

The Tenth Circle Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Trixie Stone is the fourteen-year-old daughter of Daniel and Laura Stone. She's just broken up with her boyfriend, Jason, and is heartbroken over the break-up. Trixie tells Jason that she can't continue without him but Jason remains determined that their relationship is at an end. Trixie's friend, Zephyr, tells Trixie the best way to get Jason's renewed attention is to make him jealous. Therefore, Zephyr has a party with no adult supervision. There are several sexual games played during the party and Trixie begins participating but finds she can't go through with it and quits. After the party breaks up, only Trixie, Zephyr, Jason, and Jason's friend Moss remain. The four play strip poker but as the evening progresses, Zephyr and Moss go to a bedroom together. Later in the night, Jason finds Trixie in the bathroom and they wind up holding each other and then have sex.

Trixie goes home and locks herself in the bathroom where her father finds her, crying. Her father, Daniel, asks what's wrong and Trixie says that Jason raped her. Daniel takes Trixie to the emergency room and calls his wife, Laura, but it's hours later before Laura returns the call and goes to the hospital. Laura had been with her lover, a young man who is a student in her class. Laura had actually told the young man, Seth, that evening that she was breaking off her relationship with him.

The stories of Trixie's rape hit the papers because Jason is a hockey champion in their town. Trixie is harassed at school and has trouble dealing with the notoriety. Laura and Daniel work on their marriage and try to get past Laura's infidelity. Meanwhile, they remember their past history. Daniel was born and raised in Alaska but was treated badly by his peers because he is half-white. His best friend had committed suicide and Daniel had initially been blamed. He'd been exonerated but left Alaska anyway and never returned.

Questions soon arise as to Trixie's credibility and many people believe that she is actually seeking revenge on Jason for their breakup. Jason insists they had sex months earlier though Trixie had said she was a virgin until the night of Zephyr's party. Other questions arise and when it is proved that Trixie had been raped, the charges against Jason escalate.

When Jason turns up dead, it looks as if Daniel might have followed through on his threat to kill Jason. Attention is also focused on Trixie based partly on the hair that's found in Jason's watch band. However, it's later discovered that Laura had confronted Jason and had accidentally caused his death.

Prologue through Chapter 1

Prologue through Chapter 1 Summary

The prologue opens on December 23, 2005, with a parent living the horror of not knowing where a child is. Daniel Stone had been in the park along Freedom Trail in Boston when Trixie, his daughter, was four. He was pushing her in the stroller and stopped for a burger. He begins pushing the stroller again only to discover the child inside wasn't Trixie. Daniel had panicked, calling for help. Police arrived but Daniel was the one to find Trixie, twenty-four minutes later. Now, Daniel is again faced with a distance between himself and Trixie but this time it's Trixie, a teenager, who's pulled away. Trixie, meanwhile, has managed to sneak a little food to a "dropped dog" named Juno where she's manning a check point on a sled race. She also remembers being lost at four but only in pieces. She doesn't remember unbuckling herself but she does remember that her father had carried her back to the car that day, abandoning the stroller. When she was four and was separated from her father, she'd been desperate for him to find her. Now, at fourteen, she wasn't hoping to be found at all.

In chapter one, Laura Stone has her undergraduate students sit perfectly still for a full minute as part of teaching Dante's "Inferno." Laura likes the story because it's filled with demons graphic enough to hold the attention of the students while allowing her to escape her own life. She sums up a question central to the story: Is the loss of freedom to do what one wants the worst punishment possible? Laura also knows the story is about a guy who is reevaluating his life's choices, a character with which Laura can sympathize.

Meanwhile, Daniel is about to drop Trixie off at school. They have grown apart and Daniel hates that their relationship has changed. Daniel is struggling on this particular morning to make conversation. Trixie has a boyfriend and though Daniel wants to keep Trixie safe, Laura feels that keeping her too close will only make her rebel. Daniel has sought to give Trixie room and says there's now too much distance between them.

Trixie goes into school and it's obvious there is a problem. She has heard other students making bets as to when she might fall apart in public but she's holding it together. Trixie and Jason have actually broken up. Trixie feels a hand on her shoulder and expects to see Jason but sees Moss Minton, Jason's best friend, who asks if she's okay. She says she is and Moss assures her that Jason's friends think Jason "is an idiot" for breaking up with her. Trixie is called on in class to relate a dream but she says she doesn't remember her dreams. Trixie then says she's going to be sick and rushes to the bathroom. There, she stomps on her compact and breaks the mirror, then uses a shard of the glass to cut the inside of her arm. Immediately, she regrets it. The cut hurts but she notes that it doesn't hurt "as much as everything else."

There are four graduate students in Laura's class and three of them have their laptops balanced on their knees but the fourth student, Seth Dummerston, is asleep. When he



wakes after class is dismissed, Laura calls him out for falling asleep. He says he "had a late night" and indicates that Laura might have played a role in his loss of sleep.

At school, Trixie turns a corner in the hall to see Jason kissing his new girlfriend. Trixie's best friend, Zephyr Santorelli-Weinstein, appears and pulls Trixie away from the scene. The school, Bethel High, is located in Bethel, Maine, and there is an open campus. Zephyr and Trixie leave campus. Zephyr asks Trixie why she cares so much about Jason and Trixie says she feels she's supposed to be with Jason. Zephyr says boys want "friends with benefits" but Trixie says she can't "be like that." Zephyr says it's better to have the benefits without the baggage of a complicated relationship.

Daniel is working on a comic and he says drawing villains is more fun than drawing heroes because there are more options for villains. Daniel is currently working on a comic book called "The Tenth Circle." Trixie is his inspiration. In this story, the hero - Duncan - is seeking his daughter who is lost in Hell. He has to use all kinds of powers to get to her and each time he loses a little more of himself. Daniel grew up in Alaska. He'd been the "only white boy in a native Alaskan village." Daniel's mother was a teacher and he'd never know his father. Daniel's only childhood friend was Cane, a native whose grandfather had stepped in to teach Daniel the things Daniel's father should have taught him. Daniel faced a great deal of torment because he was white and he couldn't wait to leave Alaska. He'd been getting in trouble from an early age but he'd always been able to lose himself in drawing comics. Daniel admits that Duncan is facing the same troubled past and that Daniel's own identity is emerging in the comic he's currently working on.

After school that day, Trixie waits for Jason to come out of hockey practice. She asks him for a ride home. In the car, Trixie asks how Jason gets through the days without showing any pain over their breakup. Jason says their relationship had mattered to him but that it's over.

As Laura heads home from school that evening she is making plans of how to break off her relationship with Seth. When she gets home, she tells Daniel she can't stay for dinner because of a meeting at school. On the phone later, Trixie tells Zephyr she'd talked to Jason and Zephyr says it's time for Trixie to take another course of action. Trixie agrees. Trixie goes downstairs where Daniel has dinner ready and announces she is going to Zephyr's. Daniel is disappointed but doesn't object. Trixie takes her backpack and leaves. She stops behind a neighbor's fence and changes into some super-low jeans without panties. She also has a shirt from her mother's closet.

