hiding. There are four more people in the first car. They all try to convince Rose and Joe to go with them but Rose insists on using the second car so Joe can take her to where Nina is being kept safe. As Joe and Rose drive away, he notices that she has been injured. She passes it off as mere bumps and bruises from their hurried escape across the sand. Rose uses a cell phone she borrowed from Joshua to call where Nina is located and tells the person on the other end to move Nina to Big Bear. Rose tells Joe she owes him an explanation.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Fifteen Analysis

The escape from the restaurant takes the small group across rocky cliffs and beaches marred by the footsteps of many visitors. While fleeing for their lives, Joe takes a moment to glance back at Joshua who has been quietly talking to an unseen person. Joe realizes that he is talking on a cell phone and has just ordered a car to be ready to pick them up when they give word of their location. They continue traveling across the beach in an attempt to put distance between themselves and the helicopter. The rescuer named Mark leads them to a flight of redwood stairs that are surrounded by a wooden frame which reminds Joe of a rocket launch pad minus the rocket. They climb the stairs and find themselves surrounded by a 6-foot tall wrought iron security fence that has been locked shut. Not wanting to get caught attempting to climb the fence Joshua shoots the lock open and proceeds to open the gates. There is no fear of the helicopter hearing the gun's discharge which would give away their location. Proceeding through the gates the small group finds themselves on the grounds of a large private estate. Joe is concerned that there may be surveillance cameras in the trees set to trigger massive floodlights which would definitely provide the helicopter pilot with their location. Fear keeps them moving until Rose stumbles near the pool. Joe asks if she is okay. She says she is but he doesn't really believe her. Something in her voice betrays that she is hurt worse than she is willing to acknowledge at this time. She insists that she is just winded from having been knocked on her butt when they were attacked leaving the restaurant. Joe is concerned for her safety but she insists that everything is alright and keeps moving as quickly as she can.

They are moving along a walkway through a grove of trees near the mansion when they are caught in the beam of a flashlight. The flashlight is held by a security guard



patrolling the grounds. Before he has a chance to ask what they are doing, Mark runs toward the man. Impact is made and Mark easily subdues the man when he gets him in a wrestling hold and rams his head into a wall so hard it rattles windows. Joshua has retrieved the flashlight and shines it on the overweight guard. Mark keeps the man on his knees and his head turned away from them thus making it impossible for the man to remember details of the intruders. The guard tries to use false bravado as a means of gaining an upper hand. It doesn't work and he soon finds himself handcuffed and gagged. After the remote control unit that operates the gate is removed from his body, he is informed that the police will be called thirty minutes after they leave. They move toward the front of the house where they see a large fountain in the middle of the driveway. Mark leads Joe and Rose toward the fountain while Joshua heads to the gate all the while talking on the cell phone in order to set up their getaway.

While Joe waits at the fountain with Mark and Rose, she asks Mark how they know about her. He explains that he is a member of Infiniface and they have been following Rose's work for quite some time. When Joe tries to interject a question of his own Rose says she'll tell him later. Meanwhile Rose wants to know how it is that her work has come under their detection. Mark explains that the multi-billion dollar group to which he and Joshua belong is in charge of keeping an eye on upcoming and promising research that could provide the type of epiphany Rose was trying to explain to Joe. Rose knows how long Mark's group has been in existence so she finds it difficult to believe that they could be following all of her work especially when the past seven years had been spent in high security with Teknologik. Mark tells Rose that when she went off the radar it sent up red flags that she was co-opted by a branch of the government that could enforce a complete information blackout. This lead Infiniface to dig deeper into her whereabouts. They finally located her at the subterranean location of Teknologik in Manassas, Virginia working on Project 99. Rose is shocked when she hears this. She wants to know how much Mark and his associates know about the project. He claims not enough. Still shocked to discover someone outside of the facility was able to gain any information at all she asks how they managed to do it. He explains that they don't limit themselves to just written publications and shared scientific data bases. Rose tells him that is a nice way of calling themselves hackers. Mark merely shrugs it off and states that they don't do it in order to make financial gains for themselves. They simply perform the tasks for which they were created.

Joe has remained silent throughout this whole exchange absorbing the information being shared. He is still trying to process the events that transpired when he held onto the photograph while in the basement of the restaurant. He has had time to process that what he is hearing could be leading to a potential revelation of more mind-numbing and revolutionary experiences. While his desire to learn the truth is still in high gear, he believes that he would be better off mentally if he allowed the information to gently roll over him in small advances rather than trying to process it all at once. Meanwhile Mark and Rose continue their conversation with Mark telling her that she was of particular interest to them not only because of her work on Project 99 but also due to her sudden departure a year ago taking something from the Project with her. This one series of actions on her part made her the most wanted person in the country. Mark continues to tell her that what really got their attention was the amount of money and effort that was



being thrown into finding someone who supposedly died in the crash of Flight 353. Add to that the reports they were intercepting from a police agency with a clandestine nature concerning Rose being alive and active in the Los Angeles area. It was discovered that Rose had been visiting the relatives of crash victims. So members of Infiniface who had once been part of the military began their own surveillance of the people who had been watching Joe and the other families. Mark tells Rose that it probably was a good idea they did considering how Teknologik nearly retrieved Rose thus putting an end to her rogue activities. Rose thanks him for the rescue but tries to tell Mark he has no idea what kind of danger he and Infiniface are getting into. Mark explains that the group has over a thousand members and they are not afraid of what lies ahead for them and humanity. He goes on to say that if the scientists at Project 99 have indeed found a way to interface with the infinite then the world is on the brink of something radically life-altering. He believes that Rose and his group are allies. Rose tentatively agrees. Mark goes on to say that she and his group have all been working to keep the forces of self-interest fear and ignorance from keeping the world at large in the dark. Rose gently chides him by reminding him that she once worked for them. He replies with a simple admission that she turned.

Two cars have approached their location by this time one of which stopped to pick up Joshua. When the cars stop near Joe and his companions, the new arrivals get out and gather around Rose. Joe watches this small gathering and witnesses the almost reverent manner in which Rose is being held. They treat her as if she is a saint manifest in physical form. Rose appears to be taking it all in stride. She comments that she is surprised to see them all wearing mufti or robes. Joshua replies that when they first started out they tried to remain as quiet as possible so as not to attract any unwanted attention due to misunderstandings. He tells her that the group had no idea that they would have such violent enemies. Mark adds to it by reminding them how powerful their enemies are as well. The conversation continues with each person adding comments. They had thought that everyone would want to know the answers if discovered. What they found instead is that remaining ignorant for some truly is bliss because they do not have to leave their comfort zones. Joshua explains that they started wearing robes as a way of making people less nervous about them. If they are seen as members of a cult then they make the mass populace less nervous. It's a very good disguise. When Joe hears the discussion of the robes he remembers the group he passed on the beach. He mentions this as well as the shaved heads. Joshua explains that some of them do dress in such a fashion as a way of distracting their enemies from what they are really doing. This exchange is a prime example of how difficult it is for humanity as a group to move away from their preconceived notions of how the Universe works. No one likes to leave what they perceive as their comfort zones. The young people in front of Joe and Rose want her to join them so they can bring her discoveries to the world. Rose declines the offer because she needs to see Nina, the young girl in the center of it all. She also tells them that they do stand on the threshold that the group foresaw. They will see the world through the current darkness of their minds and enlightenment shall be theirs. She approaches Mark and asks to use one of the two cars. She explains that what happens next can only involve herself and Joe. Mark hands her a dollar bill and says that there is a phone number hidden in the serial number. She puts it in her pocket as Mark tells her



to call it whenever she's ready to join them or if she is in trouble. She borrows Joshua's cell phone then thanks them all as she and Joe head to the car they are borrowing.

