

Stormy Weather Study Guide

Stormy Weather by Carl Hiaasen

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Plot Summary

Stormy Weather is a novel about the aftermath of a destructive hurricane that struck Southern Florida. The novel begins with many diverse characters that appear to be completely unconnected. Several characters arrive in South Florida to take advantage of the chaos after the storm to defraud victims, while others are caught in the momentum of the chaos itself, innocent as the victims. As the novel progresses, the separate categories of characters make connections to each other that create a symbolic link between the plot and the destruction of the hurricane. *Stormy Weather* is a novel as chaotic as the storm it depicts, creating a highly entertaining work of fiction.

Bonnie and Max Lamb are on their honeymoon when the hurricane hits. Max is excited by the storm and insists on traveling to Miami to see it firsthand. Bonnie is outraged by Max's behavior when it becomes clear his only desire in being in the ravaged area is to videotape it, and purposely loses him in the chaos of destruction. It is not until later that Bonnie realizes Max is really lost, abandoning her to the dangerous elements of the now lawless city. A kind stranger finds Bonnie wandering the streets and offers to help her.

Augustine Herrera inherited a small wildlife import business from his uncle shortly before the hurricane. After the storm, Augustine discovers that all the animals have escaped their cages and wandered into the surrounding neighborhoods. Augustine goes in search of the animals and finds instead Bonnie Lamb, wandering the streets in search of her husband. Augustine takes her home with him. Once there, Bonnie learns from a message on her answering machine back in New York that her husband has been kidnapped. Augustine helps Bonnie get in touch with the FBI. However, the search for Max Lamb is not a priority because of the storm and because Max's messages on the machine give the impression of a man more concerned with his career than about his own well being.

Eddie Marsh is an opportunist who decides to use the hurricane as a means to make a quick buck. Eddie teams up with Snapper, a criminal she has done business with in the past, to scam homeowners out of their insurance money. Eddie and Snapper attempt to convince one homeowner that Eddie has fallen under debris from the homeowner's house, but the homeowner quickly sees through their scam. The homeowner, Tony Torres, has a scam of his own he needs help with. Tony convinces Eddie and Snapper to help him defraud the insurance company by having Eddie pose as Tony's estranged wife, Neria.

The insurance scam appears to be going perfectly until a man shows up and disappears with Tony. Snapper, too, leaves, joining a friend in a roofing scheme. Eddie is left alone in a nearly demolished home. When the insurance man shows up, Eddie realizes this is the perfect opportunity to take the entire payoff herself rather than share it with anyone. Eddie seduces the insurance man and convinces him to go along with the fraud. However, Snapper soon tires of the roofing scam and returns to Eddie, forcing her to cut him in on the deal.



Augustine and Bonnie get word from Max's kidnapper that he wants to meet Bonnie. They go to the meeting with a state trooper who claims to be a friend of the kidnapper's. They not only rescue Max, but bring in the kidnapper as well. The state trooper tells the kidnapper, Skink, that the trooper's lover has been injured by a criminal she pulled over in a stolen car. Skink decides to go after the criminal as a favor for his friend. The criminal turns out to be none other than Snapper.

Augustine and Bonnie go with Skink in his hunt while Max returns to his job in New York. Augustine and Bonnie have grown close and Bonnie is having a hard time deciding if she should return to her husband or not. While Bonnie is attempting to make this decision, she finds herself in the middle of her own kidnapping with Skink. The kidnapping ends with Skink and Augustine turning the tables on Snapper, taking him into the wilds of the Keys as their hostage. It is during this time that Bonnie decides to remain with Augustine instead of returning to Max.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Stormy Weather is a novel about the aftermath of a destructive hurricane that struck Southern Florida. The novel begins with many diverse characters that appear to be completely unconnected. Several characters arrive in South Florida to take advantage of the chaos after the storm to defraud victims while others are caught in the momentum of the chaos itself, innocent as the victims. As the novel progresses, the separate categories of characters make connections to each other that create a symbolic link between the plot and the destruction of the hurricane. *Stormy Weather* is a novel as chaotic as the storm it depicts, creating a highly entertaining work of fiction.

Bonnie and Max Lamb are in Orlando on their honeymoon when they hear about the hurricane on the news. Max is fascinated by the damage reports and decides he and Bonnie should go to Miami to check it out for themselves. Bonnie does not like this idea. Bonnie would rather remain in the hotel until the storm passes.

Edie Marsh has been in Palm Beach for several months attempting to seduce a Kennedy. Edie thinks if she can seduce a Kennedy and then claim rape the next day, the family will be reluctant enough to face another criminal trial that they will pay her off. However, Edie has dated several Kennedys and has not been able to convince a single one to share her bed. Now Edie has decided the money is in Miami in the aftermath of the hurricane that is about to strike. Edie calls up an old buddy who agrees to work the scam with her.

Two young men who have been in the Keys on a college break are attempting to get out among the mass exodus of tourists. The boys are stalled in traffic on the Seven Mile Bridge. They get out and begin throwing empty beer cans off the side. A man appears from beneath the bridge and berates them for littering. The man breaks a window on their car and throws a dead squirrel in the back seat. The man then insists that the boys drive him to another bridge closer to the expected course of the storm. Once there, the man insists the boys tie him to the bridge before he allows them to leave.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces a group of characters that appear to be unrelated to one another. First are Bonnie and Max Lamb. Bonnie and Max are on their honeymoon in Orlando. Bonnie does her best to seduce her husband, who has already been seduced by the reports of storm damage on the television. Max wants to go to Miami to see the damage up close. This situation introduces tension between these characters because Bonnie would rather remain a safe distance from the storm while her husband would prefer to be in the middle of the chaos. However, Bonnie has no idea what her husband's motivations are and agrees to go, hoping he has good intentions.



Edie Marsh is introduced as a woman who is looking for a quick buck any way she can get one. Edie is in Florida in order to seduce a Kennedy so that she can claim rape and get a payoff. Edie's motivations for being in Florida establishes from the beginning the type of person Edie is and the level she will go to in order to get what she wants. Nothing is sacred to Edie, even her own body. Edie then decides to go to Miami in order to profit from the aftermath of the hurricane. Edie's actions suggest to the reader the direction of the novel, at least as far as she is concerned.

Finally, introduced in this chapter is a curious, nameless character. This nameless character breaks the window on a young man's car to teach him a lesson for littering over the side of bridge. This man is clearly some sort of nature lover, someone who will go to extremes to protect the environment. This man also appears to be somewhat insane since he then asks to be tied to a bridge that lies in the direct path of an approaching hurricane. The man's behavior suggests that his role in the novel will be dramatic and unexpected, possibly catching the reader off guard at many points throughout the development of the story.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Edie and her partner, Snapper, take rooms in a motel thirty miles from the expected path of the hurricane. During the night, Edie becomes frightened by the storm and goes to Snapper's room, where she discovers he has managed to procure a prostitute. The three of them spend the night together. The next day, Edie and Snapper attempt to find the home they picked out the day before to use in their scam. However, the storm has so damaged the area that they get lost and decide to pick another. Once the house is chosen, Edie poses under a bunch of debris, cutting herself with a nail to make the scene look authentic. Snapper calls for help when the scene is set.

Bonnie and Max arrive in Miami shortly after dawn. Max immediately sets out to take video of the destruction. As Bonnie watches, Max ignores the victims of the destruction or uses them to make his video more exciting, never once offering to help anyone. Bonnie is outraged and begins to wonder what she ever saw in Max. Max and Bonnie are separated as Max becomes more engrossed in his video and Bonnie becomes more disgusted by his behavior. Max is videotaping a monkey that is in a tree in the middle of a residential neighborhood when the monkey steals his camera; Max chases after the monkey. At the same time, two state troopers are on a bridge looking at a rope that was used to tie a man to the bridge. The rope has been cut.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Edie and Snapper make it through the night and immediately set out to begin their scam. The reader is not completely sure what the scam is until they arrive at their chosen destination. Edie and Snapper cannot find their original chosen target and choose a new one, faking an accident scene out front with some debris. Now the reader can see their scam is to convince a homeowner that Edie has been injured by falling debris on the homeowner's property in order to get insurance money. However, Edie has a bad feeling about the change in addresses, suggesting to the reader that the scam might not go as predicted.

Bonnie and Max arrive in Miami where Max immediately begins videotaping the destruction. Bonnie is outraged at her husband's clear disregard for the suffering of the people he is gleefully recording. Bonnie begins to wonder what she ever saw in Max, introducing more tension between these two characters. They have only been married a few days, and Bonnie is already wondering why she married Max. Bonnie and Max are then separated, suggesting Max's lack of concern for his new bride in comparison to the video he is busy making. When the monkey steals the video camera, the reader should be wondering where the monkey came from.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Tony Torres is a mobile home salesman and the owner of the house where Edie and Snapper are attempting their scam. Tony is worried about his safety because shortly after the hurricane he learned that all of the mobile homes he had sold, mobile homes he swore would withstand a hurricane, had been destroyed. Tony is thinking about his own safety when he finds Edie and Snapper in his yard. Tony turns the tables on them. Tony knows they are scamming him and he confronts them, forcing them into his house at gunpoint.

Augustine Herrera inherited his uncle's wildlife import business a week before the hurricane. Augustine is the son of a drug smuggler who is independently wealthy due to a plane crash he suffered a few years before. However, Augustine is not interested in the money. In fact, Augustine is not interested in much of anything other than his skull collection that he uses to juggle.

After the hurricane, Augustine discovers that most of his uncle's exotic wildlife has escaped the poorly maintained cages where they lived. Augustine, out of a sense of responsibility, takes a tranquilizer into the streets to search for his animals, including several monkeys, but has little luck. Instead, Augustine finds Bonnie, who has been wandering the streets lost for several hours in search of her missing husband.

Max Lamb wakes up in his underwear, tied to a tree. Max vaguely recalls a big man grabbing him off the street. Max sees that man now, muttering to himself and falling to the ground in strange convulsions every few minutes or so. Max falls to sleep again and when he wakes, he finds he has a collar of some sort around his neck. The man introduces himself as Skink and tells Max the collar is electrified. Max realizes he has been kidnapped and attempts to negotiate with the kidnapper, only to be shocked for his efforts. Max quickly realizes he is in trouble.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Edie and Snapper attempt their scam. However, they have attempted the scam on someone who can see right through their attempts. This man, Tony Torres, has trouble of his own. Tony sold a bunch of mobile homes that he said would make it through a hurricane and did not. Tony is worried for his life, telling the reader that there might be good reason for Tony to be afraid.

Augustine Herrera is introduced in this chapter. Augustine is a lost soul who has an aimless existence in life. Augustine has seen the bad side of life through his father's career as a drug smuggler. Augustine has also seen some happiness through the uncle who thought enough of him to leave him his wildlife business. Augustine seems lost as to what to do with the rest of his life, suggesting he will find a purpose as the novel

continues to develop. When Augustine meets Bonnie, a woman unhappy in her brand new marriage, the reader can clearly see a direction this purpose could possibly take.

Max has been kidnapped. It is not clear why or by whom at first. The man introduces himself as Skink. Max is not afraid in the beginning, despite being nearly naked and tied to a tree, showcasing Max's more conceited side. However, when Skink puts a shock collar on Max, the kidnapped man begins to see the seriousness in his situation.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Tony Torres forces Edie and Snapper to tell him their plan. Then Tony presents one of his own. Tony needs a bodyguard because of the irate customers who might come looking for him. Tony also needs a woman to pretend to be his wife. Tony owns his house outright, so all the insurance money will be his, except for the fact that he is married and his wife's name is on the deed. Tony's wife left him several months before and Tony is reluctant to share the insurance money with her. Tony offers Edie and Snapper ten thousand dollars apiece to help him out.

