

The Talisman Study Guide

The Talisman by Stephen King

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Plot Summary

'The Talisman' by Stephen King and Peter Straub was one of the first of a series of collaborations by the 'masters' of the Horror genre through the eighties, nineties, and beyond. Written as a collaborative piece, it shares many of the associations and thematic similarities with a lot of the works of these two authors, developing ideas that each have implanted within their stories such as Corruption, Magic, and Childhood Innocence.

The Talisman follows the story of Jack Sawyer as he accompanies his mother Lily Kavanaugh-Sawyer to a dreary and depressing rain-drenched resort in New England. Lily Sawyer is dying of cancer. Jack Sawyer soon encounters the mysterious Speedy Parker a local handyman who seems to know the cure for his mother and for many of the strange woes that are befalling Jack. He reveals to Jack that there is in fact another world alongside our own called the Territories which his own father knew about, and which he must travel through to get to the other side of America if he is to save his mother.

The journey that the young Jack Sawyer takes is not only a re-enactment of the Heroes Quest, but also a psychological journey where he has to encounter his deepest fears, and learn the value of friendship. The challenges and dangers that befall him not only introduce him to the magic and wonder of the Territories, but also to such spiritual illnesses as hopelessness, incarceration, apathy.

In one sense, a road trip across America, Jack Sawyer meets a friendly werewolf named 'Wolf' and is pursued by Morgan Sloat - his father's old business partner who sees in Jack and the Territories an opportunity to gain control over the whole world.



Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 1-3

Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 1-3 Summary

At the beginning of the book, we meet Jack Sawyer and his widowed mother Lily Sawyer arriving at the Alhambra Inn and hotel on the New England Coast. They are retreating here 'on holiday' from the concerns of the entertainment agency that Lily ran with her deceased husband and friend of the family, Morgan Sloat. It also becomes apparent that Lily Sawyer, retired actress and single mother is also seriously ill.

The first three chapters introduce the reader to the world of the story and the character of Jack Sawyer and his mother. Jack is a tough, independent child of twelve at the start of the book who realises with a maturity far beyond his years that his mother is running from her past, her illness, and also from the increasing threats of her business partner Morgan Sloat. Jack slouches around the deserted resort town, contemplating his own grey feelings and his mother's inability to deal with the situation, and remembering the accident that killed his father Philip Sawyer years earlier. While he is exploring the seaside resort, he meets Lester 'Speedy' Parker, the handyman for the deserted entertainment park who seems to know Jack immediately.

In Chapter 2, 'The Funnel Opens' Jack spends his time mostly with his ailing mother, and realises that she is putting on a brave front for the world to see. She refuses to talk about her illness or the business or even why they are in New England. With alarm, Jack Sawyer notices that she is once again smoking cigarettes. On the beach (when he is kicked out of the hotel to play on his own) he starts to hallucinate, imagining that a seagull is talking to him and that a funnel opens in the sand. The funnel grows and appears hungry as Jack tries to get away and from it he hears the voice of the old friend of the family, Morgan Sloat gloating over Lily's imminent death. Jack becomes distraught, tries to talk to his mother but only receives wise cracks and cynicism in return.

In the following Chapter 3, 'Speedy Parker' Jack goes to find the custodian of the Arcadia Funworld because the mysterious man seems to have answers to his dilemmas. During their conversation Jack begins to remember an incident years ago when a person in a car attempted to kidnap him, and was stopped by a black man who remarkably resembled this Speedy Parker. Speedy Parker shows Jack a picture of a landscape that he calls the 'Territories' and claims that he knows Jack's father. As the situation at home mounts worse and worse, finally with Morgan Sloat phoning the Alhambra Inn and threatening Lily, Jack once again turns to Speedy for answers.

Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The first three chapters of the book work to introduce the main characters and also the primary motivation for the young Jack Sawyer. Jack is presented as an independent-



mindful young child who has learnt to grow up confident and self-assured after his father Philip Sawyer was killed in a car accident. This strength of spirit shows itself in the way that he attempts to cajole his mother into battling her demons, and also attempts to find out what is happening around them. However, the reader can clearly see that Jack is out of his depth and lacks an awareness of what is happening to his mother until the arrival of Lester Speedy Parker.

Lester Speedy Parker appears as an archetypal character to the story, the enigmatic 'wise man' who guides the young hero. Jack immediately feels positive about the old Arcadia Funworld custodian because Speedy seems to be the only character with some joy, optimism and freedom about him. Up until this point Jack and his mother have been surrounded by increasing threats, foreboding and darkness (both physically in the stormy, heavy weather that racks the resort town and emotionally in the morbid feelings that plague Jack).



Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 4-5

Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 4-5 Summary

The last few chapters of Part I sees Jack learning about the existence of the Territories and of the quest ahead of him if he is to save the life of his mother. By the end of these two chapters Jack has had his first taste of the magic of the Territories and has decided to travel to the other side of America to retrieve the magic Talisman.

In Chapter 4, 'Jack Goes Over' our young hero is talking to Speedy Parker, who has just shown him the photograph that he took of the Territories. Speedy Parker reveals that he did indeed know Jack's father and that the premonitions that Jack has been having are correct; great danger is surrounding him and his mother. Speedy Parker even seems to know of 'the Daydreams'. The Daydreams was the fantastical experiences that Jack had once had as a child. What was put down as wishful imagination is now seen as Jack's first engagement with the Territories itself. Speedy tells Jack about the Talisman, the magic jewel that can save his mothers life, and of the existence of his mothers' Twinner - her Territories double, the Queen Laura DeLoessian. Speedy provides Jack with a bottle of 'magic juice' which Jack drinks, to find himself in a medieval countryside by the side of an ocean. Jack marvels at the smell and taste of the giant blackberries and fruit there, and is scared by the hungry giant predator-type seagulls that are drawn to him. When he uses the juice to once again 'jump' over to the mundane world he sees that whilst in the Territories he only walked a 100 metres, in the mundane world he travelled over a mile.

Chapter 5, 'Lily and Jack' sees Jack going for breakfast with his mother at a cheap diner restaurant, where Jack informs his mother of his decision to 'travel' to find a cure for her illness. There is something different about Jack now that he has been in the Territories, and his mother seems to see that there is a hint of truth, not madness to his impossible quest. Jack gets Lily to admit that his father could also travel in the way that he intends to. Sometimes she would enter a room she was sure to find Philip in, only to find her husband coming in through the front door some moments later. His mother realizes that her son is telling the truth and lets him go on his quest with her blessing.

Afterwards, heart-heavy with the fact that he has to leave his mother behind, Jack returns once again to Speedy Parker where Speedy Parker gives him a sandwich, the bottle of magic juice, and a white guitar pick. Speedy Parker tells the boy that he has to show the guitar pick to a man named Farren in the Territories, and there Farren will take him to see the Queen and help him on his journey to retrieve the Talisman.

At the end of this section, there is an Interlude entitled 'Sloat in this World' which features the exploits of Morgan Sloat for the first time in the novel. Morgan Sloat is currently thinking about his business as he drives to the residence of Asher Dondorff; a small-time character actor whom Morgan is tired of dealing with on behalf of his agency.



During these thoughts Morgan thinks about the first time that he met Philip Sawyer at Yale University where they had all been interested in acting and producing. After college Philip, Morgan and another man named Tommy had created their first business: an entertainments agency and Philip had introduced Morgan to the magical realm that he had discovered called 'The Territories'. Morgan had seen the possibilities immediately when he had learned of Twinners and the facility for a simple object in the mundane world to have enormous power in the next. He started to propose to Philip the idea of introducing modern technology, science, armaments and Philip was horrified. Not long after that Philip was killed in a car accident, as was Tommy the sleeping partner of the business.

Morgan Sloat displays characteristic arrogance as he thinks about the intimidation racket he is playing against a local Chinese restaurant in order to buy their mortgage, and this section ends with his hopes for Lily's demise (so that he can control the business) and greeting Asher Dondorff with murderous intentions.

Part I Jack Lights Out, Chapters 4-5 Analysis

These final two chapters in Part I serves as an extended introduction to the story proper, proving the existence of the Territories to Jack, making the connection between Jack's mother and the Queen of the Territories, and solidifying Morgan Sloat's role in the story.

Jack Sawyer is already in a heightened state of distress by the time that he turns to Speedy Parker, having experienced strange hallucinations in the first few chapters. This seems to make it easier for him to accept what Speedy is saying. The authors also refer several times to Jack's past; to his late father and the Daydreams in order to justify Jack's willingness to accept Speedy's story and drink the magic juice that will take him to the Territories.

When he finally does indeed jump over for the first time, it feels like a sea change within the progress of the book. Where before the surrounds of Jack and Lily were the monotonous grey of the hotel, suddenly there is color and vibrancy. Perhaps this is a referring to the fact that the possibility of change and or hope are interlinked. Speedy himself refers to the change that he sees in Jack 'You are movin' now' to refer to the dynamism and direction that the protagonist is now exhibiting.

Another interesting feature of these two chapters is the way that Lily accepts her sons seemingly insane decision to travel across America to find a cure for her terminal condition. By reading Chapter 5 we can see that some subconscious part of Lily knows about the Territories, about the activities of her late husband Philip and perhaps even of the intrinsic evil of Morgan Sloat. Lily's tough sarcasm is really a mask for her inability to put faith in the magic that her husband believed in. When she is confronted by her own son, we feel that this woman is now too tired to disbelieve any more, especially as a small part of her has faith that her son will be okay.



The Interlude at the end of this section is the first in a number of Interludes that suddenly feature the narrative of their nemesis Morgan Sloat. It serves the plot development as a whole to remind the reader of the deep and treacherous evil that the protagonists are facing, and shows the reader (but not the protagonists) that there really are no limits to which Sloat will not break in order to get his way.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 6-7

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 6-7 Summary

The first two chapters of Part II presents almost a pleasant picture of life and the inhabitants of the Territories as Jack starts his journey, until we delve a little deeper and see that underneath the surface political tensions are heating up.

Chapter 6 'The Queen's Pavilion' begins with Jack in the Territories and hitching a ride to the local encampment. He immediately understands that the people here have a kind of technological level equal to the middle ages, and that they speak in a language that he automatically understands. He travels without speaking to the driver of the cart and gets to the local encampment. What was the fun fair in his own world has now turned into a fair with wrestling matches, hammer-throwing, and jugglers around a large pavilion. Jack approaches it to find a number of other people with the same intention as himself, and the angry palace guards turning them all away. he manages to slip in unnoticed by pretending to be attached to a group with the right papers, and is discovered by a thin looking guard with a scar running down his face. This guard is the Captain Farren, whom Speedy Parker told him that he must see.

When Jack tells Farren of his mission and shows him the guitar pick (which has now turned into some kind of tooth), the Captain believes him and makes the connection between Speedy Parker and his Twinner 'Parkus' a wise man whom is known for his loyalty to the Queen. The Captain agrees to show Jack the Queen as per Speedy's commands but also tells the boy that he must act well in order to get past the guards.

Jack and the guard Captain pretend that Jack is Farren's half-witted child whom the Captain is scolding. Whilst they maintain this charade it is obvious that half of the guards are really in the employ of someone called 'Morgan of Orris'.

Chapter 7 'Farren' continues Jack's and Farren's charade as the guard captain takes the boy to a secret hatchway which he can look out and see the chamber of the Queen. When he does so he sees, for a moment, the weak and resting face of the Queen in her bed. Her face is that of his own mother, Lily Sawyer.

Hurrying the boy on his quest, Farren reveals to Jack that Morgan of Orris is a nasty outpost-lord and deputy to the Queen who is turning the palace guards against Captain Farren and who is slowly taking over the kingdom. They are about to make their escape when they are confronted by a thin man dressed in white called Osmond who appears to be some sort of chief of interrogations for Morgan of Orris. Osmond proceeds to whip Jack for being slovenly, and is about to do some real damage when suddenly a carter arrives, telling the monster that a cart full of ale has turned over on the road. Osmond is angry because it is also the road that Morgan of Orris will be arriving on soon, and Captain Farren takes the opportunity to make his exit with the frightened Jack.