Once on their way, Rose collapses in pain. Joe is concerned and begins to question her as to the extent of her wounds. He thinks she may have a broken rib that could in turn puncture a lung. Rose insists that they get moving if they are to help Nina get out of this situation with her life intact. He tells her the route they can take away from where they are that won't allow their enemies to monitor them. Rose tells him to just go. She slumps in her seat as Joe pulls away from the estate. For the first time since he met her Joe witnesses Rose in a moment of self-doubt. She does not believe she has the strength to carry out her plans. She doesn't believe she is special enough to do it. Joe tries to reassure her that she is by telling her she is special to him. She is still dealing with her doubts as she dials a number into the cell phone that she borrowed. Joe tells her that whatever she needs from him he will do. He then asks more questions about Nina. Rose doesn't answer him right away because at that moment someone answers her call on the other end. She tells whoever it is to move Nina to the Big Bear location and she will be there as soon as she can. As Joe listens, he allows himself to give in to the hope and renewal he believes is waiting for him when he is once again reunited with his daughter. He wants to shout his happiness but he remains silent. As Rose finishes her call, Joe notices that she is not using her left arm all that much. When he questions her about it, she tells him to stop nagging. She will be fine once they get to Nina. Joe asks her to tell him everything since he deserves it. She agrees and begins her story.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Sixteen

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Sixteen Summary

Picking up where Chapter 15 stopped, Joe and Rose are driving toward Big Bear Lake located near San Bernadino. As promised, Rose tells Joe everything about her work with Teknologik. She also explains the group to which Joshua and Mark belong is called INFINIFACE a hybrid of the words interface with the infinite. She briefly details the creator of the group, Loren Pollak. From there she goes into a discussion of scientific breakthroughs that lead her to the story of Project 99 and just what Teknologik was creating in their secret labs far underground in Manassas, Virginia. She goes into great detail concerning several of the case study subjects. In doing so she discloses the truth about the young girl with her on the plane now known as Nina. Rose also mentions one of the subjects, SSW-89-58. He is important because it is his abilities that Joe has been witnessing since visiting the Delmann's. Joe notices that Rose seems to be growing tired and weak. She tells him that she was shot on the beach and that the bullet passed through her. She is slowly dying but tries to hold on until they get to Big Bear Lake where she says Nina can heal her. Joe arrives at the cabin Rose directed him to and sees Nina for the first time. By then however, Rose has already gone into the Afterlife.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Sixteen Analysis

The chapter opens with Joe and Rose on the road to Big Bear, California. For the moment, they have outrun the hired guns of Teknologik and are on their way to meet Nina and her caretakers. Along the way Rose finally tells Joe everything she has been withholding since they met that fateful day in the cemetery. She begins her story with an explanation of the group Infiniface and their founding father. She tells Joe that the group is not a cult in any sense of the word. Their name literally means "Interface with the Infinite." They were started by a man named Loren Pollack a computer software genius. He is often called the poor man's Bill Gates. Rose finds it rather interesting to call a man poor when he was able to start with nothing and accumulate seven billion dollars by the time he turned 42. She continues her story after a brief interruption to urge Joe to drive faster. He claims the road they are currently traveling would not be good for speeding. When he tells her to buckle up she refrains from doing so based on the amount of pain in her left side. This is really the first admission that her physical pain may be more than she can handle. However she refuses to allow this to hinder her actions regarding the retrieval of Nina.

She continues telling Joe of Loren Pollack and the reason he created Infiniface. Using a billion dollars of his own, he established a charitable trust and named it Infiniface. It is his belief that utilizing research garnered by new superfast computers the scientific community is getting close to discovering a way to bring people face-to-face with the reality of a Creator. Joe says that this sounds like a cult to him. Rose concedes that a lot of people think that Pollack is nothing more than a harmless flake. However he is a



smart flake who can understand complex research from a plethora of sciences. Pollack is one of many who believe that modern physics has evidence of a created universe. This comment steers the conversation toward a brief discussion of chaos theory. Rose explains to Joe that the chaos theory does not say what its name implies, that the universe is random and chaotic. The theory is an extremely broad one that recognizes oddly complex relationships in apparently chaotic systems. She uses weather patterns as an example and says if you look deep enough into any chaos you will find hidden regularities. Joe tells her he knows nothing more about chaos theory than how it is appropriated in movies. Rose responds to his statement with a personal comment on movies and politicians. She refers to both of them as stupidity machines. Up to this point she has been able to remain objective and positive about the world around her. As time seems to be running out, she lets her feelings out a little perhaps as a way to mask the physical pain she is experiencing. She collects her thoughts and continues with her story.

She explains to Joe that science mocked the religious community's notion that the universe was created out of nothing. This is a direct violation of all the laws of physics. Something cannot be created out of nothing. At least that was the belief eighty years ago. With scientific breakthroughs, that have allowed a better understanding of molecular structure particle physicists are able to create matter out of nothing all the time. Again she pauses to allow her physical pain momentary focus. Looking for aspirins in the glove box she comes up empty handed. Joe offers to stop at a store but she insists he keep driving since they still have a lot of distance to cover and time is growing shorter.

Rose continues talking this time about molecular biology. It is important for a better understanding of her work with Project 99 to discuss not only this theory but also to briefly touch on Darwin's theory of evolution. Molecular biology is the keystone to what was taking place with Project 99. It is believed that the more humanity understands living things on a molecular level the clearer it becomes that all of life is created by intelligent design. This does not negate Darwin's theory despite his having arrived at it in 1859 long before there was any knowledge of atomic structure. At that time Darwin believed that the smallest unit of a living creature was a cell. He saw it as nothing more than an accident of chemistry. Scientists now know that cells are actually enormous complex structures designed with such precision that seeing them as an accident of nature is impossible. At this point, Joe feels that he is out of his league since Rose is talking about things for which his knowledge is limited at best. Rose has been caught up in discussing her life's work as any scientist would and has forgotten that the average person may not understand all the complex jargon. She attempts to further clarify things by bringing up Francis Crick one of the three men credited with discovering the double helix of DNA. She tells Joe that Crick was a scientist through and through with no room for spiritual thinking. When he was unable to tie in the complexity of molecular biology with the theory of natural selection, he determined that life on earth may have been designed by an extraterrestrial intelligence. His scientific convictions however prevented him from claiming a Creator in a spiritual sense. Joe scoffs at this by commenting on the popular notion of god-like aliens. When Rose tries to counter that by asking who created them Joe responds with the conundrum of who came first the chicken or the egg. Rose



chuckles at this and is once again overwhelmed by physical pain. She regains control over her breathing and continues her discussion of Pollack and his beliefs.

Rose tells Joe that Pollack believes the purpose behind science is to increase humanity's understanding of the universe to solve the puzzle of God's existence which in turn will make us become like gods ourselves. It is Pollack's belief that by finding a scientific connection with the infinite then we will be able as a species to rid ourselves of hatred and division and unite in a common quest that is both of the spirit and the mind. Pollack founded Infiniface in order to track worldwide research that is willing to look at metaphysical aspects the scientists may overlook. Through this group, he wants to encourage specific projects which appear to be heading toward the interface with the infinite. When Joe states that Infiniface isn't a religion Rose agrees with him. She further explains that Pollack believes religions validate themselves with the recognition of a Creator but that they bog themselves down with the myriad interpretations of what God wants from us. In his view, we are to work together to peel away all the layers of the universe to find God and ultimately become his equals. Again Joe shows his lack of faith when he says he doesn't believe in anything because no loving God would allow so much suffering. Rose tells him that Pollack would claim the fault of Joe's thinking lies in the narrow human perspective. In response, Joe states that Pollack might be full of shit. Rose began coughing again taking longer to recover her breath. Again Joe insists on taking care of her wounds but she just argues against it. Joe does not want to choose between her or Nina. Rose says there is no choice because Nina comes first. She is the hope of the future.

As they continue their journey, Rose finally gets to the part of the story involving her work with Project 99. Joe asks her what it is and why they were housed in a subterranean complex outside Manassas, Virginia. Rose asks if he is familiar with the Human Genome Project. Joe states that he does. He understands it to be the way in which scientists are figuring out what each human gene controls. Rose calls it the greatest scientific endeavor of our age. It is a map of all one hundred thousand human genes detailing the DNA alphabet of each. It is how the cures for cancer, muscular dystrophy and other diseases will be found. Rose tells Joe that she is not directly involved in that. Project 99 is looking for the genes associated with paranormal talents such as telekinesis and telepathy. Joe immediately responds by denying their existence. Rose ignores his skepticism and relates the studies being conducted at Duke University involving people with psychic abilities. She goes on to say that when a person is found to test exceptionally high in these tests blood samples are drawn and examined. She explains that by collecting the data they were building a library of profiles with unusual genetic abilities in order to uncover common patterns among people who have had all manner of paranormal experiences. When Joe asks if they found something, Rose is hesitant to reply. She finally says that they have uncovered quite a lot. With that statement, Joe finally realizes what has been taking place in the basement facilities of Teknologik. Horrified by what he pieces together, his next statement clues Rose in on his disbelief. He now knows that not only have they observed the phenomena but they have also been applying their findings. They have been experimenting on humans. Despite being visibly appalled by this revelation, Joe continues to press Rose for more information. When he calls them monsters Rose insists that they are humans. Joe



states they may look human but they are still monsters. Rose disagrees and says that the real monsters are the ones who made them.