Seth is lying on his futon, reeling from the fact that Laura has just told him their affair is over. Laura is in the bathroom when the doorbell rings. Seth answers to find "the kid" there with money, expecting to buy drugs. He says he has nothing to sell but she insists and pulls out more money. He gives in and gives her a stash he hadn't intended to sell. Later, Laura calls Daniel to say she's going to spend the night in her office in order to get more work done. Daniel is under no illusions and knows that Laura is having an affair but doesn't know what to do about it.

At Zephyr's house, Zephyr is handing out tubes of lipstick for a sex game called Rainbow. Trixie participates, performing oral sex on a young man. In the midst of the act, she becomes ill and rushes outside. She's still on the front steps when Jason and Moss arrive. At two-thirty the following morning, Trixie, Zephyr, Jason, and Moss are playing strip poker. Trixie loses a hand and is frantic, trying to decide what to pull off. Zephyr offers to "pinch strip" for her but Trixie suddenly remembers why she's here - to make Jason jealous enough to come back to her - and removes her bra. Moss snaps a photo of her with his camera and there's an argument as Trixie demands it back. Trixie runs from the room and Moss and Jason have a physical fight. Trixie takes Moss to her room and Trixie returns to the living room where she finds Jason is still there. They kiss.

Later, Daniel is awakened by a crash. His first thought is that Laura has returned home but he finds Trixie in the bathroom. Daniel calls to her but she won't open the door. He finally breaks it in and asks what's wrong. Trixie's first words are that "he raped me."

Prologue through Chapter 1 Analysis

As the story opens with the prologue, it becomes evident that the family situation for Daniel Stone isn't typical. Over the course of the story it will be revealed that Daniel has given up a great deal to remain at home as Trixie's primary caregiver. Daniel is a cartoonist and works from home, crafting his workday around Trixie's needs and schedule. Trixie's mom is a college professor.

Trixie is dealing with the reality of life. She says she'd spent her childhood believing she could do and be anything she wanted simply by wanting it. As a teen, she's discovered that the reality is that she can't be popular or cute just by wanting it. She also says she can't control her own destiny because she's too busy trying to fit in. The problem is that Trixie is working too hard at things that don't matter as much as she believes they do.

Laura thinks back over her relationship with Daniel. Daniel had been something of a "bad boy" and it was really that image that had drawn her to Daniel in the first place. However, when they are about to marry, she insists that he set those ways aside and he does in order to prove his love for her and to make her happy. However, Laura comes to realize that she isn't happy with the stable, dependable man she demanded that Daniel become.

While Trixie is talking on the phone with Zephyr, she cuts herself again. This is the second time since the story opened. Trixie wonders what she would do if her father were to enter the room and see what she's doing. It seems as if Trixie is hoping someone will discover what she's doing in order to help her. She is having trouble evaluating her emotions, trying to decide if she's feeling pain or shame.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

In chapter two, Trixie had returned Jason's kiss and they believe they must have fallen asleep because she woke with him on top of her, kissing her neck. In the present, her father is driving her to the hospital and he keeps remembering Trixie's words, that Jason Underhill had raped her. Trixie asks where her mother is and Daniel says he'd called but she hadn't been at the office. Trixie asks where her mother could be at three-thirty in the morning. Daniel calls Laura's office and her cell phone repeatedly. At the hospital, he calls her office again and leaves a message, saying he has Trixie at Stephens Memorial Hospital and that she was raped. He concludes the message with the words, "Please come."

Daniel returns to Trixie's bedside and they are joined by Janice who identifies herself as a sexual assault advocate. She begins by assuring Trixie that she isn't to blame, regardless of the situation or the circumstances. Trixie says she's changed her mind and wants to go home but she's urged to have a doctor examine her and agrees. The doctor sees the bandages around Trixie's arm where she's been cutting herself. The doctor asks if the attacker used a knife and Trixie says she thinks he scratched her when the attack first began. Laura arrives during the examination and holds Trixie. She says they'll get through the coming ordeal and Trixie says she knows they will, but she secretly believes they are both lying.

Daniel goes home to get Trixie some clean clothes. When he returns, he and Laura meet in the hallway. Laura makes a reference to Trixie's clothing and her trip to Zephyr's house. Daniel counters, saying if Laura is going to make an accusation, she should do it outright. Daniel asks why Laura hadn't answered her phone and she almost makes an excuse. Daniel says if she is going to make this a habit she might at least give him a phone number where she can be reached. Their argument is interrupted by the arrival of the police officer, Mike Bartholemew. Trixie is taken to the Bethel Police Station where she gives her statement. Trixie says she'd been drinking Coke and rum and that she hadn't used any drugs. After Trixie's statement, Mike tells Daniel the case will be difficult to prosecute. At home, Laura remakes Trixie's bed with fresh sheets. When Daniel comes in to tell Trixie good-night, she asks him to stay awhile. She remembers Jason saying, "Don't tell me you don't want this."

Mike hates rape cases because the result is that a rape victim is "gone forever" though she has to "go through the motions of being alive." Mike is at home and recalls Daniel asking if Mike has children. Mike had said he doesn't at the time but at home he removes his daughter's pillow from a plastic evidence bag and inhales, catching only a faint scent that reminds him of her though he'd taken great care to preserve it. Daniel, meanwhile, goes to intercept Jason at the Saturday hockey game. Laura begins to research and discovers that, counting unreported rapes, ninety-four percent of rapists go free.



Daniel parks far from the hockey rink and waits. Before he can find Jason, he spots Mike and knows Mike has seen him. Back at home, Laura asks if he'd gone to the hockey rink and he admits that he had. Laura and Daniel have a fight about Laura's affair. She insists it's over and the fight grows physical briefly before Daniel regains control. Mike arrests Jason after the hockey game and word spreads quickly so that a reporter soon has information about the case though it's a juvenile case. Jason appears in court and is ordered to have no contact with Trixie or her family, no contact with drugs or alcohol, begin substance abuse counseling, and be home by ten each night. However, the judge says there's no need to ruin the Buccaneers' "chance for a repeat state championship" by granting a request for house arrest. Trixie begins counseling. Laura remains at home for awhile but Daniel suggests it will be better for Trixie if they return to their normal routines. Trixie gets a dramatically different haircut. Laura has trouble returning to the classroom because her students know about the rape. Daniel says Janice has suggested Trixie return to school. Daniel and Laura argue again about the affair and Laura offers to move out but Daniel says it wouldn't be good for Trixie.

