

# **The Target Study Guide**

## **The Target by David Baldacci**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.

# Contents

<a href="#">The Target Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1-8.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9-18.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 19-29.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 30-48.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 49-58.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 59-76.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>

# Plot Summary

Will Robie is called by the new Deputy Director of the CIA, Amanda Marks, and ordered to make himself available for vetting for a new mission. This mission is never explained to Robie, or to Jessica Reel, his unofficial partner. However, based on the fact that Reel murdered the former DD and an analyst in the employ of the CIA before their last, heroic mission, Reel and Robie both feel as though they have become a target of the head of the CIA, Evan Tucker. For this reason, they do not expect to survive the vetting.

At the Burner Box, the CIA's North Carolina training location, both Robie and Reel are pushed to their limits by Marks as she forces them to prove their ability to continue as CIA agents. After more than a week of hard exercise, dangerous training, and tests of their endurance, Robie and Reel are put through the torture technique known as waterboarding. They are told that the torture will end if they will sign confessions. Reel's confession is an admission that she murdered two CIA employees while Robie's is to confess to treason by aiding Reel. They both refuse. A visit from Tucker informs them that this was only a test to see how they would hold up under torture by the enemy, but Tucker tells the CIA agent who conducted the torture that he had wanted the confessions to hold against the two agents.

Robie and Reel's experience gains them respect and support from Amanda Marks who lightens their continuing training and works out with them. At the same time, the mission Tucker had planned to send Robie and Reel to perform shatters when an ally is killed. Instead, Tucker sends the two agents to kill an ally who might now be a liability. However, when Robie and Reel arrive to kill the North Korean general, he asks them to protect his family before killing himself. When the president receives word of the general's final statement, he asks Robie and Reel to go to North Korea and rescue the general's two adopted children from an internment camp.

Robie and Reel successfully rescue the general's children, but the act has angered the North Korean government. The North Korean government sends an assassin to kill the president's wife and two children. Robie and Reel, who caught the attention of the president's ten year old son, are invited to go on vacation with the First Lady and her children in Nantucket. Unbeknownst to them, this is where the assassins intend to strike.

On Halloween night, the assassins attack the First family as they enter the courthouse on Nantucket to lead a Halloween parade. Robie and Reel manage to get the family into a secure room, but they are soon overtaken by the assassins when they use flash bombs to disorient them. However, as they confront the assassins, one of the their own, a woman from the internment camps called Chung-Cha, turns on her own allies in hopes of saving the life of a young child she adopted from the same camp. Chung-Cha is killed by an overzealous deputy, but her child is found and rescued. Reel and Robie arrange for the child, Min, to live with Robie's friend, Julie, and her guardian.

# Chapters 1-8

## Summary

Chapter 1. Earl Fontaine is dying of cancer at a prison hospital in Alabama. Earl was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death for the murder of his wife. However, he is too ill to be put to death. Earl implies to a nurse that he killed many more people than that. In his thoughts he reveals he has one more person to kill.

Chapter 2. The president of the United States meets in the Situation Room with the head of the CIA, Evan Tucker, and his national security adviser, Josh Potter. They speak with a man named General Pak. Together they discuss a clandestine mission that will take place soon, a mission that could see the president impeached and General Pak killed if it were to become public. After they finish speaking with General Pak, Tucker tells the president that he has two people in mind for the mission, but they must be vetted. The president is surprised to learn Tucker is speaking of CIA agents Reel and Robie, two agents who recently disobeyed direct orders during their last mission. However, Tucker insists they are the best two agents for the mission.

Chapter 3. Will Robie is unable to sleep. He goes for a walk and quickly runs into a group of young men who plan to rob him. Robie quickly disarms them and sends them running for their lives. As Robie contemplates the medal he received for his last mission, he receives a phone call from the Deputy Director of the CIA asking him to come to Langley.

Chapter 4. Jessica Reel also cannot sleep. She goes to the burnt out shell of her former home and contemplates her own medal. She throws it into the Chesapeake Bay. As she turns to leave, she sees a car pull up. Afraid for her life after disobeying direct orders and killing two CIA agents, she hides. Reel receives a phone call from the Deputy Director of the CIA asking her to allow these four men to take her to Langley.

Chapter 5. At Langley, Reel and Robie meet the new Deputy Director (DD), Amanda Marks. Marks tells them they are under consideration for a new mission, but the director, Evan Tucker, wants them vetted. For this reason, they will be spending several weeks at the Burner Box, a training facility in North Carolina. Marks will be working with them personally.

Chapter 6. Robie meets with Julie Getty, a fifteen year old friend. He tells her that he is going off on a training mission. Julie, however, knows that Robie and Reel made some enemies on their last mission and she wonders if Robie will be safe during this training. Robie tries to reassure her even though he also wonders about his safety. Reel, who has been following him, calls and meets him. They also discuss the possibility that they will not survive the Burner Box. Reel wants Robie to refuse to go and take his chances with the courts. Robie refuses.



Chapter 7. Tucker meets with Marks and stresses that he wants Reel and Robie tested beyond their abilities. However, when Marks tries to ask him if she is supposed to kill them in the testing, he refuses to commit to an answer. However, when Tucker is alone, his thoughts make it clear that he wants Reel punished with death for her treasonous acts.

Chapter 8. After receiving a visit from two men, the doctor comes to the ward to visit the patients in Earl's prison hospital. After she examines him, the doctor asks Earl if he needs anything else. He asks her if she can locate his daughter and let her know he is dying. Earl tells her his daughter entered the Witness Protection program as a teenager because of some trouble she got involved in long after he went to jail. The doctor promises to do what she can.

## Analysis

Two separate situations are presented in these early chapters. The reader initially meets Earl Fontaine, a prisoner who has committed a heinous murder and sentenced to death. However, Earl is dying of cancer and is not well enough to be executed. Earl suggests to a nurse that he not only killed his wife, but made it a sport to kill people he disliked, including Jews, Protestants, and blacks. This seems like prison boasting to the nurse, but when Earl receives two visitors and claims that he has one more person to kill, the reader begins to wonder. Later, when Earl asks to see his daughter, a woman who has been living in the Witness Protection program for years, the reader wonders if he does not mean harm to this woman.

The second situation that is presented in these early chapters is that of Reel and Robie. Reel and Robie are CIA agents who were recently awarded a medal for their last mission, a mission on which they worked together. This mission began in Syria, but ended in the United States when Reel killed two CIA agents, one of whom was the Deputy Director, because of acts she saw as treasonous that led to a near fatal attack on her mentor. Robie was sent to kill Reel for these acts, but he decided to ignore these orders when she told him her reasons for doing it. Now the head of the CIA, Evan Tucker, is out to stop Reel for her actions and Robie has become a target as well because of his loyalty to Reel. Tucker arranges for Reel and Robie to be sent to the Burner Box to be vetted for a new mission. Tucker tells everyone he is doing this to test their loyalty to the agency, but some, including Reel and Robie, suspect that his true motivation is to have them killed.

## Discussion Question 1

Who is Earl Fontaine? Why is he in the prison hospital? What crime did he commit? What does he ask the doctor to do for him?



## Discussion Question 2

Who is Reel? Why has she become an enemy of the CIA? Who does she believe wants her killed? For what reason?

## Discussion Question 3

Who is Robie? Why does he remain loyal to Robie? Why does he not simply quit the CIA?