From this point on in the story with a few minor interruptions, Rose proceeds to tell Joe in as much detail as she can about the experiments that have been taking place. She explains that there are currently 48 children housed in this location all of whom have been more or less born and raised in the confines of the lab. They were not conceived in love nor did they come into the world via a mother's womb. They were incubated in amniotic fluid created in a lab. They have a series of handlers consisting of scientists and security personnel doubling as cooks. No one is to become emotionally attached to the children therefore they are no names associated with them only a series of numbers that tells of their spot in the chain of research. Rose tells of several children who showed promising results but were somehow flawed making their progression into the research almost impossible unless they experience the changes in body chemistry that one experiences during puberty. Out of the 48 children, only 7 have shown any paranormal abilities. Joe doesn't want to believe that the person he is with at this moment could ever have anything to do with such a project. She is just too kind and good for him to believe her capable of such atrocities. She tells Joe she did it out of pride. She wanted to prove she could take on such an endeavor. When she started with the project there was no consensus that experimentation would be applied so zealously. They were just to monitor the first child through the second trimester. The general attitude was they weren't working on a person since they didn't consider a fetus as an actual human being. At this point in her story Joe is overcome with repulsion for a woman he had until that time so greatly admired and adored. And yet within that repulsion he finds pity for she has proven to have the same kind of human weaknesses as him

Rose tells Joe of her attempt to leave the project only to be told that there was no way she could without endangering those around her whom she loved. Her bosses threatened to harm her family and friends should she ever try to leave. When Joe asks why she didn't go to the police to have the facility closed she tells him she couldn't without physical evidence. Then she tells him of the two colleagues who had tried to stop the project. One had a sudden stroke while the other was gunned down by a mugger who was never caught. This brings the story to the two main test subjects and the reason Rose ran away from the labs a year ago taking with her something from the project. One is a male subject designated SSW-89-58. The other is a female called CCY-21-21 born a year after the male in question. The male subject far exceeds any of their expectations. He possesses the language skills of an average college freshman when he is just 42 months old. By the time he is 4 he looks like a typical 7-year old. He also is capable of playing any piano piece after hearing it only once. When he exhibits paranormal activity, he does so with great prowess. His first major achievement is in remote viewing. He shows this off by discussing in detail many museums he has never visited. He even manages to get into a top-secret Strategic Air Command defense center and describes it in detail. All of this from looking at a photograph of the mountain in Wyoming where the base is hidden. He is considered to be the greatest espionage asset ever in existence. Unfortunately, it is discovered that he can enter a human mind as easily as a distant room. He does this to his primary handler. He takes control of the



man and makes him walk naked through the halls of the orphanage in which he is kept. He also makes the man crow like a rooster. When the handler has control of himself again he severely punishes SSW-89-58. Disliking the treatment, 89-58 enters the man once again only this time at home. While he has control of his handler he makes the man murder his wife and daughter before walking the handler through suicide. From this point on the subject is kept sedated. A new compartment is built in which to house this test subject. He is never left unsupervised.

More experiments are conducted with this subject but now it is done in what is to be considered a safer fashion. The doctors and assistants communicate with him via speakerphone. He is shown images of places and people and often sent on remote viewings. He is often tested by being sent somewhere that already has extensive research attached to it. His answers are compared to what is on file. Some of these viewings involve dispatching someone like a foreign national. Since blood is spilled during these assignments, they are called wet missions. If he is good, he is rewarded. If he refuses to go on a mission, he is punished. The doctors in charge are named Blom and Ramlock. He is limited in his viewing only to the walls of the structure he has been shown in a photograph. He has little control when in an outdoor location, which frustrates him. However, his handlers believe that with practice he can become proficient in this area as well.

Rose stops her story because she needs to use a restroom. She is growing weaker with every passing minute but still refuses to allow Joe to attend to her wounds by going to a hospital. She is convinced that they will make it to Big Bear in time and that Nina will heal her. Meanwhile Joe is reeling from the emotional upheaval he has experienced. For the first time in a year he believes he knows the truth of the crash that killed his family. Before Rose exits the car to use the restroom of the Shell station where they have stopped, she tells Joe of the experience on the plane before it crashed. She doesn't know how they found her but she could tell the boy was doing a remote view by the way the lights dimmed in the cabin. When she explains that he was sent to get both her and Nina Joe doesn't comprehend why. He thinks that Nina was involved after the crash. He still has no idea that the girl known as Nina is not truly his daughter. Rose pauses in the story and goes to the restroom. This gives Joe the opportunity to process the information she has imparted to him thus far. He begins to piece together what he knows from the copy of the transcript given to him by Barbara. The boy had actually taken over the captain using him as an instrument much the same way one would use a gun or knife. Joe finds it within himself to actually pity the child despite the fact that he is a monster. After all the boy did not ask to be born. His evil comes from having never been shown human values. Yet he enjoys killing and he is still out there waiting to find Rose and Nina.

Joe is still thinking over some of the dialog on the transcript especially the part when the boy says through the captain that if the doctors don't stop what they are doing to him he is going to kill everyone. Joe realizes that this has a more far-reaching meaning than just the people on the airliner. This scares Joe because the implications of the boy's abilities are on par with an apocalypse the likes of which the world has never seen. The end result could be catastrophic should he ever be shown images of nuclear missile



silos and other nuclear weapons facilities. Joe is unable to continue along this line of thinking because he realizes Rose is taking too long in the restroom. He goes in to see if she is okay and discovers that her wound is worse than expected. She has been shot once in the chest. The bullet passes through without hitting any vital organs. She is growing weaker. Joe thinks there is internal bleeding but Rose says the bullet hit the right spot. Joe thinks that there could be a bone fragment that was jostled out of place by all the bumps from traveling. He wants to take her to a hospital but she insists on getting to Nina. Joe helps her back to the car so they can continue their journey. Joe gets her a drink from a vending machine but before she accepts it she gives him the photograph of his family's graves and the dollar bill Mark gave her. This is the bill on which the number for Mark is coded in the serial number. Rose is convinced that she is not going to make it to Big Bear in time. Joe tries to convince her otherwise but she ways him off. She tells him that Infiniface truly is their ally. She also tells him to call them should anything go completely wrong. She is trying her best to tie up any loose ends before she leaves this existence for a better one. Rose also tells Joe that she never meant to hurt him. He tells her that she didn't but she insists that there is a lot she needs to account for and asks him not to hate her too much. He tells her he doesn't. She proceeds to tell him of the one true success to come out of Project 99.

Subject CCY-21-21 was conceived a year after SSW-89-58. She is Rose's project. The young girl is quiet and naturally graceful and charming. She exhibits an extremely high IQ and loves to learn. For the first three years of her life, however, she shows no signs of paranormal activities. This changes on a supervised play date with other children. She finds a sparrow that has a torn eye and broken wing flopping around on the ground. When she gathers it in her hands it quiets down and grows still. The little girl starts to cry and carries the bird to the closest handler. Hearing that nothing can be done to save the bird the inconsolable little girl sits on the ground and strokes the little sparrow all the while singing to it. Within minutes, the bird is completely restored to health. Suddenly the little girl is propelled into a storm of happy activity. For the next fifteen months she and Rose work closely together enhancing her abilities. The little girl is used to heal select members of the military and political circles as well as their family members who are suffering from life-threatening illnesses. A year after she restores the sparrow a staff geneticist, Amos, is brought to her with pancreatic cancer. She treats him with a simple touch. While doing so, she discovers that the man is also suffering spiritually. Maybe this is due to all of his work on Project 99. Maybe other reasons are the cause. These are of no matter to the little girl as she heals him of this spiritual affliction as easily as she did his cancer. Amos is so overjoyed by what the little girl has shown him that he wants her to share her gift with the other researchers in the room. When she touches a researcher named Janice the reactions are quite different. Janice collapses in a heap overwhelmed by the intensity of her remorse and regret for her life's work and the harm it has brought to others. Rose is brought in to help control the ensuing tumult.