Farren reveals to Jack that Osmond is another element of the evil that has risen to power now that the Queen is ill, and they walk out onto the only highway to see a cart overturned and bodies on the road. The Captain gives Jack a lucky coin and tells him to make his journey quickly, and to hide if he hears Morgan of Orris coming. Within a few hours traveling along the road, Jack does indeed hear the conveyance of Morgan approaching like thunder, and runs into the woods to hide. Suddenly, he is surrounded by the twisting and grabbing roots of trees as if summoned by the evil Morgan of Orris, and has to use the bottle of Magic Juice in order to escape back into the mundane world.

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 6-7 Analysis

These two chapters in the first section of Part II, contain a lot of information about the 'Territories' side of the story that Jack is having to learn quickly. The primary lesson for Jack in these two chapters is the existence and connection between Twinners in each world, and the nature of the evil that he is facing. The experiences that Jack has in the Territories almost acts as a metaphor for the dangers that he is facing, or as a way to reveal their true nature. Jack sees that the Territories version of his own mother is under threat by those closest to her and is herself gravely ill (which sheds light on his real mother's own condition). Jack also makes the connection between Morgan Sloat and Morgan of Orris; but Morgan of Orris is surrounded by trepidation, darkness, and threat (again enhancing the danger implied by his mundane-world counterpart).

It seems as we read these two chapters that suddenly it is becoming clear what is happening to Jack's own mother, and the danger that Jack himself is in. Despite all of this, the events are non-stop and fast paced, and it is only when Jack manages to stop at the end of the section (freeing himself from the constricting vines and jumping back into the mundane world) does the weight of his task settle upon him. As he crawls into an abandoned shed, at this point Jack looks the youngest and most vulnerable of the whole narrative.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 8-10

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 8-10 Summary

The next three chapters starting with 'The Oatley Tunnel' 'Jack in the Pitcher Plant' and ending with 'Elroy' are Jack's first introduction to serious threat and danger in the novel: his first challenge.

The challenge starts in Chapter 8 'The Oatley Tunnel' where Jack is almost run over and has to travel through a motorway tunnel embankment. Inside he imagines a creature with yellow eyes stalking him, which panics the boy and forces him to race out of the other side. He gets a lift from a well-meaning driver and tells him 'the story' of how his name is Lewis Farren and that he is attempting to make his way to a nearby town to see an unwell relative.

In Chapter 9, Jack gets into the small town of Oatley to find it a backwater town where there is no work save for the local factory and nothing to do for the locals except to drink at the one bar; the Oatley Tap. It is here that he meets Smokey and Lori. Smokey owns the Oatley Tap and is a thin, cruel man who convinces Jack to work for a week. After the first week Jack (still too small to be doing heavy bar work) drops a beer keg, losing all of his wages. Whilst Jack knows that he should cut his losses and quits, Smokey tells him that if he works the weekend he will be paid in full, and if he skips out now that he would tell his friend the local policeman about the runaway child.

Jack agrees to continue to work, starting to feel that the place is really a trap when he receives a phone call at the bar. A strange and terrifying voice calls down that he has been found and that he should have run away when he had the chance. He continues to work the last shift, seeing that the drinkers who arrive all are tinged with desperation, anger or pain when he is cornered by the aggressive stranger called Elroy.

The story is continued in Chapter 10 'Elroy' as the stranger at the Tap confronts Jack with strangely glowing yellow eyes that 'he should have been gone' and is about to attack him when the assault is disturbed by another call for a keg of beer. Jack takes this opportunity to get lost in the crowd, performing his duties before surreptitiously making his way back to the stock room where he has stashed his nap sack and his belongings. He decides to make a run for it, despite Smokey's warnings and despite not being paid, knowing that the Oatley Tap is in fact a trap. As soon as the boy makes his decision, he is cornered by Elroy again who chases him into the yard behind the bar, and begins to change; sprouting fur and hooves as he becomes a sort of goat-animal-monster.

Jack succeeds in getting away, all the while hearing the snatch of words 'when I was six' playing over and over in his head as he swigs the magic juice and 'jumps' into the Territories.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 8-10 Analysis

These three chapters comprise our protagonist's first real challenge on the 'Road of Trials' and one that he barely escapes from. We see here the authors introducing the idea that not everything is as it seems in the mundane world, and that the dangers that are facing Jack are not just physical, but are in fact primarily spiritual in origin.

The narration is full of foreboding and danger as Jack is introduced to the town of Oatley, the bar of the Oatley Tap and the owner, Smokey. The town is full of boarded up businesses whilst the Oatley Tap itself is dirty and demeaning. Still the question remains of why Jack decides to work there at all? Jack believes that he will get money, or at least be fed in return for working for Smokey, and does not realise that Smokey is relying upon the fact that his staff need him for their employment. It is obvious to us the readers that Smokey has no regard for his longest-serving staffer Lori, whom he casually slaps and who, in a sickening twist to the story, seems to enjoy the attention even if it is abusive attention.

The danger surrounding Jack is complete when the phone call announces that he has been found and the Elroy-Thing attacks him. The threats and the foreboding have finally become real, and thus Jack is empowered to face them, although he survives more out of luck than he does any kind of skill. At this point we might feel that the authors are trying to indicate that Jack Sawyer is still too young and out of his depth on this journey, and is only barely coping.

Above all, these three chapters start to examine the theme of Travelling and Corruption for the main character. The notion of 'travelling' and 'moving' appear to be good things for Jack, they imply a sense of direction and purpose. It is only when he has stopped moving and he is static that he starts to see that stasis leads to stagnation, corruption and the hopelessness of lost dreams (exemplified by the weary crowd at the Oatley Tap).



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 11-13

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 11-13 Summary

The next three chapters in Part II remove some of the immediate horror and threat from around Jack Sawyer, and instead mollify it with Jack's increasing understanding of what happened to his father and how dangerous the Territories really are.

Chapter 11 'The Death of Jerry Bledsoe' begins where Chapter 10 left off (Jack escaping the Elroy-thing) and remembering a conversation that he had overheard when he was six. He was falling asleep behind their sofa when he woke up to hear Philip Sawyer excitedly telling Morgan about the Territories, how the Territories have magic instead of technology or science, and how there seems to be a synergy between events, people and objects in between the two realms. Morgan proposes that they start shipping their modern technology to the Territories in order to make money, which the dreamer-idealist Philip Sawyer finds abhorrent. Philip introduces the idea that taking action in the Territories has effects in their world, and that even the Territories have their neighbouring magical realms where a small effect becomes magnified again and again. His father used the example of Jerry Bledsoe.

The story of Jerry Bledsoe, Jack remembers, is the story of their electrical handyman who was freakishly electrocuted out of nowhere one day, around about the same time that Philip Sawyer himself was moving back and forth from the Territories. Jack saw his father go into a garage and not come out for hours, instead come casually sauntering up the road. At that same time they hear of the tragic death of Jerry Bledsoe. Jack begins to have his suspicions of what Morgan Sloat is attempting to do in the Territories and what the impacts of jumping from one realm to the other has.

In Chapter 12, 'Jack Goes To Market' Jack gets a lift in the Territories this time, by a Carter family. He spends the day with them where they quiz him on who he is and where he has come from, only to ask him to leave their carriage when he tells them that his father was a 'political' person who died at the Queen's Palace.

Chapter 13, 'The Men in the Sky' follows Jack's adventures as he goes to the local market and sees some of the local produce and people. Here he meets a man selling a magic mirror (which shows Jack to be a cat), and buys a meat roll. He revels in the experience before going on his way again along quiet, beautiful country roads and finally sees a tower with men flying from it (they each have gigantic wings strapped to their arms). Just as Jack is revelling on this vision he sees the conveyance of Morgan and Elroy speeding along towards him on the road. He quickly runs off of the road and feels the passage of Morgan and Elroy more than sees him. Realizing that Morgan is close by, he uses the magic juice to jump over into the mundane world once again.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 11-13 Analysis

These three chapters act somewhat as a balm for the reader and for the character of Jack (in contrast to the experience that Jack had in the previous three chapters!). Jack even has a deeply spiritual experience whilst walking on the country roads in Chapter 13 when he realises the healing and wholesome effects that the Territories is having on his soul. This, coupled with the revelations that Jack experiences at the beginning of Chapter 11 gives these chapters an almost metaphysical or mystical feel.

Chapter 11 uses the technique of the flashback to allow the author to show what the real danger is in this novel that Morgan Sloat/of Orris will find a way to completely control the Territories and thus create huge synergistic changes in the real world. The story of Jerry Bledsoe reveals that just by travelling in between the two places can have dramatic effects, as if the death of the electrician was somehow connected to Philip Sawyer.

These chapters continue the theme that the Territories are essentially wholesome and healing, exploring the idea that 'magic' is connected with optimism, naturalness, and a sense of wonder whilst 'corruption' is connected with stasis, illness, and manipulation.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 14-15

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 14-15 Summary

In Chapter 14 'Buddy Parkins,' Jack jumps from the Territories to near Angola and Lake Ontario, where he descends into the town to find work. The narrative starts once more as he leaves Angola, somehow even more disturbed than when he went in. A man named Buddy Parkins picks him up and in one of the rare examples of generosity in the text, Buddy Parkins offers to drive the runaway as far as he is able, offering him food and even a home to stay in with himself and his wife. During this exchange we see how Jack himself has changed and appears to be 'glow' youthfully and persuasively to the people around him - an after effect of spending time in the Territories. Jack is upset in these two chapters at the word of a strange little earthquake that shook five constructions from the top of a tall tower. Jack associated his jumping back and forth in between the realms as the cause of this disaster, and the constructions workers with the five flying men that he saw in the previous chapter.

Jack decline Buddy Parkins offer and gets dropped off at a large interstate mall where he buys a new pair of trainers (realising that he looks as homeless as he actually is currently). Jack feels disdain for the excesses of the mall that he sees around him, and attracts suspicion and hostility as he wanders through the aisles of shops. Stopping at a phone booth he calls his mother Lily and she tells him not to worry (putting on her characteristic sarcastic demeanor) when all of a sudden the phone is cut off and Morgan Sloat's voice comes over the line: he threatens Jack to return home of his free will or else he might not return at all. The phone then explodes from the wall. Jack hurries away from the phone booths to the outside of the mall, where he runs into a blind Negro musician with a surprising likeness to Speedy Parker.

Chapter 15 'Snowball Sings' details the encounter that Jack has with the musician outside of the mall. To start with the young boy mistakes the blind musician for Speedy Parker, despite claims to the contrary. Jack tells the musician his story of woe and the musician reassures him that it might not be anything to do with him that the five construction workers died in an earthquake. Before he is hauled off the local police, Old Snowball also tells Jack that he doesn't need the magic juice to travel, and then reveals his face in the back of the police car to be that of Speedy Parker.

Jack continues on his way but his next lift that he gets on the free-way with a Mr Emory Light turns into a dangerous encounter when Emory Light tries to sexually assault him. Jack guides Emory to pull over at a small truck stop and then runs for the woods, hiding in the brush until Emory gives up and drives on. He is about to continue when he feels something coming. Within seconds the large black car belonging to Morgan Sloat arrives and Jack is forced to jump once more into the Territories.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 14-15 Analysis

These two chapters have a bitter sweet quality and Jack is attempting to come to terms with the idea that he might be having effects in both worlds because of his travelling. Jack's main enemy in these two chapters is really himself and his own emotions as he struggles with his courage and his homesickness.

