

# **Wayward Study Guide**

## **Wayward by Black Crouch**

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## Plot Summary

“Wayward” by Blake Crouch is a science fiction thriller, the second installment in his Wayward Pines Series, and the sequel to “Pines”. The town of Wayward Pines, Idaho, is the last trace of human civilization on earth, built by billionaire David Pilcher to preserve the human race. Having discovered that Wayward Pines is a town inhabited by people suspended in animation for 1,800 years, Ethan Burke attempts to escape, survives, and is made sheriff by Pilcher – a job which Ethan reluctantly does to ensure the safety of his family. When Pilcher’s daughter is murdered, Ethan is ordered to track down the culprits – which leads him to Pilcher and his psychotic right-hand woman, Pam. Ethan then rallies the town and tells them the truth about the wilderness beyond the electrified fences which surround the town: they are meant to protect the residents, and keep the descendants of human beings – cannibalistic creatures called abbies – out. Pilcher, enraged at Ethan’s betrayal, shuts off the electrified fences and opens the gates – at which time the howls of thousands of abbies can be heard in the woods beyond the fence. Ethan knows he is in serious trouble as the novel ends.

# Part 1

## Summary

Chapter 1 – Mustin watches one of the abbies – humanoid creatures (descendants of human beings) which populate the wilds of the world – move around the land outside of the electric fence through the scope of his sniper rifle. If the creature scales the canyon wall and gets past the fence, Mustin will have to call for backup. He takes a shot at the creature, misses, shoots again, and hits the thing. He then looks at the town, at how beautiful and peaceful Wayward Pines is – and how none of the people in town have any idea what goes on in the outside world. He sees Sheriff Ethan Burke walking up the street.

Chapter 2 – There are days that are normal to Ethan Burke, where Wayward Pines seems real, and not like the last trace of civilization and human existence on earth. He goes into Steaming Bean for a cup of coffee from Miranda, his usual routine, and grabs two books, including “The Sun Also Rises” by Hemingway, to read. At the sheriff’s office, he says good morning to the receptionist, Belinda, who is playing solitaire. In reality, Ethan is the one resident of the town who knows what the outside world really is. He has spent his first two weeks as sheriff learning the backstories of each of the residents, so he can keep control, and keep up the illusion of normalcy. He strolls through town, and people happily say hello to him. He then heads out of town and into the pine forests. He then proceeds to a spot with large boulders, which open up like a door to a subterranean entrance.

Inside and in a jeep, Ethan is escorted by Marcus, a twenty-something, who drives him to the complex overseen by David Pilcher, a billionaire, where hundreds more future residents of Wayward Pines exist in suspended animation, having been asleep for 1,800 years. Pilcher and his inner circle, a crew of some 160 people, oversee 650 residents put into suspended animation after Pilcher discovered the corruption of the human genome in the 1970s. Pilcher then reanimates the people, putting them into town and integrating them into their new lives. Cameras are hidden all over town to follow the daily lives of people. Pilcher’s prediction that humans will devolve comes true – in the form of abbies.

Pilcher gives Ethan a surveillance report on Peter McCall, editor of the Wayward Pines newspaper, Wayward Light. McCall hasn’t been into work in two days. Pilcher wants Ethan to drop by and say hello, and keep an eye on McCall. He also notices Ethan isn’t wearing a sidearm, which Ethan explains is meant to reassure people. Ethan promises to wear it at Pilcher’s insistence. Pilcher reminds Ethan of the stakes. He explains one of his scouts out in the outside world spotted a herd of abbies, numbering two thousand, twenty miles from Wayward Pines. Pilcher reminds Ethan that sometimes, the truth and freedom must be sacrificed for safety. Pilcher also reveals he has unmanned drones flying all over the country, looking for other people or civilization, but has found nothing yet. Ethan then heads home to 1040 Sixth Street. Ethan reads for an hour from a book



of Robert Frost's poetry, and then his wife, Theresa, gets home. They make love, then work on dinner together. Their son, Ben, gets home soon after. They have homemade ice cream after dinner. Ethan reads "The Hobbit" to Ben as Ben falls asleep that night.

At 3 in the morning, Pilcher calls, telling Ethan that McCall has headed south of town past the road that leads out and back in, and is heading into the woods to escape. Ethan is told to stop McCall, and Ethan heads out. He catches up with Peter, wondering about the fence in the woods, and about his former life in Missoula. Peter wants to know what is beyond the fence, but Ethan attempts to coax him back to town by saying his freedom and his life matter more. Peter then runs headlong into the fence and electrocutes himself. Pam suddenly steps up beside Ethan. Pam is Pilcher's beautiful, right-hand woman, unfailingly loyal and cruel. Ethan worries about Peter's family. Peter has lived in Wayward Pines for eight years, and Pam says that human rights don't exist anymore.

Ethan heads back to town, hits something in the road, and his Bronco flips over. There is a dead woman in the road. He pulls her body off the road. Ethan, bloodied and confused, heads home. He cleans himself up, and then gets into bed with his wife.

Chapter 3 – Ethan wakes up late in the afternoon. Theresa is at work and Ben is at school. Pilcher is in Ethan's room, and Ethan explains the events of the night before. Pilcher holds up the photo of a woman, Alyssa, whom Ethan confirms was in the road last night, as if she'd been stabbed all over and tortured. The woman works for Pilcher as a spy in town, and never returned from her most recent mission to infiltrate the Wanderers, the underground rebellion group in Wayward Pines. Pilcher wants Ethan to pick up where Alyssa has left off. Kate, Ethan's old partner in the Secret Service and former love affair, was Alyssa's contact in the Wanderers. Pilcher knows they are actively recruiting, and believes they know the truth about the outside world.

Chapter 4 – Theresa finishes up work at the realtor's office for the day. She reflects on her former life in Seattle as a paralegal, and wonders if Wayward Pines is some kind of prison. Theresa then goes to see Pam, posing as a psychiatrist. She reveals that she knows Ethan has answers to questions she has, but doesn't want to ask him. She explains that the longer she has been in Pines, the more normal it seems. Theresa wonders about hope and explains that dreams aren't all possible anymore. Pam talks about hope and happiness being relative. She also asks if Ethan knows about Theresa's former living situation, and Theresa says no.