## Vocabulary

communication, prison, death row, mobile, convenience, questions, decades, mission, obvious, bracketed, demand, organizational, expectantly, continued, certain, comment, skepticism, loyalty, psychiatric, evaluation, vetted, withstand, accomplish, keen, disappointment, necessarily, assume, unequivocally, conference, particularly, burner

# Chapters 9-18

## Summary

Chapter 9. Robie and Reel arrive in North Carolina. Marks meets them in a Humvee and immediately instructs them to strip to their underwear. Anticipating such a thing, both Robie and Reel are wearing workout clothes under their regular clothes. They are then forced to run six miles, three of it uphill, to the main complex of the Burner Box. Afterward, they are run through four hours of intense exercise training. Afterward, they are taken to their room and forced to strip for their physicals.

Chapter 10. The doctor suggests to Robie that he get skin grafts for the severe burns on his legs from his last mission. He refuses because it would require him to stop work for six weeks or more. During the exam, Robie tries to get information on Marks from the doctor, but the doctor is reluctant to tell him anything. Afterward, Robie is taken back to the room and is quickly retrieved again to visit with the psychologist for a psych evaluation.

Chapter 11. Reel undergoes her own physical. The doctor asks about evidence on Reel's body of childbirth, but she refuses to discuss it. Afterward, Reel is also taken to visit a psychologist. At the same time, the psychologist talks with Robie about his current situation and the mission he conducted with Reel that got them both into all this trouble. Robie expresses the opinion that he did the right thing disobeying orders by not killing Reel and helping her survive the CIA's attempts to have her killed.

Chapter 12. Reel speaks with a female psychologist, but she is less open than Robie. She defends her decision to kill two CIA agents who she believed were not only corrupt, but responsible for the devastating injuries to Reel's mentor. They also talk about Reel's conviction that she is not meant to leave the Burner Box alive.

Chapter 13. A woman is led into a room at Bukchang, an internment camp in North Korea. She escaped from another camp and was caught with hidden money upon her arrival at Bukchang. The administrator tells the woman that if she can give him more money, and provide him sexual services, he will allow her to escape again. However, the woman is not really a prisoner, but an assassin sent by the government officials. She kills the administrator and the guards.

Chapter 14. The assassin, Chung-Cha, returns to her apartment where she admires the rice cooker she got in payment for her latest kills. She leaves the apartment and goes for a walk, stopping to eat at a western-style restaurant and visit the USS Pueblo. Chung-Cha saves a tourist who somehow got separated from his tour group. He nearly took a picture of the marketplace, something that is a serious crime in Pyongyang and would likely have led to his death or imprisonment.



Chapter 15. Robie and Reel have been at the Burner Box for a little more than a week. They have not had time to talk and are very aware of the sound and video devices that monitors their room. For this reason, when they do have a moment to talk, they hide their hands and speak in sign language. Reel suggests they make an effort to get Marks over to their side. As they finish speaking, they are dragged from their room and are waterboarded by former chief trainer Andrew Viola. Viola pushes them to sign a confession outlining their crimes, including treason. They refuse.

Chapter 16. When Robie and Reel wake the following morning, they receive a visit from Tucker. Tucker assures them the waterboarding was done only to see if they could withstand torture should they be captured during their mission. He tells them that he needs them for this mission and has no plans to kill them. Afterward, Robie and Reel are given a full meal for the first time since their arrival and given the chance to take a shower. Afterward, they go for a run and find themselves alone with Marks. Marks tells them that the waterboarding was not her idea and that from now on she would be training with them.

Chapter 17. At the prison, the doctor visits Earl and tells him she has contacted the United States Marshall's office to begin the process of getting word to his daughter of his impending death. Afterward, Earl's neighbor, a rapist called Junior, tells Earl that he thinks he is up to something, leaving Earl concerned that he might have a problem.

Chapter 18. Tucker speaks with Viola. Viola expresses concerns over the treatment of Reel and Robie, but promises fidelity to Tucker. At the same time, Viola gets the impression that Tucker really wanted the confessions signed and that he is plotting death for Reel despite his declarations that he is only trying to prepare Reel and Robie for a special mission. On his way to the airport, Viola calls Roger Walton, someone high in the CIA and a friend to Reel and Robie, to give him information on Tucker's actions.

## Analysis

Robie and Reel arrive at the Burner Box and are immediately forced to endure overwhelming amounts of exercise and stress. They also have physicals and psychiatric examinations. It appears that Marks is trying to push them to their limit and beyond. Robie and Reel are exhausted beyond words even as they struggle to keep up. When they are waterboarded, it seems they have finally reached their limit, yet they do not give in and they do not ask for mercy. Robie and Reel prove to the reader that they are truly stronger than anything Tucker and his people can throw at them.

Marks is a by-the-book kind of agent. However, when she witnesses the waterboarding, she is not impressed and does not like it. Marks thinks that Reel and Robie were right all along, that Tucker wants them killed. She will not be a part of this and decides to begin helping them. She becomes their ally without Reel and Robie having to do anything to encourage this change in attitude. The reader is made optimistic by this and by Viola's attempts to get help to Reel and Robie, but there is still danger for Reel and





Robie as well as this mysterious mission Tucker wants them to go on for unknown reasons.

The reader is introduced to a North Korean assassin, Chung-Cha. She is a beautiful young woman who has had a very difficult life and does not anticipate a happy future. The reader connects Chung-Cha to the General Pak who spoke to the president in Chapter 2 about the mission Reel and Robie are being prepared for. This leaves the reader wondering if Chung-Cha will play a part in this mission.

In prison, Earl learns that the doctor has begun the process of contacting his daughter, which should be a happy moment if the reader was not convinced that Earl meant this girl harm for unknown reasons. At the same time, Earl has become suspicious of his neighbor, Junior, leaving the reader concerned for Junior's future, as well.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does Marks push Reel and Robie at the Burner Box? For what purpose?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why are Robie and Reel waterboarded? What is waterboarding? What is its purpose?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Earl want to see his daughter? Who is helping him find her?

## **Vocabulary**

waterboarding, witness, calm, suspect, understand, confidentiality, violation, specific, understand, guarantees, situation, sympathetic, doddering, request, remained, glimmer, danger, intentional, guardian, cryptically, fallout, director, mistake, termination, observation, tortured, valid, confession, proof, surprised

# Chapters 19-29

## Summary

Chapter 19. Robie and Reel visit their psychologists again, but this time it is one group meeting. Reel's psychologist tries to get her to discuss her attack on the former DD and an analyst, but Robie and Reel both refuse to acknowledge that their actions might have been inappropriate. The psychologists, however, continue to push the question of whether Robie and Reel will be able to follow orders if placed in the field again.

Chapter 20. Robie and Reel participate in an obstacle course. This time Marks is right there beside them. Afterward, they receive a visit from Roger Walton, also known as Blue Man. Blue Man tells them he believes that Tucker wants to use them for a super-secret mission that may be impossible for Robie and Reel to survive. They immediately guess that Tucker wants them to assassinate the head of some foreign country, a treasonous act that could cause the president to be impeached if it goes wrong. Blue Man suggests that Tucker wants to use Robie and Reel because he wants them dead and this mission would be a good way to ensure that happens.

Chapter 21. Chung-Cha is on a train following a man for unknown reasons. When the man goes to dinner, Chung-Cha carefully searches his sleeping compartment and leaves behind a listening device. When the man returns to his compartment, Chung-Cha listens carefully and becomes convinced that the man knows the compartment has been searched. Therefore, when the train approaches the next stop, she prepares to leave. She manages to leave the train before the man so that he does not see her leave. She then follows him to a local hotel where he takes a room for the night. Late in the night, Chung-Cha slips into the man's room through a window. The man is waiting for her and puts a gun to her head. Chung-Cha is able to disarm the man and injure him. Chung-Cha questions the man before knocking him unconscious and locating his phone. Chung-Cha searches the phone for text messages and phone calls. She notices that the man called a number in North Korea. She dials the number and is surprised when a person answers in English.

