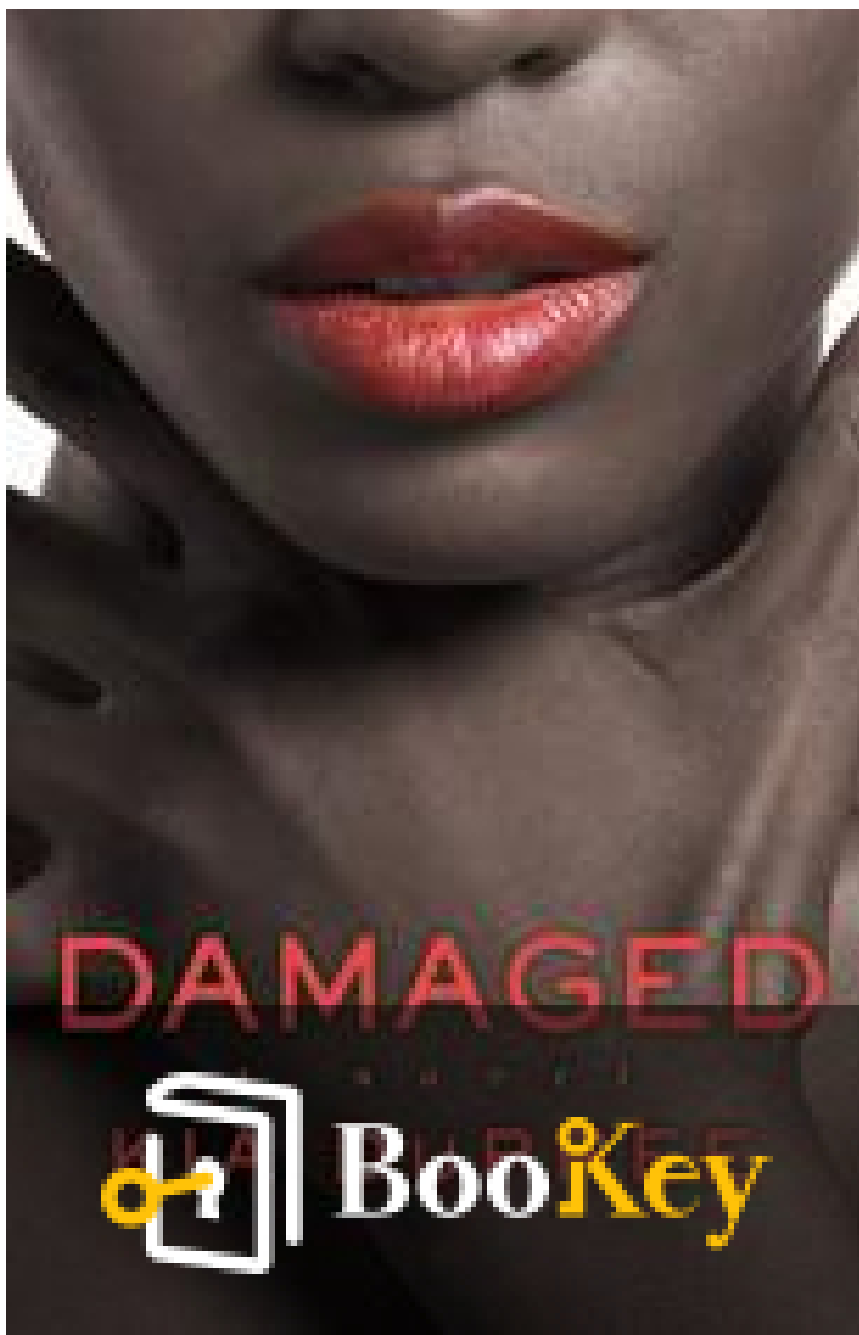


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Cathy Glass



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Damaged Summary

"A Journey of Healing After Childhood Trauma."