Chapter 5 – Ethan examines Alyssa's corpse in the hospital morgue. Her blood has been drained. She has oak leaves in her hair, but apart from that, she is clean. Ethan questions Alan, one of Pilcher's men who helped to bring Alyssa's body in. Alan has been intimate with Alyssa before, and knows her well. Everyone in the mountain complex knows everyone. Alan says that Alyssa had mentioned that her mission would soon be over. He asks Ethan to find who did this to Alyssa, and hurt them.

Chapter 6 – When Ethan gets home, Theresa is waiting for him on the front porch. Ethan's bruising from the wreck the night before worries Theresa. He says he is alright,



and heads up to get changed for dinner over with the Fishers. Brad Fisher is a lawyer; his wife, Megan Fisher, is a teacher –Ben’s teacher. Megan and Theresa work on dinner, during which time Megan reveals she and Brad are trying to have a baby, and will be looking for a bigger house when the time comes. Ethan reflects on Brad Fisher, and what he knows about Brad’s file: he is from Sacramento, a Harvard law grad, and was traveling through Wayward Pines with his new wife on a two-week work trip when they decided to stop for the night. Brad comments that he has seen mountain sheep on the cliffs in the distance. After dinner, everyone plays Monopoly. On the way home, Theresa begs Ethan never to speak to him with the mere formal surface conversations that everyone has with everyone else. Ethan tells her to be careful. Pilcher calls Ethan that night about Alan.

Chapter 7 – In Cahn Auditorium at Northwestern University in Chicago in 2006, David Pilcher lectures about suspended animation, doing what he can to generate more funds for his project. Afterwards, Pilcher and Arnold Pope take a walk across campus, and Pilcher runs into an abused fourteen year-old girl – Pam. He gives her some money and offers her a private room at the Drake Hotel if she wants it. Back at the hotel, Pilcher says hello to his wife, Elisabeth, and kisses his daughter, Alyssa, goodnight. He is then told by Elisabeth that Pam has shown up.

## Analysis

When the novel “Wayward Pines” by Blake Crouch begins, Ethan Burke is finishing up his second week as newly-installed Sheriff of Wayward Pines, Idaho. The truth about the town, its residents, and the creatures beyond, is well known to Ethan, David Pilcher, and the 160 or so members of Pilcher’s crew in the mountain complex. Ethan is Pilcher’s public point man in town, and Pilcher relies on Ethan to keep the surface order of things calm. Pilcher has other agents – spies – embedded into the town itself, including his daughter, Alyssa, who Ethan discovers murdered while heading home from a call to handle a disturbed Peter McCall.

Pilcher appoints Ethan to handle the case of Alyssa’s murder. Alyssa is his daughter, so Pilcher is especially horrified by the turn of events. It is explained to Ethan that Alyssa was in the midst of penetrating the rebellion group, the Wanderers. Following once such meeting –with Kate, no less –Ethan learns that Alyssa disappeared and was murdered. She has been mutilated and her body has been drained of blood. It is an especially heinous way to die, by torture. Ethan is quite torn by his current place in life: he is investigating a murder for the murderous people who will order executions to keep the town of Wayward Pines in check. Ethan struggles continually with his conscience as he seeks to balance his job with moral justice.

Interestingly enough, Part 1 ends with a flashback to 2006, where Pilcher meets Pam for the first time –a young teen, horribly abused –and Pam’s unflinching, unyielding loyalty to Pilcher suddenly becomes apparent as it is Pilcher who takes her in to care for her. It is here that the reader also learns that Alyssa is actually his daughter. Pilcher, who appears to be a morally ambivalent character, assumes a much more sympathetic pose



here as a grieving father who is trying to do the right thing, but must use unjust means to achieve better ends.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Ethan Burke find his job as sheriff so difficult? How does he handle the difficulties?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why does Pilcher task Ethan, personally, with the search for Alyssa's murderer?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Alyssa matter so much to Pilcher? Why does Pilcher matter so much to Pam?

## **Vocabulary**

cirque, oblivious, subterranean, aberration, espouse, rigorously, immaculately, unsanctioned, tumultuous, insular



## Part 2

### Summary

Chapter 8 – Tobias is living out in the wilderness, nearly out of medical supplies and ammunition. 1,287 days he has been out in the wild, having made it as far north as Seattle, and is headed home with incredibly important news.

Chapter 9 – Ethan goes to talk to Ted, head of the surveillance group at the mountain complex. Ethan asks Ted how it is possible such a sophisticated surveillance system misses a murder. Fourteen years of the elements have destroyed cameras, creating certain blind spots. They have houses and the town sufficiently wired with microphones, and rely most heavily on audio data to monitor people, apart from video and tracking devices. Ethan has Ted bring up a history of Alyssa's movements based on her microchip until the last night, when it is cut out and left in her bedside drawer. He has Ted bring up Kate's chip as well, and isolates all instances when she and Alyssa were alone. They then pull audio and video feeds from those encounters. Ethan believes one encounter includes a note passed in a pepper between Kate and Alyssa. Ted goes on to explain that the cameras are usually in sleep mode, but activated only by proximity of a microchip. Without a microchip, the Wanderers are essentially ghosts.

Ethan has Marcus bring him to Alyssa's private quarters. There, he discovers a small space with books and photographs on shelves, which he believes are of Alyssa's mother. He finds a folder of five written reports in which Alyssa describes contact and progress with the Wanderers, initiating with contact between her and Kate Hewson, now Kate Ballinger. She is to meet Ballinger at the cemetery mausoleum at 1 a.m. after cutting out her microchip. She is not heard from again.

Ethan questions Marcus. Marcus is 27, and was brought out of suspension two years before to replace a guard killed beyond the fence. Ethan asks Marcus why he submitted to the project and suspension. In his former life, Marcus explains he was a drug-addict and a drunk. Marcus volunteered to do something important with his life; Ethan reminds Marcus that he and the others didn't have a choice. Ethan hears screaming, and sees scientists with an abby strapped down to a gurney, along with Pilcher. Pilcher explains they are doing experiments on the abbies. They are testing the intelligence of one particularly docile abby, nicknamed Margaret. She has been taught to communicate by way of hand signals. Pilcher tells Ethan that they are bringing a man named Wayne Johnson out of suspension, so Ethan should be prepared for a call for help if needed. Ethan tells Pilcher he is sorry for the loss of Alyssa, and Pilcher tells Ethan to find who did this to his daughter.