Chapter 22. At the shooting range in the Burner Box, Reel, Robie, and Marks discuss the possible target of Tucker's secret mission. Reel thinks it must be either the leader of North Korea or the leader of Iran. They discuss how dangerous, and illegal, this move would be.

Chapter 23. Evan Tucker received an email informing him that Lloyd Carson, his British contact with General Pak, was killed in an apparent robbery. This could be potentially fatal. Not only this, but Carson's phone called a special number in North Korea late the night he died. Tucker receives confirmation that this call was placed by Carson's killer. It appears to be clear evidence that their plot has been discovered by the North Korean government.



Chapter 24. Chung-Cha is back in North Korea and she is waiting to be interviewed by a general in the government about the report she made on the death of Lloyd Carson. Chung-Cha reported the phone call she made from Carson's phone and identified the voice on the other end as General Pak, a well-respected general who is also the second in command of the country. The general who interviews her is a close friend of Pak's and does not believe her until she plays a recording she made on her own cellphone.

Chapter 25. Tucker meets again with the president and his security advisor, Josh Potter. Tucker informs the president of Carson's death and the dilemma this causes them in regards to General Pak. Although the president promised Pak that he would make sure nothing bad happened as a result of their plot, he now finds himself in a position of needing to stop General Pak from being arrested by North Korean officials and possibly interrogated. It is decided that Pak must be eliminated. The president agrees to have Tucker send Reel and Robie to France, where Pak is currently on the run, to eliminate him. However, the president also tells Tucker his career is over.

Chapter 26. Tucker meets with Robie and Reel at the Burner Box. He tells them that their mission is to kill General Pak. Robie and Reel correctly guess that something went wrong with the original mess and that this mission is an attempt to clean up the mess. Tucker refuses to admit to anything. Tucker tells them if they are successful on this mission, their past will be forgiven.

Chapter 27. Earl Fontaine is concerned that his bed neighbor in the prison hospital, Junior, has an idea what he has been planning, so he sets him up. Earl had the guard, Albert, hide a knife in Junior's bed. When Junior finds it, Albert rushes over, forces Junior to continue holding the knife, and kills him.

Chapter 28. Robie and Reel are in Avignon, France. They spend a day going over the mission plans before visiting the cottage where Pak is believed to be hiding. They leave cameras all around the property so they can monitor the movements of Pak and anyone else who might visit him. During the night, they break into the property and find Pak in the bedroom. Pak has a gun. He tells Robie and Reel to make sure his family is not hurt. He also asks them to tell the president to go to hell. Pak then kills himself.

Chapter 29. Robie and Reel are debriefed. Although the mission is over and all evidence that Robie and Reel were there, there is some concern that the North Koreans will retaliate. North Korea has nuclear weapons, so this idea causes a great deal of concern.

## Analysis

As Robie and Reel continue their training at the Burner Box, things begin to fall apart for their nemesis, Evan Tucker. The British man Tucker was using as a go-between for he and General Pak is killed by Chung-Cha. Chung-Cha, a young woman who was badly abused and mistreated in an internment camp in North Korea, is a trained assassin who works for the North Korean government. She is a broken person who is constantly

reminded of the nightmare she lived as a child and the possibility that the smallest mistake could send her back there in a moment. For this reason, she is a loyal citizen. Even though she knows it could cause her trouble, Chung-Cha not only does her job well, but she tries to be honest about what she finds during these missions. For this reason, Chung-Cha shows proof to the government of the traitorous actions of General Pak in working with the British spy, Lloyd Carson. This causes a great deal of turmoil, not only for the Americans who had been plotting to help Pak take over his government, but also for Chung-Cha as she clashes with loyal supporters of Pak's.

Tucker has made a colossal mistake by getting involved in the potential assassination of the North Korean leader. This plot could be exposed now that Carson is dead and the North Koreans are aware of the plot. The president could be impeached. For this reason, Tucker insists that their only course of action is to kill Pak and make it appear as though his own government did it. The president gives his permission for this mission to go forward, but he is not happy about it and tells Tucker that his career is over. Tucker, who had appeared to be the enemy, especially when it comes to the safety of Robie and Reel, is slowly becoming a sympathetic character. He appears to be over his head just a little.

Robie and Reel are sent to France to kill Pak. The mission does not go as planned, however. Pak commits suicide, but not before asking Robie and Reel to be sure his family is not harmed. This leaves Robie and Reel concerned with the fallout, particularly since the North Koreans have nuclear weapons. Tucker, too, is concerned with this thought, but he refuses to discuss it with these two, traitorous agents.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why is it important for CIA agents to follow orders? Why are Robie and Reel continuously asked if they are capable of doing such a thing?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why is the death of Lloyd Carson such a big deal to the Americans? Why does it lead to the attempted assassination of General Pak?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Who is Chung-Cha? Why does the author spend so much time telling her story? Why is it important for the reader to know about her childhood?

## **Vocabulary**

international, annihilate, threaten, answered, agreement, assassins, specific, target, warning, retorted, president, respectfully, cracked, nukes, doubt, command, paranoid,

seriously, desperately, lukewarm, debrief, obviously, outside, studied, illumination,  
reason, articulated, unnecessary, forgotten, attention

# Chapters 30-48

## Summary

Chapter 30. Reel and Robie are at his apartment. He begins making dinner as they discuss the mission and a possible future mission. Robie suggests they call Julie and invite her to join them. Reel volunteers to go get her. On the drive, Julie tells Reel that she believes they had a similar childhood and offers to listen to her talk sometime. Reel is appreciative.

Chapter 31. After dinner, Reel is alone in Robie's apartment when she receives a phone call from her former contact from WITSEC. The man tells Reel that her father is dying in prison and he wants to see her. Reel is shocked and her first inclination is not to see him.

Chapter 32. Reel speaks with Robie about the possibility of seeing her father. Reel asks Robie if he will go with her should she choose to go. He agrees.

Chapter 33. Robie and Reel arrive in Alabama and make the hour long drive to the prison. As they drive, Reel tells Robie about the Neo-Nazi group she became involved in after her father went to prison and she ended up in foster care. Reel turned to the FBI for help, making it possible for them to arrest most of the group. Reel testified against them, sending all but one to jail for significant time. The leader, Leon Dikes, had a good lawyer, however, and only served a short sentence. It was for this that Reel spent several years in WITSEC.

Chapter 34. Chung-Cha is briefed on a new mission. The government wants her to kill the First Lady and her two children in retaliation for the American government's attempt to assassinate their leader.

Chapter 35. Reel and Robie are taken to the prison hospital where Reel speaks with Earl Fontaine for a few minutes. Earl tells Reel that he wanted to see her so that she could say whatever she needed to say to him before he died. Reel becomes angry and leaves without saying much of anything. Robie tells Earl he was not worth the waste of breath required to tell him what a scum he is and leaves, too. As they drive away, they are unaware they are under surveillance.

Chapter 36. A few days later, Reel and Robie have dinner with Julie. During the meal, Reel tells Julie about her father and how he killed her mother. Later, they drive Julie home and return to Robie's apartment. Reel comments that she should find a new place to live. Robie invites her to live with him for a while. Robie gets a phone call from FBI Agent Nicole Vance. Julie has been kidnapped.