Rose asks the little girl to show her what she has just shown the other two people. She does and it transforms Rose forever. She has been shown truth in its purest most unadulterated form. As Rose assess what has just transpired she realizes that there are two implications to what has just happened. The world can be transformed forever by a single touch from this special child. People will be able to see the world as a wondrous



place full of possibilities and hope. On the other hand, there will be those individuals hell-bent on destroying the young girl simply because she will undoubtedly shake up the status quo. For these people who have made a living off of the suffering of others this sudden change in their fortunes will not be tolerated. The little girl will either be a messiah or pariah. Knowing what she does about the people for whom she works Rose realizes that the best hope this little girl has for survival is to be taken out of the facilities as quickly as possible. Setting her course on freeing the child Rose embarks on the mission that has brought her to this point with Joe Carpenter. Rose stops her story for a moment to tell Joe that she is sorry for deceiving him back at the restaurant. She did so because she needed him. When he hadn't opened his heart and mind with the photograph she feared he would abandon her. She begs his forgiveness and tells her that the little girl needs him. He listens quietly trying to decide if he should just stop everything. He comes to the realization that if he cannot trust Rose than who can he trust. He tells her to finish her story.

Rose continues by telling Joe how she spirits the girl away from the facilities. It is quite simple actually. Whenever they meet a security guard the little girl offers her hand in friendship. When the guards take her hand they receive the same gift as everyone else; a sense of euphoria as well as momentary remorse for past hurts they may have caused. With the guards incapacitated in this fashion it is quite easy for Rose to take the girl out through the garage and into the wilds of Virginia. From there she heads to New York via a series of bus rides. Once at JFK International Airport in New York she secures passage on the ill-fated Flight 353. Rose has faked her identity so that she is the wife of a white man with the last name of Tucker. She claims that Nina is her step-daughter. Her intentions for the media are to give them the name the little girl had in the facility. This way she could garner more sympathy for their cause by showing how insidious Teknologik is by equating what they were doing with concentration camps.

While on the plane, Rose and the little girl are seated across the aisle from Joe's family. As they sit there 21-21 becomes interested in an electronic game being played by Joe's youngest daughter. Wanting to see more of the game she asks Rose if she can move to an empty seat nearby where she and the new little girl could play the game together. Rose hesitates out of fear but finally relents and 21-21 sits beside Nina to play. This is the first time 21-21 has had any sort of unstructured playtime. She becomes enthralled with everything to the point of mimicking Nina in an effort to become Nina. Since the flight is a late one Joe's daughter soon grows tired. She gives 21-21 a hug and asks her mom, Michelle, if she can give her toy to her new friend. She does just that before rejoining her family in their seats where she promptly falls asleep. Rose notices how delighted 21-21 is with her gift hugging it to her as if it was the most treasured thing in the world. Not wanting to ruin the game or tarnish her new experience 21-21 keeps the game as it is so it can always be the way it was when Nina gave it to her.

Rose stops her storytelling again to take a drink of soda. She and Joe are still miles away from Big Bear. He has listened to her story all the while battling the urge to lash out at her in rage. He cannot explain why he is so angry with Rose or the young girl with a serial number for a name but he is. Perhaps he wants to react out of anger because he finds rage and anger to be his comfort zone. He has reacted to many things in this



capacity all of his life. Even though he has spent the better part of a year living in grief he really doesn't know how function in it. Wishing to change the subject Joe asks Rose about Horton Nellor's role in things. He knew that he owned stock in Teknologik but beyond that he could see no connection. Rose replies that it's simply a big business function for Nellor and people like him. They will control every aspect of the future unless Nina changes everything. As far as Rose is concerned these business men know nothing of good and evil. All that exists to them are events and they are whatever they can spin them to become. Joe is still slightly angry with Rose for what she wants him to believe about his daughter but seeing her in such pain from her wound causes compassion to rise to the surface of his emotions. He drives as fast as he dares on the roads. When Rose loses her grip on the soda can she's been holding she tells him that she's losing it. He tries to bolster her flagging spirits by telling her it won't be much longer. Rose then tells him how it was when the plane crashed.

The plane is plummeting toward the ground. All around her she hears people praying, screaming, and crying. She braces for an impact she never feels for just when she believes the plane will hit she finds herself bathed in a glow of the brightest blue. There is no sense of motion or temperature. She is just suspended in air. She tries to expel the breath she has been holding but finds she cannot until finally she finds herself still in her seat but the seat is in the meadow. All around her are signs of death and destruction but she is alive. She and 21-21 have somehow been transported out of the plane, suspended in a separate dimension by the psychic gift of 21-21. The effort has left the little girl a near empty shell of her former self. Rose stands in the middle of the carnage holding 21-21 in her arms unable to move. Overwhelmed by a sea of emotions destined to flood her senses she recalls the signs that a wet mission has taken place. The flickering of the cabin lights and the hands of her wristwatch spinning wildly clues her in that she has been discovered by her former employer. Fearing for her life as well as that of the little girl, she is holding Rose flees the crash site. After traversing wooded areas and ridges she sees the ranch house of the Ealings in the distance. By this time 21-21 is able to walk on her own but she's still out of sorts. As they approach the house Rose tells her to remember that her name is Mary Tucker but the little girl says her name is Nina. She has chosen a name for herself. These are the last words she speaks for several months.

Rose and Nina spend the months after the crash with some friends in southern California. Nina remains withdrawn showing no signs of her previous abilities. Rose plunges into despair. At Christmastime Nina shows signs she is healing. She watches television and reads books but does not speak to anyone. Rose works with her daily to get her out her self-imposed prison by telling her of the good she can bring to the world. Eleven months after the disaster Rose finds Nina in the room they share holding the copy of the Los Angeles Post that has the story of the crash on the front page. The paper is opened to a page that has photos of some of the crash victims. Nina is touching the photo of the other Nina who had been her friend for such a short time. She is smiling. Rose asks if she feels sad remembering her friend. Nina shakes her head no then guides Rose's hand to the photo. When her fingertips touch the newspaper she feels transported to the same place where she was in those moments before the crash.



There is a belief among clairvoyants that people can leave behind a type of psychic residue on objects they have touched. Those who can tap into this residue have often assisted police with investigations. The energies Rose feels are similar but they differ in that they were not left by Nina's touch but rather put there on purpose by Nina's will. Rose feels as if she is swimming in a sea of blue light. It feels crowded with others whom she cannot see but she can feel. One of the swimmers seemingly passes through Rose and she knows instinctively that this is Nina Carpenter. The little girl is dead and gone and yet happy and alive in another plane of existence. Rose has been given another glimpse into the connection between this reality and what others call the afterlife. It isn't really another place as much as it is an intersection between phases of existence. When she takes her hand off the photo she still feels the peace from her connection. She takes Nina in her arms and cradles her knowing nothing needs to be spoken. Nina's gift is returning. Rose knows this is a sign that she must start to talk to the families of the victims so that they may receive the peace they seek. She wants to talk to Joe first but he has completely disappeared off of everyone's radar. So great is his despair that he simply wishes to die. Forced to start her mission elsewhere, this brings Rose's story to a close and ties it in neatly with the events that started Joe on his own journey to salvation.

Joe stops the car somewhere in the mountains of California. There are still twenty miles to go to reach Big Bear but something in Rose's voice tells Joe the truth he does not want to acknowledge. She is dying and will not make it to Big Bear in time to be saved by Nina's healing touch. Rose asks Joe to hold her hand. He doesn't want to look at her because he believes she will be perfectly fine if he doesn't. He allows his superstitions to control him for a moment. When he finally looks toward her he sees she has become a frail shell of the vibrant woman she was three days beforehand. Despite her physical condition her eyes were still as compelling. He takes her hand and tells her that Big Bear is not far. She appreciates his kindness but knows that she will not make it. She tells him it's too far. She just wants him to hold her hand. They share a few more tender moments of conversation in which Rose tells him that Nina heals him. He tries to tell her that he's nothing. Rose admits that she started the work too soon. She didn't allow Nina's power to grow back to the level it had been before the crash. She implores Joe to hide Nina away and keep her safe until her powers return. She tells Joe to open his heart to Nina. Joe tries to keep Rose with him out of sheer will. She tells him that everything is all right. He begs one last time for her to stay. Her parting words are "see you." Joe held her hand for a few moments more then leaned in to kiss her brow before carrying her back to the car. He cannot just leave her in the wilderness. She led him through so much pain and sorrow to a possible light that he has yet to accept exists. It would be horrible of him to leave her there like so much discarded trash.