Chapter 10 – Pam, dressed up as a nurse, welcomes Wayne Johnson back to the world. He disappeared in Wayward Pines in 1992 as a traveling encyclopedia salesman. Pam explains that Wayne now lives in Wayward Pines – and knows that she needs to make him believe that he was killed in an accident.





Chapter 11 – Ethan watches Kate at the cash register in her toy store from the cover of Steaming Bean. She is now almost forty-five years old. Ethan has gone over previous reports suspecting 11 households of people of being Wanderers, or of having removed their microchips. Ethan reflects on the three-month affair he had with Kate in his old life. He then goes to see her at the toy store. They converse lightly, with Kate asking after Ben. He buys a slingshot from her, and passes her a note. He then leaves.

Wayne Johnson goes in to see Theresa. Theresa sees Ethan leave the toy shop with a slingshot in hand. That night, Theresa confronts Ethan over his visit to the toy shop. He explains it is for work, but can't talk about it. Theresa is bitter and hurt by this. Ethan reflects on the note he left for Kate about the mountain complex contingent watching her –and that he will meet her that night at the mausoleum.

Chapter 12 – Ethan goes to the cemetery. It is nearly two in the morning. He wonders if Kate will show up, or if Kate and her group will show up to murder him. At last, Kate shows up, armed with a knife, just in case. Ethan explains that Pilcher and the others know about her and their microchip removal. He goes on to ask about Alyssa. Kate denies murdering her, and wants to know whose side Ethan is on. Ethan says he doesn't know yet. Kate denies her group having anything to do with Alyssa's murder, and leaves. Ethan wonders if Kate has lied to him. Back in bed with Theresa, Theresa explains she wants to leave Wayward Pines. She is tired of being there. She is worried about Ethan and Kate. They have sex, and Theresa exaggerates her moaning so Ethan can tell her the truth in whispers about everything going on –the truth about Wayward Pines.

Chapter 13 – It is 2013 in Seattle. Pilcher and Adam Hassler meet up. Hassler is covering up the disappearance of his three missing agents as best he can in exchange for payments from Pilcher. Hassler explains he wants to be part of Pilcher's program. Pilcher agrees. Hassler tells Pilcher that he doesn't want Ethan to wake up. He is in love with Theresa, but Theresa is not in love with him. Pilcher announces that he and his team will be partying and then going to sleep in two weeks. Hassler agrees to join.

## Analysis

As "Wayward" continues, Blake Crouch expands his plot to involve two separate series of events. The first involves a scout who goes by the name of Tobias, who has been gone for more than three years, heading across the wild as far as Seattle, where he has seen something so outrageous that he must return at once to Wayward Pines to tell Pilcher about it. This is also important because it demonstrates to the reader that Pilcher is curious to see what is out and about in the world. Not only has Pilcher sent out drones to scout out the land, but he has sent actual people as well. Secondly, the reader also learns that Adam Hassler knows full well what happened to Ethan, Kate, and Bill – by way of David Pilcher. The two are in league together, and Pilcher is paying off Hassler to handle things. Hassler goes so far as to decide to go through with the 1,800 year sleep in order to have a shot at love with Theresa. But where Adam Hassler



currently is –even if he is still suspended, or if he is actually alive – is entirely unknown to the reader.

Ethan, meanwhile, continues his investigation into the disappearance of Alyssa Pilcher. He discovers that she is required to remove her microchip in order to meet with Kate and the underground group, the Wanderers. Ethan must also help transition Wayne Johnson's integration into Wayward Pines. The reader learns that Pilcher's agents have various ways of ensuring compliance, including that Wayward Pines is some sort of afterlife. Pam, for example, is trying to get Wayne Johnson to believe that he is actually dead. Ethan is also struggling with balancing his love life and his professional life –a decision which ultimately leads him to informing Theresa about the truth of Wayward Pines. It is a dangerous move to make, but one which brings Ethan and Theresa closer together than they have ever been.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Hassler's motivation for working with Pilcher, and then volunteering to go into suspended animation?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What methods do Pilcher and his men have of ensuring order and peace in Wayward Pines? Which seems to be their most effective?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Ethan ultimately decide to tell Theresa the truth about Wayward Pines? What are the consequences of this?

## **Vocabulary**

amplified, stilted, bewildered, millennia, deprioritized



## Part 3

### Summary

Chapter 14 – Tobias shoots at an abby from a distance, misses twice, and then kills it. It is his forty-fifth kill. But a chorus of screams rings out, and a pack of abbies give Tobias chase. He takes cover –and twenty-five abbies begin circling, looking for him. As darkness falls, the herd settles in for sleep for the night. That night, Tobias dreams of ruined Seattle. In ruined Seattle is a monstrous hive constructed by the abbies. They are building something of a civilization. In the morning, the abbies are gone. He then continues on.

Chapter 15 – Kate delivers a message to Ethan by way of Sharpie on a Styrofoam coffee cup, urging him to meet her at 3 a.m. at the corner of Main and Eighth –without his chip. Pam brings Ethan into the complex, and asks him to check up on Wayne Johnson. Ethan then relates his meeting with Kate to Pilcher. Ethan explains he needs his chip taken out. Pam questions his loyalty. Pilcher reluctantly agrees if Ethan promises to be in at dawn the next day with a full report. Ethan asks Pilcher if Alyssa had any enemies in the mountain; Pilcher does not believe so. Pilcher reveals that Alyssa was only twenty-four, and volunteers for the assignment that killed her. Pilcher explains that of all the people put into suspension and revived, nine never woke up – including Elisabeth. Pilcher has no family, and encourages Ethan to hold tight to his. Ethan then has his chip removed, and he asks to see Margaret. He wonders if communication with the abbies is possible, and if humans and abbies can coexist.

Chapter 16 – Ethan goes to visit Wayne Johnson. Wayne Johnson has many questions, but Ethan can only be vague. Ethan explains the town means life, and outside is death. Ethan then goes to meet Theresa, who is understandably shaken. Ethan tells her about her microchip. Ethan agrees to cut it out of her in the study in the house –the only blind spot in the house. As winter gets close, Ethan can see his son's breath in the house. Firewood has not yet been delivered, so Ethan destroys the coffee table for firewood so Ben can draw by the fire. Ethan then extracts the chip from Theresa's leg in the study. He patches her up, and then goes to prepare dinner, telling Ben not to disturb Theresa because she has had a rough day. After midnight, Ethan and Theresa sneak out and go walking. Theresa is willing to risk death for freedom by leaving Wayward Pines. They make love out in the wilderness, and then come back into town as the snow falls. Ethan explains the screams heard at night by Theresa and Ben are abbies. Ethan promises Theresa they will fix everything one day. Ethan tells Theresa she must go on like nothing has changed, and that Pam is actually Pilcher's closest ally. He then explains to Theresa that he must go and see Kate, and Theresa accepts this.