The contrast between the Territories and the mundane world is discussed again, this time with the mundane world appearing to be soulless, dirty and somewhat perverted as Jack encounters old beer cans and trash on the sides of the motorway, or cruel and taunting pedestrians in the malls. The unseemly effects of the Territories is explored also, as it is revealed that Jack is becoming a magnet for the more mundane human predators of the highways. Even good natured lift-givers like Buddy Parkins senses something different about the boy (a theme which becomes important later as Jack becomes able to 'use' that energy that he acquires by spending time in the Territories).



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 16-17

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 16-17 Summary

As soon as Jack jumps into the Territories, he is bowled over. He appears to be in the midst of a cattle-like herd of animals that look a mixture of cows and sheep. He hears a voice shouting at them to move and sees, trying to clear a path through the animals a herdsman that looks exactly like the Elroy-thing.

Jack is terrified of the things as it approaches him and seizes his hand, but sees quickly that the large hairy man-thing is not Elroy. It pumps Jack's hand and introduces itself, in a simplistic way as Wolf or the family of Wolfs. The creature appears to be harmless, and only a few years older than Jack, although he is considerably bigger. Wolf tells him unconcernedly that he is almost at the time of his 'Big Moon' when he will start to change into an animal. Jack realises that Wolf is actually a werewolf, from a family of werewolves. The good-natured Wolf asks Jack how his father Philip is, as Philip and Morgan came through the Wolf lands many years before and Phil became friends with the Wolf family. Before Jack tells him, Wolf senses the sadness in Jack's wood and howls, he knows that Jack's father is dead.

In the next section 'Interlude: Sloat in This World (II)' carries on the story of Jack's escape right from under Morgan's clutches. The man pulls from his pocket a toy key that he had bought from an unknown curiosity shop somewhere, sensing the Territories magic that was on it. Morgan's narrative reveals how the key turns into a lightning rod when it is translated into the Territories, and that Jerry Bledsoe must have picked it up the day that he had been electrocuted. Morgan then starts to rip his way into the Territories.

In Chapter 17 'Wolf and the Herd,' Jack and Wolf are still talking about Jack's father, Jack learning that his father and Morgan travelled across the Territories and had become friends with the Wolfs. Philip had seemed interested in all parts of Territories life, whilst Morgan offered members of the Wolf family jobs, taking them away to become 'bad wolfs'. Wolf also reveals how the herd that he is looking after is the Queen's herd, and that the Wolfs have been charged with looking after them for generations, swearing never to hunt them or other humans as long as they are in service to the Queen.

It is then that the world is ripped open, and out steps Morgan Sloat, transforming into Morgan of Orris as he does. Morgan of Orris is a thinner version of Sloat, wearing coal black robes and brandishing the lightning rod, which he uses to shoot bolts at the two of them. He shouts threats at Jack and scatters the cattle all around them which proceed to trample their keeper, Wolf into the stream. Jack rushes to his friend's side, grabs him and jumps through to the Territories, with the help of the very last of Speedy's magic juice.



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 16-17 Analysis

These two chapters represent a change of direction in the narrative, as the character of Jack meets his friend Wolf, who is to have one of the largest impacts on the boy of all of the characters that he later encounters. The introduction of Wolf's character allows the authors to examine the themes of innocence, wholesomeness and how they contrast with the mundane world, with Morgan Sloat, Osmond and technology. There are also shades of the cautionary tale which warns the reader not to judge a book (or a Wolf) by their appearances!

At this point in the story Jack has survived the Oatley Tap and is dealing with the idea that he is halfway from his goal, homesick, and might be causing tragedy all around. He is, in short; vulnerable and lonely. Wolf allows Jack to understand the value of friendship and to accept the fact that he needs the support of his peers around him.

There is also an interesting contrast in these chapters between the 'good Wolfs' and the 'bad Wolfs'. The bad 'Wolfs' and the creatures like the Elroy-thing, who have followed Morgan Sloat/Orris's lead and taken to attacking humans (and eating we are led to wonder?). This difference is added to by the way that Morgan Sloat enters the Territories; a ripping, rending and tearing action totally unlike how Jack enters the Territories (which adds to the sense of danger and threat implied by Morgan).



Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 18-19

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 18-19 Summary

For the larger part of Chapter 18 'Wolf Goes to The Movies' Jack spends his time trying to negotiate Wolf through mundane society with varying degrees of success.

Chapter 18 starts by Wolf howling at the sudden, dirty onslaught of the motorway around him, and the chemical stinks of this world. It becomes obvious to Jack that Wolf is highly sensitive to all of the bright lights, noises and smells around him, and cannot stop himself from reacting like a jittery animal. Wolf refuses to hitch a ride with any of the cars that they come across, as being cramped inside the vehicle with the smells of sweat and exhaust fumes terrifies him. When they finally try and fail once more Jack finally loses his temper with his travelling companion and starts shouting at him, before Wolf tells him that the man in the car had the 'Black Disease' (cancer) and Wolf couldn't go anywhere near it. Finally Jack finds that the only way to mollify Wolf's terror is to allow Wolf to give back a piggyback and run his way through the back lanes and country roads. Wolf runs unerringly west, and can run tirelessly for two hours before having to put the boy down. Despite this good deed Jack is getting sick with chills and fever. He decides the only thing to do is to take Wolf to a movie cinema where he can rest and hopefully recover while Wolf is occupied.

As soon as Wolf enters the cinema he starts attracting attention by the staff and the other viewers there. He devours a bag of popcorn and his flaring nose appears funny to the staff who guide him to a seat. As Jack snores off, he has no idea of the panic that his companion is in, as the narrative switches to reveal that Wolf believes that he has been taken to a cave which smells of forest smoke (cigarettes). Suddenly the 'magic window' at one end of the cave opens to reveal the fire (the start of the Lord of the Rings Cartoons), crashing brass, shouting Orcs and Wolf jumps up and starts howling. Jack and Wolf are forced to leave the cinema, claiming that Wolf is an epileptic and that explains his strange behaviour and the fact that he wet himself in panic. By this point however Jack is nearly fainting with fever, and as he collapses Wolf scoops him up and runs westward again into the quieter countryside.

Chapter 19 'Jack in the Box' begins with Jack waking up by the side of a country road, and seeing that Wolf has become unmistakably hairier, bigger, and more feral. They continue west for the rest of that day through small villages and country lanes until Jack says that he will have to go into the closest town of Daleville. By reading a newspaper he sees that it is nearly full moon and soon Wolf will transform into the werewolf. Jack talks to Wolf, who scares the boy by talking obsessively about food and hunting, and Jack sees that he has to buy a padlock to lock Wolf up for the three days during which he will change. They find a deserted barn as Wolf is slowly becoming more distant and more wolf-like and Wolf tells him that Jack is now the herd, and must be locked up for three days, or else Wolf will catch and eat him. Despite Jack's misgivings about being



hungry for three days, this they do, and Jack holds Wolf's hand for as long as he can until the sun goes down before Wolf padlocks the door and slides the key back to Jack.

The narrative now splits, following Jack for the most part as he spends three days in total isolation, attempting to fill his time with sleeping or naming all of the songs he has ever heard by Fats Wallah, or counting his steps as he traces the walls of the room. The next day a joint of nameless meat is pushed under the door, and again the next day, which Jack devours. For Wolf however, he is 'taken by the moon' and spends the next three days hunting and eating every smaller mammal in the little wooded creek nearby: squirrels, mice, even cats and badgers. When he finally returns to free Jack he claims to have not eaten any humans, and carefully nurses Jack to health as he has spent three days in the dark.

Part II The Road of Trials, Chapters 18-19 Analysis

The last two chapters of *The Road of Trials* are unmistakably written for the horror genre, but they also have a touching, fairytale-like quality as Jack has to try and work out how to treat Wolf with respect and keep his cool with his dangerous and panicked friend. The tragedy of Wolf's eventual demise is foreshadowed here right from the very first time that Wolf emerges into the mundane world: it is obvious that he cannot survive in this world, and that he will never truly belong. This is seen in the way that even the smells and the sounds seem to be attacking Wolf (a metaphor for the difference between industrial society and agrarian culture perhaps). Yet there is a sense of honesty and rightfulness about Wolf, and we feel alarmed when Jack responds angrily towards his friend for not being able to adapt to the mundane world. Wolf is able to sense illnesses, diseases and 'wrongness' in a manner that it seems that Jack and mundane people should be able to but have somehow lost the facility for; in this way Wolf is literally a messenger from another way of being, acting in the book as a challenge for Jack to become more natural and more simple in his attitudes.

The terrible freedom that Wolf symbolizes is not all beneficial however, as it is clear from Chapter 19 that his sort of freedom could not be allowed to exist in this world. In a way this also foreshadows the events of Part III. Despite his horrific nature and his 'monstrousness' we still feel empathy for the character of Wolf, more so than for Richard Sloat, as Richard has a choice of whether or not to act and believe whereas Wolf seemingly can only act instinctively.



Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 20-23

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 20-23 Summary

Chapter 20 'Taken by the Law' starts off optimistically, with Jack and Wolf going into Daleville and there spending the last of their money to buy burgers. Here Wolf gets laughed at by some local kids and he ends up bellowing at them, which is noticed by a local man in a truck. He offers to give the pair a lift, and seeing that Wolf is nervous about cars, tells Wolf that he can ride in the open back. This they do, Jack seeing that the man is transporting bags of sticky vegetation in the front cab. Wolf loves his journey in the open air.

When the pair reach their exist point, the man offers Jack a rolled-up cigarette to give to Wolf when he starts feeling angry and tense (like he saw in the parking lot). Despite the man's good intentions, this obviously ends up getting the pair into even worse trouble than ever before. Wolf and Jack are walking westward down a country road when a cop car notices them and slowly drives by before stopping and asking them questions. When the officer is unsatisfied with Jacks answers, and notices that Wolf will not get into the police car to go to the local station, the officer hits wolf with a truncheon and forces jack inside, where Jack promptly eats the 'cigarette'.

Jack and Wolf are remanded to a local hostel for the next thirty days by a judge, and they discover that the police officer and the judge are both being paid by the owner of the hostel (Sunlight Gardener) to pick up runaway boys and leave them in his care. At the home they work on the form, participate in evangelism and eventually might be allowed to leave.

Chapter 21 'The Sunlight Home' introduces jack and Wolf to their new home for the next month, where they are surrounded by other cruel-looking bully boys, Hector and Singer. Sunlight Gardener himself is a man in a white suit with a slightly hysterical laugh, which Jack instantly recognises as belonging to Osmond of the Territories. Sunlight Gardener is Osmond's Twinner. In a daze because of the 'cigarette' he ate, Jack stumbles through the procedures where they are forced to hand over all of their belongings (including the lucky pick and the silver dime) and are taken to a concrete room with a simple bunk bed where they are to stay.

In Chapter 22 'The Sermon' jack begins to see just how twisted and corrupt the Sunlight Home for Wayward Boys really is, as the next day they are given breakfast and are led down to give confession: a practice where each boy is asked to admit to something terrible and sinful that they have done. Neither Jack nor Wolf have anything that they wish to admit to, but they see the victimised boys all about them gratefully telling the most puerile of sins just for the recognition of their peers. Afterwards, during dinner Jacks meal is knocked from his hands by Hector Bast and they are taken that night to



'Night chapel'. This is held in the basement where Sunlight Gardeners sermon to the young congregation is televised and broadcast to the world, as he ecstatically calls for punishment and forgiveness in equal measures on those who have sinned.

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 20-23 Analysis

The first three chapters of Part III introduce a whole new type of horror to the book, not that of monsters and lone beats stalking Jack, but rather a form of oppressive horror in the form of incarceration, forced labour and abuse. The hypocrisy of the home (that it is supposedly religious, and set up in order to look after 'wayward boys') only heightens the travesty and sense of mounting shock that the reader feels.