Chapter 37. Vance describes the scene of the kidnapping to Robie and Reel when they arrive. Julie's guardian, Jerome, was badly injured but managed to call for help. Julie's cellphone was left behind with a text message addressed to Sally Fontaine. Although

they do not tell Vance that Sally Fontaine is Reel's birth name, they get a copy of the message. On the drive back to Robie's apartment, Reel tells him that the message is written in a code that she helped create during her days with the Neo-Nazi group. She says the message tells her that Leon Dikes will release Julie in exchange for Reel and her daughter.

Chapter 38. Reel explains to Robie that Dikes raped her when she was a member of the group and that she gave birth three days after the FBI arrested the members of the group. She was forced to give the child up for adoption because she went into WITSEC and was quickly recruited by the CIA. Reel has no idea where her child is now, but hopes that Dikes will be willing to trade Julie just for her.

Chapter 39. Julie arrives in an undisclosed location and is taken to speak with Leon Dikes. Dikes wants to know how Julie knows Reel. Julie refuses to tell him anything even after he hits her for making a disrespectful comment.

Chapter 40. Dikes tells Reel he will not release Julie until she and his child arrive. Reel fights the idea of taking her child to Dikes, but eventually agrees if he will give her two days to arrange it. Afterward, Robie reminds Reel that they are CIA agents and they are smarter than Dikes. They begin to make plans to get Julie back.

Chapter 41. Dikes threatens to torture Julie if she will not tell him about Reel. Julie agrees.

Chapter 42. Reel speaks to Dikes again and receives instructions on how to travel to him. Dikes threatens to impregnate Julie and then kill her when the child is born if Reel does anything against his instructions.

Chapter 43. Reel and a woman posing as her daughter travel according to Dikes specific instructions. When they arrive in Alabama, they are searched and everything but a scrunchie in Reel's hair is taken from them, including their clothes. When they arrive at the compound, Dikes immediately takes DNA samples from Reel and her daughter to verify their identities. Dikes then orders Reel to go into a separate room with him.

Chapter 44. Chung-Cha attends another meeting with government officials to discuss the assassination of the First Lady and her children. Chung-Cha takes the file home and studies the information on the family. As she studies it she sees a man outside her apartment window whom she realizes has been following her.

Chapter 45. Dikes takes Reel to a bedroom after giving orders that they are not to be disturbed. They talk for a few minutes and then Dikes orders Reel to undress and lay on the bed. She does. Reel spits in Dikes' face as he approaches her. He turns to get his gun and Reel attacks him, using her scrunchy as a garrote around his neck. They struggle for a few minutes. The noise draws the attention of the guard so Reel makes lovemaking sounds to satisfy his curiosity. Reel then breaks Dikes' neck. When Dikes is dead, Reel fires off his gun three times into the ceiling.

Chapter 46. Robie and full team of FBI and CIA agents is outside. At Reel's signal, they rush the compound. Reel leaves the room where she and Dikes were and kills Albert, the prison guard and a member of the Neo-Nazi group, as he tries to stop her. Reel goes to the room where she left her daughter and Julie only to find Julie has been moved. As they rush to find Julie, they hear gunfire. Robie has killed two guards threatening Julie.

Chapter 47. Reel, Robie, and Vance explain to Julie how they worked together to plan this operation. Reel also introduces the woman who pretended to be her daughter, Agent Lesley Shepherd. Reel disappears for a few minutes to take pictures. Then she invites Robie to go with her to do something.

Chapter 48. Reel and Robie visit Earl Fontaine in jail one last time to tell him his friends are dead. They, with the help of the prison hospital's doctor and the warden, have arranged to move Earl to death row. Earl will likely die quickly and in a great deal of pain without the intervention of the hospital.

## Analysis

Reel was once in WITSEC, the United States Marshal's witness protection program. She was in this program because she helped the FBI take down a Neo-Nazi group. Her father was not only aware of this group, but he was a part of it before going to prison for murdering Reel's mother. Reel dislikes her father not only for the murder of her mother, but for the abuse he perpetrated on both Reel and her mother before his imprisonment. Therefore, when she learns he is dying in prison and wants to see her, she is conflicted. Reel's first instinct is to not go. After a conversation with Robie in which he warns her she might regret not seeing him, she decides to go. Reel is unaware that this whole visit was set up by the Neo-Nazi group in an attempt to locate her and force her to return to the leader, Leon Dikes, who is the father of her only child.

Dikes and his people kidnap Julie in an attempt to get Reel and her child to return to the group. Dikes is unaware that Reel is now a member of the CIA. With Robie's help, Reel sets up a mission to retrieve Julie. In the process of this mission, Reel kills Dikes and Albert, a guard from the prison. Afterward, she goes to the prison to see that his scheme to have his own daughter killed failed. It is a dark moment in Reel's life, but her reaction shows how strong of character she has become despite her dark childhood. Not only this, but Robie's lack of hesitation in getting involved in the operation. This shows the reader that Robie, who has never really had an emotional connection to another person is deeply involved with Reel.

As Reel's personal drama plays out, Chung-Cha learns that she has been chosen to kill the First Lady and her children in retaliation for the American president's attempt to kill their supreme leader. Chung-Cha knows that this is a great honor, but is also aware that she is unlikely to survive the mission. At the same time, she becomes aware that the government is having her followed. It is clear to the reader that Chung-Cha's life is in danger just because she told the truth about what she found on Carson's phone.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Why was Reel in WITSEC? How did this shape her adulthood and her career?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Who is the father of Reel's child? Where is her child? Why?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why is Chung-Cha being followed? What does this say about her immediate future?

## **Vocabulary**

strength, Neo-Nazi, concentration, possible, legally, death row, transport, lightning, personnel, horrific, warden, actually, terrific, stabilized, condition, determined, execute, collapse, confidence, effective, coincidentally, compliments, mention, pretend, interrupted, visitors, assault, disentangled, quickly, stripped

# Chapters 49-58

## Summary

Chapter 49. Chung-Cha goes to the camp where she grew up, Yodok. She has been given permission to find one child and remove her from the camp. Chung-Cha inspects several children.

Chapter 50. Chung-Cha witnesses a child beaten by the guards and her fellow children. She requests to speak to her. Chung-Cha sees herself in this child. She asks the child if she has a family and if she wants to leave the camp. The child, Min, asks to leave immediately.

Chapter 51. Chung-Cha fills out the paperwork to take Min away from the camp and drives her to her apartment. Chung-Cha feeds the child and gives her a bath to begin the process of removing the filth from her body. Chung-Cha lies in bed that night and thinks about the day General Pak came to the camp and asked her if she wanted to leave.

Chapter 52. Robie and Reel are home only a short time when they get a call from Blue Man asking them to meet him. Blue Man tells them that they believe the North Koreans are planning an attack on America. Blue Man also tells Robie and Reel that he believes the North Koreans might have seen them at Pak's cottage and they could be in danger as well.

Chapter 53. The president is eating breakfast when his wife joins him. She tells him she wants to take their children to Nantucket because she is worried about their ten year old son, Tommy's, trouble adjust to life in the White House. The First Lady, Ellie, wants the president to join them, but he tells her it is impossible. The children join them. The president is thinking of Pak and has an epiphany as he watches his children. Afterward, a gardener overhears Ellie talking about the Nantucket trip with her secretary.

Chapter 54. Robie and Reel are called to the White House to visit with the president. The president tells them that he wants to send a team to North Korea to rescue Pak's children from the internment camp where they have been sent in the aftermath of Pak's death. Robie and Reel volunteer to run the mission themselves.