Chapter 17 – Pam is gleeful. She has been tracking Ethan and Theresa, and now wonders how to go about destroying him.



Chapter 18 – Kate is late to meet Ethan, and a man appears instead, directing Ethan to a bush. The man is Bradley Imming. Ethan is blindfolded and taken to an unknown location in what appear to be old sewers. Ethan is stripped naked to search for surveillance equipment and the microchip. They travel down the tunnel and into a streambed outside. They climb up a cliff face. He is led into a massive cavern. There are massive numbers of people enjoying an evening party by candlelight. It has taken years to build the place. Here, Kate explains, people can talk about their old lives, or whatever they want. Kate explains their group isn't revolutionary, but human. All they want is a place to be who they really are. Kate explains she has known the truth about everything. Alyssa did not reach out to her only a few weeks before, but years ago. Kate reveals there is a tunnel under the fence somewhere, and Alyssa was well-loved by the group, and well-trusted. What is stopping them from leaving is the fact that others have left –and have never come back. Kate adamantly denies having anything to do with Alyssa's death. Back at the party, Ethan sees Brad Fisher, who is there for his third time. He reveals his original wife, Nancy, committed suicide after waking up in Wayward Pines, and Megan is a complete stranger to him. Ethan later explains to Kate that whoever killed Alyssa tore her up.

Chapter 19 – As Ethan walks home, Marcus finds him and picks him up to bring to Pilcher. Just inside the tunnel, Ethan pulls a knife on Marcus, takes Marcus's gun, and knocks Marcus out. The gun is empty. He then drives up into the mountain. Ethan then goes to see Ted, and has him wipe certain video feeds. He asks Ted about his past life. Ted was an alcoholic and homeless following the death of his wife when he met Pilcher at a soup kitchen. He has Ted track Pam's movements. They discover a two-hour gap in Pam's movements in the video which have been flawlessly patched together except for the time. Ted explains only two people on his team could have done it. One of them is on duty in the next room. Suddenly, Pam, Pilcher, and two guards show up on the surveillance screen. Ted quickly pulls up the Ballinger house on the screen to help Ethan. Ted quickly tells Ethan there is a blind and deaf spot on the corner of Ninth and Main at the bench. Pilcher, Pam, and the guards then enter, demanding to know why Marcus is in the infirmary with a cracked skull. Ethan says it is because the kid pointed a gun at him. Pilcher then asks to see Ethan in his private quarters. Pam holds Ethan back just a moment to whisper that she knows all about him and Theresa, and that she owns him now.

Ethan reveals to Pilcher he was able to infiltrate the group. He says there are fifty or sixty people, but lies and says the group is violent and revolutionary. He says they plan to take over the town, and they want war. Some have even been over the fence, he says. Judging from the reactions of Pilcher and Pam, they aren't expecting this, leading Ethan to believe that Alyssa must have told them the group was harmless. Pam wants to go in at night with a team to get every person in town in the cavern, but Pilcher doesn't want a bloodbath. He believes most can be persuaded. Pilcher decides a fete should be called for Kate and Harold Ballinger. Pam explains they must be taken alive so they can be killed in the circle on Main Street. Pilcher says he hates the fetes, but knows what is best for his people.



Chapter 20 - Ethan and Theresa bathe together so Ethan can tell Theresa what he has discovered: Kate's people did not kill Alyssa, meaning Pam, Pilcher's men, or Pilcher himself did the deed. Further, there will be a fete for Kate and Harold. He explains he will not stop the fete because he has a plan in mind that Theresa shouldn't know about. She tells him she's felt closer to him than she ever has. Ethan picks up Ben from school that day, and they go and get hot chocolate and fudge. They sit down on the bench at Main and Ninth. Ethan begins to talk about Seattle, and Ben says he can't do that, and that Ethan isn't his real father, but the one who protects them is. Ethan begins explaining David Pilcher, when Megan Fisher suddenly arrives, asking why Ben is crying. Ethan tells her to mind her own business, and she storms off down the road.

At the sheriff's office, Ethan looks at the cloak costume for fetes formerly worn by Pope. It is made of human scalps –thirty-seven total. Ted calls Ethan, and tells him to meet at the morgue just as Dr. Miter arrives to put Ethan's chip back in. Ethan tells Miter to wait, and then arms up with weapons, and slips out through the window to his Bronco. Ethan then meets Kate at the corner of Main and Ninth to explain the situation. Kate explains the tunnel under the fence is beside a huge pine stump. Ethan then goes to the hospital. Ted shows him surveillance footage on a laptop of Pilcher and Pam carving up Alyssa. Ted has made several copies of the footage, and gives on to Ethan. He tells Ted to go back to the mountain and carry on as if nothing has happened, and to stand by.

Ethan goes to the stump mentioned by Kate and commences digging to find the door to the tunnel. Armed with a Desert Eagle pistol and a sniper rifle, Ethan heads into the dark tunnel. He finds the doors on the other side, and fires at the padlock. When he returns, Pam is waiting for him. She is wearing tight jeans and a tight shirt. She does not appear to be armed. She closes in on him, talking to him, and when she is close enough, she dodges an attempt by Ethan to hit her with the gun, and she strikes. She tries to suffocate him, but Ethan stabs her in the leg with a knife. Ethan then knocks her out, and cuts out her microchip.

Chapter 21 – It is New Year's Eve, 2013, in the Superstructure at Wayward Pines. Elisabeth announces to David she wants to stay behind. This stuns him. Elisabeth says she wants Alyssa to stay behind, too. She says Pilcher doesn't love her or Alyssa first – he loves his work, first. She leaves, and Pilcher calls Pope. Hassler, meanwhile, is partying it up. Pilcher takes him to see Theresa, already asleep. Everyone undresses, and then heads to their containment units and machines. Alyssa is taken and put into her own machine at Pilcher's orders, leaving Elisabeth behind to be strangled by Pope.