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About the book

In "Damaged" by Cathy Glass, readers are transported into a turbulent but profoundly poignant realm of foster care, where expressions of love, healing, and hope shine through the layers of neglect and trauma. Cathy, a seasoned caregiver, courageously opens her heart and home to Jodie, a fragile and deeply wounded eight-year-old girl. As Cathy navigates the labyrinth of Jodie's harrowing past, marked by unspeakable abuse and abandonment, she encounters the formidable challenge of breaking through the wall of silence and trepidation that encloses the little girl. Through Cathy's unwavering compassion and Jodie's tentative steps towards trust, "Damaged" is not merely a heartrending narrative; it is a testament to the transformative power of resilience and kindness. With each page, Cathy Glass beckons readers into a world at the intersection of despair and redemption—a tale that profoundly underscores the enduring potential for healing in even the most scarred souls.

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About the author

Cathy Glass is a prominent British author renowned for her poignant and insightful portrayals of the challenges faced by children in the foster care system. With a pen name that reflects her dedication to protecting the identities of the children she writes about, Glass has become a steadfast voice in advocating for the overlooked and vulnerable. Her vast experience as a foster carer for over two decades lends authenticity and heart to her storytelling, captivating readers with the raw and transformative power of hope, healing, and resilience. Through her myriad of internationally bestselling memoirs—including "Damaged"—Cathy has not only shed light on the complexities of the foster care system but has also continually inspired countless individuals with her unwavering compassion and commitment to making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

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Chapter 1 Summary: Emotional Blackmail

The chapter begins with Cathy, an experienced foster carer, receiving a phone call from Jill, her link worker at the Homefinders Fostering Agency. Jill informs Cathy about an unusual case involving an eight-year-old girl named Jodie, who had already gone through five foster placements in just four months. The situation is serious enough to require a pre-placement meeting, which hints at the complexity of caring for Jodie. Despite the uncertainty and potential challenges, Cathy, who has been fostering for over twenty years, agrees to attend the meeting.

The next morning, Cathy follows her usual routine of sending her children—Adrian, Paula, and their foster sibling Lucy—to school before attending the meeting at the Social Services office. The pre-placement meeting includes various professionals involved in Jodie's case, indicating its severity. Among them are Dave Mumby, the Social Services team leader; Sally, the guardian ad litem representing Jodie's legal interests; Nicola, Jodie's home tutor; Gary, Jodie's current social worker; Deirdre, representing Jodie's current foster carers; and Eileen, who will soon take over from Gary as Jodie's social worker.

During the meeting, Cathy learns about the distressing background Jodie comes from: she's been on the at-risk register since birth due to suspicions of abuse related to her mother's drug use and her father's alcoholism. Most



strikingly, the incident that led to Jodie's removal from her home involved her starting a house fire, which triggered Social Services to intervene, placing her and her siblings in different foster homes.

Despite her young age, Jodie has been described by her previous carers as having challenging behavior, acting more like a three- or four-year-old than an eight-year-old, with tendencies toward aggression, violence, and destruction. Deirdre adds that Jodie had frightened her current carers, who also found her manipulative and unlikable.

The meeting also outlines the legal context of Jodie's situation: she is under an Interim Care Order as the court processes her case. Her future could either involve returning to her parents or being placed under a Full Care Order, leading to long-term fostering, adoption, or even residential care. Cathy feels the weight of responsibility as she listens to the professionals, all of whom are assessing whether she could handle Jodie.

Despite her apprehensions, Cathy is compelled by Jodie's dire circumstances and the understanding that this little girl, after suffering significant trauma and neglect, deserves the chance to restart her life. Cathy decides to take Jodie in, using her proven approach of love, kindness, and firmness, convinced that residential care is not appropriate for someone so young. Her decision is met with relief and appreciation from everyone present. Cathy knows her acceptance of the challenge is just the beginning of a potentially



turbulent journey to help Jodie find stability and healing.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Cathy's unwavering commitment to nurture despite daunting challenges.

Critical Interpretation: In the face of Jodie's complexities and daunting history, you are inspired by how Cathy exemplifies profound courage and compassion, choosing to provide a nurturing environment for a child deeply in need. It's a testament that regardless of the uncertainties and immense responsibilities that lie ahead, your willingness to step up and extend love and kindness can pave the road to healing and transformation. This pivotal moment inspires you to approach life's daunting situations with resilience and empathy, understanding that even amidst chaos, you have the power to be a beacon of hope and stability for others.