Joe continues to their destination in Big Bear. When he arrives, there is a tall black man waiting on the porch in the glow of the porch light. On the top stair stands a young girl with blond hair. He finally sees the girl that he has believed for so long is his daughter. She knows what has happened and starts toward the car where the body of Rose is lying in the back seat. She speaks the first word in over a year when she looks at the car and says simply "Mother." Joe notices the similarities that she shares with his Nina. Their hair and their cheeks are so similar they could be sisters. However, her eyes are



not the same gray as his little girl's. Nina's eyes are amethyst in color. He tries to see this girl in a positive light but his anguish at having his fears come to pass overwhelm him. He looks upon her with fear, hate, and revulsion. As much as he hates her, he hates himself for doing so.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Seventeen

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Joe has finally come face-to-face with Nina. He also meets Louis Tucker, Rose's ex-husband. Louis explains to Joe that Rose was going to stay at the cabin but he believes it isn't safe because he thinks he was followed from the last safe house where Nina had been. When the lights of the cabin flicker on and off, Joe realizes that they have been found. Suddenly, Louis sets himself on fire. Running for their lives, Nina and Joe take off for the woods. The presence that had taken over Louis is now seeking to do the same to Joe. When Nina takes his hand to run the presence flees into a hawk. A battle of wills between Joe and the presence takes them further into the woods thus weakening the abilities of the presence. The chapter ends with Joe and Nina walking hand in hand out of the woods and into their future.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Seventeen Analysis

Through all of the fear, anger, dismay, and hope of the story Joe has arrived at a cabin in the woods near Big Bear Lake, California. He gets to see for the first time the young girl whom Rose spirited away from a corrupt group of scientists and political bureaucrats who would have used her as a weapon for their own selfish purposes. He exits the car that brought him and Rose to the cabin and sees her ex-husband on the front porch along with Nina and two suitcases. Louis Tucker weeps not for Rose but for the time it will take him to see her again. Joe tells him that he does not think that staying in the cabin will be safe for any of them. Louis tells Joe that while he was on his way here with Nina he was in such a state of fear that he believed he was being followed. Joe said the people after them could do that from a distance with all the resources they have available. As they are talking the wind picks up and the electrical lines slap against the walls of the house. Louis tells Joe that just before he arrived Louis had come out on the porch because he thought he heard a helicopter. Joe and Louis continue chatting as the winds pick up and the electric lines once again slap the house. This time there is a flicker in the lights and Joe watches Louis walk to the fireplace and pick up a battery operated butane match and then set himself on fire. Nina knows what is going on just before the flames catch Louis' hair on fire. She yells "No!" and runs to Joe's side. Joe knows what is happening as well. They've been found at last and the boy in Manassas, Virginia is remote viewing them.

Louis moves to block the door and Joe pulls a gun from his waistband. This is the same gun he retrieved from the storyteller on the beach when he and Rose were saved by Joshua and Mark. He had placed it under the seat of the car he drove to the cabin. He had put it in his waistband prior to approaching the cabin. Whether he did so out of a sense of fear or not it's a good thing he has it. But as he aims the gun at the flaming Louis he cannot pull the trigger. This is the man who moments ago cried over Rose. If Joe shoots him he will just give the boy in control of him the freedom to seek out



another host body to inhabit. Joe believes that he will be the target rather than Nina. If the boy were to take control of him he could shoot Nina then turn the gun on himself thus ending Rose's hopes of a new and glorious age for humanity. For a moment Joe thought Nina might be able to save both of them the way she saved herself and Rose the night of the crash. He decides against it out of fear that she hasn't returned to her full capacity. So instead of shooting Louis Joe does the best thing he can think and that is to tell Nina to run out the back door. He can hear the boy's words in Louis' voice saying how fun this is. Joe banks on the boy enjoying what he is doing long enough for him and Nina to escape into the woods. The boy is still laughing and heading toward his intended victims as they exit the living room and go into the kitchen. Once across the threshold, Joe slams the living room door shut in a vain attempt to give himself and Nina a little more time. Nina gets out the back door and is hit with a rush of wind. She keeps running and Joe follows behind her. When he joins her outside he hears the kitchen door slamming into the wall and realizes the chase is still on. Hoping beyond all hope that he and Nina can make it far enough into the woods to prevent the boy from using his talent on them Joe follows Nina as she runs for cover in the wilderness.

Joe momentarily loses sight of Nina which sets him into panic mode. He runs in the direction he believes she has run shouting her name. He hears Louis' voice behind him chanting the words all children say when they are playing hide and seek. Still running, Joe sees a break in the trees and catches a glimpse of Nina's hair. He runs toward her stumbling over fallen trees and sliding in leaves. Nina has found a deer trail. He catches up to her in time to see the woods around them glow a deadly shade of orange. The burning hulk that is Louis Tucker is now in woods not more than thirty feet behind them. When what used to be Louis is fifteen feet away, Joe turns and pulls the trigger on the gun he's been carrying. Emptying the gun of all of its bullets, Joe hits the flaming man about four times stopping him in his tracks. The body falls lifeless to the ground. As Joe prepares to run with Nina he feels the icy needle that tried to enter him in the Delmann home. He screams in pain as he realizes his fear of possession are about to come true. Just then Nina approaches him and takes his hand. Her touch sends the needle screaming out of Joe's body. She has saved his life. At that moment, a hawk screams down out of the sky and aims for Nina. It pecks and jabs at her trying to gouge her eyes, rake her forehead, anything it can to effectively kill her. Sensing the boy has inhabited the hawk, Joe enfolds her in his arms and uses his body as a shield to protect her. This selfless act shows that on an instinctual level Joe has accepted Nina as the child she is. He cannot allow her to die anymore than he could sit idly by and allow his own daughter to perish. The hawk continues to batter at Joe pecking him on the arms and head. It lashes out with its talons to scratch at his eyes. As Joe bats at the possessed avian, he thinks of ways to disable the bird. He remembers that their wings are hollow which makes it easier for them to fly. This also proves to be a weakness as it means their bones will crush more easily. Grabbing the hawk around the chest all the while being pecked at by the razor sharp beak Joe manages to crush the birds chest. With the hawk disabled Joe tosses it away and turns his attention to Nina. He checks to see if she is injured and discovers not a scratch. He is a bloody mess. He retrieves the gun from where it had dropped during his fight to the death with the hawk. He flips the safety on and returns it to his waistband. He senses that there is more danger approaching when



he hears a terrified animal sound. He cannot tell from which direction though with the howling winds lashing out at them. He picks Nina up and heads for the deer trail.

Fire is surrounding them from all sides so he cannot take her back to the cabin in order to retrieve the car. Unsure of where to go Joe stands with Nina in his arms momentarily trying to orient himself. Suddenly, the treetops overhead burst into flames, sending masses of burning pine cones and needles down on Joe and Nina. They have found themselves in a tunnel of fire with little chance of escape. Joe sees the deer trail again and runs down it with Nina in his arms. The flames seem to be following them urged on by the Sanata Ana winds as well as the ones created by the fire itself. Driven by panic and a will to outrun the flames, Joe finds the trail takes a gradual incline to a ridge. He is quickly using up his supply of adrenalin and the heat from the fire is pulling sweat from his body. He is gasping for breath by the time he and Nina reach a ridgeline. By this time Joe is unsure if his muscles can keep going but he manages to get across the small crest and follows the deer trail as it descends the other side of the ridge. The air on this side is less stringent and the temperature is a bit cooler. From somewhere deep inside of him Joe manages to find another surge of adrenalin and continues stumbling through the woods in an effort to escape whatever form death has for him and Nina. As he continues his trek, he is slammed into from behind by a snarling coyote. The impact nearly drives him face-first into the ground where he would have crushed Nina. Rather than clamping down on his back though the coyote snagged his jacket. As it hangs on to the corduroy garment, it is acting as a counterbalance, thereby allowing Joe to remain upright. When the jacket ripped the coyote fell free. Taking advantage of the moment, Joe puts Nina on the ground and grabs the pistol out of his waistband. Aiming the gun at the angry coyote, Joe pulls the trigger. When nothing happens he remembers to disengage the safety. The coyote starts to circle Joe just as it would any other sort of prey. Joe manages to dance out of the way once before his right calf is torn into by a set of gleaming fangs. Crying out in pain, Joe raises the gun to take aim once again. Abruptly, the coyote stops the brutal attack and slinks away from Joe in confusion. It lets out a mournful howl as it looks at the moon. The fire on the ridge flares a little scaring the coyote into action. It leaps off into the woods fleeing from Joe as if it had been scalded by hot water. The boy's control over the animal has ended for he has exhausted his remote ability.