Augustine helps Bonnie search for Max until dark, but all they find is the rental car, stripped, with all of their luggage gone. Augustine insists on taking Bonnie home with him since she has nowhere else to go. At the same time, Skink is leading Max through the outer edge of the Everglades. They travel in the dark, arriving at an Indian village where Max is allowed to make a phone call to Bonnie. Since Max does not know where Bonnie is located, he leaves a message on their answering machine at home in New York. Skink gives Max's video camera to the chief of the Indian tribe in payment for use of the cell phone, much to Max's chagrin.

Chapter 4 Analysis

After forcing Edie and Snapper to confess to their scam, implying he might have them arrested or worse, Tony offers to hire Edie and Snapper. Tony needs Snapper to provide protection for Tony and Edie as they participate in a scam to get the insurance money for Tony's house; otherwise, he would be forced to share the money with his estranged wife. The reader might assume that given Edie and Snapper's actions up to this point and their desire for easy money, they will most likely agree to this proposition. However, this does not give an indication of how well the scam will play out.

Augustine helps Bonnie search for her husband rather than search for his animals. They have little luck and Bonnie is at a loss as to what to do next. Finally, Augustine takes the question out of her hands and takes her home with him. While Bonnie is on her way to a nice warm home, Max is being dragged through the Everglades. Max is not scared, though, or at least he does not appear to be. Max appears to simply be confused. Max leaves a message for Bonnie on their answering machine in New York. Then the kidnapper gives Max's camera away, which seems to bother Max more than his predicament or the possibility that his wife could be hurt or scared somewhere. This defines Max's personality better than any description, up to this point, possibly could.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Bonnie calls the answering machine in New York as soon as she and Augustine arrive at his house. Later, Augustine calls a friend at the FBI while Bonnie sleeps. In the middle of the night Bonnie wakes and finds Augustine's collection of skulls, and she impresses him by not becoming frightened or disgusted by the sight. Augustine then tells Bonnie that the FBI will not take Max's kidnapping seriously until a ransom demand is made, suggesting that Max's message might be a ruse to cover up his desire to end his marriage.

Snapper and Edie return to Tony's house the next day, unable to pass up the possibility of making ten thousand dollars for a few days work. Edie is not happy, however, as she is convinced that Tony will attempt to sleep with her. Snapper, too, is not happy, especially since he has another offer to work a roofing scheme with his friend Avila.

Ira Jackson is at the mobile home park where his mother lived. Ira's mother died during the hurricane when the mobile home park disintegrated in the storm. Ira, a mob enforcer, decides he must make the salesman pay for his mother's death since it was the salesman who convinced his mother the mobile home would survive a hurricane.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Bonnie calls the answering machine and receives Max's message in which he tells her he has been kidnapped. However, the FBI is not interested in the kidnapping since many husbands use the chaos of a hurricane to escape unhappy marriages. Bonnie does not believe this is the case, but she cannot convince anyone of that fact. Snapper and Edie, in the meantime, decide to take Tony up on his offer to scam the insurance company. However, neither is happy about the scam because they are not in control of the situation. Later it appears that Tony's safety concerns are warranted. Ira Jackson, a mob enforcer, shows up at the mobile home where his mother lived and vows to kill the man who convinced her she was safe staying there. That man, as the reader already knows, is Tony Torres. This is clearly foreshadowing, giving the reader insight into the actions of the following chapter.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Skink takes Max to a remote clearing where he allows him to ask a few questions. Max wants to know who Skink really is, learning he was once governor of Florida. Max asks why Skink kidnapped him and is told Skink was appalled by him videotaping the destruction. Finally, Max asks what happens now, and Skink tells him they will continue to travel together to learn a few life lessons.

Tony attempts to seduce Edie. Edie flees across the street where a man is walking his dogs. Edie feigns interest in the dogs. The man tells Edie she should take the dogs and leave. The man has business with Tony Torres. In Edie's absence, the man, who is actually Ira Jackson, confronts Tony with the murder of his mother. Tony argues his innocence, turning his gun on Ira. Ira incapacitates Tony with a cinder block before stealing him away from the house.

Augustine tells Bonnie a little about his past, including his father's criminal history and about the plane crash that made him a rich man. Later Augustine takes Bonnie to FBI headquarters where she has no luck in convincing them that Max's kidnapping is legitimate, due in large part to the fact that Max's message on the machine includes instructions for his co-workers in New York. The FBI argues that a man who has been kidnapped would most likely not worry about work. Bonnie remains convinced of her husband's veracity, however. After lunch, Bonnie asks that Augustine take her to the morgue.

While searching for gas for Tony's generator so he can watch television, Snapper runs into a car full of kids who attempt to mug him. However, Snapper gets the better of them by incapacitating their leader and taking his gun. Snapper assaults the leader and then takes their car, which he knows is most likely stolen.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Skink seems to be an open and honest kidnapper, telling Max anything he wants to know. Max is not happy with the answers he receives, however. Max does not believe that Skink was once governor of Florida and that his only reason for kidnapping Max is his videotaping of the destruction. However, these answers provide a few insights for the reader if the reader should choose to believe them.

Ira Jackson has come for Tony Torres, confronting him with the death of his mother before incapacitating him and removing Tony from his home. Edie has no idea what is going on, but she also has no loyalty to Tony, so she leaves the scene before anything happens. Snapper, who is supposed to be providing Tony with protection, is off protecting himself from an attempted mobbing, stealing a car in the process. Snapper is



a tough man, suggesting to the reader that his violent side will appear more than once through the course of the novel.

Augustine and Bonnie get to know each other better in this chapter. The revelations are more characterization, but it is also information that intimate companions might seek about one another, revealing a deepening of their relationship even as Bonnie desperately attempts to get help in finding her husband. These revelations could be a prediction of a deeper relationship slowly growing between Bonnie and Augustine.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Augustine stays with Bonnie as she is shown two bodies that match Max's general description. One man died from a gunshot, the other in a terrible accident. Bonnie has trouble telling if the second body is Max's or not because there is little left to identify in the face. Bonnie is embarrassed to admit to the medical examiner that she does not know if her husband has any birthmarks that might make identifying him easier. Afterwards, Augustine takes Bonnie back to the area where Max was lost and they search for any signs of him; they find none. Back at Augustine's house, Bonnie listens to another message on the answering machine in New York from Max assuring her he is in no danger and instructing her to call one of his co-workers with instructions on their current ad campaign.

Jim Tile, a state trooper normally assigned to the northern part of the state, has been reassigned to South Florida during the hurricane aftermath. Tile is happy with this assignment because it brings him closer to his girlfriend, a fellow state trooper assigned to South Florida. Tile is a friend of Skink's and is attempting to locate him to be sure he survived the hurricane. Tile finds Bonnie's reports about Max's abduction and believes Skink is responsible.

Snapper returns to Tony's house to find Edie there alone. Edie tells him about the strange man who apparently took off with Tony. Snapper takes the opportunity to leave, stranding Edie in the house. Late that night, Edie is alone, watching television thanks to some gas she paid a few neighborhood kids to siphon. A man knocks on the door frame and introduces himself as a representative of Tony's insurance company. Edie pretends to be Mrs. Neria Torres, just as Tony hired her to do.

Skink forces Max to climb a tree and gives him a lecture on the history of Florida. Max does not listen, and when Skink asks him questions, Max fails miserably, causing Skink to shock him with the collar. When Max wakes afterward, Skink tells him he wants to meet Bonnie.

A man, Gil Peck, is traveling through the devastated neighborhoods looking for people to be victims of his masonry scam while at the same time looting abandoned houses for merchandise. Gil comes upon what was once a mobile home park and sees a satellite dish that is completely undamaged and worth thousands. Gil walks over to check it out and finds that inside the dish someone has crucified a man. Before leaving, Gil attempts to steal the dead man's watch.

Chapter 7 Analysis

While Bonnie is visiting the morgue, looking at dead bodies and fearing one of them is her husband, Max is calling the answering machine in New York to discuss work. This



again showcases the differences in their personalities as well as Max's skewed view of his own priorities. Max has never once inquired about Bonnie's safety. Augustine, on the other hand, has not let Bonnie out of his sight once since meeting her, making sure she is safe and taken care of every minute. This touches on the theme of love versus security, comparing Max's obsession with work to Augustine's concern about Bonnie's welfare. As far as the kidnapping investigation goes, the only person who cares about Bonnie's concerns is a state trooper she has yet to meet, Jim Tile, who is a friend of the kidnapper's. This suggests that Bonnie and Tile will meet very soon.

Snapper returns to Tony's after robbing the kids who had intended to rob him, only to learn that Tony has disappeared. To Snapper, this suggests that his ten thousand dollars has also disappeared. Snapper decides to cut his losses and go participate in the roofing scam instead. Edie is now abandoned with the nearly destroyed house. However, this proves to be a good thing when the insurance man both Edie and Snapper forgot shows up that night. Edie pretends to be Neria Torres as she had planned to do for Tony, suggesting she might be the sole recipient of the insurance money. However, things have not gone well for Edie so far, so the reader might be skeptical about the outcome of this scam as well.

Elsewhere, Skink decides he wants to meet Bonnie, suggesting a new direction for the subplot of Max's kidnapping. At about the same time, a man finds a crucified body in a demolished mobile home park. The reader may assume that, in line with the plot development thus far, the victim is likely Tony Torres, the man who sold all those mobile homes.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

This chapter details the circumstances of the initial meeting between Bonnie and Max, who met when Max was hired to do advertising for a cereal that Bonnie's company produced. Bonnie and Max worked together on the campaign, a campaign Max thought was brilliant while Bonnie thought it mundane. However, through the course of working on this campaign, Max fell in love with Bonnie and they began to date. Max was so different from any other man Bonnie had ever dated. Max took work seriously where all of Bonnie's other boyfriends had failed to achieve decent jobs. Bonnie felt as though she had found the kind of man her mother wanted her to marry, but discovered, ironically enough, that her mother disliked Max. Bonnie stuck with the relationship, however, despite finding Max boring and as mundane as his campaign slogan.

Eddie shows the insurance man around the house, attempting to pull off the scam. At first it seemed to be working, but when the insurance man sees pictures in the bedroom that are clearly not of Eddie, she admits the truth. Eddie then seduces the man, asking him to join her in the fraud. Across town, a National Guard soldier is manning a road block alone when he sees what he thinks is a bear in the road. The soldier cannot believe his eyes. Before he can take aim at the bear, however, a truck speeds toward him. The soldier fires at the truck instead, causing it to crash into a ditch. The driver is Cain Darby. Darby is running from the police, thinking they are after him because of the body he found at the mobile home park. However, the police did not know about the body until Darby told them.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The back story on Bonnie and Max gives the reader some insight as to why Bonnie married Max. It may seem to the reader that Bonnie is losing her affection for her husband a little too quickly, until the reader reads this back story and realizes the only reason Bonnie married Max in the first place was because of his devotion to his career. However, it is this devotion that is causing Bonnie difficulties now, adding irony to the text. Irony also enters the story when Bonnie suggests she looked for a man with a good job because of her mother's desire to see her daughter well taken care of, but the man Bonnie finally chooses is a man her mother dislikes.

Eddie shows the house to the insurance man and thinks she might get away with her plan until the insurance man sees wedding photos in the master bedroom. Now Eddie must think fast. Eddie decides to seduce the man in order to get him to come in on the scam with her instead of having her arrested for defrauding an insurance company. It is left unclear at this point if the insurance man will agree to the fraud, but the fact that he does not attempt to stop the seduction seems to play in Eddie's favor. However, things



have not gone well for Edie up to this point, so the reader should look on this new development with some caution.