## Analysis

Ethan's investigation brings him into direct contact with Kate, and her group, the Wanderers. It is during this time that Ethan discovers two very important things, both of which he later shares with Theresa. First, the Wanderers did not kill Alyssa. Second, the Wanderers are not a group determined to commit revolution or insurrection – but to get together, enjoy being alive, and be free to talk about their old lives and dreams. In a way, this proves to be the most dangerous kind of freedom – the intellectual and



emotional kind – that no regime can ever completely crush. Ethan removes Theresa's tracking chip, and the two go on a walk during which time they discuss plans for freedom – all of which are overheard by Pam, who has been spying on Ethan.

Ethan's loyalty is up for question, and Pilcher is determined to see a test of Ethan's loyalty by having him call a fete for Kate and Harold Ballinger. Ethan, alarmingly, does not seem to have any real hesitation about agreeing to call a fete for either Kate or Harold – but the reader soon discovers that Ethan has some sort of plan in mind – though it doesn't seem to take into consideration the fete, or the safety of either Kate or Harold.

The sympathetic character that Pilcher represents based on the loss of his wife and daughter is soon eroded and destroyed. Pilcher is personally responsible for the murder of his daughter, and orders the execution of his wife when his wife decides she does not want to be put into animated suspension. Indeed, Elisabeth does not want Alyssa to be put into animated suspension either – and this enrages Pilcher, who has Alyssa put into suspension anyways, and sends Pope after Elisabeth. Pilcher goes from something of a tragic figure in the reader's mind to a murderous, psychotic creature on the level of the abbies.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the truth about the deaths of Alyssa and her mother, Elisabeth? Why are both women killed?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Ethan so readily agree to order the fete in a meeting with Pilcher and Pam?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Ted agree to help Ethan? What motives could Ted possibly have?

## Vocabulary

circumnavigated, amalgamation, putrefying, irony, proposition, preferential, lucid, percolated, fragile, hackle, annihilated, premonitory, meticulous, congregating, requisitioned, incongruence, trajectory, qualms, astronomical, pragmatist, sentience



## Part 4

### Summary

Chapter 22 – Tobias is now one night from home. He raises his hands to the fire he has built and can't wait to get back.

Chapter 23 – Pilcher calls Ethan at eight in the evening at the sheriff's office, unhappy about the chip. Ethan says he will get it put back in first thing in the morning. Pilcher goes on to explain that Pam is thirty minutes late in returning to the mountain. It is because Ethan has slipped her chip into the purse of a woman in town. Ethan calls the ten officers to announce the fete for Kate and Harold. The officers keep machetes. Ethan then records a voice message to be delivered to every home in the town by phone. People pour into the streets with homemade weapons and costumes to begin the fete. Ethan heads out in his jeep. Pam, meanwhile, wakes up on the other side of the fence. She is enraged and feels no pain, wanting to kill Ethan. Meanwhile, the crowd has taken Kate and Harold alive, as instructed. Ethan calls the crowd to order by saying Kate and Harold hate the town, and then begins to say they have the audacity to want to know why they are there, which gets the town's attention. Ethan then reveals the truth to the town about what is going on. An abby, held prisoner in the jeep, wakes up and breaks out. Ethan then kills the creature. Ethan says he will answer any questions the people have in the movie theater, and that anyone who lays a hand on Kate or Harold will be killed.

Chapter 24 – The townspeople head into the theater, following Ethan. He tells them everything, including about David Pilcher. Some walk out. Nearly all stay. Pilcher suddenly appears on screen, and begins speaking to the crowd, explaining the danger of the abbies. But the people rip down the screen and smash the projector. Pilcher knows he is finished. He destroys a scale model of Wayward Pines in his study. The people stay in the theater, stunned, upset, or feeling alive. Pilcher then calls Ethan at the theater, telling him all the people are now his. Pilcher says that Alyssa betrayed him by not only telling people about blind spots, but by creating them. Pilcher's conscience is unbothered, because he says it has all been for the greater good. Pilcher says he is going to give Ethan Hell, an everlasting place of torment. Then, all the lights go out.

Chapter 25 – Three years before, in Wayward Pines, Adam Hassler leaves behind the woman he loves for a mission. The woman professes her love for him. The woman is Theresa.

### Analysis

Ethan organizes and orders the fete against Kate and Harold, who are abducted and brought to the circle in the center of town. Ethan seizes the moment to do two things: first, he orders that Kate and Harold should not be harmed, and he will kill anyone who





harms them. Second, he reveals the truth about the world outside the fences that surround Wayward Pines as an abby he has knocked out with a tranquilizer comes back to life in the jeep, breaks out, and is killed by Ethan. The people of Wayward Pines have literal, physical evidence in front of them of the horrors that await them in the outside world. Ethan then tells everyone to gather in the theater.

In the theater, Ethan answers all of the questions the people have, from the abbies, to the missing time, to where they are, and just who David Pilcher is. Pilcher attempts to hijack the meeting by appearing on screen, but the people of the town refuse to hear Pilcher out, and rip down the screen and the projector. Ethan has turned nearly the entire town against Pilcher with the truth. But there is another two truths that Ethan himself has yet to learn: that he cannot cross Pilcher without consequences –as the lights all go off in the town –and Theresa has had a romance with Adam Hassler, who is now strangely missing from town.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What are the consequences of the rebellion against Pilcher, and the truth being made clear to the people of the town?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why do some of the people in town leave Ethan's meeting at the movie theater as he unveils the truth to them? Would you leave, or would you stay?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Is Pilcher justified in turning his back on Wayward Pines? Why or why not? Is the existence of Wayward Pines at all justified? Why or why not?

## **Vocabulary**

velocity, eerie, makeshift, carrion, garishly, berth, catatonic





## Part 5

### Summary

Chapter 26 – Tobias writes his last entry in the journal he has been keeping on his journey. He signs it with his full name: Adam Tobias Hassler.

Chapter 27 – Ethan drives through town to the fence. There, he discovers the electricity has been cut, and the gate through which firewood expeditions occur, and scouts enter and leave, is wide open. The sound of thousands of abbies can be heard in the woods all around the fence.