Chapter 2 Summary: The Road to Jodie

The narrator reflects on the beginnings of her journey into fostering, which started two decades ago, even before she had her own biological children. Her interest was sparked by a newspaper advertisement showing a child needing a home, which led her and her husband to consider fostering as a way to provide love and stability to children in need. Although first entering the world of fostering somewhat impulsively, it became a passion and lifelong commitment for her.

The narrator admits that fostering is challenging, often defying romanticized expectations of children simply needing love to thrive. Foster children typically come from difficult backgrounds, and while their behaviors can be tough—ranging from anger to aggression—they usually need attention, kindness, and stability to work through their struggles.

Despite the challenges in fostering, the narrator found it rewarding. Over the years, she continued working with foster children alongside raising her own children, Adrian and Paula, who grew up accustomed to sharing their home with others in need. The narrator's family faced their own struggles, including her divorce, but her children developed empathy and understanding, never complaining about the foster children who came and went in their lives. She feels blessed that they embraced the situation and even provided support to the foster children.



Her experiences reveal a common background among many of her foster children: neglect stemming from parents' substance issues or mental health problems. Such neglect is not intentionally cruel but a byproduct of parents' struggles. The ideal outcome is for children to be reunited with their family once these issues are resolved. Many foster children struggle with self-esteem, discipline, and attention-seeking behaviors, but providing a structured, stable environment often helps them adjust and improve.

While fostering can be gratifying, it also requires emotional resilience, particularly when saying goodbye to a child who has become part of the family. The narrator takes short breaks between placements to recover emotionally and regroup before welcoming a new child.

As the chapter closes, the narrator prepares her children for a new foster child, Jodie, whom she agreed to take on after a meeting with Social Services. Jodie has had a difficult past and several foster placements, presenting a potential challenge for the family. The narrator reassures her children, reminding them of the 'safer caring' rules essential to protect everyone involved and instructing them to report any concerning confessions from Jodie about her past. With a brave face, she navigates the delicate balance of introducing a new foster child while maintaining stability at home, preparing herself and her children for what is to come.



Chapter 3 Summary: The Arrival

On a dreary, rainy April morning, Cathy prepares her home to welcome Jodie, an eight-year-old girl who will become her new foster child. With years of fostering experience, Cathy is still anxious as the arrival of a new child is a significant event, both for the child and the foster family. She ensures that Jodie's new bedroom is welcoming, with colorful animal posters and a teddy bear duvet cover, aiming to make the transition as smooth as possible.

As Cathy waits for Jodie and her social workers, she busies herself in the kitchen and is first visited by Gary, a worker involved in Jodie's placement, and then by two women, Deirdre and Ann, who arrive with Jodie. Initially hiding behind Ann, Jodie, dressed in mismatched clothing, reveals herself only after being coaxed by the appearance of Toscha, Cathy's cat. Jodie's behavior is challenging, marked by anger and a lack of social restraint, revealing a child who is used to having her own way.

Jodie's arrival introduces immediate tensions. She stomps around the house with a defiant attitude, opening drawers and demanding treats. Cathy, accustomed to handling difficult behavior, attempts to engage Jodie in simple tasks such as offering biscuits to guests. Despite Jodie's challenging demeanor, Cathy remains patient, recognizing the child's past trauma and need for consistent care and boundaries.



The day is filled with formalities and paperwork, typical for fostering placements. Gary completes the necessary forms while Jodie explores her new surroundings with an almost aggressive curiosity. Cathy notices Jodie's physical appearance—overweight and wearing clothes suggesting neglect—and her uncoordinated movements, hallmark behaviors of a child struggling with anger and control.

As the formalities conclude, the social workers leave, and Cathy is left alone with Jodie. Despite her outwardly tough behavior, Jodie is a child burdened with the emotional scars of moving homes repeatedly. Cathy tries to establish a routine, showing Jodie around and introducing the rules of her new home.