These three chapters also are reminiscent somewhat of the Oatley Tap, in the way that they present a spiritual threat as much as a physical one to Jack and Wolf, and with every menacing encounter we can see the situation around Jack and Wolf getting worse and less hopeful. They are in a sense trapped not just in body, but also in soul. The contrast to the previous chapters cannot be more different, especially for Wolf who we can see is possibly in the very worst possible environment that he could be in. This level of danger and threat foreshadows the tragic end that the book has in store for this character.



Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 23-25

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 23-25 Summary

Jack decides that the only possible way to escape the Sunlight Home is to detour through the Territories, but also understands that the Territories version of the Sunlight Home is probably far worse. They are out picking rocks from the field one day in November when suddenly Ferd Jenklow, the sarcastic friend of Jack and Wolf runs for the perimeter wall. The narrative then flashbacks to the time that Ferd told them how The Sunday Report (a television documentary team) came to the home because of a letter that he had smuggled out to his parents, exposing the straight jackets, the box and the abuse. However the letter was only sent back immediately by his god fearing parents and Ferd was then himself imprisoned within 'The Box'.

Later that day Jack is cornered after confession by Hector Bast and Singer, but Wolf gets in the way and fights them, crushing Hector's hand. Sunlight Gardener arrives and the largest boys jump on Wolf, using a syringe of tranquillizer to knock him out. Wolf is then carried to the Box where he spends the next night, howling. Meanwhile Sunlight Gardner interrogates Jack as to where he comes from and what he is doing, which Jack resists.

In Chapter 24 'Jack Names the Planets,' Wolf is let out of the Box and Jack can see immediately that Wolf is sick and is nearing his change once again. The confinement of the Sunlight Home is killing his free spirit. The rest of the following week Jack is interrogated every night or bullied during the day, as one boy or another will trip him up or attempt to push him over in the dinner line. The chapter ends as Jack tried to convince Randolph the cook to let him and Wolf escape, to which Randolph replies that his life isn't worth it. That night Jack is beaten up by Hector Bast, while Sunlight Gardener threatens him with the flame from a lighter.

In Chapter 25 'Jack and Wolf Go To Hell,' Jack decides that he cannot wait any longer and decides that they must flip into the Territories. They choose their moment before they are to go out into the field for the day and both go into the bathroom, where Jack wills the jump to happen (as he hasn't got any of the magic juice left). They manage to jump, only to find themselves in a nightmarish version of hell where large demon-type things are whipping boys to push carts up a spiral rad cut into the side of a pit. The slaves attached to the carts are the boys that have tried to escape from the home.

Terrified, they flip back into the sunlight Home, to be confronted by Gardener and a team of boys who jump on the pair. First Sunlight Gardener uses the syringe on Wolf and then on Jack, causing them both to fall unconscious.



Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 23-25 Analysis

Chapters 23 - 25 appear to be some of the most horrific in the entire book, as the dangers surrounding Jack and Wolf appear insurmountable and inescapable. The reader realises almost before the protagonists does how much danger they are in, but only by piecing together the intimations and the suspicions (the use of the words 'straight jacket' and 'punishment'), altogether these chapters fairly shiver with horror and threat.

An interesting feature is how the different characters react to the threatening situation around them. Jack occupies a similar position to the reader (reinforcing his protagonist role) in seemingly dumb shock whilst other characters display fear, submission and even a form of acceptance of the daily cruelty around them. This is perhaps a message about the necessity of hope and courage in the face of adversity, reminding us of some of the worst effects that cruelty can have on the human psyche. Ultimately, this dilemma is seen in the character of the chef Randolph who helps Ferd Jenklow but who refuses to help Jack and Wolf. Even though he appears sympathetic to the plight of the boys, we are reminded what people are driven to ignore in the name of money or through their own misery. In the end, even though he is a semi-likeable character, Randolph has to be condemned for his inability to help the boys around him.



Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 26-28

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 26-28 Summary

At the start of Chapter 26 'Wolf in the Box,' Jack swims into consciousness long enough to see that he is in Sunlight Gardener's private office where the manager of the Wayward Home, Sonny and Hector Bast are gloating over their apparent victory. Jack overhears Sunlight say that Jack has had enough tranquilliser to keep him asleep until that evening, and that Wolf is being kept in the box. When he next wakes up, he is now forced into a straight-jacket and is being asked questions by Sunlight as to where Speeder Parker is, how much his mother knows of the Territories and what the objects that he brought with him (the Lucky dime and the guitar pick) do in the Territories. Jack resists the questioning, only to receive a burn from a lighter (administered by Sunlight Gardener) and repeated punches by Hector Bast.

Elsewhere, Wolf is in the metal Box and is going frantic with claustrophobia. His heightened emotional state forces the Change to start to happen and he breaks the bolts holding him imprisoned. The boys of the home are either helping Rudolph in the kitchens or are hearing confession when they hear the loud thud against the walls of the Sunlight Home of Wolf breaking free. The adult cook Rudolph decides to go and hide, just before Wolf bursts in and then races to the confession hall. Here he attacks the biggest boys who hurt him or Jack (leaving the others). Sunlight Gardener leaves off his torture of Jack, telling the boys that he is going to bring the car around and leaving the gun for them to defend themselves. Jack knows as well as his tormentors that Sunlight Gardener has run away as Wolf breaks into the adjacent room the Night Chapel and destroys the equipment. A fire starts and the automatic alarms call out for the police.

Wolf breaks into the room holding Jack and saves him from being shot, but getting shot himself repeatedly several times. Wolf kills Jack's attackers and then lays down to die, telling Jack that he loves him and that he will never forget him.

In Chapter 27 'Jack Lights Out Again,' we see Jack in an almost catatonic state as he hears the police arrive to the destroyed Sunlight Home. Wolf has faded into nothing (returning to the Territories perhaps) and all around him there are dead bodies. He gathers up his things, feeling numb, and sneaks out to the highway where he receives a lift from a truck driver going west. Jack can hardly speak he is so deep in shock and mourning.

In Chapter 28 'Jack's Dream,' Jack Sawyer is still deep in mourning as he carries on moving west across the country. He receives a heavy woollen loden coat from one driver, and enough money to buy a steak. The local paper that he reads tells the story of the horrific finds at the Sunlight Home. Jack receives a ride from a trucker who drops him off at a motel, where he spends the night dreaming restlessly about Wolf, himself



and Richard. Wolf appears to be running toward him over the sulphuric lands, telling him to watch out and that more creatures are after him.

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 26-28 Analysis

Chapters 26 to 28 are the conclusion to a miniature story-arc inside Part III which we could call the 'Story of Wolf'. It follows the rules of the classic thriller-horror genre in the way that the end is predictable and unsurprising (we had shadows of Wolf's death shown to us when he first accompanied Jack into the mundane world). However that does not make these chapters any less emotionally impacting. Wolf's death serves as an object lesson to Jack and for the whole story about the nature of friendship and asks the question of how far are we willing to go for our friends? We cannot help feeling that Jack's sense of confusion and trying to negotiate or manage the situation was the wrong course of action, and indeed they should have run from the home just as Ferd Jenklow had done.

Not only are these chapters truly devastating as we are shown Wolf's brave and loyal death, but they also take the nature of the evil that faces Jack to a whole deeper level. Before this point Osmond and Morgan were both quite theatrical characters, drawn with plain bad intentions. With the inclusion of Sunlight Gardener and the scene of his torture of Jack we finally see just how evil the forces arrayed against Jack really are.



Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 29-33

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 29-33 Summary

Chapter 29 'Richard at Thayer' sees Jack almost collapsing as he arrives at the grounds of the prestigious private school of Thayer, where his oldest friend Richard Sloat is studying. Richard Sloat is the son of Morgan Sloat, his current nemesis and his deceased fathers business partner.

Jack is 'caught' by a senior student named Etheridge when he gets to Thayer, who mistakes him for a freshman and demands that he returns to his school House and dormitory immediately. As soon as he leaves the angry Etheridge Jack sees a black limousine pulling up and a man in a white suit being helped out of the car. Jack carried on his search, finding Richards room where he sneaks in through the window to the surprise of his bookish friend.

The rest of Chapter 29 has Jack recount his story to his disbelieving friend, who appears himself to be anything but like his own father or Jack. Richard is bookish, studious, and intensely pragmatic in his approach to life, who at first dismisses what Jack says as 'Seabrook Island Stuff'. Richard is referring to the time when the Sloat and the Sawyer family used to spend holidays together at a place called Seabrook Island, when Jack told Richard about his Daydreams of the Territories and Richard told him that this was all nonsense. Richard doesn't believe in most of what Jack says, and certainly not about Wolf being a werewolf, but he accepts that Jack was indeed at the Sunlight Home and that terrible things had happened there. Richard believes that Jack is suffering from some kind of exhaustion.

In Chapter 30 'Thayer Gets Weird,' Richard spends the next day attending his classes while they decide what to do. Jack amuses himself by trying on Richards preppy clothes. When Richard finally comes back however, weird things seem to be following Jack as Richard reveals that the headmaster has disappeared and the basketball instructor was away too, being replaced by a strange, 'rough' sort of man. Jack tells him that these people must be working with Osmond or Sunlight Gardener, and that they are onto his trail.

In Chapter 31, 'Thayer Goes To Hell,' they wake up to find Nelson House (where Richard is staying) deserted. They walk through the corridors to find no other boys there, and Jack thinks that either they have been kidnapped for the Territories or they still exist but are on a slightly different 'level' of existence. Richard sees Etheridge in the quad, smoking with others and is outraged, is about to call out when he notices that Etheridge appears different, (half his face has been mutated) and Jack is sure that this version is Etheridges Twinner in the Territories. That evening howls of rabid dogs sound all around them and still Richard believes that nothing is wrong..



The situation gets worse for the boys in Chapter 32 'Send Out Yer Passenger' as the Etheridge-Twiner starts to call out to them to send out Jack 'the passenger' to them. They start throwing stones at the window, and Richard believes that they must be some kind of angry mob, or a Columbian drug-cartel. Jack piles the furniture in front of the window, before finally convincing Richard that they have to leave the room. Richard agrees to go to the next room where they see that everyone really has vanished except for the mutated dog-boys outside and themselves.

In Chapter 33, Richard and Jack are walking the halls of Nelson house, where all around them strange fungus is starting to grow on the walls, spilling white maggots. Richard believes that he must be hallucinating, that he must have a fever or has been poisoned and deliberately breaks his own glasses rather than see the exact dangers that they face. Jack notices that the weirdness seems to come around them in cycles as they remain trapped in the House, and decides that their only time that they can escape is during one of the 'quiet spots' he talks to Richard about the layout of the campus and discovers that next door is an abandoned theatre called the Depot. When Jack learns that it used to be one of the major shipping hubs for rail traffic to the West he makes the intuitive connection that it must also be some sort of gateway to the Territories. They make a dash across the campus, to be almost immediately chased by the Etheridge-Twiner and the headmaster Mr Duffrey and a host of other students. This time they are all half mangled, mutated versions of themselves, running almost on all fours after them. Richard and Jack just make it over the fence and to the Depot and Jack pulls Richard with him into the Territories as he does so.

Part III A Collision of Worlds, Chapters 29-33 Analysis

The final chapters of Part III again provide a small mini-story which seeks to introduce the character of Richard and explain why he is so different to Jack. This is done cleverly in a series of conversations and flashbacks between the two protagonists, displaying their joint past and how their stories have remained interlinked.

In one way the school of Thayer can be seen as another version of the Sunlight Home and the Oatley Tap in its associations. Like these other 'traps' it is a static place which does not change, and is controlled by a domineering authority. As soon as Jack arrives at Thayer he is picked on by the mundane version of Etheridge for 'not being in the right place at the right time' which in itself is an attack on the principles of freedom and adventure that Jack's quest represents.

Jack has come to Thayer because, after the loss of Wolf he needs an ally and believes that he can find one in Richard. Richard could almost be for the boy his salvation: Jack was charged with looking after one friend (Wolf) who ultimately died trying to protect him, is Jack looking to protect Richard as a means of penance for what happened previously?