Finally, a soldier sees a bear that surprises him because it is not common to the area. The reader should know that this bear is most likely one of the bears from Augustine's wildlife business. Then Darby, the man from a previous chapter who found the body of Tony Torres, is caught by the police thanks to this soldier and confesses about the body while swearing he did not kill him. If not for Darby, the police would not know about the body. This introduces another subplot into the novel as the investigation into Tony's death begins.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

After Skink allows Max to make a few phone calls, they move on, spending the night in a barn. Skink offers Max a cigarette and becomes angry when he learns that Max does not smoke even though his biggest client is a cigarette brand. Skink forces Max to smoke an entire carton of Bronco cigarettes. Bonnie, in the meantime, is sleeping in Augustine's arms. Bonnie wakes, feeling guilty despite the fact that nothing sexual happened. Bonnie quickly gets out of bed and makes breakfast for both of them. Before they can enjoy the meal, the morgue calls and asks Bonnie to come look at another body.

Snapper was born Lester Maddox Parsons, the son of two Ku Klux Klan members. Snapper has been in and out of jail since he was a teenager. When Snapper was seventeen he got his nickname after he was caught stealing a farmer's tractor and was beaten by a game warden. Snapper's jaw was so badly broken that it healed oddly, leaving him permanently disfigured. Now Snapper is involved in a roofing scheme with his friend Avila, an ex-building inspector. Snapper is to take a crew of men around to people's homes, ask for a deposit, and have the men work for a few hours before taking off with the money.

Fred Dove, the insurance man, agrees to Edie's plan to defraud his company. Fred is concerned that the real Neria Torres will show up and ruin their plans, but Edie assures him everything will go as planned. Edie then tries to talk Fred into allowing her to stay with him at his hotel, but Fred, afraid his wife will learn about his new companion, will only offer her grocery money.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Skink forces Max to smoke Bronco cigarettes because that is Max's largest client at his advertising firm. Skink wants Max to learn a lesson about being a hypocrite. This seems to be the main reason Skink kidnapped Max, giving the reader a little more insight into Skink's personal motivations. Bonnie, in the meantime, is sharing a bed with Augustine. All Bonnie takes from Augustine is comfort, but she is still moral enough to feel guilty, touching on the theme of moral responsibility. This also opens a new door in the development of the plot between Bonnie and Augustine, suggesting the possibility of a romance between these two characters.

The reader is offered some back story on Snapper in this chapter. The reader learns how Snapper got his disfigured jaw, a physical trait that will prove to be important in identifying Snapper later in the novel. Snapper's latest scheme is also reviewed in this section of the chapter, previewing Snapper's story line for the next few chapters. Finally, Edie has not giving up on her schemes. Edie has talked the insurance agent for Tony

Torres into helping her defraud his company. It looks as though Edie's luck might be changing, but how far that luck will get her remains to be seen.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Bonnie and Augustine go to the morgue once more to view a body that could possibly be Max. However, this body turns out to be that of Tony Torres, although Bonnie and Augustine have no way of knowing his identity. While there, Bonnie and Augustine meet Jim Tile. Tile requests a few minutes of their time in order to discuss Max's kidnapping. Tile explains to Bonnie and Augustine that he believes his friend, Skink, is the man who has taken Max. Skink is a Vietnam vet who was once governor of the state of Florida. Skink was so concerned with conserving the natural resources of the state that he managed to alienate the entire state government, causing them to politically destroy him by refusing to support any of his policies. Skink became so frustrated he simply quit, walking away from the public eye and becoming a recluse. His only friend has remained the state trooper assigned to protect him during his reign as governor, Jim Tile.

Ira Jackson had thought killing the mobile home salesman would make him feel better, but it did not. Jackson makes the decision that the mobile home salesman was not the only one responsible for his mother's death. Jackson decides he must go after the crooked building inspector as well, since it is obvious that someone failed to inspect the trailers properly.

Snapper takes a deposit on a home to do roof repairs and moves his crew quickly because of an impending storm. Snapper is nervous, so he purposely chooses a large, expensive home some distance from the other homes he has already hit. The large home is owned by an eccentric woman who gives Snapper seven thousand dollars in cash for the job on her roof. Snapper does not report this money to his crew or Avila.

Jim Tile listens to the recording of Max's phone message and assures Bonnie that Max is not in immediate danger, but that he would like to be kept informed should more messages be received. Almost the moment Tile leaves, Bonnie finds a new message on the machine in New York asking for a ransom of sort and a meeting.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Jim Tile provides a back story on Skink, informing a surprised reader that Skink was indeed once governor of the state of Florida before he was shunned by the state government and had a nervous breakdown. Skink has been a recluse ever since, living homeless in the nature he so loves. This explains a few things about Skink's motivations as well as his reasons for kidnapping Max. Skink sees Max as no better than the architects and contractors who are destroying the natural beauty of Florida.

Ira Jackson has decided that killing Tony Torres was not good enough to atone for his mother's death. Ira turns his attention to the building inspector who clearly did not do a proper job in inspecting his mother's mobile home. The reader should suspect that this



inspector is Avila, Snapper's partner in crime, since an earlier chapter informed the reader that Avila was a building inspector who was forced to quit due to scandal. Avila's life could be in danger if Jackson is successful in locating him, providing the reader with insight into the next few developments within the plot.

Snapper, in the meantime, is stealing money from Avila by not reporting a deposit of seven thousand dollars from an eccentric rich woman. This suggests trouble for Snapper later down the road as it seems trouble always follows crooks who attempt to cheat their partners. Jim Tile assures Bonnie that her husband is not in danger, while at the same time requesting to be kept informed of new developments. Bonnie almost immediately gets a unique ransom demand and a request for a meeting with the kidnapper, again providing the reader with a road map of where the plot will take Bonnie next.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

In the back of a U-Haul truck, Skink gives Max a lecture on how he needs a legacy, something that people will remember long after he is gone. At the same time, Ira Jackson has learned that Avila was the building inspector who was supposed to have checked his mother's mobile home. Avila was assigned to mobile homes while under investigation for taking bribes and failing to look over the roofs of buildings he inspected. This same night, Snapper is pulled over for speeding by a female state trooper. Snapper attempts to talk his way out of the ticket but it quickly becomes clear the woman intends to run his license plate. Since Snapper is almost positive the car is stolen and does not want to be arrested, he beats the woman unconscious and steals her gold wedding band.

Eddie is having a hard time living in the Torres's destroyed home and is grateful when Fred Dove returns to the house that night. Eddie begins to seduce Fred and Snapper walks into the house, uninvited. Across town, Bonnie climbs into bed with Augustine once more, frightened by what Tile told them and unable to sleep alone. Augustine assures her that everything will be alright and that he will go with her to the meeting with the kidnapper.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Skink wants Max to have a legacy that says more about him than his actions since the hurricane. This is important because it is a moment that will come back to Max later in the narration, inspiring him to attempt to do exactly that. Ira Jackson has found that Avila is the inspector that failed to inspect his mother's mobile home, hinting that Avila's life may soon be in danger. Snapper beats a female state trooper who is not identified in this chapter. However, an alert reader may realize the impact of a beating on Tile's lover might have on the overall plot development and wonder if perhaps this unlucky state trooper might not be her. If the state trooper is Tile's lover, this might suggest a possible direction for further plot development.

Eddie is unhappy living like a hurricane victim and finds she is actually happy to see Fred Dove even though she does not think highly of him. However, before the two can commence their love making, Snapper walks into the house. Snapper's presence could mean a possible disruption in Eddie's carefully laid plans to defraud the insurance company. Across town, Bonnie lies in bed with Augustine, drawing comfort from him even as she plans to go rescue her husband. This need to be close to Augustine gives the reader the impression that Bonnie may be having second thoughts about her marriage. This also illustrates the theme of love versus security once more, as Bonnie finds herself comparing her husband with Augustine, even if it is in a platonic manner.



Chapters 12-13

Chapters 12-13 Summary

Skink and Max are sitting on the unsteady porch of stilt house in the middle of a bay. This is where they are scheduled to meet Bonnie. Bonnie approaches the house on a boat that Augustine borrowed from a friend. When they come close enough to dock, Bonnie hands Skink a bag full of the things he asked for as ransom, including batteries for his Walkman. Skink then instructs Max to remove the collar from around his neck, but Max is unable to do it due to his deep fear of being shocked. Bonnie does it for him. Skink then allows Max to board the boat, but he grabs Bonnie before she can jump aboard and unties the boat, pushing it away. However, Augustine and Bonnie have not been alone on the boat. Tile stands up and grabs Bonnie away from Skink; at the same time Augustine shoots him with a tranquilizer gun.

A man, who is notorious for being a bad hunter, decides to hunt the cows that have been running wild in his neighborhood since the hurricane hit. However, it is not a cow this man comes face to face with, but rather a bison from Augustine's wildlife business. The bison gores the man before it is caught by animal control in a supermarket a few hours later. Augustine is unaware of this drama because he is on a boat in Stiltsville. Augustine, Bonnie, and Tile haul Skink onto the boat from the water, where he fell after being tranquilized. Tile tends to his friend while Augustine pilots the boat back into town.

Gar Whitmark, a trade builder in Miami, argues with his wife when he learns that she gave seven thousand dollars to a company of crooked roofers. Gar forces the woman to find the receipt the foreman gave her. On the receipt is the name of the company and through that Gar is able to track the owner, Avila. Gar knows of Avila through his business. Gar immediately calls Avila and threatens his life unless Avila returns his money immediately. Avila knows that Snapper must have taken the money and failed to report it; Avila is so angry with Snapper that he makes a santeria offering to the god Chango, asking the god to strike Snapper down. Oblivious to this drama, Snapper is asleep in Torres's recliner across town. At his feet, Edie and Fred Dove are tied together, naked.

Chapters 12-13 Analysis

Bonnie arrives at the meeting with Skink and Max where Skink's true intentions are revealed when he puts Max on the boat and grabs Bonnie. Skink simply wanted to exchange hostages. However, Augustine and Bonnie have brought backup in Tile. The three clearly already had a plan before arriving and they put it into motion the moment Skink makes his move, rescuing Max but also knocking out Skink with a tranquilizer. For what purpose this is done, the reader does not know at this point, but the author will surely reveal his intentions in the next few chapters.



Augustine's bison has gored a man and killed him. The bison symbolizes the chaos of the storm and the lawlessness of the aftermath. Augustine does not know about the killing yet, but will surely learn about it soon. His reaction to this killing will be important insight into his character. Gar Whitmark is a new character who has a small role but is significant in the latest developments within the plot. Gar threatens Avila with an unusual death if he does not repay the money Snapper took from Gar's wife. This is important because it shows Avila's motivation to find Snapper in order to refund Gar's money. Snapper appears to be up to trouble of his own. Snapper has Edie and Fred Dove tied up, but the reader has yet to learn for what purpose.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Snapper has tied up Edie and Fred in order to find out what scam they are planning to perpetrate. Fred breaks down and tells Snapper the entire plan, including the amount of money they hope to come into, after Snapper hits Edie and makes fun of Fred's sexual prowess. Snapper makes them agree to include him in the plan before he lets them go. In a rage because Snapper hits her, Edie hits Snapper on the leg with a crowbar.

Augustine, Bonnie, Max, Tile, and Skink go back to Augustine's house so Max and Skink can clean up. Tile speaks to Skink about Brenda, his girlfriend who happens to be the same state trooper Snapper beat up. Skink is upset by this news and worried about his friend. Max has little compassion for Tile or Brenda. Max wants Skink arrested; Bonnie attempts to talk him out of it. Max becomes distracted, however, when he calls his co-worker and learns that a huge scandal is about to rock Bronco cigarettes.