Daniel takes Trixie to school for her first day back. He begins talking about his life in the Eskimo village of Akiak. He says the house he shared with his mother was attached to the school and was where the previous principal had hanged himself. Daniel says the school and the house were haunted. He says the Eskimos were afraid of the ghosts. Though they tormented him, the one thing they could never say was that he was afraid. Trixie counters, saying that Jason isn't a ghost but Daniel responds that means she has nothing to fear.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Trixie continues to think about the moments surrounding the rape. The reader doesn't get a true picture of what happened or if there even was a rape until the final moments of the story. It seems unthinkable that Trixie might have manufactured the accusation out of her grief but Jason continues to insist his innocence and relates several details that make it look as if Trixie might not be telling the story. For example, Trixie tells the nurse during the initial examination that she was a virgin prior to the attack that night. However, Jason later reveals that he and Trixie had engaged in consensual sex prior to that night. While Jason is in court for the first time he recalls Trixie saying that her life is over without him. Jason wonders if she'd been planning to be sure his life was over as well.

Laura spends some time at home and wants to be protecting Trixie. However, Trixie wants to spend most of her time alone and that leaves Laura without any clear direction. She admits that the house is mainly Daniel's domain. This is an interesting aspect of their lives in that the traditional roles are somewhat reversed.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In chapter three, Trixie arrives at school and is told by the principal that she can always return to the office if she needs to get out of the limelight. She endures the day without talking with anyone. She is at lunch when Zephyr arrives and says Trixie has gotten Jason's attention and should now drop the story that he raped her. Moss arrives and echoes Zephyr's thoughts.

Mike is beginning to work on the case with Marita Soorenstad, a prosecutor who is arguing the case might not be easy to prosecute. Mike points out that Trixie told Jason "no," but Marita says Trixie had been drinking and playing strip poker, which may indicate she hadn't said "no" until after the sexual act was completed. The fact that Trixie lied to Daniel about where she was going is another strike against her.

Daniel's fame is growing and he's listed as number nine of the top ten comic book artists. Daniel's goal for this particular day is to draw a level of hell in which there are adulterers, bound together for eternity. He notes the irony of the situation. Laura and Daniel meet in an embrace that morning and the situation grows heated until Daniel asks if Laura is thinking "about him." Laura assures Daniel she isn't but he says he can't stop thinking about "him" and Laura leaves the room. Daniel picks Trixie up that afternoon and she's devastated. He pulls over to comfort her. A car drives by and its occupants throw a beer bottle, striking the Stone's vehicle.

Jason spends the afternoon with an attorney. Jason says Trixie hadn't taken it well when they broke up. He recounts the events the night Trixie accused him of rape. He says he'd found Trixie in the bathroom and he'd hugged her. Trixie had responded by "coming on" to him and kissing him. He says Trixie began oral sex but he didn't reciprocate. He says Trixie had lost her virginity months earlier, in October. Zephyr is questioned by the police and says there was no music playing at the time Trixie claimed to be raped. She also says she never heard Trixie scream for help. Mike questions Dr. Roth who examined Trixie after the rape. Dr. Roth says there's a good chance Trixie inflicted the cuts on her arm to herself but that doesn't change the fact that she'd been raped. Dr. Roth says she'll testify that Trixie was raped.

In her session with Janice, Trixie recounts segments of her relationship with Jason, including the night she'd told him she loved him, the fact that he hadn't said it back, and the way he'd told her it would be good for them to "see other people." Trixie admits that she'd begun cutting herself after the breakup. A letter to the editor of the Portland Press Herald expresses outrage over the accusation against Jason and predicts the people of Bethel would find him innocent. Daniel deals with his editor who is pressing Daniel to get more pages finished. Seth calls Laura but Laura refuses to talk to him.



Daniel and Laura had been dating for awhile when Laura discovered she was pregnant. She'd initially planned to preclude Daniel from her life and raise the baby alone but he finds out and is furious. Daniel recounts his own life without a father. He says his mother had said his father died but Daniel discovered that wasn't the truth when he was eleven. Daniel says his mother had wanted to protect him, saying it might be easier to have no father than to discover his father didn't want him. Laura says she isn't certain she wants her child to have Daniel for a father. A week later, Daniel has cut his hair and accepted a job Atomic Comics. He's deposited his salary in the bank and pleads with her to accept him. She does.

Daniel learns that Jason's lawyer has subpoenaed Janice's records related to her time with Trixie and that she'll have to comply with the order. Mike reveals that there are some inconsistencies in Trixie's testimony and that the case is going to continue to be difficult. One aspect is Trixie's statement that she was a virgin until the night of Zephyr's party. She now admits that she wasn't but says she couldn't say that because her father was in the room at the time. One day Seth arrives at the house. Trixie answers the door but Laura sends her upstairs and slams the door on Seth. Upstairs, Laura admits to Trixie that she's had an affair but assures her it's over. They fight and Trixie calls Laura a slut.

In school a few days later, Trixie is on the computer in the school newspaper class when all the screens go dark then pictures of Trixie without her bra - the photos taken by Moss - appear on computers across the school and the community. Daniel goes directly to Mike's house to complain. Mike says the photo has been traced back to Moss. Later, Laura steps into the bathroom to discover Trixie has tried to commit suicide. Daniel remains at the hospital until Trixie regains consciousness. He then sets out to find Jason. Jason gets into his car and almost immediately feels the knife at his throat. Daniel forces Jason to drive to a place near the river where hunters sometimes park. Daniel shreds Jason's clothes, leaving him naked. He makes it apparent that he's going to kill Jason and Jason pleads for his life. Daniel suddenly realizes what he's doing and what it means. He stands up and leaves.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Mike questions Moss who swears that Trixie didn't tell Jason to stop but also admits he wasn't in the room at the time. As Moss is preparing to leave, Mike gives him his business card. Moss reads the last name and says he used to have a babysitter named Holly Bartholemew. Mike says that was his daughter. When Moss asks if she lives "around here," Mike says she doesn't and promises to pass on Moss's greetings the next time he talks to her. Later, when Daniel is furious about Trixie's photo, Mike tells him to calm down. When Daniel asks how Mike would feel if it were his daughter, Mike says he would be happy because that would mean his daughter was still alive. Mike really expects Daniel to say something about being sorry but Daniel instead challenges Mike to "understand."

Trixie is scared when Seth arrives at the house but not for the reason Laura believes. Trixie recognizes Seth. While Laura believes Seth is trying to resurrect their relationship, he's actually trying to give Laura a piece of information that's going to be important to the rape case. It was Trixie who appeared at Seth's door the night Laura broke up with him. It was Trixie who bought the drugs from Seth that night and took them to Zephyr's house. At this point in the story, Laura still doesn't know this and she goes to Trixie's room to admit her adultery. It's not clear why she feels compelled to admit this to Trixie because it seems that Seth's presence could have been explained some other way. An interesting aspect of this is that Trixie probably expects her mother to reveal that Seth has told on her. When Laura admits the truth about her affair, Trixie is immediately furious and calls her mother a slut.