Richard himself provides a contrast to the character of Jack, as his commitment to pragmatic science is the very antithesis of everything that Jack has been experiencing.



The reader gets the sense that both children could be the saving grace of the other (Richard being the friend that Jack needs in his mourning and Jack giving Richard the courage to face what is in his past). The character of Richard can be seen almost as a metaphor for the mundane world and the mundane sensibility that, when experiencing something out of the ordinary retreats with fear and has 'Had enough, forever'. This is symbolized by Richard taking off his own glasses and crushing them rather than having to deal with the truth in front of his face.



Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 34-36

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 34-36 Summary

Part IV opens with Chapter 34, 'Anders' during which Richard goes into the Territories for the first time and they find the rail road that will take them through the Blasted Lands to the Talisman. To begin with, Richard is in a state of hysteria as e still believes that a drug gang, with rabid dogs is chasing them. Jack resorts to slapping him to get him to understand that they have jumped into a different world. Richard decides instead to believe that he must either be freakishly ill or that he has a brain tumour and that this is all a hallucination.

Jack takes Richard to the shack that the Depot has transformed into in the Territories. Here he meets Anders, an older man with a large beard who at first curses Jack for being a demon, but when Jack produces the Lucky Dime that Captain Farren gives him, suddenly falls to his knees in awe. He thinks that Jack is none other than the dead Jason DeLoessian, the son of Queen Laura DeLoessian of the Territories who has now ascended to an almost mythical status. Whilst Richard falls into a sleep in the side of the shack Anders shows Jack the straight rail road tracks that heads off to the west, that Morgan of Orris had designed and installed.

Alongside this, Anders tells Jack the story of Morgan of Orris; a petty and cruel Outpost Lord who unexpectedly rose to prominence a few years previously. He became fast companions with the old king Philip Sawtelle (Philip Sawyer's Twiner), whilst was secretly recruiting an army of Wolfs and building this railway. It reaches through a cursed area known as 'The Blasted Lands' where there are wandering fireballs, mutants and monsters, and spending too long within this land appears to give the unwary a form of radiation sickness. On the other side lies a place called The Black Hotel, and the mythical Talisman. Anders himself was to ride the small rail carriage that he has through The Blasted Lands to deliver the goods that Morgan of Orris has left there, but Jack instead reassures him that he and Richard will take the rail-carriage instead. Anders is superstitiously grateful of this offer, thinking that Jack/Jason has saved his life.

In the next section 'Interlude: Sloat In This World,' we follow the exploits of Morgan Sloat as he attends the bedside of Lily Sawyer at the Alahambra. He threatens her to sign over the business, and demands that she tell him where Jack Sawyer is. Lily Sawyer is fierce from her sickbed, but Morgan enjoys gloating over her condition, imagining what the future will be like when he has Jack and the Talisman, and able to control whole worlds.

Chapter 35 'The Blasted Lands' returns to Jack and Richard travelling on the train that they have stolen from Morgan's depot. Jack sees at once that the train is really nothing more than a tiny battery-powered carriage, pulling another flat bed carriage with many piled boxes marked 'fruit' and 'lenses'. He is under no delusion that the crates really carry guns and modern weaponry. They set out, into a landscape that becomes steadily



more hostile around them; baked and parched and filled with strange, distant noises. Their journey takes several days, the first few of which Richard becomes really ill and sores start to appear at the side of his mouth. Jack sees a fireball racing through the landscape, strange naked dog-like things and a head peering over the horizon at them. Richard slowly comes around and announces that he knows that he hasn't got a brain tumour and that they are really in the Territories. He has finally accepted where they are, and is willing to help Jack.

The pair find guns in the carriage, and use them to fend off an attack by dog-like lizard creatures which fire bows and arrows at the train. The attacks cease, but Jack works out that up ahead there must be a training camp of some kind, for all of these guns and ammunition to be delivered to. He imagines it to be an army of the Bad Wolves and assorted mutants, and tells Richard to grab as many of the Uzi submachine guns and grenades that they can find. They coast out of the Blasted Lands in Chapter 36 'Jack and Richard Go To War' and there meet a startled Bad Wolf at a small station. Jack pushes the little train onward, where it runs straight through the main gates of the training camp and into the centre of an arena and barracks. Richard and Jack shoot as many of the Bad Wolves and the lizard-creatures that they find, before out from barracks comes the Elroy-thing, Osmond/Sunlight Gardener, and Osmond/Sunlight's child, Reuel Gardener.

Reuel is the Twinner of the mundane Reuel who also attended Thayer school with Richard. This version has a fleshy tentacle for an arm and mismatched, fishlike-eyes. Richard and Jack attack the small group, and seem about to lose when suddenly Jack uses the Luck dime with the features of the Queen DeLoessian on it. This acts as some kind of holy weapon in vanquishing Reuel. They hear a horrible roaring and ripping behind them as Morgan Sloat/Orris emerges into their realm, and is about to fire his lightning rod at them when Jack grabs Richard and they jump into the mundane world, in California, just outside of Point Venuti.

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 34-36 Analysis

This collection of chapters reveals to the reader the true nature of the corruption that Morgan Sloat is inflicting upon the world of the Territories in the form of The Blasted Lands, and further examines the theme of corruption versus magic. As we have already discovered, 'magic' for the story is associated with freedom and naturalness, an innate form of honest goodness. When Morgan Sloat tries to control the magic of the Territories, he does so by introducing technology and weapons in the form of the guns, the grenades and the training camps. This jars both poetically and emotionally with the rest of the storyline - and is meant to! What the authors are showing the reader is the battle between magic and science, freedom versus oppression, played out in the forms of the Bad Wolves and our protagonists. It feels somehow fitting that the 'bad guys' are dispatched with their own weapons.

If a criticism can be raised against this book then perhaps it is the simplistic way that good and evil are presented. The Bad Wolves and the other denizens of the Blasted



Lands are intrinsically evil purely because of what they are, and this seems to be a fundamental distinction. Is the story too naive in its assertion that 'what looks ugly, must also be corrupt?' The use of force such as guns and ammunition appears heavy handed in the narrative, reminding us of the pulp action-adventure stories of the fifties and sixties.

The plotting and the pacing of Chapter 35 stands out as an excellent escalation of threat and horror, as the very land around the characters seems to drip with threat and terror. The authors cleverly increase a sense of foreboding not merely by introducing that protagonists to monstrous sights, but by suggesting weirder or even stranger things that are only half seen and half understood.



Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 37-40

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 37-40 Summary

Chapter 37 'Richard Remembers' is an abrupt change of pace to the story, as Richard and Jack emerge into a deserted yard which also has a small battery-operated train. It seems that this is the counterpart to the training camp that they had just been in, which also has train tracks, a barracks, and an arena. 'Here' however is California, and where they are standing is overgrown with weeds and deserted. They then investigate, to find that the deserted train is here filled with plastique and armaments. Jack fires a gun at the train carriage until it blows up, and the pair run off in the direction of the coast.

As they travel, Richard starts telling Jack about the fact that he remembers this place from when he was a child; that it was called then Camp Readiness, and his father Morgan Sloat brought him there as a child. He hadn't known it at the time, but it was now clear that Morgan had been preparing for this time for years, and together they would 'holiday' here whilst Morgan Sloat admired the Agincourt Hotel. The Agincourt, Richard tells Jack, is a large, scary black hotel that neither he nor his dad has ever been inside, and Jack knows instinctively that it is the same Black Hotel that hides their prize, the Talisman. As they emerge above Point Venuti suddenly, Richard points Jack to a large sign which has a picture of his mother, Lily Sawyer on it. They are showing her films at the local theatre as 'Queen of the B's.'

Chapter 38 'The End of The Road' shows Jack and Richard making their way down to the town of Point Venuti, when they start noticing the creatures called the Territories trees. These mobile trees whisper and threaten the boys, but Jack pays them no heed. He sees however that Richard's illness is getting worse; the sores are now becoming angry and infected welts.

In Chapter 39 'Point Venuti' the two boys make their way into the town of the same name, only to find that here the worlds are bleeding together all around them. beyond the town on a promontory out into the sea sits the Black Hotel, which appears to double in size and strangely shrink. Territories-trees appear throughout the town and crazed naked people appear at windows, before running away before Jack/Jason. Jack starts to hear the voice of the Talisman inside his head, calling to him. This gives him the strength to carry Richard through the town of Venuti. In the next chapter, 'Speedy on the Beach' the boys finally see their enemies in Sunlight Gardener and the last remaining Bad Wolfs, surrounding the entrance to the Black Hotel. Jack hears the voice of Speedy Parker inside his head and they are guided to the nearby beach, where they find Parker hiding behind some rocks. Parker is seriously ill with the same diseased sores that Richard is developing, but knows of a way that Jack and Richard can get into the Black Hotel. He has an inflatable float with him and he tells Jack that if they float to the piers of the Black Hotel then they will be safe.



Jack and Richard float out past the breakwaters and are carried towards the pilings of the Black Hotel when they are spotted by Sunlight Gardener's men, who start shooting. None of these shots hit however, as massive fish-like things rise from the deeps to protect the two boys, getting shot themselves or lapping their float towards the Black Hotel.

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 37-40 Analysis

In this collection of chapters, there is a common underlying theme running throughout them, of despair and struggle in the face of hopelessness. Jack is confronted by enemies and seemingly insurmountable odds all around and yet has to find a way through to the Black Hotel itself. The protagonists are presented with different types of horror, from physical threat (the attacking trees and the guns of their enemies) to spiritual horror (the naked crazies, the shifting dimensions of their surroundings), and even emotional horror (the fate of Richard as he gets worse and worse), the question that is being posed is whether or not Jack can remain courageous enough to withstand these attacks.

Of course, the ultimate message of the book is that honesty and 'good magic' can prevail against any form of coercion, and in keeping with this fact of the novel, as Jack moves closer to the Talisman he becomes more 'like Jason' and as such is unstoppable. Here we can see the authors utilising the classic fairytale concept of destiny that heroes are pre-ordained to be at certain places and to achieve certain things. This is referred to in the way that the 'monstrous fish' from the Territories rise up to protect the small dinghy that the boys are on, almost as an act of blessing in defiance of the oppressive cruelties of Sunlight Gardener and Morgan Sloot. The sense of horror around the protagonists increases steadily throughout this chapter, particularly when we come to understand that it is Morgan Sloot's own magic which is making Speedy Parker and Richard ill. The sense of repulsion that we have for this character is now complete when we see that he is willing to kill his own child for his selfish desires.



Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 41-43

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 41-43 Summary

Before the start of Chapter 41 is another 'Interlude: Sloat in This World' in which Morgan Sloat returns from the front line of the Black Hotel to the Kingsland Motel. Here he is wondering about the sacrifice of his son that he is just about to make when Sunlight Gardener bangs on the door, with the news of how the boys have escaped. Morgan Sloat tells him not to worry, that even if Jack emerges from the Hotel with the Talisman, they will have his friend, Speedy Parker.

In Chapter 41 'The Black Hotel,' Jack and Richard have now crept inside the Black Hotel, where they are instantly confronted with alls that seemingly ripple in and out of existence and creatures that can hiss and whisper at them. Richard falls unconscious and jack has to find a safe place in one of the abandoned drawing rooms where he can hide his friend. As he makes his way to the depths of the building Jack hears the Talisman calling to him, but even the walls start talking to him, threatening him. One door handle seems to burn red hot and Jack has to imagine that it is only an illusion as he makes his way forward. The boy is then confronted by a mailed knight who is apparently already dead. Hearing Speedy Parker's voice inside his head, Jack uses the pick that Speedy has given him to fight the creature and kill it. Getting past this test, he then faces two more of the vampire-knights, and as Chapter 41 ends feels that the quest is impossible.