Chapter 55. Chung-Cha continues to spend her time with Min, trying to keep her clean, help her regain her health, and begin her education. Chung-Cha also shares with Min her love for hamburgers and fries and her knowledge of the city's history. Min causes Chung-Cha to have many memories of her past. Chung-Cha recalls how after Pak left a woman took her into a basement room where four people were restrained and hooded. The woman instructed Chung-Cha to kill the people. Chung-Cha then learned the people were her family.

Chapter 56. Robie and Reel meet with Kim Sook, a man who escaped from the North Korean internment camp, Bukchang. Sook tells Robie and Rook how he escaped and why they would never be able to escape the country with Pak's children if they did not have a North Korean with them. Sook volunteers to go with them. The president agrees and they begin making their plans.

Chapter 57. Robie, Reel, and Sook go to North Korea alone. They travel via boat across the Korea Bay. Then they ride battery powered scooters to Bukchang. They are able to sneak inside the camp and rescue Pak's grown children, but as they are leaving an alarm goes up. Three guards they killed outside the camp have been discovered. Robie sends Reel and Sook to the bay with Pak's children while he stays behind to distract the guards. However, the North Koreans have greater fire power than Robie had expected. He is quickly overwhelmed and must make a run for it. Robie's scooter is damaged by mortar fire. He begins to run, but when he hears a helicopter overhead, he thinks he is not going to survive. However, he is contacted over his communications earwig and learns that the helicopter is American. The helicopter lowers down into the trees and Robie grabs onto the skids just before the North Koreans catch up to him. Once inside the helicopter, Robie learns it was Reel who called for the helicopter.

Chapter 58. Robie arrives on board the USS George Washington and is taken immediately to sickbay to treat his injuries there. Reel finds him there and he thanks her for saving his life.

## Analysis

Chung-Cha visits the internment camp where she grew up. Chung-Cha continues to be the only prisoner in the total control section to be released. She wants to take another child like herself out of the camp and give that child a chance at survival. For this reason, she takes Min out of the camp and begins teaching her about the outside world. Chung-Cha and Min have an instant bond that causes Chung-Cha to begin remembering and dealing with her own past. The reader realizes that Chung-Cha is lonely and that she has a big heart, a heart that wants to make a difference to someone who could have grown up to be like her. This could cause Chung-Cha to behave in unpredictable ways later in the novel.

Robie and Reel are tasked by the president to go to North Korea to save General Pak's adopted children, who are now full grown. This mission could have been fatal for one or both of them, but Reel comes through for Robie and saves his life after he separates from her and becomes stuck in the woods with North Korean hostiles behind him. Reel saves his life. This seems to seal something between the two of them, sealing a bond that began when Robie was tasked to kill Reel but made the decision not to.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Chung-Cha adopt Min? What is her purpose? What is revealed about Chung-Cha's past through her interactions with Min?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does the president send Reel and Robie to rescue Pak's adopted children from Bukchang? Are they successful?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Reel send a helicopter to save Robie in North Korea? What does this suggest about their relationship?

## Vocabulary

features, aircraft carrier, guarding, coverage, trained, enough, supposed, airlift, transition, protection, anticipated, preferred, trouper, gauze, perched, displaced, personnel, expensive, relieved, rendezvous, position, harness, cinching, helmeted, maneuvered, vertically, pinging, earwig, illuminated, electronic, assistance, beacon

# Chapters 59-76

## Summary

Chapter 59. Min begins asking questions about why she was in Yodok. This causes Chung-Cha to think of her own family. She tells Min about her parents, how they were professors who spoke out against the government. A short time later, government officials come for Chung-Cha. She leaves Min with her landlord.

Chapter 60. Chung-Cha meets with several officials about the upcoming assassination. They tell her about the Americans who took Pak's children from Bukchang, which has spurred them to move up the time frame of the assassination. One of the government people at the meeting is Rim Yun, the woman who encouraged Chung-Cha to kill her parents all those years ago. Chung-Cha dislikes her and does not like that she is involved in the planning. However, she can do nothing about it. When Chung-Cha learns that she will be leaving in a week, she suggests that they allow her to take Min with her to America, as cover. Rim Yun is against the idea, but the others agree.

Chapter 61. Reel and Robie are at the White House to accept congratulations from the president. As the president walks them out, they run into the First Lady and her son, Tommy. Tommy got into a fight at school. The First Lady is angry, but the president seems mildly amused. When Tommy tells everyone that he got into the fight because the other boy made fun of his dad, Reel interrupts by praising him for having his father's six. Tommy seems impressed with Reel and Robie.

Chapter 62. Chung-Cha and Min arrive in New York City. They go immediately to their hotel where Min is impressed by the television and candy. Afterward, they go to dinner and do some sightseeing. Min is impressed with everything she sees.

Chapter 63. Chung-Cha and Min travel by train to Virginia. They join a young couple and drive to a town house in a small suburb. While Min plays in the basement with some toys the couple provided, Chung-Cha speaks with the others about the plan. The gardener from the White House tells them about the trip to Nantucket, suggesting it would be the perfect time for the assassination.

Chapter 64. Chung-Cha and Min go for a walk in the residential neighborhood where the town house is located. They run into some kind neighbors who offer to help them with anything they might need. A few days later, Chung-Cha meets with the team of assassins who will help her with the attack on the First Lady and her children. They discuss Nantucket and the jobs the others will get in order to give them cover for the assassination. Chung-Cha is to stay back for a time and arrive when the First Lady does. At this meeting, Chung-Cha learns that none of them are expected to survive the assassination.



Chapter 65. Robie and Reel are called to the White House again. This time it is the First Lady who wants to see them. She asks them to accompany her and the children to Nantucket. Tommy has become fascinated with the two of them and the First Lady hopes their presence will help Tommy adjust better to life in the White House. They agree.

Chapter 66. Tucker is displeased that his two best agents will be vacationing in Nantucket when they need them in Washington, D.C. in case of an attack by North Korea. However, he allows them to go. After the meeting, Tucker pulls Reel aside and apologizes for his actions in the aftermath of DD Gelder's death. Tucker says that evidence points to Gelder being a traitor and that he no longer faulted her for doing what she did.

Chapter 67. Chung-Cha and Min travel by ferry to Nantucket and take up residence in a small cottage there. They spend some time visiting the island. Chung-Cha uses Min to speak with several of her team members by giving her a note to give to a gas station attendant.

Chapter 68. Reel and Robie arrive on Nantucket by plane with the First Lady and her children. They travel to the home the family will be staying in for the week. After unpacking, they go to a restaurant to have lunch. Claire, the First Lady's fifteen year old daughter, has a crush on Robie and makes her intentions obvious. At the same time, Reel speaks with Tommy about his unhappiness and shows him how lucky he is to have a family that loves him.

Chapter 69. Chung-Cha and Min are walking on the beach at the same time as the First Lady and her family. Chung-Cha refuses to allow Min to stare at them. Instead, she distracts her by having her take a note to a North Korean man in a small shop on the beach. Chung-Cha is unhappy that the message from the North Korean man suggests they halt the assassination attempt because of Robie and Reel's presence. She decides they must go forward. At the same time, she begins to teach Min three simple sentences in English she can use if something should happen to Chung-Cha.

Chapter 70. Robie is outside when Claire joins him. They talk for a few minutes and he manages to convince her to be nicer to her brother. As they talk, a loud bang causes Robie to react instinctively by throwing Claire to the ground. They learn, however, that it was only a car backfiring.

Chapter 71. The assassination team comes to Chung-Cha's cottage late at night. They agree to proceed as planned and go over the plan once more. Then one of the men gives cyanide capsules to everyone that is to be used after the assassination is over. Chung-Cha receives two, one for her and one for Min.