Ira Jackson drives to Avila's house and pretends to be a man looking for a roofer. Ira offers Avila fifteen thousand dollars if he will look at his house at that moment. In desperate need of money since he cannot find Snapper, Avila quickly agrees.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Edie is forced to make Snapper a part of her plan to defraud the insurance company. Edie is not happy about this, once more showing her bad luck when it comes to her schemes to get money out of people. When Edie is finally untied, she hits Snapper with a crowbar. This is important to the plot for two reasons. First, it explores Edie's character and her unwillingness to sit back and let anyone get the better of her. Second, it leaves Snapper with an injury that will continue to plague him throughout the rest of the novel. This section also illustrates the theme of opportunism, showing the reader what an opportunist will do to get what he wants.

Augustine and Bonnie return to Augustine's house along with Tile, Skink, and Max. Max is angry and wants to press charges against Skink, but Bonnie has developed affection for Skink and does not want to see him go to jail. Bonnie's reaction to Skink shows her depth of character, especially as compared to Max's lack of depth. This is further explored when Max learns about the trouble with Bronco cigarettes and loses complete interest in everything going on in Florida.

Again the theme of opportunism is touched on when Ira Jackson approaches Avila and convinces him that he wants his services as a roofer. Avila jumps at the chance of making fifteen thousand dollars without doing anything. Avila's actions also put him in Ira Jackson's hands. The reader is already aware of what Jackson did to Torres, so it is no stretch of the imagination to think Avila might find himself facing the same death.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Bonnie has decided to stay in Florida even as Max rushes back to New York. Bonnie cannot understand why she was not enough to keep Max happy on their honeymoon and is unsure she wants to remain his wife. Bonnie mulls this over as she, Augustine, Tile, and Skink go to the hospital to visit Brenda. Brenda has been beaten badly enough that she needs plastic surgery to repair her face, but is nonetheless expected to make a full recovery. During the visit, Brenda gives Tile the license number of the car she stopped. Instead of giving that information to the detectives, Tile gives it to Skink.

The next morning, the Torres phone begins to ring. Edie picks up after the second or third ring and hears a woman's voice on the other end. Edie hangs up and the next time the phone rings, she makes Snapper answer. This time the woman identifies herself as Neria Torres. Snapper and Edie realize this means their time is running out.

Ira Jackson takes Avila out to a subdivision that was flattened by the hurricane. Ira ties Avila up and makes him confess to his failure to properly inspect the mobile homes on his list. Avila willingly admits to it, hoping his honesty will save him from further injury. It does not. Ira begins to nail Avila to a tree, starting with his hand. However, something happens that stops Ira from continuing his crucifixion.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Bonnie has made the decision not to return to New York, which is significant since her husband has already returned. Bonnie is contemplating her devotion to her husband, which gives the reader the idea that she might choose to end her marriage in favor of something better, again touching on the theme of love versus security. As Bonnie attempts to decide what to do about her marriage, Tile deals with the attack on his lover by giving important information about the attacker to Skink. This tells the reader that Skink might do something with this information that Tile cannot because of his role as a police officer.

Edie and Snapper receive a phone call that tells them Neria Torres is coming to Miami. This is bad news because Neria is the only one left alive who can sabotage their attempts to defraud the insurance company. Again it seems that Edie's luck is about to run out. Ira Jackson's luck also seems to be running short. Ira has Avila tied up and is about to crucify him, preparing the reader for a death similar to Torres's. However, something happens to stop Jackson. Since the reader assumes Jackson is not easy to stop in light of the fact that he has already gotten away with killing Torres, the reader must be very curious as to what could happen to save Avila's life.



Chapters 16-17

Chapters 16-17 Summary

Edie Marsh opens a bank account in a local bank under the name Neria Torres, using a car registration as identification. This account is meant to be Edie's means to cash the insurance check when it arrives. At the same time, Avila is watching Jackson being devoured by a lion. Avila can hardly believe his luck and assumes this good fortune has come to him because of his sacrifices to the Santeria god Chango. Avila frees himself from the tree and rushes home to make a bigger offering of goats. Back at Augustine's, Skink tells Augustine about the license plate number Tile gave him. Augustine volunteers to help Skink search for the attacker. Later, Augustine goes into the house, where he finds Bonnie in his bed. Bonnie wants to make love to him, but Augustine resists because he is not sure she has made a decision about Max. However, Augustine allows her to remain in his bed where they cuddle most of the night.

The phone rings half the night before Augustine finally rolls out of bed to answer. It is Max. Augustine wakes Bonnie so she can talk to him. Max tells Bonnie he has to go to Mexico, but he wants her in New York by the time he gets back. The next morning, Avila arrives home where he treats his own wounds, reluctant to tell his wife what happened because he knows she will trivialize the experience. Avila then goes out and takes seven thousand dollars from his brother-in-law's stash in order to pay back Gar, no longer interested in being the pawn of anyone else's anger. Gar accepts the seven thousand and then presents Avila with a bill for the twenty thousand it will take to repair his roof.

Edie, Snapper, and Fred Dove get themselves kicked out of Fred's hotel room when Snapper shoots a bullet into the roof to stop the barking of dogs. Edie is angry because she does not want to live in the Torres's destroyed home anymore, but has no choice since all the hotels in the area are full. Edie's anger is dampened somewhat when Neria calls again, letting her know she is in Memphis. Edie gives Neria a story about how Tony ran off to Brooklyn with some girl. Then Edie goes next door and cuts the neighbor's phone line so Neria cannot check the story with the nosy neighbor. At the same time, Bonnie, Augustine, and Skink are headed to a small subdivision where the address that matches the license plates from the stolen car the attacker was driving is located. On their way, they stop at a tent city full of hurricane survivors just in time to see the President.

Chapters 16-17 Analysis

Edie opens a bank account in Neria's name, proving to the reader that she intends to continue with her scheme despite the danger of Neria possibly appearing. Avila is rescued by the most unlikely circumstance when a lion, probably from Augustine's wildlife business, attacks Jackson. This leaves Avila free to return to his scams,



touching on the theme of opportunism. At the same time, Augustine learns about Bonnie's information on her attacker and Skink's plan to go after him. Augustine decides to join Skink in the search, giving the plot a new direction in which to take Augustine's story line.

Max gives Bonnie an ultimatum to force her to come home, but the reader probably already suspects that this will not encourage Bonnie to return to Max. Bonnie has found something she needed with Augustine, or else she would most likely have returned to New York already. Avila goes ahead and pays the debt to Gar without attempting to find Snapper because the experience with Jackson has left him frightened. However, this is most likely not the end of the situation between Avila and Snapper as suggested by the twenty thousand dollar bill Gar presents to Avila. Avila will want someone to pay for that.

Edie and her friends get kicked out of the hotel where they were hiding and quickly learn that Neria is closer than originally thought. Edie attempts to delay her by telling her a lie, but since Edie's luck has been bad at best so far, experience should warn the reader that Edie's trick might not work. Bonnie and Augustine have joined Skink in his hunt for Snapper. This hunt will most likely shape a large remainder of the end of the novel, perhaps bringing together both groups of main characters at long last.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Skink has obtained the address of the people who reported their license plates missing from Tile. Augustine speaks to the man and his wife when they arrive at the address. The man tells how a group of kids stole his plates while he was standing right there in the yard. Then the man tells Augustine how he saw the same car again later, but this time it was being driven by a white man instead of the group of black youths who had had the car before. This sighting gives Augustine, Skink, and Bonnie somewhere definitive to search for the car.

Avila's wife finds her husband in the garage, suffering a puncture wound in the groin from one of the goats he bought to sacrifice. Avila's wife takes him to the hospital to be stitched up. That same afternoon, Fred Dove tells Edie that his supervisor wants to talk to Tony and Neria Torres to double check Fred's paperwork on the claim. Fred is in a panic, sure they are caught, but Edie promises everything will be okay.

Augustine, Skink, and Bonnie camp for the night. Skink makes Bonnie and Augustine a nice meal of some sort of eggs he finds nearby. Afterward, Bonnie and Augustine climb into a sleeping bag together. Bonnie asks Augustine to make love to her again and this time Augustine agrees.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Augustine finds out where the car that the attacker has been driving was seen recently, pinpointing an area for he, Skink, and Bonnie to look the next day. Clearly this points a direction in which the narration will go in the next few chapters, leaving the reader with just enough questions to lead the reading on through to the next chapter. Avila is injured by the goats he wanted to sacrifice, not only creating a comical situation to entertain the reader, but also creating a situation the reader will remember when something similar happens toward the end of the novel. Finally, Bonnie and Augustine make love. This event has been hinted at since the beginning of the novel and its occurrence satisfies tension that has filled every scene between these two characters since their introduction. However, it also places both characters in an interesting situation if the reader remembers that Bonnie is still legally married to Max and has not made the conscious decision to end her marriage.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Avila calls an escort service he remembers Snapper using in the past, hoping to find someone who remembers Snapper. Avila meets with a prostitute he previously met through Snapper and bribes her into telling him the next time she or her girlfriend hears from Snapper. Snapper happens to have the prostitute with him as Avila is talking to the other girl. Edie is annoyed because she feels that Snapper should be practicing for the arrival of Fred's supervisor with her instead of fooling around with a prostitute. Snapper, on the other hand, thinks Edie owes him one for messing up his knee with the crowbar.

Levon Stichler, an older gentleman who lived in one of the mobile homes Tony Torres sold, has decided he should kill Tony Torres. Levon Stichler comes up with a plan and goes in search of Torres. On the morning the insurance supervisor is due, Stichler shows up at the Torres home. Edie mistakes him for the insurance man and begins to show him around the house. When Snapper comes out of the bedroom, Levon threatens him with a sharpened auger from his mobile home until he realizes he is not Torres. That same morning, Bonnie and Augustine wake without guilt for making love the night before. With Skink, they drive to Calusa Drive, where they quickly find the car Snapper was driving the night he attacked Brenda; it is parked in front of what the reader knows is Tony Torres's house. The three take up residence in a house across the street to watch the Torres house for any signs of Snapper.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Avila has a line on Snapper through an escort agency he uses frequently. Avila bribes a prostitute to tell him the next time she hears from Snapper, suggesting Avila will find Snapper later in the development of the novel. Snapper is still using this service and has one of the prostitutes with him that very night, much to Edie's chagrin. Edie wants to rehearse their insurance scheme, but Snapper only wants to have fun, suggesting disaster for the scheme. When Levon Stichler arrives at the house, it seems disaster is already on its way for Edie and her scheme. However, the tables are quickly turned and now the reader must feel concern for the unlucky Mr. Stichler. Finally, Bonnie and Augustine, not feeling the least guilty for their love-making, arrive at the house where Snapper is holed up. This brings these separate groups of main characters closer together, making a meeting almost unavoidable.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Neria Torres is driving cross-country with her professor lover and a beautiful young student of his. Neria is suspicious of her boyfriend's feelings for the young student and has begun to question her desire to remain in a relationship with the professor. Neria is more concerned about reaching Tony at this point, however, as she is concerned her husband might be trying to take all the insurance money for himself. Neria must now decide if she should drive to Brooklyn in search of her husband, as suggested by the strange woman on the phone, or continue to Miami. Neria calls the police in Miami to see if her wayward husband might have been arrested, which would explain his failure to answer their home phone, but loses patience before the police can tell her anything.

Max has flown to Mexico in order to convince the owner of Bronco cigarettes not to pull Bronco ads from all major newspapers and magazines that carried a NIH report describing the terrible effects of smoking Broncos. Max knows if the company pulls these ads it will be the end of his company's participation in Bronco advertising. However, the owner is determined not only to pull the ads, but to get out of tobacco all together. The owner dies of lung cancer within minutes of speaking to Max.