### Analysis

In the chilling final part of “Wayward”, the two truths that Ethan must learn are about to hit him in the face. First, he cannot cross Pilcher without consequences. Turning away from Pilcher means Pilcher turning away from the people of town. As such, he shuts off the electricity to the fences, and throws the gates wide open for the abbies. The second is that Theresa’s time spent with Adam is about to be revealed through the return of Adam Hassler, who has apparently been going by his middle name, Tobias. Ethan’s discovery of the quiet fences, and the wide open gates, is the more immediate concern. How he will handle this remains to be seen, as this is where the novel ends.

### Discussion Question 1

What is the truth behind who Tobias is? How will Tobias's return affect Ethan?

### Discussion Question 2

What is the danger of the quiet fences and the gates left open in a locked position?

### Discussion Question 3

For what reasons is Tobias so anxious to return to Wayward Pines?

### Vocabulary

repelling, proximity, egress



# Characters

## Ethan Burke

Ethan Burke is the thirty-seven year old principle protagonist of Blake Crouch's novel "Wayward". An Iraq War veteran and former Secret Service agent, Ethan is put into suspended animation for 1800 years, wakes up outside of Wayward Pines, discovers the truth about Pilcher and the town, and becomes the sheriff in order to have a chance at life, and to be reunited with his family – his wife, Theresa, and son, Ben. Ethan does not enjoy his job as sheriff, because he is one of the few people who knows the truth about the outside world, and must lie to all the people of the town about it. Ethan is tasked with discovering the murderer of Pilcher's daughter, Alyssa, and comes to discover that it is Pilcher and Pam who are responsible. Ethan then reveals the truth about the town to the people who live in it, and they turn against Pilcher. But Ethan's problems magnify when Pilcher shuts down the electric fences and opens the gates.

## Theresa Burke

Theresa Burke is the loyal, loving, and compassionate wife of Ethan, and mother of Ben. She knows something is off with Wayward Pines, and is finally told the truth by Ethan. Theresa resolves that she would rather die free than live without freedom. Theresa, however, apparently lived for a time with Adam Hassler, and was in love with him until Ethan returns on the scene during a three-year mission Hassler was sent out on. Nevertheless, Theresa seems committed to Ethan.

## Ben Burke

Ben Burke is the twelve year-old son of Ethan and Theresa Burke. He is enrolled at the local school where he is slowly being brainwashed to oppose the family structure in favor of service and loyalty to the community. Ben ultimately learns the truth of Wayward Pines the night his father orders a fete against Kate and Harold Bollinger.

## David Pilcher

David Pilcher is the billionaire who founded and funded Wayward Pines and the mountain complex. He rules over everything as a benevolent dictator who is seemingly haunted by the death of his wife and daughter. In reality, he is psychopathic, having personally murdered his daughter and ordered the execution of his wife. When Ethan and the town turn against Pilcher, Pilcher shuts down the electric grid and opens the fence gates.



## **Pam**

Pam is the bloodthirsty, cruel, twenty-something right-hand woman who is unfailingly and unflinchingly loyal to David Pilcher. Pilcher discovers Pam as an abused fourteen year-old girl, and takes her in. It is from this that her loyalty stems. She poses as a nurse and a psychiatrist as needed, and helps to keep the people in town in check. She suspects Ethan of disloyalty, spies on him, and discovers as much to be true. When Pam confronts Ethan, and tries to fight him, Ethan gets the better of her, cuts out her tracking chip, and leaves her on the other side of the fence.

## **Adam Tobias Hassler**

Adam Tobias Hassler is a former Delta Force operative and Special Agent in Charge of Ethan's unit in the Secret Service. Adam is in love with Theresa, and helps to cover up the disappearance of Ethan, Kate, and Bill, on payoffs from Pilcher, and in hopes of having a chance with Theresa in 1800 years. Throughout the novel, Adam is returning from a scouting mission to the Pacific Northwest, where he discovers the abbies building a civilization. By the end of the novel, he is one night away from returning to Wayward Pines, having been away for three years from his relationship with Theresa.

## **Ted**

Ted is the chief surveillance analyst in the mountain complex working for Pilcher. Ted is a former homeless drunkard who is taken in by Pilcher before the suspended animation of 1800 years, and so is relatively loyal to Pilcher. But Ted is not as loyal as he first seems, assisting Ethan with his investigation into Alyssa, and protecting Ethan from discovery several times by Pilcher and Pam. It is Ted who gives Ethan the footage of Pilcher and Pam mutilating and murdering Alyssa.

## **Alyssa Pilcher**

Alyssa Pilcher is the beautiful, sweet, kind, twenty-four year old daughter of David. She works various missions for her father, including as a spy in town. She ultimately refuses to give up the Wanderers, and to give any extensive information about them, leading to her death at the hands of her own father, and Pam.

## **Kate Ballinger**

Kate Ballinger, nee Hewson, is a former Secret Service agent, husband of Harold Ballinger, and former love interest of Ethan Burke. She is kind, compassionate, and part of the underground group known as the Wanderers. She is put out for the kill in a fete ordered by Pilcher, but saved at the last minute by Ethan.

## **Marcus**

Marcus is a twenty-seven year old security guard and agent of Pilcher who works at the mountain complex. He is straightforward and loyal to Pilcher for getting him away from drugs and drinking. Marcus ultimately ends up with a cracked skull when Ethan pummels him with his own gun for taking him at gunpoint to see Pilcher.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Electric Fences

Electric fences surround the city and farmland of Wayward Pines, Idaho. They are electrified chain-link fences designed to keep the abbies out, and the people of Wayward Pines in. The fences are punctuated by a gate which allows woodcutting expeditions out into the surrounding forests. At the end of the novel, when Ethan and the townspeople turn against Pilcher, Pilcher shuts down the electric grid, and opens the gates so the people can leave – or the abbies can get in.

## Sniper Rifles

Sniper rifles are wielded and utilized by the guards in Wayward Pines, Ethan, and members of Pilcher's crew to kill abbies and enforce order. A sniper rifle is also carried by Adam Tobias Hassler as he scouts out the wilderness and heads to the former city of Seattle and returns to Wayward Pines. They ensure effective kills at safe distances.

## The Cloak

The cloak is worn by the sheriff on nights of fetes. It is a grisly and gruesome reminder of the violence the people are compelled to commit by Pilcher and the ordering of the fetes. The cloak is composed of the scalps of thirty-seven human beings. It is greeted with disgust and revulsion by Ethan.