Laura had been out with another young man when she met Daniel for the first time. He'd drawn her and it was only later, when Laura was looking carefully at the drawing, that she saw the words "meet me at Hell" inscribed in the picture. She'd done some research and discovered "Hell" was a reference to a local club. She met Daniel there and their relationship grew. The recurring references to Hell and sins are a darker undertone of the book and fit in with Laura's classes at the college and Daniel's newest comic.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

In chapter four, Jason manages to cut through the duct tape that's binding him and return to his car where he dresses in his hockey uniform. He heads to the police station to report the attack but keeps remembering that Daniel Stone had said he'd kill Jason if he told anyone. Jason believes the threat and decides not to report the attack. Daniel arrives home. When Laura asks where he'd been, he says only that he'd been driving. Daniel and Laura make love that night though things are still tense between them. The next day, Trixie is released from the hospital. When they arrive home, Zephyr is waiting. Laura and Daniel allow Trixie to make the decision whether to talk to her and Trixie invites Zephyr inside. Trixie is cool, asking Zephyr if someone had dared her to approach Trixie. Zephyr says she's sorry and that she feels the entire situation is her fault. Trixie relents but knows she doesn't truly trust Zephyr. However, she admits that Zephyr probably remembers a time when they'd been five and "had been the only two people in the world who knew that fairies lived inside the kitchen cabinets and hid under pots and pans when you opened the doors."

Laura, Daniel, and Trixie meet with Marita who points out problems with the case including that Trixie had lied about having oral sex the night of the rape. She also points out Trixie's instability, evidenced by her suicide attempt. Trixie now says that she doesn't remember returning to the living room and had thought it would "come back" with time. She says she still can't remember those details but does say she had a headache the following day. Added to the fact that the ER doctor indicated that Trixie exhibited a "dissociated mental state" on the night of the rape, Mike suggests Trixie may have been drugged which would change the charges. A test of Trixie's blood taken a few hours after the rape indicates she had ingested PCP. Jason is in his room when his father bursts in, revealing that he's heard from a friend the result of Trixie's blood work and that this will mean Jason is tried as an adult. Seth arrives at Laura's office and reveals to her that he'd sold the drugs to Trixie.

Trixie and her father make a trip into town. It's crowded for an event and Trixie suddenly realizes she can't face going into the grocery store. She decides to wait outside while her father goes in. She's soon frightened of being alone and decides to go in but encounters Jason. He's furious and demands to know what she told the police to prompt these new charges. Trixie screams and Daniel appears, hitting Jason. He beats on Jason for several minutes and says he'll kill Jason if he ever again approaches Trixie. Then Daniel looks for Trixie and realizes she's gone. Jason goes to a nearby bridge and stands, thinking about his future. Daniel calls Laura and she arrives in town. They agree to find Trixie themselves and Laura heads home while Jason continues to search for her.

Laura arrives at home but Trixie isn't there. Daniel arrives later with Trixie who is unhurt but asleep. The next morning Laura learns that Jason committed suicide the previous night.

Chapter 4 Analysis

There's an interesting thought when Jason comes to the conclusion that he can't tell anyone that Daniel had attacked him. Jason says that he feels the situation will be detrimental to him and his case if he tells and decides he won't tell anyone about it. He says that telling the truth will "severely backfire on him." He then wonders, "Had Trixie felt that too?" This seems to indicate that Jason has a little compassion for Trixie's situation but it's not clear how this applies. It may be that Jason feels for Trixie because he'd raped her and she managed to tell the truth. If that's the case, this may be an indication that Trixie is the one telling the truth about the situation. However, it may also be that he believes Trixie had gotten herself caught up in the lie about the rape and was now afraid to tell the truth - that he hadn't raped her.

A little bit of information is revealed in this chapter about Daniel's previous life. He remembers believing that Cane had deliberately slighted Daniel by not inviting him on a trip. Only later had he understood that Cane believed there wasn't the need for an invitation. A year after that perceived slight, Daniel is "standing over Cane's body in the gymnasium and his hands were covered with Cane's blood." It's on that day that Daniel realizes "one word might have saved them both." The reader is led to believe Daniel killed Cane but the truth will later be revealed. Cane committed suicide and Daniel had beat Cane's head on the floor in a desperate effort to wake him up. Daniel is initially considered a suspect in the death but is eventually cleared.

There's a hint of foreshadowing in this chapter when Laura arrives home after leaving Daniel in town to search for Trixie. Laura "stepped herself to wait for whatever came next." This seems to indicate Laura is expecting the worst with regard to Trixie's disappearance but it actually is an indication that Laura is expecting to be caught for murdering Jason. The details of the hours following the fight between Daniel and Jason won't be revealed until the end of the book. Jason stands on the bridge and thinks about the condition of his life. He believes his life is over and considers that he might be found guilty of the crime. With these thoughts, it seems possible that Jason may have jumped. It's later revealed that Jason was pushed. Trixie, Daniel, and Laura have time to commit the murder.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

In chapter five, Mike continues to work the crime scene where Jason died. A wallet and cell phone are discovered and Mike takes the news of Jason's death to his parents. The following Monday, grief counselors are on hand at the school. The medical examiner in charge of the autopsy on Jason Underhill is Dr. Anjali Mukherjee. She tells Mike that Jason's alcohol levels indicated he was seriously drunk when he died. She does, however, point out that Jason has bruising on his temple and a black eye that only became evident several hours after his death. She also points out fracture lines that indicate Jason was hit prior to the fall that killed him. Other clues added to the wood splinters under Jason's fingernails make Anjali say she believes Jason was pushed and tried to catch himself.

Daniel hears Laura crying and tries to comfort her. She says she was thinking about "him," and Daniel immediately thinks it's the man she'd had an affair with but Laura is referring to Jason. Mike examines Jason's phone and discovers a memo that is a recording of the fight between Jason and Daniel, including Daniel's threat. Mike questions Daniel and he denies having seen Jason the evening before his death. Mike later talks with Trixie. She instinctively pulls her shirt sleeves down to hide the fresh cuts she'd made in the shower. Mike questions Trixie and hints that her father has already told him about the fight he had with Jason. Trixie confirms the fight but says they went directly home afterwards. She doesn't say she wasn't with her father. Mike learns there was blood on Jason's hand and that it wasn't Jason's. Venice Prudhomme, the lab technician, agrees to give Mike a preliminary report but warns that the full DNA testing will take time. She later reveals that the blood on Jason's hands were from a female, meaning it wasn't Daniel.

Trixie learns that Jason's funeral is going to be at the Bethel Methodist Church with burial at Westwind Cemetery. Trixie gets dressed to go and slips downstairs to find Daniel waiting in the truck. Trixie asks where he's going and he says, "Same place you are." When Trixie asks why Daniel wants to go to Jason's funeral, he says he doesn't. When they arrive at the church, Trixie suddenly fears going inside. She asks Daniel what she'll do if she can't make herself go inside. Daniel says he's there to do whatever she needs and he guides her in. When they are in the church, every eye turns to look at them. Outside, Mike collects Trixie's boot tracks to compare with tracks found at the scene of Jason's death. Near the end of the service, Trixie begins to scream and her father takes her out of the church.