Fred Dove arrives at the Torres house with his supervisor. Edie and Snapper put on a good show of being a married couple. The only concerns the supervisor has are Snapper's leg injuries, which he does not want to come back later to haunt the insurance company, and the high side of Fred's estimate on the household goods. The supervisor signs off on the claim and Edie learns that they will be getting sixty thousand dollars more than she had originally thought. Edie is thrilled, especially since Snapper has no clue about the extra money.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Neria Torres is on her way to Miami. It seems for a minute that Edie's ruse about Brooklyn might have worked, but Neria's reluctance to drive to Brooklyn leaves the reader unconvinced. Neria then attempts to call the police and nearly learns her husband is dead, something that might make Neria's destination obvious, but she loses patience and does not learn this truth. This continues to leave Neria's destination unknown.

Max is in Mexico attempting to save his job. This is important because it shows that Max's job is more important to him than his wife, again touching on the theme of love versus security. At the same time, Edie seems to have finally had some luck with her scheme. Edie, Fred, and Snapper are able to convince Fred's supervisor that everything is legitimate. Edie even learns there will be more money than originally suspected, money that Snapper does not know about. Things are beginning to look good for Edie.



However, early parts of the novel have suggested Edie's luck is not this good, so the reader must be wary of something changing in the next few chapters, especially since the reader knows Skink and his friends are sitting across the street, waiting to find Snapper.



Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary

Augustine has returned to his truck to get the guns while Bonnie stays with Skink. Skink watches the house across the street while Bonnie wonders about the people who once lived in the house and where they are now. Across the street, Edie and Snapper are trying to decide what to do with Lester Stichler now that the insurance men are gone. Snapper wants to kill him, but Edie is reluctant. Finally Snapper comes up with a plan that does not require hurting the old man. Snapper has Edie help him roll Lester into some drapes before they carry him out to the car. Skink sees Edie and Snapper walk out to the car and tells Bonnie it is time to go. When they approach Edie and Snapper, Skink and Bonnie are forced at gunpoint into the car. At about the same time, Tile confesses to Brenda that he gave Skink the license plate number of her attacker.

Augustine returns to the home where he left Bonnie and Skink only to find them gone. Augustine realizes the car at the house across the street is also gone. Augustine goes across the street to see if he can find where Bonnie might have gone. Augustine finds little of use except for Edie's purse and the insurance papers. Augustine starts to call Tile when he thinks to push the redial button on the phone. Through this ploy, Augustine discovers that Snapper has reserved a room in a motel in the Keys.

Max Lamb is depressed over his failure to convince the Bronco owner to change his mind. In a moment of determination, Max decides to fly to Miami to retrieve his wife. Max goes straight to Augustine's house and breaks in, but he finds the place empty. Max decides to call the answering machine in New York and leave another ultimatum for Bonnie. About the same time, Avila receives a call from the prostitute telling him about Snapper's call asking to meet the prostitute and her girlfriend at a hotel in the Keys. Avila offers to pay the girls double what Snapper offered for them to give him the name of the hotel.

While stopped overnight in a motel in Bonifay, Florida, Neria's professor boyfriend climbs into bed with his student. Bonnie wakes to find them in the throes of passion. Neria flies into a rage and attacks the professor before running off in their van, leaving them stranded.

Chapters 21-22 Analysis

Augustine has left Bonnie alone with Skink. Augustine does not believe he will be gone long enough for there to be trouble. However, Skink decides to make his move before Augustine returns. Bonnie goes with Skink willingly, up for any kind of adventure and full of trust for this man who, ironically, kidnapped her husband. Edie and Snapper decide to take Lester somewhere where he will be out of their way without their having to kill him. Not only does this show some of Edie's compassion and touch on the theme of moral



responsibility, but it also sets up the next few chapters for the reader by implying a trip of some sort.

Augustine uses a trick he once used on a drug-addicted girlfriend to find out that Snapper has booked a room in a hotel in the Keys. Clearly Augustine believes this is where Snapper has taken or led Bonnie and he decides to go after them, providing a direction for the next few chapters. Max has returned to Miami, taking up residence in Augustine's house, uninvited. Max then leaves an ultimatum for Bonnie, hoping it will scare her into returning home with him. However, the reader must suspect that Bonnie will not be scared easily as suggested by her previous reaction to Max's ultimatum. Avila has also learned where Snapper is headed and most likely will go there himself, setting up a disastrous meeting between these diverse groups of characters. Neria, too, is close to Miami. The reader must wonder what her appearance will mean to Edie and her insurance scam.



Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary

Edie drives while Snapper holds the gun on Skink and Bonnie. Snapper considers killing everyone in the car, including Lester, but he does not have enough bullets and he needs Edie to cash the insurance checks. However, Snapper begins to grow nervous when Skink makes comments about the state trooper he beat several days before. Edie hears what Skink has to say and becomes upset at the idea of Snapper hurting a state trooper. Snapper shows her the ring he stole from the trooper before he throws it out the window. Snapper could not pawn the ring and did not see any other reason to keep it. Edie becomes angry and to defy Snapper, she stops on a bridge to watch the dolphins in the ocean. Snapper fires a bullet through the roof of the car to spur her on.

Avila wants to make one more sacrifice to Chango before going to the Keys, but the grocer does not have any more chickens. Avila ends up buying a coatimundi. The sacrifice goes bad when Avila's mother-in-law opens the garage door minutes after Avila has freed the animal. The animal jumps into the mother-in-law's hair, causing her to run, screaming, through the neighborhood. Avila gives up and leaves for the Keys without making his sacrifice.

Tile begins the drive out to the Keys, having been informed of Snapper's movements by Augustine. Tile catches up with the car, but is stuck behind a driver who is lost and causes Tile to lose the car with Snapper and Skink inside. Tile gives the lost driver several citations out of irritation. At about the same time, Fred Dove goes to the Torres house to celebrate with Edie only to find it empty. Fred waits for a time, finally giving up at sundown and taking the dogs back to his hotel with him, leaving candy and wine in the dining room.

Augustine arrives at the hotel ahead of Snapper and his party. Augustine learns that Snapper has other guests awaiting him at the hotel, however, and manages to learn the room number from the clerk. Augustine goes to the hotel room and finds the two prostitutes there. Augustine pays the girls to tell him about Snapper and his plan for Lester.

Chapters 23-24 Analysis

Snapper is clearly in control in this chapter, bossing everyone around, Edie included. Edie is finally learning the kind of person Snapper is and she does not like what she is learning. Edie is an opportunist, touching on the theme of opportunism, interested only in making easy money. Snapper, on the other hand, is willing to hurt people for what he wants. This scares Edie and it also contrasts the two criminals, making a clear distinction between the two. Skink remains calm in the back seat, even when Snapper throws Brenda's ring out the window. The reader must be curious about Skink's



behavior, wondering if he is scared or if he is simply biding his time. Past behavior does little to clue the reader in, leading the reader to the next chapter to find answers.

Again Avila has bad luck with a sacrifice, foreshadowing his continued bad luck later in the novel. Tile, too, has bad luck attempting to keep up with Snapper's car. However, Augustine arrives in the Keys long before Snapper and is able to locate the prostitutes waiting for Snapper. Augustine soon learns that Snapper has a plan to use the prostitutes to keep Lester busy in order to keep him from going to the police about the insurance scam. Fred Dove arrives at the Torres house and finds it empty. Fred leaves behind flowers and candy for anyone who happens to come to the house next to find. This could mean trouble, depending on who comes to the house next. Fred also takes the dogs and leaves for the night, implying he intends to return. However, it is questionable if Edie will return, so the reader must be curious what will happen if Fred comes to the house and finds someone other than Edie there.



Chapters 25-27

Chapters 25-27 Summary

Neria is on the highway headed to Miami when the professor's van runs out of gas. A group of construction workers looking for jobs in the hurricane-ravaged areas stop to give her gas. The men then insist on following her back to her house in order to help her with reconstruction; Neria has no choice but to allow them to follow her. At Augustine's house, Max receives a visit from a friend of Augustine's who is an FBI agent. They talk for a while about Max's kidnapping and the possibility that Bonnie has been brainwashed by the same kidnapper. The FBI agent does not appear to take Max seriously.

Snapper makes Edie stop at a liquor store to buy whiskey. Bonnie is hot and asks for a Coke, quickly pouring it down her blouse when it comes. Snapper is distracted by Bonnie, worried about how her sexual appeal might undermine his power over the hostages. Shortly afterward, Snapper and his hostages arrive at the hotel. They take Lester up to the room where the prostitutes are waiting, informing Lester of their plan. They intend to leave him with the prostitutes and have these ladies take pictures of Lester in compromising positions so if he were to tell the police about the insurance scam, Snapper and Edie can make a counterclaim of sexual perversion against him.

In the parking lot, Augustine is hiding behind a dumpster. When the car is empty, Augustine climbs into the back. A few minutes later, Augustine can hear voices approaching and what sounds like a fight break out. Sure enough, Avila confronts Snapper as he walks back to the car with Edie, Skink, and Bonnie. Snapper gets the better of Avila and begins to beat him. Avila gets away and runs down the street. Snapper follows. Avila finally jumps off a bridge to escape. Avila floats out to the ocean on a piece of plywood until the Coast Guard rescues him the next day. When presented with the option, Avila claims to be a rafting refugee from Cuba, giving him the opportunity to change his life.

While they wait in the car for Snapper to return, Edie learns more details about Snapper's attack on the state trooper. Edie tries to let Skink and Bonnie go, but they both refuse. Edie then decides to make an escape herself, but Snapper returns before she can. Tile has arrived at the hotel and he turns on his lights the moment he recognizes Snapper. However, Snapper has no intention of being arrested. Snapper climbs into the driver's seat and pulls his gun on Tile. Snapper fires once, hitting Tile square in the chest. Snapper speeds out of the parking lot and steals another car from a customer at a nearby convenience store. Before Snapper, Edie, Skink, and Bonnie are very far away, however, the car they abandoned behind the store suddenly appears behind them.



Chapters 25-27 Analysis

Neria is close to her home, a fact that tells the reader that Edie should not expect to ever see the insurance money. Neria is being followed by construction workers, a curious turn of events that seems to be leading to something, but the reader has no clue as to what at this point. Max receives a visit from an FBI agent to whom he suggests his wife will not come home with him because she has been brainwashed by Skink. The reader knows this is not true, but it reveals Max's train of thought and explains his motivations in continuing to hope his wife will come home even at a point when another man might have given up.

The arrival at the hotel reveals Snapper's full intentions for Lester, allowing the reader to see that he does not plan to kill the old man. This illustrates the theme of moral responsibility in a small way as Snapper chooses not to kill the kind old man who has already lost so much. Augustine takes the opportunity while Snapper and the others are occupied with the old man to climb into the car and hide. Here Augustine is witness to a fight between Avila and Snapper, even though he cannot see the fight. Going with the theme of Avila's unlucky existence, Snapper gets the better of Avila, even with his injured knee. Avila escapes into the ocean where he finds a larger escape from his entire life through the lie that he is a rafter from Cuba. The chances of Avila pulling off this new life seem to be limited, however, suggested by his past experiences.

Edie is sickened by Snapper's violence and does not want any more of it. Edie attempts to free Skink and Bonnie, but they are there for a purpose and do not wish to leave until they are done. Edie then tries to leave, but Snapper returns before she can. Again, this behavior shows the difference between Snapper and Edie and begins to generate some sympathy for Edie. Edie seems to be just as much a victim in this situation as anyone else.

Tile attempts to arrest Snapper and is shot in the process. Tile is Skink's closest friend, so the reader must be wondering how Skink will react. Skink shows little reaction, however. Snapper steals another car, but the old car begins to follow them. This is a strange turn of events for the characters, but the reader should remember Augustine in the back of the car. Now it is Augustine's turn to play the hero.