Chapter 72. The First Lady and her family discuss the costumes they plan to wear for Halloween. Claire is annoyed that they have to participate in a parade the town is putting on. Later, Robie and Reel discuss their future. Robie tells Reel that he has decided to retire in a year.

Chapter 73. Chung-Cha and Min dress up in costumes and go downtown before the parade. They go trick or treating, but Chung-Cha panics when she sees that the First Family is handing out candy and pushes Min to collect the sweets on her own. Min uses her new English phrases with Tommy, but then Chung-Cha comes back for her. Chung-Cha sits Min down outside and shows her where the police station is. She instructs Min to go there in an hour if Chung-Cha does not return. Chung-Cha then meets up with her team as the First Family goes toward the town hall.

Chapter 74. The First Family is about to climb the steps outside the town hall when Robie spots a Chinese dragon. He has the secret service check it out before they go inside. When it is proven to be nothing but a bunch of teenagers, they proceed into the building only to be fired upon by someone in the balcony above the entryway. Chaos ensues as gun fire erupts between the Secret Service and the assassins in the balcony. Reel and Robie manage to get the First Family into a cellar room with a spiral staircase. They push the family behind a heavy table and guard the stairs. However, the assassins have flash-bangs, a type of disorienting weapon that creates loud noise and bright lights. They throw three flash-bangs into the cellar, disorienting Robie and Reel so completely that they are able to overtake them.

Chapter 75. The assassins disarm Robie and Reel and gather the First Family. Chung-Cha makes a speech about the American's actions against North Korea. However, instead of killing Reel and Robie, as well as the First Family, Chung-Cha attacks her fellow assassins. Afterward, Chung-Cha explains to Robie and Reel about Min. As they begin to tell her what she will have to do next, a deputy shoots her in the neck. Chung-Cha bleeds to death before they can get her help.

Chapter 76. Robie and Reel are hailed heroes in the aftermath of the attack on the First Family. However, their only thoughts are of Chung-Cha. They arrange for Julie and her guardian, Jerome, to take in Min. Afterward, Reel suggests to Robie that she would like to do more for Min as they visit Chung-Cha's grave in rural Virginia.

## Analysis

As Chung-Cha and her group of assassins prepare to kill the First Lady and her children, Robie and Reel get to know the First Family and find themselves invited to vacation with them on Nantucket in hopes of helping the ten year old son, Tommy, adjust better to life in the White House. Robie and Reel find themselves the subject of infatuation by the president's two children, an amusing situation that makes Robie very uncomfortable. In the end, however, he manages to convince the older girl to be nicer to her brother while Reel convinces Tommy to give his parents, and his sister, a chance.

Chung-Cha finds herself in something of a quandary as she struggles between her duty to her country and her love for Min. Chung-Cha is so concerned for Min that she arranges to take her with her to America, only to realize that she has placed Min in a difficult position by bringing her along on an assassination mission. Chung-Cha learns that she and the others are not meant to survive their mission, but are to commit mass



suicide in a message to the American government. This includes Min. Chung-Cha realizes she cannot do this. Instead, Chung-Cha teaches Min to ask for help in English and then she turns on her comrades in the final moments of the assassination plot. Chung-Cha has decided to seek help in America. However, an overzealous deputy shoots and kills her. Although Chung-Cha has done the right thing, she dies and leaves Min alone. Despite this, Min is in America and she now has a brighter future than she ever would have had in North Korea.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do Robie and Reel get invited to Nantucket with the First Family? Why do they decide to go? What do they do for the family there?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Tucker apologize to Reel? What does he apologize for? What does this mean for Reel's future with the CIA?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Chung-Cha kill her companions instead of the First Family? How does this save Reel and Robie's lives? What might have happened to Chung-Cha if she had survived?

## Vocabulary

horizon, wrought-iron, sibling, explained, situation, language, recovered, scrubbed, practice, agreed, completed, opened, everything, tensions, conflicted, returned, overzealous, embraced, heartfelt, supporting, endured, counseling, politically, administration, building, moment, quite, deputy, covered, wounds, ambulance, pressed, knocked, itinerary, debriefing, comrade



# Characters

## Will Robie

Will Robie is a CIA agent. Robie has just returned from a mission to Syria he was not supposed to survive, but did. Robie won a medal for his actions in Syria, but has earned a bad reputation with the current director of the CIA, Evan Tucker. Therefore, when Tucker sends him to the Burner Box in North Carolina, Robie believes he is being sent there to die. Instead, Robie is pushed to his limits and he survives, proving he is still capable of being a good agent.

Robie and his current partner, Reel, are sent to France to kill North Korean leader, General Pak. When they arrive, Pak is waiting for them. Pak commits suicide. Later, Robie and Reel go to North Korea and save Pak's adopted children from an internment camp. This causes the North Korean government to send assassins after the president's family. By coincidence, Robie and Reel happen to be with the family with the assassins arrive. They keep the family safe until they are overwhelmed by superior fire power. However, the assassination does not take place and Robie and Reel are once again hailed heroes.

## Jessica Reel/Sally Fontaine

Jessica Reel has had an interesting life. As a child, when her name was Sally Fontaine, Reel lived with an abusive father. Reel's father was sentenced to death in Alabama for the murder of Reel's mother. Reel went to live in a foster home where the foster father had connections to a Neo-Nazi group. Reel was pulled into this group, raped by its leader. Reel made the choice to go to the FBI and feed them information on the group that eventually led to their arrests. Reel was then placed in WITSEC. Soon after the Neo-Nazi case ended, Reel was recruited into the CIA at the age of nineteen.

Reel learned of corruption in the CIA and killed two people she believed were behind it, but she had to break some rules to do so. Robie was sent after her to kill her, but when he learned her story, he decided not only to not kill her, but to help her end the corruption that was started with these two men. Now Reel and Robie have become targets of the DCI, Evan Tucker.

As the novel opens, Reel and Robie are sent to the Burner Box, a training facility in North Carolina. They are told that the reason for this is to vet them for a new mission, but both Robie and Reel are convinced they are meant to die at the Burner Box for their previous actions. However, they survive the vetting and become full agents again, taking several missions overseas. In the end, Reel and Robie save the president's family from North Korean assassins.

## **Director of Central Intelligence Evan Tucker**

Evan Tucker is the director of the CIA. Tucker dislikes Reel and Robie because of their actions against one of the former deputy directors of the CIA and a CIA analysis. The novel begins with the idea that Tucker wants Reel and Robie killed for their actions. It is with this mentality that Tucker appears to send Robie and Reel to the Burner Box in North Carolina. However, as the novel progresses, the reader begins to question Tucker's true motivations. Tucker has a mission that is of the utmost importance that, if it fails, could lead to the impeachment of the president. For this mission, Tucker has chosen Robie and Reel. This leaves the reader wondering if Tucker might really appreciate their skill. Therefore, in the end when Tucker tells Reel he believes that she did the only thing she could in killing the two CIA agents, the reader is not surprised.

## **Deputy Director Amanda Marks**

Amanda Marks is the deputy director of the CIA. Marks is tasked with vetting Robie and Reel for a mysterious new mission. Marks is told to push Robie and Reel to their limit and then more. Marks asks if she is supposed to kill them, but Tucker refuses to say yes. Marks is a by-the-books agent and she does as she is told. However, when Robie and Reel are waterboarded in an attempt to get them to sign a confession, she is kinder to them and becomes something of an ally. Later, when Reel organizes an operation to save Julie from the Neo-Nazis, Marks offers very important intelligence information for the operation.