Chapter 42 'Jack and the Talisman' follows the fight between Jack and the other vampire-knights. As Jack fights them, he slips through the numerous worlds in which the Black Hotel manifests, sometimes being himself and sometimes as the young hero Jason. Jack defeats the knights simultaneously with the other versions of Jason in the other worlds, and walks out into the room where the gem-like Talisman awaits. The Talisman tells jack that it is the nexus of all possible worlds; the core of natural harmony and goodness that runs throughout.

Chapter 43, called 'News From Everywhere' recounts the small snapshots of a half a dozen other characters from the story who feel the Talisman coming into Jack Sawyers hands. Donny, one of the oafish children of the Sunlight Home suddenly realizes that he was in love with Ferd Jenklow (which was why he was obsessed with him), the judge who committed all of the boys to the Sunlight Home blows up, as does the Oatley Tap in a mysterious gas leak. Buddy Parkins, the friendliest driver who offered Jack a home on the road suddenly 'knows' that the boy he once helped has won the prize and Lily Sawyer in her deathbed suddenly feels a shade better.



Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 41-43 Analysis

In this section, Jack re-enacts a mythical confrontation between the young hero and the black knight, a story which finds echoes in Gawain and the Green Knight and most other hero myths. As with the other challenges, it is not only a contest of wits and skill, but a contest of courage and Jack has to believe that he has the ability to defeat his enemies, and remember why he is fighting in the first place.

The authors use these chapters to finally display the full nature of the Black Hotel, the Talisman and of Jack/Jason. The main protagonist is only really one version of countless other cosmic heroes all playing out the same story (challenging the guardians of the Black Hotel in order to find goodness). sometimes the physical fight that Jack has to have with the black knights pales next to the psychological fight he has to have against fear itself.

An intriguing element to these chapters is to be found in the final chapter 'News From Everywhere' when we see the lives of all of those effected by the story suddenly 'feel' the moment when Jack wins the Talisman. This has the effect of all of these characters experiencing a moment of justice for their actions. The evil characters face the consequences of their actions, and the 'confused' characters (such as Donny) see for the first time their true feelings. Characters with pure intentions such as Buddy Parkins and Lily Sawyer are rewarded with feelings of joy and exultation. We get the feeling that the emphasis in the narrative must now swing back towards the optimistic and aid the protagonists rather than work against them.



Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 44-47

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 44-47 Summary

In Chapter 44 'The Earthquake,' at the same time that Jack receives the Talisman an earthquake starts under Point Venuti. Jack clings to the sliding walls, crawling out of the crumbling Black Hotel to where he finds Richard, himself almost dead with the infection that his father Morgan has magically placed upon him. Jack wonders how to heal him and, for a second realises that the only way to heal Richard is to give up the Talisman and he suddenly feels jealous of his treasure. The moment that he feels jealous the Talisman changes, and its white light fades black. Horrified, Jack gives the Talisman to Richard and heals him in the process.

Outside, Morgan and Sunlight Gardener are seeing the earthquake get worse all around them and the Black Hotel starting to disintegrate. Suddenly Jack and Richard emerge unharmed, and Sunlight Gardener tries to shoot them. Somehow the Talisman reflects the light of the scope back at Gardener, causing the gun to explode and Gardener instead launches himself at the boys armed with his knife.

In Chapter 45 'In Which Many Things Are Resolved On The Beach,' Jack is confronted by Sunlight with a knife, and sees that he must protect the fragile Talisman from his clutches. Richard attacks Sunlight too, only to be hit by the man and Jack jumps back and forth in between the Territories in order to step closer to Osmond/Sunlight and use the Talisman to touch him on the head. The effect of the 'pure' object on Osmond causes him to suddenly wither away and burn.

The pair of boys race to find Parker as it all goes dark around them (an effect of Morgan's magic) and Morgan steps out from the rocks and trips Jack up, hoping that he will drop the Talisman. The Talisman flies from his grasp, and Richard throws himself out to catch it, landing heavily on a rock himself and injuring his scalp. The Talisman however rolls safely onto the sand where Jack scoops it up and confronts Morgan. Morgan flips back and forth into and out of the Territories to torment Jack and throw stones at him, before Jack realises what he is doing and times his own jump into the Territories to catch Morgan unawares and hit him with the Talisman. Morgan is destroyed.

In Chapter 46 'Another Journey,' Speedy Parker and Richard are both healed by the Talisman and Speedy Parker tells Jack that he is in fact some kind of 'policeman' from another world that looks after the Talisman. He bids farewell to Jack, saying that he must travel in the Territories as much as possible now, until he finds the biggest tree that he ever saw. This Jack and Richard do, carrying the Talisman until they find the tree and jump over into a swamp in the mundane world. Here they find a limousine waiting for them, driven by another Wolf, this time one of the litter mates of Jack's Wolf. They drive all of the rest of the way to New England, while along the way Richard takes a liking for the books of Carl Sagan.



When Jack finally gets to the East Coast, his mother Lily is near death, with only enough consciousness and strength to move slightly when Jack bursts in. Not knowing how or what he does, the Talisman opens and pours healing light into Jack's mother, and she awakes healed from her condition.

Part IV The Talisman, Chapters 44-47 Analysis

In this final section of the book there is nothing which is unpredictable about the course of events, indeed they could be criticised as being formulaic; but it is interesting to see how the authors develop the traditional heroes fairytale in the modern times, and add extra shades of depth and mysticism to the story. Speedy Parker is now revealed as a kind of policeman whose Twinners travels the worlds trying to put things right, and there are really any number of possible worlds which this dram is playing out. Most of the events of this final chapter act as a resolution to the plot, and serve to 'tie up loose' ends in the story. even though 'Wolf' is dead, one of his litter mates is introduced as another friend for Jack, thus 'healing' that loss. Even Richard's scepticism and scientific nature finds itself a hero in the scientific author of Carl Sagan!

The final scene encapsulates the theme of goodness and wholesomeness for the entire novel, as Jack's mother is healed from cancer. This scene finally casts the whole adventure and the story an optimistic, and hopeful light.



Characters

Jack Sawyer/Jason DeLoessian

The main character of the novel, Jack Sawyer starts the narrative as a twelve-year-old boy trying to come to terms with the illness that is slowly killing his mother Lilly Sawyer. An only child with only one parent left (his father having died many years before in a freak car accident), Jack Sawyer has become fiercely independent and self-reliant for one of his age. Owing in part to his upbringing (where his mother was a successful Hollywood actress and his father was a partner in agency firm), Jack Sawyer displays a tough spirit and a sarcastic sense of humor to cover his own feelings of loss.

Jack Sawyer is thrust on a perilous quest when he starts to notice a conflagration of weird events around himself and his mother, as they escape on holiday to an abandoned New England Hotel. The youth realises that in fact his mother is preparing for her own death, but seems unable to face it. When the boy is offered the magical chance to save his mother by travelling across America and into the magical realm of 'The Territories' he jumps at the chance. He soon sees that the Territories is a place that he half-knows already, and is a secret that has been kept by his family ever since his father 'discovered' a way to get there.

The character development that Jack takes is essentially the same as in any coming-of-age tale where he has to learn his own strength, learn how to differentiate between people that he can trust and those that he cannot, and learn the importance of friendship and support. Ultimately it is revealed that Jack Sawyer is the only one capable of stopping the damage that his father's partner Morgan Sloat is doing to the Territories, as he is in fact a spiritual twin of 'Jason DeLoessian' the Territories analogy of divine hero.

Lily Sawyer/Queen DeLoessian

Mother of Jack Sawyer, and wife to the deceased Philip, Lilly Sawyer was once Lilly Kavanaugh known as 'The Queen of the B's' for her starring role in many B movies of the 1960's. She fell in love with Philip Sawyer and together with their mutual friend Morgan Sloat they created the entertainment agency that would make them all wealthy.

After her husband's death Morgan Sloat attempts to slowly squeeze Lilly out of the business until eventually, upon the event of her illness he tries repeatedly to threaten her with giving up her half of the business to him. Lilly Sawyer appears to be a strong-minded, stubborn and tough personality (still resolutely drinking Martinis and smoking cigarettes even though she appears to have a terminal illness), characterized by her sarcastic and wry sense of humor that she imparts to her child Jack.

Lilly Sawyer is also the 'Twiner' of the Queen of the magical other realm known as the Territories (Queen DeLoessian). This means that she is this world's 'double' of the



Queen, and whose lives are profoundly connected. When the Queen of the Territories becomes severely ill (we suspect Morgan of Orris) then Lilly Sawyer also becomes ill within the mundane world.

Morgan Sloat/Morgan of Orris

Morgan Sloat is the third partner in the entertainment agency of Philip Sawyer, Sloat, and Lilly Kavanaugh. An ugly man, Morgan Sloat is described as a small man, balding, overweight and sweaty, whose physical features act as a symbol in the book for his inner character. Morgan and Philip 'discovered' the Territories many decades before and Morgan had been searching for a way to gain control over that magical realm ever since (even resulting in the murder of his partner Philip Sawyer and perhaps poisoning his wife).

It becomes clear that Morgan's 'Twiner' in the Territories is the theatrically evil Morgan of Orris, who is cruel, vindictive, and semi-psychotic in his displays of anger. These two characters work in tandem to further each others' goals as the story progresses and Morgan Sloat himself becomes more twisted so that, by the end of the story he is a living metaphor for the corruption that his actions is creating.

Richard Sloat

Richard Sloat is Morgan's only son whom he sends to the prestigious Thayer school in America. He is a bookish, empirical sort of boy with a reverence for all things logical and scientific. He represents in the book almost the opposite of Jack Sawyer (who is self reliant, confident and eager to believe in magic), but whose experiences with Jack convince him that there is indeed such a place as the Territories.

Richard Sloat has been a constant friend to Jack Sawyer since they were both toddlers, but whose rejection of all things fantastical proves to be a weakness and a point of contention between them. Richard Sloat essentially stands as another object lesson for Jack on how to treat people, as the further that Richard delves into the weird world, the more ill he becomes. For Richard himself, he needs to come to terms with the true nature of his own father. Richard Sloat has no Twiner in the Territories, as his Twiner died in a swimming accident (perhaps resulting in his own weak constitution in this world).

Sunlight Gardener/Osmond

Sunlight Gardener is the mundane worlds version of 'Osmond' the sadistic, cruel, second-in-command to Morgan of Orris. The Territories version of Osmond is described as a thin man who wears a white suit and shades, who is the leader of the secret police and the prison camps for Morgan of Orris. His mundane-world counterpart is Sunlight Gardener, the religious founder of a 'Home for Wayward Boys' (a kind of religious hostel that takes on strays and runaways).



The character of Sunlight Gardener is very close to his Twinner in the Territories, and with whom shares a sadistic lust of punishing those weaker than himself. Jack Sawyer and his friend Wolf falls into the clutches of the Sunlight home when caught by the local constabulary and there they witness the brutality of this characters regime. Both Sunlight Gardner and Osmond become archetypes for the controlling and domineering nature of oppression that Jack Sawyer has to strive against.

Wolf

Wolf is a character from the Territories who has no natural counterpart in the mundane world. He comes from the 'Wolf' family who are a breed of large humans who share many characteristics with dogs. In short, they are all werewolves. In the Territories the Wolf family act as herders and cattle men and are friendly, incredibly strong and loyal. Once a month when the moon is full they go through the change to become a humanoid wolf and who have to roam on their own, far from their herds.

Wolf himself befriends Jack Sawyer in the Territories but whom has to be pulled through into this world to avoid Morgan of Orris killing them both. In this world Wolf immediately starts to become ill, and becomes a symbol for the lost innocence that Jack is having to leave behind. Wolf accompanies Jack into the Sunlight Home and there saves Jack Sawyer before eventually himself succumbing to his illness.

Speedy Parker/Old Snowball

Speedy Parker is a mysterious stranger at the start and the end of the novel who appears to give advise and ultimately to set Jack upon his travels. Appearing to be either an itinerant musician or a handyman working at a dilapidated amusements park, Speedy Parker befriends the distraught Jack Sawyer and tells him a little of his past, his father and the realm of the Territories that could provide him with the key to saving his mother.