A disturbing incident occurs when Jodie, in apparent defiance, smears feces on her face, highlighting the extent of her emotional distress and lack of personal boundaries. Cathy, experienced in caring for children with complex needs, does not react with anger but provides the assurance of care and cleanliness.

The chapter closes with Cathy's realization of the challenging road ahead. Jodie's behavior suggests deep-seated issues stemming from her turbulent past, placing her in a new environment where structure and love are unfamiliar. Though Cathy is a veteran foster caregiver, she senses that



Jodie's case might be particularly challenging, requiring patience, empathy, and unwavering support. Cathy's compassion remains undeterred, as she begins the journey of helping Jodie find stability and security in a world that has often been unstable and unkind.

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Chapter 4: A New Little Sister

The narrator, a foster carer who opens her home and heart to children in need, reflects on the challenges of welcoming Jodie, a new foster child, into her family. Jodie exhibits unusual behaviors that puzzle and concern the narrator, such as being unfazed by a soiling accident and showing signs of developmental delays. As the carer cleans and helps Jodie settle in, she notices her tendency to speak in gibberish and engage with imaginary friends, behaviors that seem beyond those of a typical child with mild learning difficulties.

Jodie's first interactions with the narrator's own children, Lucy, Paula, and Adrian, present additional challenges. Despite being introduced to the family, Jodie displays possessiveness and aggression, kicking and elbowing the children during dinner. Her lack of table manners and coordination, akin to much younger children, further highlight her social and developmental struggles.

The narrator gains some insight into Jodie's background through her role-playing and dialogue, which suggests a troubled past involving neglect and potentially abusive family dynamics. Jodie seems to carry the burden of her challenging upbringing, as inferred from her mimicking of adult frustrations and responsibilities.



The evening unfolds with the family attempting to interact with Jodie, but her erratic attention span and disjointed chatter make engagement difficult. As bedtime approaches, the narrator encounters more of Jodie's anxieties and fears, such as her intense fear of the dark, requiring the carer to leave the light fully on, yet with the door closed.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Self-Harm

In this tense and emotional chapter, the protagonist Cathy is jolted awake in the early hours of the morning by an unsettling feeling, only to discover young Jodie outside her bedroom, her face smeared with fresh blood. As a seasoned foster carer, Cathy is alarmed but maintains her composure, immediately tending to Jodie's injury. She realizes that Jodie, who is eerily calm and unbothered by the cut, may have deliberately smeared the blood for dramatic effect. Upon closer inspection, Cathy notices numerous faint scars on Jodie's arms, signaling a history of self-harm, a behavior distressingly uncommon for a child of Jodie's age.

Attempting to create a sense of normalcy, Cathy bandages Jodie's wound and encourages her to return to bed, but not before Jodie oddly demands a nighttime visit to the park, a request Cathy gently deflects. Instead, she offers to tell Jodie a comforting story, managing to lull her to sleep.

As day breaks, Cathy is awoken once again, this time by a loud crash from Jodie's room. She discovers Jodie awake and playing with a football, having upset the room's contents. Cathy's attempt to calm the situation without confrontation mirrors her earlier approach, steering Jodie towards quieter activities. However, Jodie, showing signs of restlessness, ventures into her brother Adrian's room, which prompts Cathy to guide her back to her own space.



Cathy's exhaustion mounts as she finally relents and allows Jodie to watch television, but a loud outburst from Jodie soon disrupts the calm.

Demonstrating patience and firmness, Cathy helps Jodie manage her behavior and reestablishes quiet, reflecting on the challenging night and the complexities of caring for a child with significant emotional distress. Jodie's behavior throughout the night underscores the profound trauma she has experienced, highlighting the daunting task Cathy faces in providing her with a safe and nurturing environment.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Patience and Empathy in Crisis

Critical Interpretation: In a challenging and emotionally charged situation like the one Cathy faces with Jodie, maintaining patience and empathy becomes crucial. This chapter exemplifies the power of staying composed and nurturing, even when circumstances feel overwhelming. Cathy's ability to respond calmly to Jodie's distress signals an emotional maturity and strength that can inspire us. In our lives, by demonstrating similar tolerance and understanding, especially towards those in emotional turmoil, we can build safer and more supportive environments. This approach not only affirms the value of compassion but also underscores the importance of creating a reassuring atmosphere that aids in healing and growth.