Mike later confirms Trixie's boot prints are a match to those found at the scene but the boots are a very popular brand so can't definitely place Trixie at the scene. Mike knows that Trixie, as a rape victim, has motive. Knowing that Jason was drunk means that Trixie could have over powered him. Mike also examines a watch found at the scene. Jason's parents identify it as Jason's and Mike finds a red hair hung in the winding

stem. Mike goes to the Stone house and asks Daniel if Trixie had been apart from him after Daniel's fight with Jason. Daniel insists that Trixie couldn't have killed Jason and Mike says she should have no problem giving up a blood sample for DNA testing to rule her out. Daniel goes to Trixie's room and discovers she's gone.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Trixie sees Jason's ghost and says she isn't surprised at his presence. She says Jason is the first person she knew who died and Trixie notes the blood on Jason's collar and the bruises on his face. Jason pledges to get even. This seems to indicate that Trixie feels guilty over Jason's death and that she might be involved in his murder. This is the first real instance of misdirection and it will grow until the conclusion of the book.

When Trixie is at the church attending Jason's funeral, she thinks back to the night they'd had sex for the first time. She hears the minister speaking of the light and she wants to reach out for the light but keeps being pulled back into the dark of the nights Jason haunts her. She admits to herself that she's getting things confused and that she may be thinking about the nights when she'd gone willingly to him. The story then takes a turn that seems to again indicate that Trixie hadn't told the truth about the rape. Trixie admits that she's having trouble separating her memories of the live Jason from the memories of the ghost Jason. By the same token, she's having trouble separating "what she'd wanted from what she didn't." Trixie admits that "maybe" that had always been the case. It seems that Trixie is battling her memories but she is also struggling to remember the truth. She may have told the story of the rape initially as a lie but has, by now, come to believe it herself.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

In chapter six, Trixie is running away. She catches a ride with some cows and runs away when they arrive at their destination - a slaughterhouse. Daniel rushes back downstairs and tells Mike that Trixie is gone. Mike's first thought is to wonder why Trixie would run if she were innocent. His next is to remember what it's like to discover a child is missing. Mike tells Daniel to "sit tight," and promises to find Trixie.

Trixie winds up in Santa's Village in Jefferson, New Hampshire. She has hair dye in her backpack and she dyes her hair in the restroom. Daniel goes to the store where Zephyr works but she claims not to have seen Trixie. Laura arrives home and checks Trixie's room, hoping there'd been some mistake. Laura says there is "so much to be fixed," but doesn't say what those things are or identify her role in it. Laura then picks up the phone and calls the police. She's on hold for Mike when Daniel arrives. He looks over Trixie's computer and discovers that she's had MapQuest open. With clues from that, he knows she's gone to Alaska. Trixie completes the dye job and leaves, her red hair now dark. She's soon at the bus station and she encounters a young mother with a toddler named Trevor. Trixie and the girl talk a little and when the woman takes Trevor to the restroom, Trixie takes her wallet with her identification. She leaves her own ATM card and some cash in the girl's purse and catches a taxi to the airport.

Mike has registered Trixie as a missing person. He goes to the Stone's home and finds no one there. Mike realizes he has Trixie's DNA in the evidence room in Trixie's rape kit and he asks the lab tech to compare with the blood found on Jason's hand. She refuses until he has a court order. Marita says it will be difficult to get a judge to approve an order to use Trixie's sample for this purpose because the sample was obtained when Trixie was a rape victim. Marita suggesting getting the DNA a different way and Mike reveals that Trixie is missing. Marita suggests seeing if there was any blood in Trixie's school locker considering she was prone to cutting herself. Mike arrives at the school and already knows Daniel and Laura have purchased plane tickets to Alaska. He finds a photo that reminds him that Trixie had long hair when the rape occurred but that she'd donated the hair to a charity that makes wigs for cancer patients when she had it cut. Mike knows Trixie's hair will be labeled and believes he can get a court order to get a sample for DNA testing.

Trixie catches a bush plane that's carrying a veterinarian to a dog race. The pilot thinks Trixie must be a volunteer for a checkpoint on the race and she says she is though she has no idea what the man's talking about. She arrives and is completely lost, says she is volunteering for the first time, and when someone asks if she's Andi, she says she is. She's given an assignment. A young Eskimo boy is to take her to the checkpoint where she's supposed to work. She tries to talk to him but he's silent. When she asks if he can speak English at all, he responds that it's fifty-five miles to their destination and that he wonders if she's going to "yap" the entire time.

Chapter 6 Analysis

There's another instance of misdirection early in chapter six. Trixie admits to having seen Mike at Jason's funeral though Mike had thought he was hiding. She also knew that he'd been at her home talking to her father. Trixie had overheard that conversation from the upstairs railing and had known she had to leave. This seems to indicate that she's running away because she's guilty of murder.

Laura is giving a lecture on Dante's Hell in her final class before the Christmas vacation and she asks her students if there are any sins in the modern day that weren't around in the 1300s when the story was written. Someone suggests drug addiction but another student says that's the same as gluttony. There's extensive conversation about the levels of sin and why someone like Jeffery Dahmer would not be as deeply embedded in hell as someone like McBeth because Dante counted disloyalty a more serious sin. One student expresses the idea that intent makes the sin more serious. Laura stops talking and thinks about the students' comments. She says that if betraying others is serious, then lying to oneself should be more so. Laura imagines, at that moment, that there should be a tenth circle of hell for those people. She dismisses class early.

There's a new clue about the fate of Mike's daughter in this chapter. Mike arrives at the school and the principal says he hadn't noticed any problems with Trixie. Mike admits to having "no patience with this principal." The reader then learns that this principal also hadn't noticed when Mike's daughter began having problems.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Trixie's hair sample is at the lab and ready for processing. Mike gets a lesson in DNA. Meanwhile, Daniel and Laura arrive in Alaska. Daniel finds a man he knows from his childhood and asks about Trixie. He describes her but no one claims to have seen her. One person tells them about a skinny girl who arrived late headed for Tuluksak, but when Laura asks for her hair color, they're told the latecomer had black hair which prompts Daniel and Laura to decide it must not have been Trixie. However, the woman then says that the latecomer didn't have warm clothes and Daniel suddenly has a premonition. He knows he has to get to Tuluksak.

Trixie and the Eskimo who is with her, Willie, arrive at the check station. One of the teams comes in with a dog, Juno, that he leaves behind. The vet tends Juno but Trixie slips several handfuls of dog food and a couple of biscuits out to the dog. Daniel encounters a woman he knows and she says she saw a white girl pass through the previous day. Daniel knows that Laura is freezing cold and he stops at the home of Charles and Minnie Johnson, Cane's parents. Daniel leaves Laura there and heads on toward Tuluksak where he hopes to find Trixie. Trixie and Willie are standing in the dark when Daniel arrives, his lights illuminating them.