## Tranquilizers

Tranquilizers are used by the crew of the mountain complex to sedate, capture, and experiment on abbies taken from the wild. Ethan himself later uses tranquilizers to hunt down and knock out an abby, so that he can reveal the truth of the outside world to the citizens of Wayward Pines. Ethan later kills the abby that he knocks out before the abby can kill one of the citizens.

## Microchips

Microchips are embedded in the left thighs of the citizens and crew of Wayward Pines, Idaho, except for Pilcher himself. The microchips are used by the surveillance team of the mountain to track the movements of each and every citizen in town. Movement and proximity of microchips near cameras activate the cameras to begin a live feed. Kate and the Wanderers cut out their microchips, so that they become invisible to the cameras, and so that they can move freely about and beyond Wayward Pines.



# Settings

## Wayward Pines

Wayward Pines is located in the former state of Idaho, in the former United States of America. It is the creation of billionaire David Pilcher, who recognized corruption in human DNA, put several hundred people to sleep in suspended animation for 1800 years, and then transformed Wayward Pines into the last vestige of human civilization in the world. Wayward Pines is a totally self-sufficient community, and it is a beautiful and quiet place. However, its residents feel trapped and hemmed in, and want to know what exists in the outside world. Wayward Pines is ultimately left defenseless when the people learn the truth from Ethan, and Pilcher turns his back on the entire place.

## The Mountain Complex

The mountain complex is the headquarters and living arrangement for more than 160 crew and inner circle members who are loyal to and work for David Pilcher. The mountain complex is full of food supplies, ammunition, technology, cars and vehicles, supplies, surveillance gear, and everything needed to maintain life in the mountain and control on the town. The mountain complex is visited by Ethan several times during the course of the novel. It is presumably locked down when Pilcher plunges the town into darkness.

## Wayward Pines Hospital

Wayward Pines Hospital is where residents of Wayward Pines go to seek medical treatment. It is also where newly awakened residents from suspension are first taken under the common memory of being in a car accident. They are usually greeted by Pam, who pretends to be a nurse, and begins the integration process. She often encourages people to come to the conclusion they are actually dead, and they are in an afterlife.

## The Cavern

The cavern is located in a blind spot alongside a cliff. It is where the fifty or sixty-some members of the Wanders congregate to enjoy one another's company, to celebrate, and to talk about their old life and their dreams in the open without fear of reproach or punishment. Ethan is taken to the cavern in order to meet with Kate, during which time Kate denies involvement in Alyssa's murder. She likewise insists none of the Wanderers did it.

## Seattle

Seattle is a former city in the State of Washington, in the United States of America. Once a bustling metropolis, it is now ruined and overrun by abbies, who are constructing new buildings of wood and earth, like a hive or a nest. Their new civilization is discovered by Adam Tobias Hassler, who returns the great distance to Wayward Pines in order to give the information gathered on his mission to Pilcher, and to reunite with Theresa.



# Themes and Motifs

## Dystopianism

Dystopianism is a major, dominant, and overarching theme in the novel “Wayward” by Blake Crouch. Dystopianism involves the totalitarian control of a group of people and place by an all-powerful, all-knowing group, organization, or government with the express purpose of denying human rights and human freedom in favor of service to a supposed greater good, and the preservation of the controlling body or individual. The intention of good is overshadowed, outweighed, or utterly demolished by the commission of bad deeds and actions, such as the denial of human rights, to achieve the ends.

In the novel, David Pilcher assumes the role of benevolent dictator from his perch in the mountain complex. At least 160 people work for him as crew and an inner circle. He dictates everything that goes on in town –from who people marry to what they do for work. He denies people access to the truth of the outside world. Pilcher intends Wayward Pines as a time capsule that has preserved the human race, but instead, it has become his own personal little kingdom. Pilcher says he knows what is better for the people in town than they do themselves.

In order to maintain control, Pilcher has implemented a thorough system of surveillance, by way of audio and video feeds. He implants microchips into the left thigh of each individual on the mountain and in town (except himself) in order to track the movements and activities of those individuals. His most loyal agents, including Pam, participate in the daily activities of town, steering and guiding people. Pilcher has also implanted numerous spies among the people of the town. When worse comes to worst, Pilcher relies on violence to maintain order, by ordering mass killings called fetes in which all the citizens of town are required to hunt down and kill selected targets. Despite Pilcher’s intentions of preserving humankind, he fails excessively by denying human rights and exploiting human nature. It is a system that Ethan singlehandedly topples.

## Family

Family is a major and important theme in the novel “Wayward” by Blake Crouch. Family involves the emotional, spiritual, and even physical support and loyalty to others who may or may not be blood-related, but who operate in the traditional family structure. Family, in the novel, is presented as something that is utterly important, or utterly irrelevant to those involved in the situation.

Family is utterly important to Ethan Burke. Ashamed for a past affair, Ethan is determined to make everything up to his family when they all become entrapped in the Wayward Pines scheme. Ethan’s choice to leave to stay in Wayward Pines is made out of loyalty to his family, and his desire to be reunited with them. Ethan becomes sheriff,





and everything he does for the next two weeks is in support of his family –his wife, Theresa, and his son, Ben. Ethan even goes so far as to tell Theresa the truth about Wayward Pines, and it brings husband and wife even closer together, as both end up relying on one another for emotional support.

Family is utterly irrelevant to David Pilcher. Although Pilcher makes himself out to be a tragic figure, having endured the loss of his wife in the suspension process, and his daughter by way of murder, Pilcher does not truly care about his family at all. His wife, Elisabeth, says as much when she tells him that his work comes before either her, or Alyssa. This is borne out by the facts later on. Elisabeth's refusal to be suspended leads to her strangulation, ordered by Pilcher. Alyssa's refusal to cooperate with her father leads to her murder, literally by her father. Family means nothing to Pilcher when it comes to Wayward Pines.

## Truth

Truth is a dominant and underlying theme in "Wayward" by Blake Crouch. The idea of truth is a timeless question pondered by philosophers, theologians, and thinkers. Just what is true? This is the question that haunts every single one of the residents of Wayward Pines on a daily basis. Truth is an invaluable, intrinsic thing to those people, while to others, like David Pilcher, truth is a commodity of utilitarian value. Truth, to both ruler and ruled, is something vastly different.