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Chapter 6 Summary: A Very Troubled Child

In this chapter, we follow Cathy, a foster carer, as she navigates the tumultuous first days of having a deeply troubled child named Jodie in her care. Jodie has arrived with significant emotional and behavioral issues, manifesting in violent outbursts and self-harm. Cathy is tasked with addressing these behaviors while fostering a sense of security and stability in Jodie's life.

The narrative opens with Cathy reiterating rules of non-violence to Jodie, who responds with aggression, lashing out at Lucy, another child in the home. Cathy handles Jodie's tantrum by physically restraining her until she calms down, demonstrating a nurturing yet firm approach to her care. Paula, another resident in the house, empathetically reaches out to Jodie, inviting her to do a jigsaw puzzle. Despite Jodie's initial violent behavior, Paula's act of kindness helps to establish a tentative rapport.

Cathy reflects on Jodie's affinity for dark painting, a common trait in children who have experienced trauma, as they may express their inner turmoil through ominous colors. To document Jodie's progress and peculiar behavior, Cathy diligently keeps a log, an essential tool for foster carers to communicate with social workers and to track the child's development. Jodie's strange response to having her photograph taken—attempting to remove her clothes—adds another layer of concern, hinting at possible past



trauma.

As the weekend unfolds, Cathy acknowledges the exhausting nature of caring for Jodie. During a phone call with Jill, a social worker, Cathy shares her observations about Jodie's challenging behavior, emphasizing her determination to give Jodie a chance to stabilize within a family setting. Jill supports Cathy, encouraging her to continue monitoring the situation.

Cathy takes Jodie on a shopping trip to the supermarket, where Jodie seems to enjoy the experience, eagerly filling the trolley. However, her behavior quickly deteriorates in response to being told she cannot have all the sweets she desires. Cathy handles the situation with calm assertiveness, refusing to yield to Jodie's manipulative tantrums. She recognizes the familiar struggle of managing the expectations of children in care, who often seek material possessions as a source of comfort due to their backgrounds.

The supermarket incident culminates with Jodie threatening to soil herself unless she gets what she wants, revealing a method she has used to manipulate adults in the past. Cathy stands her ground, emphasizing to Jodie that such behavior will not yield the desired outcome. Despite her firmness, Cathy is left to confront the challenging road ahead in caring for Jodie.

Overall, the chapter offers insight into the complexities of fostering a child like Jodie, whose difficult behavior stems from deep-seated emotional

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wounds. Cathy's patience and unwavering commitment underscore the potential for healing through consistent care and understanding, albeit within a framework that resists yielding to manipulation and tantrums.

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Chapter 7 Summary: Contact

In this complex chapter, the narrator, a foster carer, grapples with the challenges of caring for Jodie, a deeply troubled young girl. The foster carer is in communication with Eileen, Jodie's social worker, discussing Jodie's troubling behavior, particularly her use of defecation as a means of control and manipulation. This behavior indicates a pattern that likely began before Jodie came into the narrator's care, suggesting long-standing issues stemming from past trauma or neglect. The foster carer highlights the importance of being fully informed about Jodie's background to provide effective care but expresses skepticism about receiving the necessary support from Eileen.

Amid these challenges, Jodie's biological father remains committed to maintaining contact, hinting at a potential path for family reunification if circumstances improve. However, Jodie's behavior, such as violent outbursts and self-harm, raises concerns about whether reunification is feasible or in Jodie's best interest. In the domestic space, Jodie exhibits hostility towards the foster carer's own children, Paula, Lucy, and Adrian, causing disruption and stress for the entire family.

Jodie's developmental delays are evident, manifesting in poor motor skills and a lack of responsiveness to praise or approval, which the foster carer speculates may be the result of past neglect and insufficient stimulation.