In chapter eight, Daniel asks Trixie why she chose Alaska and she said it was because she'd heard Daniel say it was where People could disappear. Daniel asks Trixie why she'd wanted to disappear and she says it was because she "didn't do what everyone thinks." At this point the reader finally learns the truth as Trixie is willing to tell it. She'd told Willie that she hadn't told Jason "no" that night and that she was a liar. While Daniel goes inside to tell the others at the station that Trixie is leaving, Willie talks to Trixie. She doesn't know what's going to happen to her but Willie suggests they might meet again someday. Trixie is glad he doesn't try to make her feel better but allows her to be sad.

Daniel arrives back at Akiak where Laura is waiting. When he turns the corner, he sees the police truck is already there. An officer approaches and says he has a warrant for Trixie's arrest. Daniel says they can't arrest Trixie because he killed Jason. Daniel then tells Trixie she can't say anything. Mike gets a call from the Alaska State Troopers who say they found Trixie and went to arrest her but that both Trixie's parents had confessed to the murder. Mike tells Daniel that he understands what Daniel's doing - protecting Trixie - and that he doesn't blame him, but that it won't work in the end. Mike then says that his own daughter had overdosed and wrecked. Mike had gone through his daughter's room to find all her drugs and had driven to the dump to dispose of them so no one else could find them. He says his daughter was already dead but he'd still been trying to protect her. Mike questions Daniel about the events just before Jason's death and when Daniel can't provide the details, he's released.

Daniel goes to the jail where Laura is being held. She tells him that she'd seen Jason on the bridge the night of his death. Jason told Laura that Trixie was ruining his life. Jason was drunk and when he advanced on Laura, she pushed him. Laura says Jason was holding to the bridge and she'd started to help pull him back up, but then she'd let go. Laura says when she heard that Jason committed suicide, she'd convinced herself that it hadn't really happened the way she was remembering

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

In the airport, Laura is struggling with herself. She makes up all kinds of scenarios. For example, she says that if a family she'd seen in the airport has already made it through security and to the gate, she would "stop being a coward." She doesn't elaborate but it seems she is struggling to find the courage to tell Daniel she killed Jason. One of the scenarios she sets up while in the bathroom at the airport in Alaska is that she'll stop being a coward if Daniel is facing the door of the restroom when she emerges. When she leaves the room, Daniel has his back to her and is looking out the window which causes Laura to "sigh with relief."

An interesting piece of information is presented in this chapter related to Daniel's relationship with Cane. Daniel was teased and tormented as an "outsider" because he was white in an Eskimo village. He says that being Cane's friend gave him a level of acceptance he wouldn't otherwise have enjoyed. However, Daniel comes to realize that Cane, by associated with Daniel, was somewhat ostracized in ways he would not otherwise have been.

When Daniel asks Trixie why she'd wanted to disappear, she says it was because she "didn't do what everyone thinks." It seems obvious that she is saying she didn't kill him but it could also be that she didn't lie about the rape. Trixie goes on to talk about the night of the rape. She says that she'd wanted to talk to Jason but he hadn't wanted to talk. Then she says, "When he started...when we started," which seems to indicate that she was willing to have sex with him initially. But Trixie then says that Jason had said he was glad to have her as a "friend with benefits," and that Trixie realizes their connection wouldn't mean they were back together. This is another indication that Trixie may have been willing to have sex with Jason but regretted it afterward.

Characters

Trixie Stone

The fourteen-year-old daughter of Daniel and Laura, Trixie is heartbroken because of her break-up with Jason as the story opens. Trixie wants to figure out a way to get Jason back and tries to take Zephyr's advice to make Jason jealous. She wears a sexy outfit including jeans that are very low on her hips and sets out to take part in several sex games being played at Zephyr's house. However, Trixie soon comes to realize she doesn't like the situation and quits. Trixie puts herself in a position to have sex with Jason and there seems to be no reason for Jason to believe Trixie would not want to have sex. Trixie seems to put a great deal of emphasis on morality and it seems likely she doesn't feel right about having sex with Jason. It seems likely that Trixie looks back at the situation and wishes she'd done differently. This could be the real reason she says Jason raped her. Trixie begins cutting herself as a coping mechanism but is also ashamed of this action. She tries to hide it and insinuates to the emergency room doctor that Jason might have had a weapon when he raped her. When she's confronted about that later, she says she didn't want the doctor to believe she was crazy, and that fear had prompted her lie. Trixie runs away on the day of Jason's funeral and she heads for Alaska where her father had grown up. It seems that Trixie is searching for something and believes she might find it by running toward her ancestral roots. This idea is never fully developed as a theme and Trixie doesn't put it into detailed thought.

Daniel Stone

Father of Trixie and husband of Laura, he is a cartoonist and has been the stay-at-home parent for Trixie for her entire life. Daniel has invested everything into his family and can't figure out how to hold his family together when he realizes Laura is having an affair and Trixie is becoming more distant with him. Daniel loved Laura as a young man and when Laura demands that he settle down, he does so. Daniel notes that Laura has always been the more stable of the two and that he wouldn't have expected her to become the person who cheated in their marriage. Daniel is absolutely certain that Laura is having an affair but doesn't know what to do about it. It's Daniel who's at home the night Trixie and Jason have sex and Trixie accuses Jason of rape. Daniel knows instinctively that something is wrong even though Trixie is in the bathroom with the door locked, and he breaks the door in order to find out what is wrong. Daniel is a native of Alaska and was wild during his younger years, at least partly because he was harassed because he was part white. Daniel fights because of this harassment and he soon has a reputation for his temper and wild ways. Daniel's best friend is an Eskimo who kills himself. Daniel is initially blamed for the death but is later exonerated. Daniel leaves Alaska as a young man and never returns, even for his mother's funeral. Daniel travels to Alaska after Trixie runs away because he wants to find her but it is also a quest for Daniel to confront his roots.

Laura Stone

Trixie's mother and Daniel's wife, Laura is bored with her marriage and has an affair with a student named Seth. Laura soon realizes she's risking a great deal of a life she actually wants in order to have something that was only fleetingly attractive. With that realization, she tells Seth she's going to end their affair. On the night she tells Seth, Laura is in the bathroom when Trixie arrives to purchase drugs from Seth. Laura is overcome with guilt when she realizes she wasn't there when Trixie needed her. It could be this guilt that leads Laura to confront Jason, a confrontation that ends with Laura pushing Jason to his death.

Seth

This is the student Laura is having an affair with. He is also the young man who sells drugs to Trixie on the night that she claims to have been raped by Jason. Seth believes himself desperately in love with Laura and is hurt when she leaves him.