Exhausted beyond belief, Joe is unable to carry Nina any further so she holds his hand as the search for a way to leave the woods. They walk along for a few moments with Joe limping due to his torn calf. He hopes they find some sort of road that will lead them out of the wooded nightmare. They have not traveled far when a sound of thunder explodes behind them. In his already heightened state of panic, Joe fears another attack. What he sees however is a herd of about thirty deer racing for some other part of the woods not engulfed in flames. Enveloped in emotions, he cannot begin to understand let alone control Joe hold Nina's hand as they travel the path left in the wake of the passing herd. They take perhaps a dozen steps before Joe realizes that his calf no longer hurts. He also notices that the cuts from the hawk's talons and beak are gone. He is no longer bleeding either. Somehow through all the turmoil of the past few minutes, Nina has managed to heal his wounds.



Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Eighteen

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Eighteen Summary

It is the second year anniversary of the crash of Flight 353. Joe and Nina are on a beach in Florida. Through the help of members of Infiniface, Joe has a new identity. Through the help of Nina, he has a new outlook on life. Joe and Nina share a brief conversation while continuing to sit on the beach holding hands and watching the ocean. The book ends here.

Part Four, Pale Fire: Chapter Eighteen Analysis

Two years have transpired since the crash of Flight 353. Joe and Nina have moved to the coast of Florida through the help of members of Infiniface. Joe has been given a new identification and a new life. The group made him a new birth certificate, driver's license and credit cards. Forgery was not involved so Joe does not have to carry any guilt that would be associated with doing something illegal. Joe and Nina are also living in one of the Infiniface group homes. This move has shown Joe's ability to walk among the living and appreciate his life again. He has also learned how to love once more. Nina has healed him not by any metaphysical method but by simply being the child she is. He watches as she relishes being a child. He sees her smile and accept life as it is without any preconceived ideas of what should or should not be. Through the brief conversation they share in this moment, Nina wants to know if Joe will ever completely open his heart again. He tells her that he will when he has learned how not to have hate in his life. He still carries fear with him especially fear of the unknown. He fears what Nina can teach him. He still sees the world as a cruel and nasty place. She suggests to him that God wants him to assist her in altering the way the world is. In a way he already has by allowing himself to consider Nina as his daughter. One other way that Joe has changed is in his ability to accept the possibility that human nature can evolve beyond the negativity it so often presents to the world. If we can raise ourselves out of our fears then we truly can become the greatest force the universe will ever know.



Characters

Carpenter, Joe

Joe Carpenter is the main character of the novel. He is a former crime reporter for the Los Angeles Post newspaper. He has lost his wife and children due to a horrible plane crash over a meadow in Colorado. He is full of grief and survivor guilt for having not perished with his family. He has been barely living over the past year. He sold the family home soon after the crash and moved into a small apartment where he simply hopes to die in his sleep. He has seen a therapist to assist in his healing process but still suffers anxiety attacks. He is at odds with himself throughout most of this story. While he toys with the idea of drinking himself into a coma, he refuses to do so because it will take away the memories of his family. Despite all of his attempts to just exist with his memories he becomes involved in a search to uncover the truth behind the crash. He becomes embroiled in a mystery surrounding the cause of the crash of Flight 353 when he discovers a stranger taking pictures of the headstones of his family. From the moment he sees Rose Tucker with her camera, he becomes a target for a group of unknown individuals seeking to silence her because of her secrets. As his story progresses, Joe goes from being totally ready to just die to finally accepting his place in the world. He can honor the memories of his family better by living than he ever could in death. He is still pretty much a loner but he is at least willing to allow people in to his life.

Tucker, Dr Rose

Rose is the mysterious woman seen taking photos of the headstones of Joe's family. She is a geneticist working for Teknologik, a medical technology company with some shady endeavors. She claims to be the only survivor of the crash of Flight 353. While working for Teknologik she assists in research projects involved with the Human Genome Project. Her group is more interested in studying individuals with psychic abilities. She grows disconcerted with her company over ethical and moral issues and tries taking their latest creation out of the lab. It is this action that prompts the group to attempt to eliminate her. When she survives the crash, she makes it her mission to meet the families of the victims. Her intentions are to ease the minds of the grief-stricken in order to give them a sense of closure. She thinks she can outsmart the other members of Project 99 only to discover that they are always behind her. She comes to Joe as a last effort to get the truth of what happens in the secret labs of Teknologik.

Beemis, Dewey

Dewey is a former coworker of Joe's during his time at the Los Angeles Post. He is a security guard and receptionist with the newspaper. He is a decent man with a good heart who wishes to maintain Joe's friendship despite the distance that has occurred between them.



Vadance, Nora

Nora is a housewife from southern California who lost her husband, Tom in the crash of Flight 353. She was visited by Rose and given a photo of her husband's headstone. She commits suicide a week after the visit. She leaves behind a videotape of her suicide.

Vadance, Bob

Bob is the son of Tom and Nora. He is a fighter pilot with the US Air Force stationed at the Miramar Naval Air Station near San Diego, California. He served time in the Gulf Wars. He is married to Clarise Vadance.

Delmann, Dr Charles

Charles is a cardiologist who lost his daughter in the crash of Flight 353. He and his wife Georgine live in Hancock Park. He has been visited by Rose. The night Joe visits he commits suicide in the master bedroom with a shotgun.

Delmann, Dr Georgine

Georgine is an ophthalmologist. She is married to Dr. Charles Delmann. On the night of Joe's visit, she commits suicide in the kitchen by evisceration with a kitchen knife.

Peccatone, Lisa

Lisa is a former investigative reporter for the Los Angeles Post and a colleague of Joe. She was also a college roommate of Rose Tucker's. Her reports were mainly concerned with serial killers and other crimes of such horrible nature. She is at the Delmann residence the night of Joe's visit. While she is there, she commits suicide by dousing herself in lamp oil and using the flames to burn herself alive.

Blick, Wallace Morton

Wallace is one of the men from the white van Joe investigates at the cemetery. He appears to be a body-builder and has the word ANABOLIC tattooed across the knuckles of both hands. Joe renders him unconscious before he searches the van.

Chrisman, Barbara

Barbara is a former investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). She was in charge of the investigation into the crash of Flight 353. She lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Her investigations into the crash led her to question the reports that



were made concerning the crash. When she tries to take her suspicions to her superiors she is threatened by two thugs. They tell her to either drop her charges of conspiracy or her family will be systematically murdered. Joe visits her in Colorado where she takes him to the exact location of the crash. She provides Joe with a written transcript of the last conversations between the two pilots the night of the crash. She also takes Joe to visit Mercy Ealing who is a woman who spoke with Rose just hours after the crash.

Ealing, Mercy

Mercy and her husband Jeff own a ranch called Loose Change Ranch. She is depicted as a quiet and demure Christian housewife. She is in the process of baking cookies when Joe and Barbara arrive at her home. She discusses her visit with a woman named Rachel Thomas who stopped for assistance the night of the crash. She drives this woman and the child she has with her to a home in Pueblo, Colorado.

Tucker, Mahalia

Mahalia is Rose's sister-in-law. She is half owner of a restaurant in Malibu, California called Santa-Fe-by-the-sea. She is also the mysterious woman Joe knows as "Demi." She has been helping to keep Rose safe from the people that Teknologik have sent to kill her.