These issues highlight the complexities of fostering a child with significant emotional and psychological needs and the profound impact of early childhood neglect.

Despite the difficult behavior, including an incident of public masturbation that raises concerns about Jodie's understanding of privacy and boundaries, the foster family shows remarkable resilience. The foster carer's own children demonstrate maturity and empathy, deciding to continue accommodating Jodie despite the difficulties, in the hope that she might improve with time and stability. Their decision reflects a deep understanding of the transformative potential of consistent care and acceptance.

When Jodie returns from a visit with her parents, she shares gifts from her father, suggesting a semblance of normalcy and affection in that relationship. The foster carer remains hopeful that visits with her parents might help Jodie settle. However, Jodie's destructive behavior, including damaging belongings of the foster carer's children, presents ongoing challenges and leaves the foster carer questioning their ability to break through Jodie's emotional barriers.

Ultimately, the foster carer is confronted with a difficult decision: whether to continue trying to help Jodie in their family environment or to acknowledge that more specialized care might be necessary. The foster carer is caught between the desire to support Jodie, who has already faced several



rejections, and the need to protect their own children from further distress. The chapter poignantly illustrates the complexities, challenges, and emotional toll of fostering children with traumatic pasts, as well as the profound commitment and compassion required from foster families.

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Chapter 8: Julie

Jodie had only recently started living with us, and her eighth birthday marked a little over a week since her arrival. Her situation was such that I'd been thinking of her as eight because that's how Social Services referred to her, though she was technically still seven when she came. For her birthday, she spent one contact session with her parents and the actual day with us. When she returned, she was loaded down with bags full of big, glittery toys that seemed flashy but cheap, reflecting a pattern of receiving plenty without the charm or value attaching to the objects.

To celebrate with us, she chose to go bowling, which was surprising given her poor coordination, but it was what she wanted. Jodie had no school friends to invite, so our group included my children Paula, Lucy, Adrian, and me. At home, Jodie unwrapped presents from us—a doll's car seat and high chair to accompany her life-size doll, Julie. Her indifferent reaction to the gifts left me puzzled and a bit hurt, but we moved past it and headed out for her bowling adventure. Despite Jodie's bossy nature, the outing was peaceful, even as we later ate at McDonald's. The day ended smoothly, with no tantrums or outbursts, which was a relief.

The next day, after another contact session with her parents, Jodie was unsociable at breakfast, expressing anger towards me. Unfazed, I encouraged her, expressing my belief that underneath her anger was a kind and happy



Jodie. Her change in demeanor showed when she dressed and joined me without protest.

Later that day, before her tutor's arrival, we ran errands to replace items belonging to my daughters that Jodie had likely appropriated. During our

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Chapter 9 Summary: Disclosure

In this emotionally charged chapter, the narrator, likely a foster carer named Cathy, sits with two young girls, Jodie and her doll Julie. Cathy reflects on a heartbreaking revelation that confirms her worst fears about Jodie's past trauma. Jodie has been suffering immense hurt and self-loathing due to sexual abuse, actions which Cathy suspects were inflicted by Jodie's father. As part of her foster-care training, Cathy understands the importance of handling such disclosures carefully for potential legal proceedings. She knows that Jodie must recount her experience in her own words without being led.

To create a safe environment for Jodie to express herself, Cathy uses a doll in a role play. The different personas—the doll as Jodie and Jodie as her father—help Jodie demonstrate what happened. Jodie acts out the scenario with unsettling detail, revealing sufficient information about the abuse for Cathy to grasp its horrific nature. Despite the grave circumstances, Jodie displays a disconcerting lack of embarrassment or self-consciousness, suggesting she perceives this as a normal part of life.

While grappling with her own emotions of anger and pity, Cathy remains composed to support Jodie. She carefully questions the young girl to clarify details for future reference, especially since a Child Protection Officer would need to follow up. As Jodie describes the abuse, Cathy feels a deep fury



towards the abuser and sorrow for the innocent child forced to witness such brutality.