Zephyr Santorelli-Weinstein

A friend of Trixie's, she is the same age as Trixie but is very wild compared to Trixie. Zephyr encourages Trixie to make Jason jealous in order to get him back and it's that advice that sets the ball in motion for Jason and Trixie to have sex. Zephyr is in another room with Jason's friend, apparently having sex, when Trixie and Jason have sex.

Jason Underhill

This is the boy Trixie accuses of raping her. Jason is a teenager and breaks up with Trixie shortly before the party at Zephyr's house. Jason is later pushed from a bridge by Laura and dies.

Moss Minton

Jason's best friend, he is at the party at Zephyr's house on the night Trixie accuses Jason of rape. Moss and Zephyr are in the bedroom together, leaving Trixie and Jason alone. Moss later asks Zephyr to try to talk Trixie into telling the truth about the rape.

Mike Bartholomew

This is the detective who handles the case against Jason Underhill. He has a pet pig, is divorced, and hates handling rape cases.

Cane

This is an Eskimo who was Daniel's best friend as a child. Cane dies and for a short time Daniel is considered a suspect in the death but it's later determined that Cane committed suicide.

Objects/Places

Bethel, Maine

This is the town where Trixie, Jason, and their families live.

Bethel High School

This is where Trixie and Jason attend school.

Boston

Where Trixie and Daniel are when Trixie, at age four, wanders away and is lost for twenty-four minutes.

Portland Herald

The name of the newspaper that runs the story about the rape charges and later runs a letter to the editor from many who say Jason isn't guilty.

Dante's Inferno

A classic book taught by Laura Stone to college undergraduates.

The Tenth Circle

The name of the comic book Daniel is working on.

Stephens Memorial Hospital

This is where Daniel takes Trixie after she tells him that she was raped.

Juno

This is the name of the dog that's left behind at the checkpoint where Trixie is stationed.

Akiak

This is the Eskimo village where Daniel lived as a child.

Westwind Cemetery

This is where Jason is buried.

Themes

The Effects of a Broken Relationship

From the opening pages of the story, Trixie is heartbroken over her recent breakup with Jason. She tells Jason that she can't go on without him. Though her words may seem melodramatic, the reader sees her pain over the coming days as she begins cutting herself. She confides to her counselor that the cutting helps her deal with the pain and that the physical pain makes sense in ways the emotional pain cannot. Trixie's heartbreak drives a great deal of the rest of the story. It is revealed at the end of the book that Trixie lied about telling Jason she didn't want to have sex and that she'd actually been heartbroken again when she learned that he wasn't interested in a renewed relationship with her. It seems that this was the final straw and what drove her to report their encounter as a rape. Another example of the complex relationships in this story is seen with Seth and Laura. Laura is obviously seeking a new thrill and is only interested in this aspect of her relationship with Seth but Seth is apparently more emotionally invested. Seth is heartbroken when Laura breaks up with him and it's only moments later that Trixie knocks on his door, asking to buy drugs. She'd wanted marijuana but he was out. Seth might have simply argued with Trixie and sent her on her way empty handed except that Laura was in the bathroom and he didn't want her to know he was selling drugs. It was his effort to get Trixie gone before Laura reappeared that prompted his decision to sell her the more serious drugs that resulted in the change in charges against Jason.

Revenge

Daniel is angry about Laura's affair but he is furious the night that Trixie comes home from Zephyr's party with the news that she'd been raped. On that night, Daniel calls for Laura but she doesn't answer. When Laura is cheating on him, Daniel is angry but he's furious that Laura is having sex with someone else when Trixie needs her. Later, Daniel barely talks to Laura because he's so angry at her. He admits to himself that it's "payback" and confronts Laura about it soon after that. An interesting aspect of this theme is that Daniel feels the need for revenge but doesn't like to voice it in those terms. There's another example of this theme seen when Justin makes his first court appearance. Justin is upset at the situation and remembers Trixie's words the afternoon she'd said her life was over if she couldn't have him. Justin wonders if Trixie's accusation of rape is an effort at revenge. To a lesser degree, Zephyr's actions are another example of this theme. Zephyr tries to make Trixie say she'd made up the entire accusation and is really angry at Trixie immediately after the story comes out. However, Zephyr later admits that she hadn't supported Trixie because she was angry that Trixie had been flirting with Moss at her party that night and because she'd gotten in trouble with her own mother when the story of the party became public knowledge. There is another example of this theme seen in Cane's death. Daniel is banging Cane's head

into the floor and some people believe Daniel was getting even with Cane for slights dating back to their childhood. This is later proven to be unfounded.

A Parent's Need to Protect his Child.

Daniel is a protective father and, as Trixie's primary caregiver, is in a position to be more protective than some fathers. Daniel's protective nature is seen in the story of Trixie being lost when she was four. Though she was lost only for twenty-four minutes, Daniel had been frantic to find her. When Daniel does locate Trixie, he picks her up and carries her to the car, unwilling to let her out of his arms to ride in her stroller. As Trixie ages, Daniel has no choice but to give her some freedom and it seems evident that he doesn't like the fact that Trixie has recently developed a relationship with Jason. Daniel admits to imagining himself holding a pistol as Jason arrives to pick Trixie up for a date. Daniel might have kept a tighter rein on Trixie except for Laura's warning that doing so would only prompt Trixie to rebel. When Trixie is crying in the bathroom on the night of the rape, Daniel breaks the door in to get to her. Daniel confesses to murdering Jason when the police are about to arrest Trixie in an effort to save her from jail time. Another example of this theme is seen in Mike Bartholemew. Mike says that his daughter had begun using drugs. Holly overdosed on illegal drugs and died in a car wreck. Mike tells Daniel that he'd gone to Holly's room and found her stash of drugs. He'd then taken the drugs to the dump and disposed of them. There was no purpose other than his last-ditch effort to protect Holly's reputation, but he says that he'd tried to protect her even when Holly was already dead.

Style

Point of View

The story is written in the third-person and seems to be from an omniscient view but is actually very limited in perspective. The reader gets one piece of the story at a time and only bits are revealed. The limited pieces of information keep the reader guessing about several aspects of the story line until the end of the book. For example, the reader sees the party and the night of the rape from Trixie's point of view. Trixie's perspective is followed right up to the moments prior to the rape then the reader has a gap of time in which the events are not revealed until later that night when Trixie tells her father she'd been raped. In some ways, the perspective seems more like first person non-fiction stories. An example of this is seen when Trixie tells the emergency room staff that she was a virgin prior to the rape. When it's later revealed that she'd had sex with Jason prior to that night, she says she hadn't wanted to answer truthfully because her father was listening. This is typical of the story and the reader misses large gaps of the action, only later learning what apparently happened during those gaps. One important example is seen when Seth answers the door and sells drugs to a kid. Seth doesn't know at the time that the buyer is Laura's daughter. Laura is in the bathroom at the time and the reader learns the identity of the buyer much later. These instances serve the purpose of keeping suspense alive throughout the book. The two most important aspects of the limited perspective are the night of the rape and the night of Jason's death.