Tile drives Edie out of the Keys and tells her he has no intention of arresting her because Skink asked him not to. Tile drops Edie at an abandoned McDonald's where he picks up Max. Bonnie leaves a nervous Augustine at the camp to go speak to Max. Augustine need not have worried, however, because Bonnie tells Max she is in love with someone else and does not want to return to their marriage. Bonnie returns to the camp and asks Augustine if it would be alright for her to stay with him. Augustine readily agrees. Bonnie walks back to camp alone to get a book of poetry and sees Snapper beating Skink with a stick. When Snapper takes off, Bonnie gives chase.



Chapters 28-31

Chapters 28-31 Summary

Tile survives the gunshot thanks to a bullet-proof vest. However, Tile is not allowed to join the pursuit when fellow officers arrive due to paperwork generated by the shooting. Back in Miami, a detective has begun to investigate death of Tony Torres. The detective goes to the Torres home and learns from a neighbor about the strangers who have been living there. The detective leaves a card for the widow who is due home at any time. Neria does arrive early the next morning, finding the candy and roses Fred left for Edie. Neria is angry that her husband was entertaining women in their home. The next morning, Neria calls the detective who left his card and learns about Tony's death. Neria sets up a meeting with the cop and uses this to scare away the unwanted construction workers. Neria goes out to the garage to see if the car will run. A Fed Ex delivery man appears and offers to help with the dead battery in the car. After he leaves, Neria opens the package he was there to deliver. Much to her surprise, Neria finds inside two checks totaling more than two hundred thousand dollars. The cop returns to meet Neria and finds Fred Dove at the home instead. Dove claims to have gotten the wrong address and runs off.

Augustine tranquilizes Snapper with his gun and Edie pulls the car to the side of the road. Skink makes a phone call and learns that Tile is okay. Bonnie makes a call too and hears Max's ultimatum. With instructions from Skink, she arranges a meeting with Max. Max, unconcerned with the dissolution of his marriage, spends the night attempting to come up with a new ad campaign that will become his legacy.

Snapper wakes hours later with The Club from the stolen car in his mouth. Skink, Bonnie, and Augustine have taken Snapper and Edie to one of Skink's hideaways on the outer boundary of the Everglades. They spend the night in the wild, eating fried snake. In the morning, Edie expresses her desire to leave. Augustine tells her he knows about her insurance scheme and she should not be in such a hurry to leave since she left her purse in a dead man's house. Later, Skink tranquilizes Snapper again and then he and Edie go for a swim. Edie wants to return to the real world, so she resorts to her old tricks to convince Skink to take her. Edie makes love to Skink only to find out he had arranged for her passage out of the Keys the night before.

Bonnie catches Snapper because his injured knee makes him slow. Bonnie pins him to the ground and tries to subdue him, but Snapper is bigger and stronger, quickly getting the better of Bonnie. Snapper begins to beat Bonnie with The Club that is still wedged in his mouth. However, someone joins the fight, grabbing Snapper by the testicles and then firing a gun against the side of his head. Augustine has shot off Snapper's ear, but otherwise left him uninjured. Augustine helps Bonnie clean up her injuries before they follow Skink out of the Everglades. They leave Snapper behind to find his own way out of the wilderness, knowing that he will most likely become lost. In the meantime, Tile



returns Max to his car where he finds Edie asleep inside. Max gives Edie a ride back into Miami.

Chapters 28-31 Analysis

Neria arrives home just in time to receive the insurance settlement checks. No longer concerned with the death of her husband, Neria takes the money and runs. In her actions, Neria proves herself to be no better than Edie Marsh, touching on the theme of opportunism. Neria does not care who killed her husband, nor does she wonder who filed the insurance claim. All Neria is concerned with is taking the money before anyone can take it back.

Augustine has stopped Snapper by once again using his tranquilizer gun. Now that the crisis has past, Skink is able to find out that Tile is okay and Bonnie learns about Max's ultimatum. Bonnie, who has already taken a new lover, worries more over the dissolution of her marriage than Max does. Max spends the night trying to come up with a brilliant ad campaign. This again illustrates the theme of love versus security, proving once and for all that Max's priorities never really included Bonnie.

Snapper is getting a punishment he most likely deserves. Skink does not kill him, but he does not hesitate to torture him, exploring his character once again. Edie wants to go back to the real world, despite learning that she most likely has already lost out on the insurance money. Edie resorts to her old habits and attempts to seduce Skink, only to learn that Skink had arranged for her to leave before she seduced him. Edie finally learns a lesson from someone more devious than she.

Max and Bonnie meet and Max finds himself being dumped, a turn of events that surprises him despite all the signs Bonnie has offered. This event brings to end one subplot that has been running throughout the course of the novel. Augustine is thrilled with Bonnie's decision, finding himself finally ready to make a life with a woman he can love. Bonnie is content, too. However, when Bonnie goes to camp and finds Snapper beating Skink, the plot takes a new twist that quickly places Bonnie in a position of danger as she chases after Snapper.

Bonnie catches Snapper, but he is bigger and stronger, so he quickly gets control of the situation. Augustine finds them somehow and stops Snapper from hurting Bonnie any further, though he stops himself from killing Snapper. This illustrates the moral difference between Augustine's character and Snapper's. Augustine will not kill Snapper himself, but he has little trouble leaving him in the wilderness to become lost and most likely starve. This touches on the theme of moral responsibility. At the same time, in an ironic twist, Max finds Edie asleep in his car and decides to take her into his company.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Max and Bonnie get an annulment and a short time later Max becomes engaged to Edie. Edie gets involved in various charities. Brenda recovers from her injuries and receives a transfer to northern Florida where she moves in with Tile. Avila begins a new life as a Cuban refugee only to die a month later from the bite of a rabid rabbit. Levon Stichler suffers a heart attack and goes to live with his daughter. Neria Torres becomes the prime suspect in the murder of her husband, Tony. Augustine and Bonnie move in together on a small fishing island where Bonnie becomes a well known watercolorist.

Epilogue Analysis

The epilogue of this novel nicely sums up the lives of each of the main characters. Max and Edie marry, an ironic twist that makes them both very happy. Perhaps they were more alike than the reader might have suspected at first. Bonnie and Augustine settle down to a quiet life, finally finding contentment for the first time in either one's life. Avila dies while Neria becomes a suspect in Tony's death. The summaries tie up the novel, leaving the reader quite satisfied with the ending.



Characters

Bonnie Lamb

Bonnie Lamb is a business executive who has recently gotten married. Bonnie is in Orlando on her honeymoon when the hurricane hits. Bonnie wants to stay at their hotel and wait out the storm, but her husband insists on traveling to Miami to see the hurricane damage. Bonnie is horrified when she sees her husband taking video of the destruction, but refusing to help any of the victims. Bonnie and Max become separated during the afternoon. When Bonnie goes in search of her husband, she runs into Augustine, who takes her under his care and offers to help her. Augustine takes Bonnie to the FBI when she finds a message on her answering machine in New York from her husband claiming he has been kidnapped, but the FBI does not take it seriously since her husband also gave her instructions on calling a friend from work.

Bonnie and Augustine become close over the next couple of days as they continue to search for Bonnie's husband. Finally, the kidnapper leaves instructions through Bonnie's husband for a meeting between the three. Bonnie and Augustine manage to get Bonnie's husband back, as well as befriend the kidnapper. Bonnie's husband announces almost immediately that he must return to New York for work. Bonnie refuses to go with him, saying that she is ill. However, Bonnie has begun to doubt her relationship with her husband and she is becoming attracted to Augustine.

In the meantime, Skink, the kidnapper, has a friend whose lover has been beaten. Skink decides to go after the man who committed the beating and take revenge on him. Bonnie goes along for the adventure and to give her a chance to decide what to do about her marriage. During the course of the chase, Bonnie and Skink are taken by the criminal and his girlfriend, forced to ride out to the Keys with them. Eventually, Augustine catches up with the missing pair and tranquilizes the criminal so that Skink can take him hostage. Through the course of this adventure, Bonnie decides to remain with Augustine. Eventually they move in together.

Max Lamb

Max Lamb is Bonnie Lamb's new husband. Max becomes bored with his honeymoon at Disney World and when the hurricane hits, sees it as the perfect opportunity to add excitement to their lives. Max wants to videotape the destruction in order to entertain his friends back in New York. Max is heartless, refusing to help anyone in his enthusiasm to get the scenes on tape. This infuriates Skink, who witnesses his behavior and decides to do something about it. Skink kidnaps Max and puts him in a behavior-modifying dog collar that sends an electric current through Max's neck when Skink pushes a button. Max quickly becomes tame in Skink's care, even taking up smoking when Skink encourages him to do so, even though Max hates to smoke. Throughout his ordeal, Max's biggest concern is not his new wife, but his job. Max calls New York several times



to deal with business concerns, telling his business associate that he and his wife had a fight instead of admitting the truth. It is this driving concern about work that convinces the FBI that Max is a husband who simply used the cover of the hurricane to leave an unhappy marriage.

When the kidnapper arranges to meet Bonnie, Max is rescued, but is not exceptionally grateful, not worried about his wife, and is mostly concerned about returning to work. When Bonnie refuses to go with him, Max is not overly concerned until she misses a later flight. Max finally begins to worry that Bonnie is becoming close to Augustine at this point, but there is little he can do from New York. Max travels to Mexico on business and then returns to Florida to retrieve his wife, only to find her missing. Max leaves a message for his wife demanding that they meet. Bonnie eventually agrees, telling Max that she has fallen in love with Augustine and that she does not want to return to New York with Max. Max ends up returning to New York with Edie, whom Max marries after receiving an annulment from his marriage to Bonnie.

Augustine

Augustine is the son of a former drug runner who became a millionaire after nearly dying in a plane crash. Augustine leads a directionless life, moving from girlfriend to girlfriend without commitment, not working and not really interested in his money from the plane crash. Just before the hurricane hits, Augustine inherits his uncle's wildlife preserve. The preserve is in bad condition and is completely destroyed in the hurricane. Augustine attempts to find some of the dangerous animals that lived there and this is how he happens to meet Bonnie. Augustine takes Bonnie home with him and introduces her to an FBI friend of his. Augustine becomes close to Bonnie in a short time, accompanying her to the morgue and to the swamps where she is finally reunited with her husband. Augustine has feelings for Bonnie, but feels guilty about her marital status.

Augustine and Skink go after the man who beat the lover of Skink's state trooper friend. Augustine gets separated from Skink, Bonnie, and the bad guys, but eventually catches up with them and manages to tranquilize Snapper with his tranquilizer gun. From there, Augustine and Skink take Snapper to a deserted place in the Keys and torture him before they leave him to find his own way back to the road. After Bonnie meets with Max and tells him she does not want to return home with him, Augustine finds himself faced with a decision regarding their relationship. Despite his guilt, Augustine wants to be with Bonnie. After Bonnie is nearly killed in a confrontation with Snapper, Augustine decides that he wants Bonnie to remain with him despite her marital state. Bonnie and Augustine move in together.

Skink, The Governor

Skink is a Vietnam War vet who was elected governor of the state of Florida. During his time in office, Skink attempts to discourage migration to the state due to the damage being done to the natural resources of the state. However, many members of the state



government are not happy with this policy due to the fact that many of their main financial supporters run businesses that revolve around the growth of the state. The government turns on Skink by refusing to back any of his policies. Skink is so upset by this turn that he quits, becoming the first governor in the history of the state to quit. Skink then becomes a recluse, living in the marshes around Miami.