When it comes to the truth by way of David Pilcher, he knows what truth is: reality. Reality is that a race of cannibalistic humanoids called abbies roam the wild, and Wayward Pines is a vestige of human civilization and humanity when humanity no longer exists. But in order to maintain the guise of normality, and to keep Wayward Pines going, Pilcher refuses to tell the truth of the world to anyone but his crew and inner circle. As such, he allows residents to believe nearly anything they want about the city: that they are in the afterlife, that they are dead, that they are in Hell, that they are trapped in an experiment of some kind, and so on. Pilcher manipulates the truth to his own ends. He continues on in this fashion by brainwashing children in the schools into unconditional and absolute loyalty to Wayward Pines and to God, whom Pilcher supplants by crushing religion.

But many people know better. They realize something isn't right. They want the truth of what is going on. It is one of the reasons some fifty or sixty people join the Wanderers, to congregate and speak freely and openly without the threat of reprisal or retribution by those in control of Wayward Pines. Although they do not know just what is true yet, they do know that what has been presented to them as truth so far is nothing but a lie. It is why intellectual and emotional freedom are the most dangerous for totalitarian societies: ideas and feelings can never be crushed the way that buildings and weapons can.

# Styles

## Point of View

Blake Crouch tells his novel “Wayward” from the third-person limited-omniscient perspective. This is done for at least three primary reasons. The first is that the third-person allows a common voice – a unifying thread – to tie together different characters and different aspects of the plot, making the plot easier to understand for the reader. Secondly, the third-person allows Crouch to explore different characters, situations, places, and events throughout the novel, thus expanding the plot. Finally, the limited-omniscient perspective allows the reader to know only as much as the characters in the novel themselves do, and allows reader to learn things only as those characters learn them. This adds to the mystery and suspense of the novel, which is, after all, a thriller.

## Language and Meaning

Blake Crouch tells his novel “Wayward” in language that is simple, brief, and straightforward. This is done for two reasons, primarily. The first is that the novel is a thriller, and the simple, straightforward language gives an urgency to, and makes the plot seem fast-paced. Secondly, the simple and straightforward language is appropriate to a thriller, for it renders only that which is necessary, appropriate to be told. Additionally, Crouch often writes his prose in a fragmented style, leaving his sentences in bits and pieces and fragments. This adds extra urgency to the prose and the plot.

## Structure

Blake Crouch divides his novel “Wayward” into five consecutive, linear parts, with each part further subdivided into numerical, linearly-ordered chapters, though the events of the chapters themselves are sometimes non-chronological. Each part deals with a major event or series of events in the novel. For example, the third part is the bulk of Ethan’s investigation into the murder of Alyssa, and the truth behind who the murderer is. Each chapter deals with specific events within that part, and some chapters alternate between the past and the present, adding depth and complexity to the plot.



## Quotes

Townies. They were oblivious. All of them. So beautifully oblivious.  
-- Narrator (Part 1, Chapter 1 paragraph 36)

**Importance:** Here, the narrator reveals the thoughts of Mustin, a sniper on duty at the beginning of the novel. The narrator explains that the townspeople are totally in the dark when it comes to what exists beyond the town fences -that of abbies and the lack of a human race and civilization.

There were still moments, like this one, when Wayward Pines felt like a real place.  
-- Narrator (Part 1, Chapter 2 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Now sheriff for two weeks, Ethan Burke walks through town. It is an idyllic place, and seems almost normal sometimes -but Ethan has insider's knowledge about the outside and the truth and reality of Wayward Pines and everything that it is and means. The calm is an illusion.

The possibility of a growing contingent of residents meeting together in secret is a disturbing development, which I believe requires immediate attention.  
-- Ted Upshaw (Part 2, Chapter 11 paragraph 28)

**Importance:** Ethan's investigation into the murder of Alyssa Pilcher turns up several intriguing clues and pieces of information. One such piece of information is the suspicion that there is a group or rebels meeting and plotting in Wayward Pines -and it is this group, the Wanderers, that Alyssa seeks to infiltrate.

Maybe we aren't as concerned," Pam said, "with your safety as we are with your loyalty.  
-- Pam (Part 3, Chapter 15 paragraph 112)

**Importance:** Ethan's determination to conduct his investigation without the tracking chip in his leg -especially if he wants to infiltrate the Wanderers -is met with suspicion and skepticism from Pam. Pam utterly hates Ethan, and is looking for a way to destroy him.

That was how you dealt with men like Ethan Burke. With men who tried to run. You annihilated them. You made them a horrifying example for everyone to see.  
-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 17 paragraph 22)

**Importance:** Pam's hatred of Ethan is clear, though the exact source of her antipathy is unknown. Pam has caught Ethan and his wife, Theresa, plotting to escape or make things right, and Pam is determined to bring Ethan down.

Inside the town is life. Outside is death.  
-- Ethan (Part 3, Chapter 16 paragraph 71)

**Importance:** Explaining the reality of the situation as vaguely, but as accurately as



possible to new resident Wayne Johnson, Ethan explains that the town, for all its hardships, means life, while outside the town means certain death.

Personally, I hate the fetes. But then again, those are my people down there, and as hard as it is, I know what they need. Perfection all the time would drive them mad. For every perfect little town,. There's something ugly underneath. No dream without the nightmare.

-- David Pilcher (Part 3, Chapter 19 paragraph 465)

**Importance:** Assuming the role of benevolent dictator, Pilcher explains with mock regret that he hates the fetes, but must do what is right for "his" people in the town. He is the master of Wayward Pines, and what he says, goes. This continues to unravel Pilcher's true, psychopathic nature.

Much as I hate them, there's something truly magic in these nights.

-- David Pilcher (Part 4, Chapter 23 paragraph 27)

**Importance:** Here, Pilcher's truly psychotic nature is on clear display. Not only does he personally order the strangulation of his wife and commit the murder of his daughter, but he finds "magic" in a night of murderous violence. Pilcher is evil, and must be overthrown.

As he stood staring through the gate into the unimaginably hostile country beyond, he was gripped with the cold, sinking conclusion that he had misread Pilcher completely.

-- Narrator (Part 5, Chapter 27 paragraph 24)

**Importance:** Ethan, following the rebellion against Pilcher, comes to realize what Pilcher is truly capable of. Pilcher has shut down the electric fences and opened the gates. The people are now free to leave -but so too are the abbies free to come in.