## **General Pak**

General Pak is the second in command in North Korea. Pak contacts the American government and conspires with them to have the supreme commander of North Korea assassinated. It is this mission that Robie and Reel are meant to complete. However, before the mission can be set in motion, Lloyd Carson, the British spy who has been the go-between for Pak and Tucker, is found killed. Tucker worries that North Korea has uncovered the plot to assassinate the leader of North Korea and that Pak will tell them everything if tortured. Tucker recommends that Pak be killed. Robie and Reel are sent to assassinate Pak, but instead Pak kills himself in front of Robie and Reel after asking them to ensure that his family is protected. Robie and Reel will later be sent by the president to rescue Pak's children from the Bukchang internment camp where they are being held.

## **Julie**

Julie is a young girl Will Robie saved from death when she was kidnapped by a Saudi prince. Julie has had a rough childhood and she recognizes the same thing in Reel. Julie and Reel become fast friends and Reel finds herself able to tell Julie things she

has never been able to tell anyone else. In the end, Julie and her guardian, Jerome, take in Min at Reel and Robie's request.

## **Yie Chung-Cha**

Yie Chung-Cha is a young woman who grew up in the Yodok internment camp in North Korea. While in the camp, Chung-Cha was badly treated. Her own parents would beat her when told to do so by the prison guards. They also told the guards about everything Chung-Cha did, even things they knew would cause her a beating. It was a horrible life, but Chung-Cha fought hard to survive. When she was ten, General Pak came to the camp and interview Chung-Cha. He told her that she could leave the camp if she did what he and his people asked her to do. Chung-Cha murdered her entire family in order to leave the camp.

Chung-Cha is now a trained assassin. She kills several armed guards and the administrator of the internment camp Bukchang at the beginning of the novel. She also kills the British spy, Lloyd Carson, an event that leads to the death of General Pak. In the end, however, Chung-Cha realizes she is no longer happy with her work, no longer supports the leader of her country, and she decides to kill her assassin team rather than follow through on her mission to kill the First Lady and her children. Chung-Cha wants to immigrate to America with Min, but she is killed when an overzealous deputy kills her in the aftermath of the attack on the First Family.

## **Min**

Min is a ten year old girl who was born in the Yodok internment camp in North Korea. Min is a tough girl who survives against all odds. When Chung-Cha sees Min in the camp, she reminds Chung-Cha of herself. Chung-Cha takes Min home with her and begins to give her a life like she has never known before. When Chung-Cha must travel to America to assassinate the First Lady and her children, she elects to take Min with her because she has no one else to leave her with. Unfortunately, this places Min in mortal damage as Chung-Cha learns that the government intended for everyone involved in the mission to die. Min survives, however, in part because of Chung-Cha's bravery. Min goes to live with Julie and her guardian, Jerome. However, the reader is left with the impression that Reel plans to adopt Min.

## **Earl Fontaine**

Earl has conducted several heinous crimes, for which he received the death penalty. However, Earl has lung cancer and is not well enough to be executed. Earl lives in the prison hospital where he is given pain medication to ease his suffering.

Earl convinces the prison doctor to contact his daughter, whom he knows was placed in WITSEC as a teenager. The doctor calls WITSEC and they contact Reel. Reel makes the decision to see her father in order to keep from feeling regret when she is older.

However, the visit is unpleasant and she finds she has nothing to say to her father. Later, Reel realizes that the visit was all a ruse to bring Reel out of hiding and allow the Neo-Nazi group to find her and force her to return to them.

## **Leon Dikes**

Leon Dikes is the leader of the Neo-Nazi group that Reel took down as a teenager. During that time, Dikes raped Reel and she ended up giving birth to his child. Dikes comes back into Reel's life after she visits her father in prison and attempts to make her return to him along with the child she gave birth to more than twenty years before. Dikes is unaware that Reel is now an agent with the CIA; therefore, he is surprised when she is able to outmaneuver him. Reel kills Dikes and Robie comes in with a team of FBI agents and helps her take out the rest of the group.

# Symbols and Symbolism

## Seashells

Tommy and Reel collect seashells at the beach in Nantucket on their first afternoon there.

## Costumes

The night the North Koreans have chosen to assassinate the First Family is Halloween. Chung-Cha dresses Min up as a frog and she goes as a pirate. It is the first time Min has heard of Halloween, let alone been allowed to dress up.

## Hamburgers, Fries, and Milkshakes

Chung-Cha visits a restaurant in Pyongyang that serves hamburgers, French fries, and milkshakes. When Min is able to eat proper food, Chung-Cha also takes her to this restaurant.

## Flash-Bangs

Flash-bangs are a type of grenade that are meant to be disorienting with bright lights and loud noises. The North Koreans use three of these to take Robie, Reel, and the First Family hostage.

## Carson's Cellphone

Chung-Cha takes Carson's phone after killing him and searches it for text messages and phone calls. She notes that one call was made to a phone in North Korea. She calls the number back and recognizes General Pak's voice on the other end.

## Julie's Cellphone

The Neo-Nazis leave an encoded message on Julie's cellphone after they kidnap her that is addressed to Sally Fontaine. The message tells Reel that they will exchange Julie for Reel and the child she had more than twenty years before.

## **Chung-Cha's Knives**

Chung-Cha carries two knives that are slightly curved and have serrated edges, just like the knife she was given to kill her family. Chung-Cha uses these knives to kill her fellow assassins and save the First Family.

## **Scooters**

Reel, Robie, and Sook use battery powered scooters to get from the Korea Bay to Bukchang. Robie later loses his scooter when mortar fire damages the front wheel, leaving him abandoned in North Korea.

## **USS Pueblo**

The USS Pueblo is an American battleship that was taken by the North Korean government in 1968 when it crossed into what North Korea considered their waters. The ship has been turned into a museum for the North Korean people to visit. Chung-Cha visits the ship in this book, remarking on the differences between the story her government tells its people and the true story she has read during foreign travel.

## **USS George Washington**

After he is rescued by a helicopter in North Korea, Robie is reunited with Reel on board the USS George Washington.

# Settings

## Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – The majority of the novel is set in Washington, D.C. Both Robie and Reel live in the area and work with the CIA, which is based there. This is also where the White House is located. Robie and Reel visit the White House on several occasions in the course of this novel, several times to meet with the president and once to meet with the First Lady.

## The Burner Box

The Burner Box – The Burner Box is a CIA training facility in North Carolina. Robie and Reel are sent here to be vetted for a new, super-secret mission. However, they believe they have been sent here to be killed in punishment for disobeying orders and for Reel killing two high CIA officials.

## Bukchang

Bukchang – Bukchang is an internment camp in North Korea. Bukchang is where the reader first meets Chung-Cha. She is sent here to kill the administrator and his corrupt staff. Later, Robie and Reel go here to save the grown adopted children of General Pak at the request of the president.

## Yodok

Yodok – Yodok is the internment camp in North Korea where Chung-Cha lived until she was ten. This place was a dark, hideous place that left her abused, filthy, and miserable. Chung-Cha was taken from this camp, but at the cost of having to kill her entire family. Chung-Cha later returned to this camp and rescued Min, a young girl of ten who reminds Chung-Cha of herself.

## France

France – Robie and Reel are sent to France to kill General Pak after his British contact is killed and Tucker begins to worry that Pak will not be able to stand up to interrogation and torture by his own government. However, Pak kills himself.

## Alabama

Alabama – Reel's biological father is dying in a prison in Alabama for the murder of her mother. Reel's father asks her to come visit him in Alabama. When she does, the leaders of the Neo-Nazi group she helped to bring down years before find her and lure her back to them by kidnapping Julie.