Cathy reassures Jodie that she is safe now, emphasizing that her father's actions were wrong, thus affirming Jodie's innocence in the situation. However, Jodie's calm acceptance signals deeper psychological scars that Cathy realizes will take time and care to heal. While Cathy aims to provide immediate reassurance, she also prepares to document Jodie's initial account—a crucial step toward safeguarding her wellbeing and pursuing justice against the abuser.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Creating a Safe Space for Expression

Critical Interpretation: In this intense chapter, you learn the impactful lesson of creating a nurturing environment where someone in distress can openly express themselves. Just like Cathy did for Jodie, consider how establishing a setting of safety and empathy can encourage others to voice their truths, no matter how painful. This pivotal act allows individuals to share their stories without fear, laying the groundwork for healing and justice. It emphasizes the importance of listening without judgment, ensuring that those who have suffered feel heard and understood. By applying this ethos of compassion in your own life, you can become a pillar of support, offering solace and strength to those navigating their own battles.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Reporting

In this emotionally laden chapter, Cathy grapples with the disturbing revelations uncovered by Jodie, an eight-year-old foster child in her care, suggesting she has been a victim of prolonged sexual abuse. Previously, Jodie had conveyed this information through play with a doll, which had opened a window into the horrifying experiences she had endured. Despite being overwhelmed, Cathy decides not to cancel Jodie's tutoring session as it provides an opportunity for Jodie to engage in normal activities and gives Cathy the privacy needed for a crucial phone call to Jill, a supportive social worker.

The narrative begins with Cathy preparing for the tutor's arrival while trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy despite the harrowing content whirling in her mind. Jodie, seemingly more resilient, anticipates her tutor Nicola's visit with enthusiasm. Nicola arrives and begins a structured learning session with Jodie, allowing Cathy the chance to inform Jill about the grave disclosures. Cathy's conversation with Jill reveals a sense of disbelief and frustration at how Jodie's situation might have been overlooked by the system for so long.

Cathy's phone calls highlight a pattern of bureaucratic detachment and gaps in communication within social services, emphasizing the failure to detect Jodie's abuse despite evident signs. The defensive nature of the system



becomes apparent as Cathy is perplexed by the lack of prior disclosure of Jodie's sexualized behavior in previous foster placements. She reflects on instances where Jodie displayed inappropriate behavior, realizing these were symptomatic of her traumatic experiences.

The atmosphere is tense, and Cathy juggles the urgency of administrative reporting with her emotional response to Jodie's plight. When Jill convenes an emergency strategy meeting with social services, decisions are made to suspend Jodie's contact with her parents until further investigation, signaling a protective measure as they unravel the extent of her abuse. Cathy is tasked with delicately exploring Jodie's mother's potential awareness or involvement, though Jodie's vague and evasive responses offer little clarity.

Sally, the guardian ad litem, provides a warmer, empathetic contrast to the largely procedural stance of Jodie's social worker, Eileen, highlighting the varied responses within child protection agencies. Conversations between Cathy and both professional and personal contacts underline the complexity and emotional toll of fostering, especially in cases marred by such severe abuse.

As Cathy informs Jodie of her new contact restrictions with her parents, she is struck by Jodie's nonchalant acceptance, a reaction perhaps reflective of dissociation or a lack of attachment resulting from sustained trauma. The interaction leaves Cathy contemplating the broader implications of neglect



within Jodie's familial and systemic care, solidifying her resolve to ensure Jodie receives the protection and support she crucially needs.

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Chapter 11 Summary: Cooking and Cleaning

In the middle of the night, Cathy, a foster carer, is abruptly woken by the terrifying screams of Jodie, a young girl under her care. Cathy rushes to Jodie's room to find her in the grips of a violent nightmare, thrashing about and attempting to harm herself. Cathy holds Jodie to prevent her from further injury and repeatedly assures her of her safety, trying to break through the night terror. Eventually, Jodie calms down, but not before experiencing a bodily release akin to the end of a seizure.