Setting

The story is set in Bethel, Maine and in a region of Alaska near Tuluksak. Both are real places and this authenticity lends credibility to the story. The settings are described in adequate detail but the descriptions of the places are not vital to the story and the lack of detail about the settings does not detract from the story. There are several specific settings within the story. Zephyr's house is the site of the party where Trixie and Jason are when Trixie alleges Jason raped her. Trixie's house is another of the specific settings. Trixie is in the bathroom when Daniel breaks in on her and she tells him Jason raped her. She is also in the bathroom when she tries to commit suicide. Bethel High School, where Trixie, Zephyr, Jason and their friends attend, is another of the settings. There is not a great deal of detail about the school and the specifics of the setting, like most in the book, are left to the imagination of the reader. There are also several specific settings in Alaska including the school at Tuluksak where Trixie is working as a timekeeper for a race. The time setting is recent times. This is borne out by the fact that there are cellular telephones and other technology that supports a modern-day setting. The time setting with regard to content is also believable. The facts that sex is rampant among Trixie's friends and that drugs and alcohol are accepted are evidence of the time setting.



Language and Meaning

The writing of the story is fairly concise but informal. The story is divided into narrative and dialogue but the majority of the story is presented as narrative. The dialogue is reasonable and believable for the characters, story, time, and setting. There are a few words and phrases in Daniel's native Alaskan language but these are adequately explained and do not detract from understanding. There are several references to sex, sex games, drugs, and alcohol, especially early in the story. These may be disturbing to some readers but they seem reasonable and acceptable to the story and characters. The overall storyline is presented in chronological order but there are flashbacks that explain the gaps in the original story. For example, the reader doesn't know what happens between the time Jason and Daniel fight outside the grocery store and the discovery of Jason's body. The police initially believe it to be suicide and the reader is led to that conclusion. The reader doesn't find out it's murder until the police make that determination and even then the reader doesn't know who killed him. It seems that Daniel or Trixie will be guilty and there are several minor clues that Laura is the killer though that isn't revealed until the end of the book. The gaps are meant to build suspense and serve that purpose. The overall tone of the story is one of fear and depression though there is an undercurrent of hope, which is exemplified mainly by Daniel's quest to come to terms with his own past.

Structure

The book is divided into eight chapters and an prologue. The prologue outlines a time when Daniel Stone had lost his daughter Trixie for a few moments while visiting Boston. Trixie had been little more than a toddler. She was riding in a stroller when Daniel mistook another stroller for his own. The chapter outlines Daniel's frantic search and his relief at finding Trixie unharmed. There is a correlation to what happens later to Trixie who, at fourteen, runs away from home after alleging rape. The loss is symbolic and carries through the entire story. The chapters are titled by number only and give no clue as to what's going to happen in that story. Each chapter ends with several pages of a comic book that follows the storyline of the main book. The significance of the comic book is that Daniel is a comic book author who works from home and has devoted his life to his family, especially to raising his daughter. Daniel's comic book mimics both the story line of the main book and Dante's "Inferno." The hero of the comic book is a father who is searching the depths of hell for his daughter. Meanwhile, Daniel struggles to find a way to rescue Trixie from the hell her life has become - a story that's very similar to Dante's work. Daniel's wife, Laura, teaches Dante's famed story as a college class. There are several references to Dante's writing throughout the book, including a class session in which the students in Laura's class discuss the sins that took people to the nine circles of Dante's version of hell. This also leads to the meaning of the title. In Dante's "Inferno," there were only nine levels of hell but the book's title indicates a tenth.

Quotes

"Laura Stone knew exactly how to go to hell. She could map out its geography on napkins at departmental cocktail parties; she was able to recite all the passageways and rivers and folds by heart; she was on a first-name basis with its sinners" (Chapter 1).

"For a moment Laura hesitated outside the door, wondering how she could have been naïve enough to believe this horrible thing had happened to Trixie, when in truth it had happened to all three of them" (Chapter 2).

"I was terrified of that ghost just like they were, but I never let anyone know it. That way, I knew they might call me a lot of awful names ... but one of them wasn't coward" (Chapter 2).

"He's going to ask her what time it was when she said it and how many pictures were on the walls of the room and what song was playing on the stereo and whether the moon was in Scorpio - details she won't be able to remember. Then he'll say that if she can't remember particulars like this, how on earth could she be sure of whether she told Jason to stop?" (Chapter 3).

"Can you pinpoint the very moment when your life began to fall apart? For Laura, it seemed like each instance she found had an antecedent." (Chapter 4).

"Trixie turned and stared out the window. Maybe she had died after all. And this was hell").Chapter 4).

"It wasn't police procedure as much as human nature. We all want to know what went wrong, even when there isn't really an answer to that question" (Chapter 5).

"The best decisions in a marriage were based not on honesty but on the number of casualties that the truth might cause, versus the number saved by ignorance" (Chapter 5).

"Technology helps us be more creative in the way we sin, but it doesn't mean that the basic sin is different" (Chapter 6).

"Zephyr had even tried to lure Trixie into objectionable behaviors simply for the purpose of trying to get a rise out of Mr. Stone, but nothing had ever worked. He was like some kind of soap opera actor whose tragic story line you fell madly for: beautiful to look at, but all the same, you know what you were seeing wasn't all it was cracked up to be" (Chapter 6).

"He didn't have to explain to Nelson why he thought that his child, who lived a whole country away, might have wound up in Alaska when she went missing. The Yupiit understood that the person you were when you went to sleep at night might not necessarily be the person you were when you woke up" (Chapter 7).

"Laura opened her mouth, and what might have been a reply came out only as a smoke ring full of what she could not say. Trust was exactly what they no longer had between them" (Chapter 7).

Topics for Discussion

Describe Trixie. What kind of character is she? What are her strengths and her weaknesses? Is she believable? Is she likable?

Who are Daniel and Laura? What are their roles in Trixie's life? How do their roles differ from traditional roles? Are they a believable couple? Are they believable characters?

Trixie's lies spiral out of control. Why do you believe she lied in the first place? Was there a point in time when she could have told the truth? Why didn't she tell the truth?

A great deal of the focus of this story is about relationships. Compare the relationship between Trixie and Jason to the relationship between Laura and Seth. How do each of these compare to the relationship between Laura and Daniel?

Describe Jason. What are his strengths and weaknesses? Is Jason merely a victim in this situation? Could he have done something differently in order to change the outcome?

Who is Moss? Who is Zephyr? Who is Marita? Who is Holly? Who is Venice? What is the role each plays in the story? How is each connected to one of the main characters?

Describe how the perspective of this story plays a role in keeping the suspense going. What are the most important details that are withheld from the reader? Why does the author choose to present the story in this manner? Was the presentation successful?

What is the most important theme of this story? Give at least three examples of this theme.