Pollack, Loren

Loren is a philanthropist who set up a charitable trust named INFINIFACE to provide the necessary means for scientific research utilizing superfast computers as a way to connect with God or a Creator.

Nellor, Horton

Horton is the founder of the Los Angeles Post. Along with his son Andrew, he owns a controlling interest in Teknologik through a Swiss holding company named Nellor et Fils. The holding company has many interests ranging from medical technology to media industries.

McKay, Beth

Beth is Joe's mother-in-law. She lives in Virginia with her husband. As Beth's mother, she is the only person Joe feels comfortable enough with to call at two in the morning when he is awakened by a nightmare.



Carpenter, Frank

Frank is Joe's father. He had been a roofer until a drunk driver hit his car resulting in the amputation of his left leg. Unable to climb ladders he turned to wood working. He did this until rheumatoid arthritis inflamed his joints to the point where he became bedridden. He died two days before Joe turned eighteen.

Carpenter, Donna

Donna is Joe's mother. She worked as a seamstress in a combination dry cleaner and tailor shop. Due to the harsh chemicals she ingested on a daily basis at work, she developed lung cancer. She died three years after her husband.

Fittich, Gem

Gem is the owner of the Gem Fittich Auto Sales located near the Los Angeles International Airport. He sells Joe a car in spite of his concerns that Joe is involved in something highly illegal.

Tran, Mihn

Mihn is an electronics engineer with the NTSB. He helped work on the information from the flight data recorder recovered from the crash of Flight 353. He is the man responsible for locating the last few minutes of conversation between the two pilots. He calls Barbara and plays it over the phone. He is killed in a horrible fire at his lab a few hours later.

Oliveri, Mario

Mario is a member of the NTSB investigation team involved in the crash of Flight 353. He is the person who tells Joe of Barbara Christman's whereabouts. He also tells Joe that Barbara is retired from the NTSB. He is head of the human performance group assigned to the crash investigation.

Tucker, Louis

Louis is Rose's ex-husband and the brother of Mahalia. He sets himself on fire after Joe shows up at his house.



Blane, Delroy

Delroy is the Captain of Flight 353. He lived in San Francisco. His voice is one of the two on the tape from the flight recorder box retrieved from the crash site.

Santorelli, Victor

Victor is the First Officer and co-pilot of Flight 353. His voice is the second of the two on the tape from the flight recorder box recovered from the crash site.

Blom, Dr Louis

Louis is one of the two lead doctors working on Project 99 for Teknologik.

Ramlock, Dr Keith

Keith is the second of the two lead doctors working on Project 99 for Teknologik.



Objects/Places

Laurel Canyon, California

This is a suburb of Los Angeles where Joe moves to after selling his home in Studio City, California.

The Los Angeles Post

This is founded by Horton Nellor as a possible competitor for the more prestigious LA Times. Joe and Michelle Carpenter are both employed there.

Culver City, California

This is another suburb of Los Angeles. The home of Thomas and Nora Vadence is located here.

Thomas Brothers Guide

This is a book containing every street map in Los Angeles County. Joe refers to it on his way to the Vadence residence.

Malibu, California

This is known worldwide for its sandy beaches and luxurious celebrity homes. Joe rents a motel room here before visiting the Vadences and Delmanns.

Griffith Observatory

Located in Los Angeles, this planetarium has been featured in many films and television programs since its construction in 1933. The observatory is briefly mentioned as a helicopter flies near it in what Joe believes is a search for Rose after she runs from the cemetery.

Teknologik

This is a medical technology company concerned with scientific breakthroughs in the field of human genetics. Rose is employed here until she runs from the work going on in Project 99. The company hires thugs to find her, Joe, and anyone else intent on going public with their experiments involving humans as test subjects.



Colorado Springs, Colorado

This is the home of Barbara Christman. It is also located near the crash site of Flight 353. Joe comes here to visit Barbara in hopes of learning more about the horrific accident that claimed the lives of his family.

LAX

These are the letters for what is better known as the Los Angeles International Airport. It is to this airport that Flight 353 is bound when it leaves JFK International Airport in New York City.

Santa Monica, California

Another suburb of Los Angeles, Santa Monica is also known for its pristine beaches and temperate climate. It is to one of the beaches here that Joe goes in order to prepare himself for the visit to the cemetery.

Loose Change Ranch

This is the home of Jeff and Mercy Ealing. It is located about a mile and a half away from the crash site of Flight 353. Rose comes here after the crash. Joe and Barbara visit the ranch in an effort to shed more light on the mystery of Rose and the crash.

The Compassionate Friends

This organization is a nationwide group designed to help people who had lost children. At the insistence of his mother-in-law, Beth McKay, Joe joins a local chapter in an attempt to come to terms with his grief. Like most fathers he stopped going to the group after a handful of meetings.

Infiniface

This is a charitable group founded by Loren Pollack. It was created as a means of furthering scientific studies that could provide a means by which humans can come face-to-face with a Creator, or God. Some members of the group go in public wearing blue robes and white tennis shoes. The group is looking for Rose in order to help her discredit Teknologik.



The Human Genome Project

This is a scientific undertaking designed to map all one hundred thousand of the human genes as well as provide details of the DNA alphabet of each gene. It is believed that this will help find cures for everything from cancer to Parkinson's disease. Teknologik was using some of the research from this project in order to enhance individuals with certain psychic gifts like telekinisis and telepathy.

Project 99

This is the area of Teknologik in which Rose has been working. It is a secret part of the main research facilities in Manassas, Virginia. This project is involved with some highly questionable moral and ethical research involving tampering with and enhancing certain humans who show a great potential for psychic phenomena.

Manassas, Virginia

This is a suburb of Washington DC this is where Rose Tucker resides. It is also the home of Teknologik and Project 99.

Peublo, Colorado

Pueblo is located approximately 100 miles south of Denver. Mercy Ealing drives Rose there the night of the plane crash. Rose claims to have a doctor friend there and Mercy believes in being a Good Samaritan so the hour drive was no big deal to her.

Santa-Fe-by-the-Sea

This is the restaurant Joe goes to in order to finally talk directly with Rose. It is partially owned by Rose's sister-in-law, Mahalia Tucker. It is located along the coast in Malibu, California.

Themes

Salvation

Salvation more often than not is associated with events of a religious nature. The person seeking salvation has accepted that a higher authority is in charge of his life thus freeing him from the illusions of sin and suffering. While Joe accepts that God exists, he has allowed himself to become disillusioned by the notion that such a caring and benevolent entity could allow the pain and suffering he has experienced in his life. He even tells Barbara Christman that he has always viewed God with the same lack of interest in Him that He has had in Joe.

Salvation also deals with being freed from failure or destruction. It is this aspect of salvation that pertains to Joe. He has been on a path of personal destruction since the crash of Flight 353 took his family from him. The simple fact that he moved out of the family home and into a small apartment over a garage so he can sleep himself to death shows his path to self-destruction.

Searching Behavior

Searching Behavior is a psychological affliction that can occur within people who manage to survive a catastrophe in which other lives may have been lost. It can be especially strong in people who have lost a child to an early death. Joe suffers from this at various times throughout the book. The first incident the reader sees occurs when Joe sees a woman who looks like Michelle with a young girl who resembles his daughter Nina. He is driving away from offices of the Post when he sees the two females in a strip mall parking lot. As Joe is approaching the parking lot, before he even enters the store, he recalls other moments when he has believed his wife and daughter have been with him. He has sensed their presences in the car while driving. He has seen them in parks and playgrounds, even walking along the streets. He knows that he is experiencing survivor's guilt yet he cannot compel himself to stop his actions. He parks beside the woman's car and follows them into the store they have chosen. As he watches them from a distance, he feels the compulsion to speak to them overtake his better judgment. When he says the names Michelle and Nina the lady turns around with a look of apprehension. He stutters that she's not to let the girl out of her sight. He then tells the proprietor that it was a case of mistaken identity and leaves the store.