Speedy Parker appears in the book also as Old Snowball the blind musician, both at crucial times when Jack seems to need the help the most, and it is from Speedy Parker that Jack first receives the 'magic juice' that allows him to travel between the worlds. Speedy Parker is really a variant of the Wise Old Man archetype for the heroes journey, who guides the young hero and sends him out to face challenges in order for them to come-of-age.

Captain Farren

Captain Farren is another character from the Territories who appears to have no direct Twinner in the mundane world. Jack Sawyer meets him outside the pavilion of the dying Queen DeLoessian and is befriended by the stern guard commander. Captain Farren is the last truly loyal soldier of the Queen, who is attempting to keep Morgan of Orris and Osmond away from the Queen but who is failing rapidly. When he realises whom Jack



Sawyer really is, and that he was sent there by the stranger known as Speedy Parker, Captain Farren gives Jack the lucky dime and shows him the direction that he must take to get the Talisman.

Anders

Anders is an elderly guard at the Depot who lives in mortal fear of Morgan of Orris, Osmond, and the Blasted Lands all around him. He is installed there by Morgan of Orris/Morgan Sloat to watch over a train that Morgan is planning to use to move guns and ammunition into the Territories with. When Jack Sawyer and Richard Sloat arrives at the Depot however, Anders recognises in Jack the deceased, almost mythical child of the Queen Jason DeLoessian and treats him almost as if he were a god.

Elroy

The character of Elroy is a person that Jack meets whilst imprisoned at the Oatley Tap. At first Elroy appears to be nothing more than a cruel and strange customer, but then attacks Jack and morphs himself into a kind of were-goat. The Elroy-thing follows Jack Sawyer on his travels before finally being vanquished outside of the Blasted Lands at the end of the novel.

The Elroy-thing stands as the opposite of the 'good' werewolf Wolf. They are both creatures from the Territories with an intrinsic connection to animals, the environment, and to primitive nature. Wolf appears to be 'clean' and honest whilst Elroy appears to be 'twisted' and corrupt.

Buddy Parkins

The kindly driver who gives Jack a ride outside of Lake Ontario and offers to give Jack a home in return for work on his farm. Buddy Parkins is one of the few genuinely friendly faces on the road, who sees in Jack some of the magic and wholesomeness of the Territories. He believes that he can help Jack and perhaps give him a future.

Elmore Light

The shocking character of Elmore Light is the opposite of Buddy Parkins, who also responds to the 'glow' that the Territories has given Jack Sawyer. Elmore Light can be placed in direct opposition with Buddy Parkins, while both characters explore the idea of intrinsic motivations and tendencies. Elmore Light has selfish tendencies whilst Buddy Parkins altruistic, as Elmore Light attempts to sexually assault his passenger.



Ferd Janklow

A sarcastic, tough New York boy that Wolf and Jack meet in the Sunlight Home for Wayward Boys, who becomes a friend to the pair with his disrespect for the place. He is used in the story as a way of heightening the threat against both Jack and Wolf, as he attempts to escape the home but fails, ultimately (we suspect) being killed by Sunlight Gardener.



Objects/Places

Speedys Magic Juice

Speedy's bottle of magic juice is a gift that the mysterious amusement park handyman gives to Jack in order to help him to jump over to the world of the Territories. For the first half of the book it appears to be a magic potion that looks and tastes like a cheap red wine. Eventually, Jack runs out of the substance however, and has to learn how to jump into the Territories without its aid. we suspect that all along it was merely a prop that Speedy gives to Jack to help him to believe in the Territories.

Speedy's Guitar Pick

This is the second item that Speedy gives to Jack Sawyer to help him on his way in the Territories. Speedy tells him to show it to Captain Farren which will assure the Captain of his loyalty to the Queen. When Jack pulls the guitar pick from his pocket, he sees that it has transformed into a large shark's tooth with inlaid gold braiding.

Captain Farren's Lucky Dime

Captain Farren gives to Jack Sawyer a silver penny with the face of the Queen upon it. In the Territories, it is a beautiful coin, and in the mundane world, it is little more than a silver dime. For most of the story, it is little more than a form of encouragement for the boy-hero, but crucially becomes important later on in the narrative as it starts to take on magical properties. Items such as the Lucky Dime, the Toy Key and many other of the Territories artefacts serve as an illustration of the author's idea that the Territories and the mundane world are deeply linked, and sometimes 'twin' with each other. An object in this world might in the next become a powerful weapon, exhibit strange qualities etcetera. As this is very much a book of opposites, it also serves as a contrast to Morgan's Toy Key.

Morgan's Toy Key

Morgan's Toy Key is important to the narrative because it serves to demonstrate the relationship between objects found in the mundane world and what happens when they are taken into the Territories. Some objects take on miraculous, dangerous or supernatural qualities. Morgan first sensed that the wind-up key of a toy soldier had magical properties and upon taking it to the Territories he discovers that it transforms into a rod that spits lightning. It can be seen in contrast to Jack's Lucky Dime, and can be used as a metaphor to describe how each approach the obstacles before them. Morgan Sloot/of Orris attempts to destroy obstacles whereas Jack Sawyer 'flips a coin' and hopes to luck, or faith.



Morgans Carriage

An important artifact that Morgan of Orris uses once he is in the Territories is his 'conveyance' (a large black Carriage pulled by six horses). The description of this vehicle is used by the authors to create tension and a sense of mounting threat in the narrative. It is also used as a way to contrast the character of Morgan against Jack; Jack has to walk or hitch hike his way across America whereas Morgan uses a thunderous carriage. Jack has to negotiate with every encounter he has whilst Morgan charges through them like a speeding train.

Richards Spectacles

The spectacles worn by Richard become important when in a symbolic act Richard throws them to the floor and crushes them rather than see the horrible and monstrous visions that follow in Jack Sawyers wake. This act on his behalf becomes at once a sign of how much Richard is willing to go through for his friend, but also how the character is willing to blind himself rather than really accept the truth. This can be read as a metaphor for Richards relationship and inability to accept the hurt that his own father is inflicting on the world.

The Box

The Box kept at the 'Sunlight Home for Way-Ward Boys' is a metal construct looking like a rusted iron coffin. it is used by Sunlight Gardener to imprison the most unruly of boys where the claustrophobia serves as a cruel punishment for 'not walking the Sunlight line'. It becomes a metaphor for the loss of freedom and adventure that is the opposite that Jack's journey stands for, and is the worst fate to befall Wolf, the animal-human who lives for freedom and natural expression.

Thayer

The private boarding school of Thayer is the temporary home of Richard Sloat for most of the year, where he is sent by his father Morgan Sloat and where Jack travels to after the loss of his close travelling companion; Wolf. Thayer itself is an archetype of law, order and conservatism and such is opposed to everything that the character of Jack stands for in the novel.

As soon as Jack arrives at Thayer however, the place starts to take a much darker undertone as the world of the Territories starts to crash into the real world. The Territories-Thayer is a place of mouldering rot and monster dog-students which Richard Sloat has to accept the reality of before he can escape.



The Alahambra Inn

The Alahambra Inn and Motel is a fairly decrepit New England hotel situated on a rain-blasted piece of coastline. It is here that Lilly Sawyer takes her son to when she knows that she is becoming gravely ill and needs to escape the clutches of Morgan Sloat. Thinking that she is hiding out, rather she is returning to the place where her Twinner in the Territories (the Queen) is herself gravely ill within her pavilion.

The curious thing about the Alahambra is that it is twinned itself with another places called 'The Black Hotel' on the other side of America, on the West Coast in California. it is here that Jack has to travel to find the Talisman needed to save both women's lives.

Venuti Point

Venuti Point in California is the mundane world location for 'The Black Hotel' and the Talisman. it is an almost exact double of the Alahambra Inn and stands as a metaphor for the interconnectedness that runs throughout this narrative (places and people, the Territories and the mundane etcetera).

The Territories

The Territories themselves are another world, described as the 'next world along' from our own mundane world. It is smaller than the mundane world, and has many similar elements and themes. Many of the characters in the mundane world have 'Twinners' in the world of the Territories whose lives and actions mirror each other. It is in a sense a purer, more undiluted world than our own, and the realm that Jack and his various travelling companions variously have to 'jump' into or out of to avoid being captured.

The Blasted Lands

The Blasted Lands around the Black Hotel corresponds roughly to the high arid lands around California, but in the Territories have been soured and corrupted by some unknown mechanism of Morgan of Orris. They now feature large rolling balls of fire which to Jack appear to irradiate the ground, and the denizens of the nightmarish world are all mutated, twisted in form and behaviour. It becomes a metaphor for the corruption that the mundane world exhibits against its own natural environment, and a poetic metaphor for the battle between progress, technology and nature.

The Oatley Tap

The Oatley Tap is a small bar serving the industrial town of Oatley where Jack Sawyer finds employment for a week during his travels. The place is filled with casual violence, cruelty and foreboding as it comes to represent apathy, degradation and the lowest



forms of vice. Jack Sawyer himself starts to feel stuck in the Oatley Tap but is unable to leave until he receives his pay check: a metaphor perhaps on the dangers of capitalism and the difference between the Territories and the mundane world. The Oatley Tap is one of the first places where Jack Sawyer begins to notice the corruption that is part spiritual and moral that symbolizes everything that he is fighting against. It is also here that the Elroy-thing tracks him down and attacks him before he escapes.

The Depot

Just outside of the Thayer house is the Depot, an old train station which served as a junction point for mid-west but is now a converted theatre hall. Jack realises that the Depot itself has a double life in the Territories, when he realises that the mundane version was known as the 'gateway to the West.' When Jack and Richard jump into the Territories they discover that the Depot is home to Anders and the only train in that realm, that Morgan Sloat/of Orris is about to use to ship weapons into the realm. Jack and Richard steal the train to travel the only safe route through the Blasted Lands and on to Venuti Point.

The Sunlight Home

The Sunlight Home for Way-Ward Boys is a religious hostel operated by the creepy figure of Sunlight Gardener, the mundane version of Osmond in the Territories. It is here that Jack and Wolf are sent when they are picked up jay-walking and are sentenced to spend thirty days in the home to avoid a criminal record. Jack soon sees that the home is operated by the Twinner of Osmond and is such is really a work camp allowing the man to exhibit his sadism. In the narrative the Sunlight Home, just like the Oatley Tap is another trail for Jack and come to represent the opposite of everything that he stands for; innocence, freedom, and justice.



Themes

Coming of Age

Coming of Age is a classic theme for fantastic literature, and the authors place this work firmly within that tradition by starting with the main character a young boy and taking him on a journey that will leave him, in many respects, a man.

All of the other principle themes of the book and the most important conflicts can be viewed in the way that they either allow Jack to exhibit greater powers of maturity and self-assuredness, or they challenge him to face a dark, gritty and unwholesome truth of the world that he about to grow up within. Even the physical journey that he makes across America is also accompanied metaphorically by the journey to adulthood; where he makes a few mistakes, makes a few friends, realises certain truths about himself and his world, and works out 'who he is.'

Jack Sawyer must learn as an individual character to be self-reliant. This is a very uncompromising book in the way that Jack Sawyer is only 13 years old at the start of the narrative and has to face such concepts as terminal illness, abuse, and violent assault. All of these factors means that Jack Sawyer has to learn to rely upon himself, but then to mollify that has to realise when he is attempting too much or being too over-confident This episode is exemplified by his friendship with Wolf, whom he looks after and cares for, for the most part, but finally understands that he also needs him as a friend on the lonesome journey.

The authors add an ironic tension in the way that, for Jack, it is not merely by being stronger or smarter that he wins the prize, but he must learn to be more open and hopeful. In a theme which is surprising mature, the authors seem to be suggesting that Jack is using his 'adventure' as a way of avoiding the fact of his mothers illness. Jack has to learn how to deal with the possibility of his mothers death, and how to also return to a sense of innocence to achieve his prize (yet remaining strong in the world).