# Themes and Motifs

## Espionage

The main characters of this novel are CIA agents. The CIA specializes in gathering intelligence that the United States uses to keep the American people safe. At the same time, the CIA has agents who go out and assassinate people who could be a danger to the United States. This is the job of the two main characters, Robie and Reel.

In this novel, Robie and Reel are sent to France to kill a high level North Korean official. They are unable to complete the mission, but their presence there leaves the impression of their involvement in a plot to kill North Korea's supreme leader and leads to an assassination attempt on the First Family. Later, Robie and Reel travel to North Korea where they rescue two people from the internment camp Bukchang. This also causes consternation on the part of the North Korean government, cementing plans to kill the First Family.

Robie and Reel are present when the First Family is attacked and might have lost if not for the help of Chung-Cha, an assassin from North Korea. However, just the act of being there and attempting to save the family also goes to the theme of espionage, making espionage a major theme of the novel.

## Trust

During a previous novel, Robie and Reel disobeyed orders given to them by their superiors at the CIA. Reel murdered two high officials at the CIA because she believed them to be corrupt. Robie was sent to kill her, but he chose not to when he learned her story. Together they were sent to Syria, a mission that should have been fatal for them.

The CIA director sends Robie and Reel to the Burner Box. Both agents are convinced that Turner did this because he wants them dead. However, they discover that Turner really does have a super-secret mission that he wants them to complete. This mission, however, will likely end in their deaths.

As the novel progresses, the reader sees how Robie and Reel are tested over and over again to see if the agency can trust them after their prior behavior. They prove their worthiness again and again. At the same time, Robie and Reel have to learn to trust their boss, Turner. Turner tells them over and over again that he does not mean them harm, but Robie and Reel are not sure if they can believe this until Turner finally tells Reel that he believes she did the right thing in executing the high CIA officials.

In the end, Robie and Reel also have to learn to trust each other. Robie and Reel are both broken people who have spent their lives refusing to trust others. It is the nature of their job and a result of past hurts. In this novel, it soon becomes clear that they do trust one another, especially when Reel arranges a helicopter to help Robie and save him

during their mission in North Korea. It is for these reasons that trust is an important theme of the novel.

## **Childhood Abuse**

Reel comes from an abusive background. Reel's biological father was a man with bigoted views on people. Reel's father was part of a Neo-Nazi group that believed that all races other than the blue-eyed, blond haired superior race were inferior. They also believed that women were inferior. Reel's biological father killed her mother and was sentenced to death for the crime. However, he has lung cancer and is living comfortably in the prison hospital. Reel, in the meantime, was not only abused by her father, but was drawn into the Neo-Nazi group and raped by its leader at the age of seventeen.

Chung-Cha also had a dark childhood. Chung-Cha's parents were professors at a university where they had the courage to speak out against the government. For this, they were sent to the internment camp, Yodok, along with all three of their children. Chung-Cha was only a year old at the time. Chung-Cha grew up in the internment camp, a victim of frequent beatings and emotional torture. When she was ten, Chung-Cha was given the chance to leave the camp, but she was forced to kill her entire family in order to do it. Chung-Cha has since become an assassin for her government, but she has never forgotten her dark childhood.

Min lived the same childhood as Chung-Cha, in the same camp. Chung-Cha rescues her and shows her the bigger world, the kindness that exists in the world. Julie, too, had a difficult childhood, running a great deal of the time from people who wanted to kill her even after her parents were killed. Julie reaches out to Reel, as Min helps Chung-Cha deal with her own dark demons. It is for these reasons that childhood abuse is a major theme of the novel.

**Theme/Motif 4**

**Theme/Motif 5**

**Theme/Motif 4**

**Theme/Motif 5**

# Styles

## Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. The novel is told through the narration of multiple characters, ranging from Robie and Reel to Earl Fontaine and Chung-Cha. The author uses multiple characters in order to show the reader information that might not have been available in the plot if the story were told only from the point of view of one or two characters.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it is a complicated, spy novel that has many players and many characters. The third person point of view that allows the reader to see into the minds of so many characters allows the reader to learn things that might not have been obvious if the point of view were handled differently. However, this point of view also introduces so many characters that the reader might become overwhelmed by the characters and in deciding which ones are sympathetic and which are not.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple English. Although the novel includes locations such as North Korea and France, there are few foreign words and phrases in the novel. The language is simple, filled with American slang, and appropriate to most of the characters. It is appropriate to the plot because the language is sophisticated enough to suggest the characters are well educated, but simple enough for even the youngest readers to comprehend.

## Structure

The novel is divided into seventy-six chapters. The chapters vary in length, some are exceedingly long, some are fairly short. The novel is told in a linear time line and includes both narration and dialogue.

The novel contains three main plots and several subplots. The first plot follows Robie and Reel as they deal with the fallout from their previous mission and their choices to disobey orders. The second plot follows the attempt of Reel's father to have her murdered by the Neo-Nazi group she once helped the FBI bring down. A third plot follows the story of Chung-Cha, a North Korean assassin who has lived a dark, miserable life. One subplot follows the relationships between Julie and Reel and Min and Chung-Cha. Another subplot follows the relationship between Reel and Robie. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.

# Quotes

Every inmate in this max prison had done something so appallingly horrific that every guard and worker here was completely desensitized to it.

-- Earl Fontaine (Chapter 1)

**Importance:** This quote describes the prison hospital where Earl Fontaine is housed.

But what exactly is the endgame here?

-- Amanda Marks (Chapter 7)

**Importance:** This quote is from Marks to Tucker, trying to establish if Robie and Reel are supposed to survive their time at the Burner Box.

Your history is one of the most unusual I've ever encountered.

-- Dr. Spitzer (Chapter 12)

**Importance:** This quote is from a psychologist to Reel, suggesting her childhood was more intense than the reader realizes.

It was live ammo. In Reel's and Robie's world there always came a time when there was no other kind.

-- Narrator (Chapter 20)

**Importance:** This quote describes the danger of the world Robie and Reel live in.

She was snitching once more, Chung-Cha knew. But that was her job now.

-- Chung-Cha (Chapter 24)

**Importance:** Chung-Cha makes comparisons here between her current work and her childhood.

Reel stared down at the man who had been a very 'small' part of bringing her into the world.

-- Reel (Chapter 35)

**Importance:** This is Reel's reaction to seeing her father for the first time in more than twenty years.

She jerked his neck to the right with her hands at the same time she slammed his head to the left with her foot. Dike's neck snapped cleanly.

-- Reel (Chapter 45)

**Importance:** This describes how Reel killed the man who raped her and fathered her child.



It had taken the better part of two weeks, but Chung-Cha rinsed Min off once more in the shower and beheld a girl devoid of dirt, even in her ears.

-- Chung-Cha (Chapter 55)

**Importance:** This quote shows how difficult it was for Chung-Cha to get Min clean.

There is far more glory in death than in living,' barked Rim Yun.

-- Rim Yun (Chapter 60)

**Importance:** This quote shows how the North Koreans look at death. It also implies that Rim Yun plans for Chung-Cha to die in her attempt to kill the First Family.

As much as I didn't want to admit it, I think you did the right thing, Reel.

-- Evan Tucker (Chapter 66)

**Importance:** Tucker admits to Reel that she did the right thing and he understands.

Min had never heard of Halloween.

-- Chung-Cha (Chapter 73)

**Importance:** This describes how separate from the rest of the world Min was in the internment camp.

I do not know,' she said. 'But in the end I could not kill this family,' she added. 'I just could not.

-- Chung-Cha (Chapter 75)

**Importance:** This is Chung-Cha's explanation for why she attacked her own team rather than kill the First Lady and her children.