The next incident the reader sees is when Joe and Barbara are visiting the Ealing residence. As Mercy and Joe are discussing the child Rose had with her when she showed up after the crash, Joe begins to get excited by the description he is hearing. Thinking that this four to five-year-old blond child could be his Nina, he grills Mercy to the point of tears. So intense is his questioning that he actually puts his hands on Mercy's shoulders in order to compel her to look at him. He badgers her into remembering such details eye color and a possible mole on one of her cheeks. Mercy



becomes upset because she simply cannot match her memories to his. Joe realizes that he has allowed himself to succumb to another incident of searching behavior. He slowly regains control by stepping outside for a breath of air.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this story is the third-person omniscient. By utilizing this point of view, the author shows that he is in complete control of the entire story. The author is also better equipped to show the many emotional highs and lows Joe experiences by using the third-person omniscient. The reader must be able to get inside Joe's head and experience his thoughts in order to comprehend the story. This would not be accomplished had the author chose a different point of view.

Exposition is used to tell the majority of the story. Some of the chapters are heavy on dialog which helps keep the reader focused on Joe and his interactions with others. This is an important part of Joe's emotional recovery and ultimate salvation from grief. Blending the two elements keeps the reader focused on events as they unfold. The moments when Joe is alone would be difficult to follow otherwise.

Setting

The bulk of the story takes place in various cities along the coast of southern California. Joe spends a great deal of time in the suburbs of Los Angeles traveling from Culver City to Malibu, Santa Monica to Burbank. He also goes to San Bernadino and Big Bear Lake. Most of the time Joe is in California the sun is shining and the weather is beautiful. Several times the heat of August in California is mentioned in conjunction with the air conditioner in Joe's car being insufficient to keep down the stickiness of the humidity. Joe is familiar with the areas he has been visiting. This familiarity is his only comfort as he spends a good deal of the time trying to avoid the men from Teknologik who are searching for him and Rose.

Joe does spend the portion of a day in Colorado traveling from Denver to Colorado Springs and back to Denver. He visits with Barbara Christman and the Ealings while he is here. The weather is overcast with thunderstorms which matches the moods of the people involved. While visiting the crash site, thunder and lightning provide a back drop to the sadness that encompasses the tour of the site. The storms continue while they visit with Mercy Ealing, which also contributes to strength of the drama that is unfolding.

The state of Virginia is mentioned a few times in the book. Joe's wife Michelle is from Virginia. His in-laws still live there. The reader is made aware of this at the very beginning of the book when Joe wakes from his nightmare and calls Beth McKay. The town of Manassas, Virginia is also mentioned as being the place where Teknologik has its headquarters. It is in the secret labs of this place where Project 99 conducts the experiments in psychic phenomena.

The final chapter of the book takes place on an undisclosed beach along one of Florida's coasts. It is here that Joe and Nina have come to begin their new lives. They



are staying in a commune house which belongs to Infiniface. The difference between Florida and California as far as Joe is concerned is seen in the way the ocean plays against the beaches. In California, Joe sees the ocean as being a giant machine constantly churning with activity. This coincides with the action of the story as it is constantly moving from one set of events to another with very little resting in between. In Florida, the ocean is more gentle. The waves caress the shore as a lover may stroke the cheek of his beloved. There is a tranquility to the ocean that Joe has not experienced since the deaths of his family. This is a comforting way to end one story and begin a new life.

Language and Meaning

The language of the story is a blend of formal and informal. Sentence structure is consistent with modern times. When medical or technical terms are used in dialogue, the characters explain any meanings that may be questionable for the reader. The flow of the story is not hindered by the language. From the moment the book starts until it ends, the flow of sentences is fairly even. The only rough spots occur at moments when Joe reminisces about his family during anxiety attacks. At other times when he is looking back the author makes use of little dividing marks to denote a change in scenery as it were.

The language of the novel conveys the different education levels of the characters involved. Joe is an investigative reporter who has a broad understanding of many topics. When he talks to Barbara Christman or others involved with the crash site investigation, they fill in any gaps of understanding the jargon they use on a daily basis. The same can be said when he talks to Rose and she discusses her work with Teknologik. Therefore the reader should have no troubles comprehending any of language used.

The tone of the language tends to be a bit on the depressing side but given the subject matter this is fitting. The descriptive passages are not so long as to bog the reader down with superfluous nonsense. The scenes containing dialog are concise and provide very good insights to the characters speaking. All in all the reader should have no trouble following Joe Carpenter on his journey through grief that leads to ultimate redemption.

The ending of the story takes place one year after the actions of the book. There is no mention of what may have happened to Teknologik or the members of Infiniface. Granted Joe and Nina are in a safe house run by Infiniface but there is no sense of justice having been served. A brief comment concerning possible criminal charges being brought against the scientists working on Project 99 may have helped give the book a less than Hollywood movie ending feel.

Structure

The book is comprised of 18 chapters that have been divided into 4 parts. Each part is named while the chapters themselves are merely numbered. The length of the chapters vary between 4 pages for the shortest and 48 pages for the longest. The chapters containing dialog move quickly and blend nicely with the descriptive passages.

The pace of the story is quick. The major events take place over the course of three days leaving little time for subplots. The main plot involves Joe Carpenter's ability to overcome his grief by uncovering the truth behind the crash of Flight 353. The main action truly starts after he witnesses the men chasing Rose through the cemetery. The build up to this point is not as slow as it could have been had the author used long descriptive passages. The chase scenes as they occur are like waves in a storm crashing on the surf. They happen quickly and frequently but are over just as fast.

The plot has a few flashbacks but for the most part follows a straight line approach. The reader can follow the story easily despite the many moments when Joe's despair overwhelms him.



Quotes

"This year, getting through, it's been hell. I can't handle another year like this" (Chapter 1, pg. 7.)

"I don't function alone. I just want to be with Michelle. I want to be with Chrissie and Nina" (Chapter 1, pg. 7.)

"You go where you want, but you have no place to be" (Chapter 3, pg. 28.)

"You almost broke my nose. You could've broke my nose? For a cockroach? Broke my nose for a cockroach?" (Chapter 3, pg. 31.)

"I'm not ready to talk to you yet" (Chapter 3, pg. 38.)

"Soon. I'll be back when it's time. Don't despair. You'll see, like the others" (Chapter 3, pg. 38.)

"Did you get Rose?" (Chapter 4, pg. 44.)

"I need to go upstairs, Dewey, put in a little time, do some research if that's okay" (Chapter 5, pg. 62.)

"Almost forgot this. Lady came by a few days ago, said she had some information on a story just right for you" (Chapter 5, pg. 63.)

"Friends can hold the ladder steady, make it easier" (Chapter 5, pg. 64.)

"The only sane response is indifference" (Chapter 5, pg. 69.)

"I have been trying to reach you, Joe. My life depends on your discretion. I was aboard Flight 353" (Chapter 5, pg. 71.)

"It's okay. I was hoping...I thought...I don't know. I'm not sure what I was thinking" (Chapter 11, pg. 228.)

"Your soul's broken" (Chapter 12, pg. 234.)

"Open your mind, open your heart" (Chapter 14, pg. 304-305.)

"I'm nobody's hero, Rose. I'm nothing" (Chapter 16, pg. 384.)



Topics for Discussion

Discuss grief. How has John dealt with his grief? What step in the grief process is John experiencing? Are there positive and negative ways to deal with grief? Is grief necessary?

Discuss fear. How has fear affected Joe? Has it been a hindrance? Has it been beneficial?

Love is an underlying theme in this book. How is it portrayed? Can it truly conquer all as the saying goes? Are there negative side effects to love? What are some of the things Joe does in the name of love?

Discuss family. What makes a family? Is there purely a biological bond that ties families together? Can unrelated individuals form a family? Is it a concept? How does Joe feel about family?

Rose tells Joe that Project 99 is interested in paranormal activities as they pertain to humans. Name and describe some of the activities.

What is redemption? Does Joe believe in it? Has it had an affect on Joe's life?

Anxiety attacks take place in the book. What are they? Who suffers from them? Are they debilitating? Can they be overcome without medicine? How long do they last?

Joe experiences moments of extreme anger. What does he do when anger takes control of him? Is he physically violent? Does he retreat into himself? When he feels the anger building how does he unleash it?

Rose questions the ethics of Project 99. How does she address her concerns? What are ethics? If they have been misused, describe how. Do ethics and morals go hand-in-hand?

Does the book end with a happily-ever-after scenario? What type of ending is it? Does Joe find peace? Is he still waiting to just go to sleep and not wake up?