Magic, Innocence & Corruption

A constant theme for both authors in a number of their individual works is the relationship between magic, a sense of wonder, and the opposing sense of terror, corruption, and lack of empowerment. This story uses the backdrop of the Territories and America to explore these ideas.

The authors try to ally a sense of naturalness, innocence and purity with the wonder that Jack first experiences when he visits the Territories and the wonder of the 'Daydreams' that he had as a child. The authors are making the point here that childhood is magical, as are dreams, hopes, and any type of optimistic belief. This is held in the same hand as the picture of Wolf; a humanoid creature who is primitive and natural, but above all is wholesome. When Wolf starts to engage with the corrupting influences of the mundane



world (chemicals, petrol smoke, incarceration, and intoxication) he starts to become ill, even taking on a dangerous edge as he seems to become 'corrupted.' This is analogous to the feelings that Jack starts to feel when he is surrounded and caught by the Oatley Tap.

One of the enduring messages of the book is that power and selfishness corrupts, whilst optimism and honesty liberates. All of Jack's most dangerous encounters (at the Sunlight Home, during the Blasted Lands, at the Oatley Tap) can be seen as a battle between Jack's natural goodness versus the oppressive constrictions of a corrupt situation around him. In this way the theme of Magic and Corruption are directly related to the main characters need to mature, to Coming of Age and the way in which Jack learns to negotiate with his environment.

A final important note about this theme is that it works to define the 'rules' of the story world. In this book, feelings, memories, and mementos can become powerful pieces of magic, and everything has its magical counterpart in the realm of the Territories. It could be argued that these elements make this story a classic good versus evil morality play.

Travelling

The theme of travelling is the most oft-used one in the story, as it stands as a metaphor not only for Jack travelling from childhood to adulthood, but also for the very notion of freedom versus oppressive determinism. There are other layers of meaning here however, such as shades of the great American literary tradition of the road trip in order to discover a sense of place, self and meaning.

The central character of Jack is even called 'Travelling Jack' several times by Speedy Parker and this becomes for him a title rather than a classification. The name of 'Travelling Jack' is reminiscent of fairytale heroes, musicians, and pop-culture icons; an allusion to the fact that the novel is in part written like a fairytale or a heroic legend. This association of the central character with the action of Travelling is emphasised when he is commanded to travel to the other side of America by any means other than by air or by long distance transport. This geas is laid upon Jack by Speedy Parker in what is clearly a re-enactment of the heroes journey. It forces Jack Sawyer to encounter many different dangers and allies and forces him to come to terms with several truths about himself and his world.

The last and perhaps the most important way that Travelling is used in the book is the way that it represents freedom over oppression. The main antagonists of the novel (Morgan Sloat/Morgan of Orris and Osmond/Sunlight Gardener) all use extreme and sadistic force to reach their goals. Even their army the bad Wolfs are over-violent in their nature. The antagonists seek to control the world around them through enforced labour, slavery, manipulation and intimidation whereas the protagonists merely want freedom. In this way Travelling comes to represent not only Jack's quest but also what he is struggling for itself. In the final twist, it is essential for Jack to return home and to

see that travelling and freedom is necessary in order to achieve a purpose (to become an adult or to heal his mother).



Style

Point of View

The narrative voice used is that of the omniscient third-person perspective, written with a focus on Jack Sawyer's point of view. In a few, rare instances this narrative point of view deviates to other characters in the novel (namely Morgan Sloat and Sunlight Gardener), usually to contrast with the protagonist and to develop a sense of threat within the text.

The novel has a strong narrative voice, but it is not personalised. The phrases used by the narrator sometimes enhance the reader's idea that the novel is meant to be a dark fairytale, told from an outside source. For the most part however the reader is a party to the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of the protagonist Jack Sawyer. Even when Jack has a travelling companion for long stretches of the book (Wolf or Richard), the point of view will include their generalised feelings and reactions to events, but will not reveal their inner thoughts as the narrative routinely does for Jack.

The use of the third person allows the reader to see and anticipate some of the dangers around Jack Sawyer even before he does (the Sunlight Home and the Oatley Tap closing in around him). The reader's maturity is often relied upon by the narrative voice, as the book allows the reader to understand some of the fuller dangers and threats around Jack Sawyer than he can at such an early age (it is obvious that Lilly Sawyer is dying from cancer at the start of the novel, and yet the protagonist Jack Sawyer does not have the vocabulary or the knowledge to understand this).

In general, the point of view used immediately endears the protagonist to the reader (we are encouraged to see why Jack feels and reacts the way that he does), and is easily understood.

Setting

The settings and locations chosen for the story vary wildly as they not only refer to physical places but also to spiritual or emotional dangers for our protagonist, Jack Sawyer. Broadly the settings can be split into contrasting opposites; the East Coast and West Coast of America, the Territories and America, the natural environment and the built-up environment. These contrasts exist it seems to explore the underlying themes of the book (Jack and Wolf feel free in the wilds and backwoods of America, but become encircled by danger and eventually trapped when they visit the malls and human environment of America).

The backdrop of the entire story is that of America in modern times (with a few phrases that indicate the setting might feel more at home in the 70's and 80's), and then the magical realm known as 'The Territories'. The Territories is described as a smaller, more concentrated world than our own which appears to be based on a mythological/fantasy



setting. This realm sits alongside America and is closely connected to it; so a prison in the mundane world could become a terrible work camp in the Territories, or a pleasant open stretch of roadside in America becomes a verdant paradisaical meadowland in the Territories. The journey of the book takes place in a more or less straight line from the New England Coast across America to the West Coast, Venuti Point and California.

The choice of setting for the book is unusual in the way that it starts not as traditional other fantasy stories start; from a 'good' setting which is then threatened but rather it starts from a 'bad' setting which proceeds to get steadily worse. The novels beginning is the Alhambra Inn and Motel, situated on a rain-blasted piece of New England countryside. Accompanying this tragic mood are threatening supernatural events (the eye in the sand) and Lily's illness gradually getting worse. It is then from here that Jack rediscovers a sense of joy, confidence and optimism when he first visits the Territories, in this way becoming optimistic enough to leave on his quest.

As with the entire book, there is always a distinction in every use of setting between natural and 'corrupt'. This corruption generally takes the form of some sort of disease or contamination (the Blasted Lands for example), and these places always hold the worst experiences for Jack compared to the natural and 'wholesome' settings of the open fields, country roads etcetera.

Language and Meaning

The language used in the book might appear a little archaic to the modern reader (we might almost expect the main character of Jack to say Gee whizz at several points). These moments tell us more about the era that the book was written for than it does about our own. Overall the language used throughout is straightforward and descriptive, not overtly technical or poetic and is easy to read and understand.

An interesting factor of the language is the awareness that the narrators have of the main character being a child (thirteen years old). The narrative manages to avoid any more complex terms that the youth might not know, and captures Jack's slightly cynical sense of humor. In a few places we could ask whether the point of view employed is truly descriptive of a boy this age, as Jack Sawyer has a very dry sense of humor and sometimes appears to be far more mature than his age allows for.

The choice of words changes dramatically from character to character, and works very well to enhance our understanding of each character's motivations. Sunlight Gardener/Osmond talks (and pretends to be) like a television evangelist whilst Wolf's language is incredibly simple and in-the-moment, just like a good natured puppy.

Given that this work is actually the composition of two different authors, there are remarkably few times when we can sense the different narrative styles and voices. At the start of the novel there is a clear back-and-forth in the language (as one section might use more prolonged description of the environment whereas the next uses more

narrative), but by the first third of the novel this difference fades and the narrative style melds into one.

Structure

The book is very long (over seven hundred pages), and in order to accommodate this length, the story is split into four parts with each part roughly between ten and fifteen short chapters long.

Each part and each chapter is named, making the novel feel a lot more like a boys-own adventure book reminiscent of the early days of comics or a television series. Each chapter focuses upon a singular setting or incident during Jack's journey, leading him to the next stage of his quest in a serialised way. The four parts of the book each describe a stage in the journey (Part I is all about Jack's mundane world challenges, Part II is about Jack facing all of the challenges for the first time, Part III throws all the story lines together and Part IV resolves them). These stages are usually differentiated mostly by the level of threat and danger to the protagonists.

As the story itself follows closely the archetype of the hero's journey, the structure of the book follows this journey visibly. The first few chapters take place in New England whilst Jack is struggling to place his trust in the 'wise old man' (Speedy Parker) before eventually finding courage enough to set out upon his quest. Jack then faces dangers of increasing magnitude, being introduced to the different dangers of the American roads and the Territories (dangerous criminals, the Elroy-Thing), before eventually having to rely upon a friend (Wolf) who is ultimately taken away from him. As Jack deals with the death of his friend, this allows him to be more honest and realistic about his adventure with his oldest friend, Richard, and to face the final challenge of the Black Hotel having grown in maturity.



Quotes

"What he was looking at was the face of Laura DeLoessian in profile... No, not just resemblance, she was his mother. Jack knew it" (Chapter 7, p. 131).

"But for some reason, equally difficult to translate from emotion into language, the conjunction of Morgan Sloat and the Day-dreams made the boy uneasy" (Chapter 11, p. 193).

"I believe a three-week squabble over there in some way sparked off a war here that lasted six years and killed millions of people" (Chapter 11, p. 197).

"Only that wasn't happening to Wolf. He hated the cars, he hated the smells, he hated this world. Jack didn't think he was ever going to get used to it. If he didn't get Wolf back to the Territories fairly soon, Jack thought he might go crazy" (Chapter 18, p. 291).

"'Him,' Wolf said. 'He kills, Jacky. With whips. This is one of his places. No Wolf should ever be in one of his places. No Jack Sawyer, either. Never. We have to get away from here, Jacky'" (Chapter 21, p. 362).

"In some ways, elves trooping up and down the halls in glowing, unearthly platoons...would have been easier for Richard to accept than this constant erosion of the Thayer school he had come to know and love...an undisputed bulwark against a world where nothing could be counted on for long" (Chapter 32, p. 483).

"how well, he thought, how well radiation poisoning fitted with the whole idea of the Blasted Lands!...the west was where the first tests had been carried out - where the prototype of the Hiroshima bomb had been" (Chapter 34, p. 527).

"But finding out that your dad is one of the guys in the black hats, Jack reflected, can hardly be one of life's groovier moments" (Chapter 37, p. 593).

"Some people are not excluded from going into the Black Hotel. They are...well...single-natured....They are like it, the Talisman" (Chapter 37, p. 614).

"The Talisman is...Not a key but a door; a locked door standing between him and his destiny. He did not want to open that door but to destroy it, destroy it utterly and completely and eternally, so it could never be shut again, let alone locked" (Interlude, p. 657).

Topics for Discussion

What does the scene between the parking lot attendant and Morgan Sloat in the first Interlude reveal about the way that Sloat deals with the world? about Sloat's own character?

Examine the theme of corruption in the story and describe how the authors examine it in the text.

Contrast the characters of Richard Sloat and Jack Sawyer. What does each character need from the other? In what ways can they be said to be opposites?

How do you think that the authors deal with the youth of the protagonists in a book that is dealing with such adult themes and adult horror?

In what way does the story of The Talisman follow the classic archetype of the Heroes Journey? In what ways does it differ?

The character of Wolf appears monstrous at times in the narrative. How do the authors differentiate between Wolfs innate goodness and that of the 'Bad' Wolfs.

The book talks often about the concept of synergy. What is this and how is this concept explored in The Talisman?

What is the more fearsome character to you and why, Morgan Sloat or Sunlight Gardener?

Can Rudolph the cook at the Sunlight Home be held morally responsible for the fates of the children around him?

What does the Talisman represent in the story? How do the authors achieve this?