Skink resurfaces during the hurricane, first scaring a couple of kids by forcing them to drive him to a bridge in the center of the storm. Later, Skink kidnaps Max Lamb for videotaping the destruction. Skink does not hurt Max except for a collar around his neck that shocks him when he does something Skink does not like. Skink decides he wants to meet Bonnie, Max's wife, and arranges a meeting. During the meeting, a friend of Skink's comes along and subdues him, taking him back to Miami. Skink learns shortly after this that his friend's girlfriend has been injured and decides to go after the criminal who hurt her with Augustine and Bonnie's help.

Skink finds the criminal, Snapper, and allows himself and Bonnie to be kidnapped by Snapper. Skink goes along with everything Snapper tells him for a long time, traveling all the way to the Keys with Snapper, where he drops off an old man to be blackmailed by prostitutes. During this time, Jim Tile, Skink's friend, is shot. This causes Skink to be filled with rage when he finally takes control of the situation. Skink ties up Snapper and puts The Club in his mouth in order to torture him for what he did to Jim Tile and Tile's girlfriend. Skink makes Snapper think he is going to kill him, but Skink is not. Skink attacks Snapper in a moment of bravado, breaking his collar bone and some ribs, but Skink still does not kill Snapper. Instead, Skink leaves Snapper alone in the Keys to find his own way out. Snapper is eventually found dead, most likely from starvation.

Eddie Marsh

Eddie Marsh is a scammer who came to Florida to attempt to sleep with a Kennedy and then accuse him of rape in order to scam money from him. When this plan does not work, Eddie hooks up with an old friend to scam people out of their insurance money after the hurricane. Eddie and Snapper pick a house at which to pretend that Eddie is injured by the debris so as to trick the owner out of some money. However, the owner, Tony Torres, guesses their intention immediately and makes a counteroffer to have Eddie pretend to be his wife in order to get his insurance money on the house. Eddie and Snapper agree, but Tony is killed before the insurance man arrives, and Snapper takes off. Eddie attempts to trick the insurance man into making a false claim with her by seducing him, but Snapper returns and causes tension in the scheme.

Eddie and Snapper pretend to be Mr. and Mrs. Tony Torres for purposes of the insurance scheme, convincing the insurance man's immediate supervisor. However, before they can claim the money, they are forced to drive out to the Keys because of the arrival of an old man who attempts to kill Snapper, confusing him with the real Tony Torres. Before they leave Miami, Snapper and Eddie are confronted by Skink and Bonnie, whom they take hostage as well. Once they arrive in the Keys, Snapper and Eddie are confronted by Avila and then by Jim Tile. Snapper shoots Tile in the chest before driving



away from the scene. Edie is devastated by this turn of events and wants out of the situation. Edie gets her wish when Augustine overtakes their car and shoots Snapper with a tranquilizer. Skink and Augustine take Snapper hostage, along with Edie. Edie seduces Skink in order to convince him to set her free, learning later that Skink had intended to free her all along. Edie finds herself in the company of Max Lamb after her ordeal. Max and Edie will eventually marry after Max receives an annulment from his marriage to Bonnie.

Snapper

Snapper is a small time hood who was beaten so badly as a young man that his jaw healed crooked, giving him his unique nickname. Snapper comes to Florida to join in a scheme with Edie Marsh. The scheme does not go as it is supposed to so Snapper goes off on his own, joining Avila in his roofing scheme. However, Snapper scams a woman for seven thousand dollars without telling anyone and then rejoins Edie Marsh when he learns that she is using an insurance agent to scam the insurance company. Avila becomes angry at Snapper when he learns about the side scheme, especially when the husband of the woman Snapper scammed calls Avila with threats.

Snapper joins the scam with Edie in order to get part of the insurance money for Tony Torres's home. However, while waiting for the money, an older man attempts to kill Snapper, believing he is Tony. Snapper decides to take the man to the Keys and hide him with a couple of prostitutes until he and Edie can leave the state with the insurance money. On the way out of Miami, Snapper and Edie are approached by Skink and Bonnie, whom Snapper decides to kidnap as well. Once in the Keys, Snapper gets into a confrontation first with Avila and then with Jim Tile, whom he shoots in the chest. Snapper and Edie attempt to escape the area with Skink and Bonnie, stealing another car on the way out of town. However, Augustine was hiding in the back of the first car and uses it to follow them down the highway, eventually pulling even with the stolen car and shooting Snapper with a tranquilizer gun. Snapper is taken to a desolate place in the Keys where he attempts to escape after beating Skink with a stick, but Bonnie manages to stop him. Skink, Augustine, and Bonnie then leave Snapper alone in the Keys to find his own way out. Snapper's bones are eventually found. It is thought that he starved to death.

Jim Tile

Jim Tile is a state trooper who at one time was assigned to Skink during his unique term and was the trooper who was with Skink on the day he quit. Tile is the only friend Skink trusts and the only man to whom he will respond. Tile is having an affair with another state trooper, a young white woman, who is injured when she pulls Snapper over in a stolen car and Snapper beats her. Tile gives Skink all the information his girlfriend had on Snapper and sends him after Snapper in revenge.



Later Jim Tile begins to regret his decision to give Skink the information on Snapper. When Augustine calls Tile and tells him where he believes Snapper is, Tile decides to go out there himself. Tile finds Snapper in a motel parking lot with Skink and Bonnie. Tile attempts to approach Snapper's car and is shot in the chest. Fortunately, Tile has on a bullet-proof vest. Later, Tile learns from Skink that Snapper has been dealt with.

Ira Jackson

Ira Jackson is a mob enforcer who arranged for his mother to move to Florida a short time before the hurricane for her health. When his mother bought her mobile home, Ira Jackson questioned the salesman carefully to be sure his mother would be okay. However, Jackson and his mother were lied to and his mother was killed during the storm. Ira Jackson comes to Florida in order to get revenge on the man who Jackson blames for his mother's death. Jackson tracks down the salesman, Tony Torres, and kills him, but does not feel satisfied by the killing. Jackson then tracks down the building inspector who should have seen that the mobile home was not tied down properly. However, in the middle of attempting to crucify the inspector, Jackson is killed by a lion that escaped a wildlife reserve during the storm.

Tony Torres

Tony Torres is a mobile home salesman who sold people trailers that he knew would not withstand a hurricane even as he told his customers the homes would. Tony is upset after the hurricane when he sees that all the mobile homes he sold were destroyed, resulting in a few deaths. However, he was mostly upset about his own well being, not about the poor people who were injured. Tony's own home was also destroyed, but it is completely paid off and therefore he hopes to pocket all the insurance money. The only problem is that his wife is still listed on the deed and he will need her signature to get the money released. When Edie and Snapper attempt to defraud Tony, he sees through their scheme and convinces them to instead join him in a scam to defraud the insurance company by having Edie pose as his wife. Before the insurance man shows up, however, Tony is found by Ira Jackson, who kills Tony in a macabre crucifixion.

Avila

Avila is a disgraced building inspector who was investigated for failing to inspect the homes that he was in charge of inspecting. During the investigation, Avila was moved to mobile home inspections, but Avila took bribes and did not even go to the mobile home park to see the homes. Avila finally quit his job and became involved with Edie and Snapper in a plan to defraud insurance companies by claiming injury outside a damaged home. When this plan appears to fail, Avila starts a phony roofing company to scam hurricane survivors out of their insurance money. However, Snapper defrauds the wife of a powerful contractor and causes trouble for Avila. While attempting to deal with the fallout of this situation, Avila is kidnapped by Jackson, who intends to kill Avila as



revenge for Jackson's mother's death, but Jackson is killed by a lion before he can carry out the planned murder.

Avila then decides to go after Snapper for turning on him. Avila uses a prostitute he knows Snapper uses to track him down, finding him in a hotel in the Keys. Avila confronts Snapper and they begin to fight, with Snapper taking the advantage. Eventually Avila finds it necessary to run away. Avila jumps into the ocean from a bridge to get away from Snapper and is eventually picked up by the Coast Guard. Avila is mistaken for a Cuban refugee. Avila is happy with this mistake, taking it as an opportunity to begin a new life. Unfortunately, soon after, Avila is bitten by a rabid rabbit and dies.



Objects/Places

Torres Home

Eddie attempts to defraud the insurance company by pretending to be Tony Torres's wife.

Insurance Papers

Augustine finds the fraudulent insurance papers in Eddie's purse when he goes to the Torres home to find Bonnie and Skink.

Glass Eye

Skink has a glass eye resulting from a bad beating he took while living on the streets, and which he continually takes out and polishes on his shirt sleeves.

Bronco Cigarettes

Max works for an advertising agency that handles the campaigns for Bronco Cigarettes. As part of his punishment, Skink forces Max to smoke Bronco cigarettes in order to teach him a lesson about advertising something he had never used.

Fed Ex Envelope

Neria Torres receives a Fed Ex envelope shortly after arriving at the home she once shared with her husband Tony. Inside Neria is pleased to find two checks that total more than two hundred thousand dollars.

Answering Machine

Bonnie and Max Lamb have an answering machine in their apartment in New York on which they leave each other messages during and after Max's kidnapping.

Skulls

Augustine has a collection of skulls that he likes to juggle. Augustine will add Snapper's skull to his collection at the end of the novel.



Books

Skink has an abandoned ambulance in the middle of the Keys within which he keeps a large collection of books.

The Club

The Club is a theft protection device for cars that is designed to lock the steering wheel into place. Skink puts The Club into Snapper's mouth as a form of torture after capturing him in the aftermath of Tile's shooting.

Redial Button

Augustine figures out where Skink and Bonnie have been taken when he pushes the redial button on the Torres phone.

Dog Collar

Skink puts an electronic dog collar on Max to shock him whenever he did anything Skink disliked.

Wildlife Import Business

Augustine inherits a wildlife import business from his uncle a week before the hurricane. It is from this business that many exotic beasts escaped during the storm to roam the neighboring residential areas.

Suncoast Leisure Village

The Suncoast Leisure Village is a mobile home park where Ira Jackson's mother lived and died.

Florida

Florida is the setting of the novel, shortly after the hurricane that flattened Homestead and the surrounding area.

Themes

Love vs. Security

Bonnie Lamb spends the novel attempting to discover the difference between love and security. Bonnie has had many boyfriends in her life who were men who did not feel the need to get a good job and take care of her. Bonnie grew up believing a man must have a job in order to make a decent husband. Therefore, when Bonnie met a man who had a good job and seemed devoted to this job she decided he had to make a good husband. Bonnie found Max boring during their courtship and was often annoyed with his behavior, especially his seeming obsession with his job. However, Bonnie saw this obsession as the way a good man should behave, a man who was ready and responsible enough to take care of a wife and children. Bonnie married Max while suffering from these mistaken beliefs in what makes a good husband.

While on their honeymoon, Max learns about the destruction of the hurricane in south Florida and decides he and Bonnie should travel there to see it better. Once there, Max refuses to help any of the victims, preferring instead to videotape their wrecked homes and destroyed lives. Bonnie finds this disgusting and allows herself to get separated from Max while considering her disgust. In the meantime, Max disappears and Bonnie is left alone in a strange place in the midst of horrible destruction until Augustine finds her. With Augustine, Bonnie finds a man full of compassion who is willing to stop his own life while taking care of her and her troubles. This is a new experience for Bonnie, leaving her confused and questioning her devotion to her new husband.

Bonnie and Augustine grow close through the course of attempting to find Max. Through this closeness, Bonnie begins to notice the difference between a man who is obsessed with his work and a man who is obsessed by the woman he loves. Bonnie finally realizes that love and marriage is not about having a good job or being able to provide for his family, but about trust and mutual affection. Bonnie does not feel as though she has this with Max, but feels it with Augustine. This is why Bonnie decides to leave her husband and remain with Augustine.

Opportunism

A large part of this novel is about people who use the hurricane to their advantages. These people find a moment of pain and misery for one group of people to be their chance to make a few bucks or to make themselves look good in the eyes of others. Edie sees the hurricane as a chance to run a scam on the victims of the destruction by employing Snapper to help her pretend to have been injured by debris. This scam does not work, but quickly leads to another scam in which Edie and Snapper are employed to defraud an insurance company. Edie sees this scam as her big break, the break she has been looking for since coming to Florida months before the storm.



Max Lamb sees the storm as an opportunity to take video of the destruction in order to share with his co-workers as some sort of badge of courage. Max travels through the worst of the destruction, unaware and unconcerned about the victims in need of assistance, taking film that he imagines sharing with his co-workers during a dinner party. Max thinks this film will make him more popular with his peers.

Both Max and Edie fail in their endeavors, however. Edie fails because she is not around when the insurance checks arrive, allowing the legal recipient to take possession of the checks. Max fails when Skink catches him in the act of videotaping the destruction and kidnaps him to teach him a lesson. However, these failures do little to teach Edie or Max anything. Max continues to be a self-centered man obsessed with his advancement in business, and Edie continues to make commitments based on what she can gain from the relationship rather than the love others desire. Ironically, Edie and Max end up together.

Moral Responsibility

Moral responsibility is a person's responsibility to care about the welfare of those who cannot care for themselves. The characters within this novel are divided into two groups: those with moral responsibility, and those without. Bonnie Lamb is in the first category. Bonnie is sickened by her husband's refusal to help those harmed by the hurricane. Augustine, too, is in this category as he attempts to retrieve the animals from his uncle's wildlife business before they can harm anyone. Augustine also helps Bonnie without asking for anything in return. Skink falls in this category in his own, unique way, as well. Skink stops Max from videotaping the debris while ignoring the victims.

Max clearly is without moral responsibility, however. Max spends his time in Miami taking advantage of the victims by videotaping their suffering for his own enjoyment. Edie and Snapper, too, are immoral. Edie and Snapper spend the aftermath of the storm attempting to defraud an insurance company when their original scam to scare a homeowner out of his insurance money fails. Avila and Tony Torres both lack moral responsibility before the novel opens as it is revealed they both played a part in allowing people to live in mobile homes that could not withstand the winds of a hurricane.

Each person within the novel pays a price for his lack of moral responsibility or receives a reward for acting with morality. Edie is nearly arrested and left abandoned in Miami after being caught perpetrating scams with Snapper. Snapper is left to die in the Keys. Avila dies from an animal bite after attempting to change his identity. Torres is killed by the son of one of his mobile home customers. Bonnie, on the other hand, is rewarded by finally finding out what true love is and being allowed to remain with Augustine. Skink is rewarded by simply being allowed to return to his beloved way of life. It is these punishments and rewards that make moral responsibility a theme of the novel.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient; the author reveals the thoughts and feelings of each character, as each acts as narrator at some point. The narrator shifts often throughout the novel, moving from one character to another, often within a single chapter, occasionally within a single paragraph. Almost every character in the novel is used as a narrator at one point or another. This shifting narration opens the novel to many different viewpoints and a deeper look at the emotional side of the novel's characters, enriching the narration of the novel. Individual sections of narration are completed in first person, but the novel taken as a whole reveals the third person omniscient point of view.

This point of view works because it does enrich the characterization of the novel in a way that another point of view most likely could not achieve. However, the shifting narration can be confusing when the shift takes place in the middle of a scene or a paragraph. Often a scene will begin through the eyes of one character and before the reader is aware of the shift, it will have changed to another's point of view. This can cause the reader to have to go back and find the moment of transition in order to clarify the passage, slowing the reader and distracting from the point of the passage. However, this does not happen often enough to cause the plot to become lost in the narration.

Setting

The novel is set in Florida, mostly in and around Miami. However, the most important part of the setting in this novel is the hurricane and its aftermath. A hurricane hits the state of Florida in the first few pages of the novel, causing overwhelming devastation around South Florida. It is in the aftermath of this hurricane that the novel takes place. The plot follows the actions of several people during the aftermath of this hurricane, including felons looking for people to steal from and innocent bystanders who get caught up in the actions of these felons and other unusual situations. The aftermath of the hurricane leaves many people vulnerable to insurance scams, construction scams, and other such illegal tricks. The actions of these unscrupulous people also cause situations in which moral, kind people are drawn into unusual situations.

The hurricane and its aftermath is almost a character in itself throughout the novel, taking on a personality that affects everyone involved in the plot of the novel. The scammers use the storm to get money out of people. Augustine must search for the animals he inherited from his uncle, leading him to meet Bonnie. Bonnie finds herself in Miami because of her new husband's obsession with the devastation of the hurricane and then reliant on the kindness of Augustine when her husband disappears. If not for the setting of the hurricane and its aftermath, the novel's plot would have little substance and the characters would not have cause to be in Miami and its surrounding areas,



making it impossible for the events that take place within the plot to happen. In this way, the setting of the hurricane is a character of its own and it creates a plausible and entertaining novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. There are times in which the language is extravagant and full of intellectual language, especially when Skink is narrating. Skink is a well-educated man who is, and continues to be, well-read. Skink often quotes from obscure literary works and speaks with a tone that is both mysterious and educated. Other characters in the novel also speak with a unique tone. Augustine's voice is also educated, though not nearly as well as Skink, and Bonnie's too seems to be somewhat refined. When the narration switches to Snapper and Edie, the language changes to reflect a lower level of education and lesser station in life, becoming more colloquial.

The language in this novel works because it is simple enough for even the youngest reader to understand, but diverse enough to give each character his or her own voice. The language breathes the characters life just as much as their back story or actions. This is important in a novel of this type in which there are so many characters that the reader may at times have trouble differentiating between each one, especially when so many of the characters have so many similar attributes, such as Snapper and Avila or Edie and Neria. These characters are so similar that having a unique voice sets them apart, enriching the narration with their individuality.

Structure

This novel is divided into thirty-one chapters. Each chapter is approximately twenty pages long, covering many different facets of narration, sometimes moving through three or four locales in one chapter. There is also an epilogue that gives a short summary of the lives of each of the main characters after the end of the novel, allowing the reader to see what has happened since the final chapter in each of the character's lives. This epilogue adds a new dimension to the novel that allows the reader some satisfaction in the outcome of each character's life.

The novel is made up of one main plot line that contains many smaller subplots. The main plot begins in many small sections, becoming one main plot as the novel comes to its conclusion. At the beginning, the reader is introduced to many main characters that appear to be unrelated to the other characters. There are Bonnie and Max who are newlyweds brought to Miami in the aftermath of the hurricane due to Max's fascination with the destruction. Then there are Edie and Snapper, who see the hurricane as a chance to make some money. Augustine moves among the destruction to find the missing animals from his uncle's wildlife business. All of these characters have their own story line, but they eventually come together as the plot develops through the novel, creating one larger plot that drives the novel.



Quotes

"Edie Marsh headed to Dade County from Palm Beach, where she'd spent six months trying to sleep with a Kennedy" (4).

"Tony Torres sat in what remained of his living room and sipped what remained of his Chivas. He found it amusing that his 'Salesman of the Year' ward had survived the hurricane; it was all that remained on the rain-soaked walls" (21).

"The hurricane had transformed the trailer court into a sprawling aluminum junkyard" (49).

"The doctor wanted to know if her husband had any birthmarks. Bonnie said she hadn't noticed, and felt guilty—as if she hadn't spent time examining the details of Max's trunk and extremities. Couldn't most lovers map their partner's most intimate blemishes" (66)?

"Max Lamb believed himself to be blessed with a winning personality, a delusion that led him to assume the kidnapper had grown fond of him. Max felt it was only a matter of time before he'd be able to shmooze his way to freedom. He put no stock in Skink's oral biography, and regarded the man as an unbalanced but moderately intelligent derelict; in short, a confused soul who could be won over with a thoughtful, low key approach" (73).

"Cain Darby closed his eyes tightly to clear the sleep. Then he opened them again, very slowly. The huge shape was still there, a motionless phantasm. Common sense told him he was mistaken—they don't grow thousand pound bears in Florida. But that's sure what it looked like..." (87).

"Late on the night of August 27, with a warm breeze at his back and nine cold Budweisers in his belly, Keith Higstrom decided to go hunting. His friends declined to accompany him, as Keith was as clumsy and unreliable a shooter as he was a drunk" (131).

"Avila thought: I'm either dead or dreaming.

Because it should hurt worse than this, being nailed to a cross. Even if it's only one hand, it should hurt like a mother. I ought to be screaming at the top of my lungs, instead of just hanging here with a dull ache. Hanging like a wet flag and staring at...

It *must* be a dream" (167).

"He'd learned the trick while keeping house with the demented surgical intern, the one who ultimately knifed him in the shower. Whenever he found her gone, Augustine would touch the redial button to determine if she'd been phoning around town to score more



Dilaudid, or pawn items stolen from his house. Before long he was able to recognize the voices of her various dope dealers and fences, before hanging up. In that way, the redial button had been a valuable tool for predicting his girlfriend's moods and tracing missing property" (231).

"Again the voice, this time closer: 'Don't do it! Don't!'

The one-eyed freak, calling out.

Who's he talking to? Snapper wondered. Don't do what?

Then the gun went off at his head, and he knew" (324).

"Two years after the hurricane, while attending a Kenny G concert to benefit victims of a Colombian mud slide, Edie met the same young Kennedy she'd long ago tried so avidly to debauch. She was mildly amazed when, while greeting her, he slipped a tongue in her ear. Max said it surely was her imagination" (333).

"Nineteen months after the hurricane, while preparing a sacrifice to Chango on the patio of his luxurious new waterfront town house, Avila was severely bitten on the thigh by a hydrophobic rabbit. Too embarrassed to seek medical attention, he died twenty-two days later in his hot tub" (334).



Topics for Discussion

Why does Max want to go to Miami? What is the point in the videotape he is making? What does Max hope to do with it? What is it that Bonnie wants Max to do instead of making a video tape? Why does she not act more forcefully in expressing her desires?

Why does Skink kidnap Max? What does Skink want to prove by kidnapping Max? Is Max's life ever in danger by Skink? Why does Skink want to meet Bonnie? Does Skink get what he wants out of Bonnie? Does Skink achieve the desired result with Max? Why or why not?

Is Augustine responsible for the damage his animals do in Miami? Why does Augustine attempt to find the animals in the first place? Why does he give up so quickly? Why are these animals an important part of the plot? What do they symbolize?

What is Edie and Snapper's original scheme? How do they intend to get money with this scheme? Why does the scheme fail? Why do Edie and Snapper hesitate to join Tony Torres in his scam? Why do they decide to go through with it? Would it have worked if Tony had not disappeared?

Was Ira Jackson justified in his anger toward Tony Torres? What was the significance of crucifying Tony? What is the symbolism of using the satellite dish for the crucifixion? Why does Ira Jackson then turn his attention on Avila? Did Avila deserve the same fate as Tony Torres? Why or why not? What is the symbolism in Avila's rescue?

Discuss Skink. Why is Skink living the way he does? Is Skink crazy? How did Skink become governor of the state if he was crazy? Why did Skink get run out of office? Should he have quit? Why did Skink kidnap Max? Why did Skink not kill Snapper? Could Snapper's death be considered murder due to the fact that he was left alone in an unfamiliar place with The Club in his mouth? Why or why not?

Discuss Jim Tile. Was Jim Tile justified in giving Skink the license plate number of Snapper's car? Why does Tile do this? What does Tile expect Skink to do? Is this immoral or justifiable? What would have happened had Tile giving the number to his fellow detectives instead?