Once Jodie is calm, Cathy comforts her, but Jodie mumbles disturbing fragments about not wanting something in her mouth and mentions having told a woman to make "him" stop, suggesting a history of abuse. This revelation leaves Cathy horrified and deeply concerned for the child's wellbeing. After settling Jodie back to sleep, Cathy, too shaken to return to bed, confronts her own stress by smoking, despite having quit months earlier. As she reflects in the quiet of the night, Cathy worries about Jodie's past and the failure of the system to detect signs of abuse, despite Jodie being on the at-risk register from birth.

Morning brings chaos as Jodie awakens and resumes her disruptive behavior, tormenting the other children, Lucy and Paula, during breakfast. Despite Cathy's attempts to manage the situation, Jodie remains defiant and uses foul language, revealing a lack of understanding about acceptable



behavior. Cathy, noting Jodie's aversion to eye contact and tendency to overreact when feeling observed, begins to connect these behaviors with the trauma Jodie hinted at during the night.

After smoothing over the ordeal with the other children and reestablishing a sense of normalcy, Cathy sits with Jodie, trying to gently coax more information about the abuse from her. However, Jodie deflects the questioning with playful storytelling, indicating either an inability or unwillingness to recall the events she hinted at earlier.

That afternoon, Cathy shares her concerns with Jill, likely a social worker or someone in a supervisory role, discussing Jodie's inability to access the memories of her trauma. Jill explains that Jodie's behavior is not uncommon for severely traumatized children who may repress memories as a protective measure. Cathy feels somewhat comforted by Jill's words, holding out hope that Jodie's recent revelations might signal a turning point in her recovery. Despite these hopes, the narrative hints with ominous foreshadowing that more challenges lie ahead for Jodie and Cathy.



Chapter 12: Monsters

In this gripping chapter, we delve deeper into the harrowing experience of caring for Jodie, a troubled foster child who is manifesting severe trauma-induced behavior. Jodie's behavior deteriorates significantly over the weeks, evident in her violent outbursts, self-harm, and distressing actions at the dinner table, where she often reacts violently against herself. The foster household is marked by constant challenges, from dealing with hygiene issues after Jodie regresses to soiling herself and showing a peculiar aversion toward damaging specific household fabrics, to enduring violent episodes that leave Cathy, the foster mother, physically and emotionally exhausted.

Amid these challenges, Cathy bravely reveals to her own children the unsettling truths about Jodie's past, explaining the context behind the cryptic and shocking references Jodie sometimes makes, such as her father's abuse. Although it is a difficult conversation, it is necessary for the safety and stability of her household. Her children, shocked but understanding, demonstrate compassion and patience, and make efforts to include Jodie in their activities, despite the extreme behaviors she occasionally exhibits. This disclosure helps them understand Jodie's often aggressive and bizarre actions.

During one of their meetings, Jill, a link worker who provides additional support, visits Cathy and Jodie at the park. Cathy confides in Jill about the



ongoing struggles and lack of progress regarding Jodie's behaviors. Jodie suffers from what seems to be dissociative episodes, a common occurrence among severely abused children as a self-protective mechanism. Despite the grim picture, Jill acknowledges Cathy's relentless efforts but suggests that only a therapeutic intervention might adequately address Jodie's deep-seated issues.

The narrative takes a darker turn one particular morning when Jodie, typically hyper-aware and anxious, is found in a seemingly catatonic state. She reveals a gut-wrenching disclosure: she had been horrifically abused by not just her father but a group of adults, including her mother and extended family members, who had complicitly participated, watched, and documented the abuse. This revelation shocks Cathy, explaining why Jodie's mental state is so severe, and why she often shuts down emotionally and physically.

Fiercely protective yet devastated, Cathy reassures Jodie that she is now safe, emphasizing that there are ramifications for the wickedness she was subjected to, and managing the delicate task of offering comfort in the aftermath of traumatic disclosures. Cathy's feelings of horror are compounded by self-doubt about whether fostering, with its exposure to such extreme situations, is negatively impacting her own children.

Following this disclosure, Cathy reports Jodie's confession to Jill,



underlining the severity of the involvement of multiple adults in the abuse. It's suggested that this may lead to a police investigation, recognizing the disturbing possibility of a paedophile ring. Cathy grapples with the weight of this revelation, questioning the boundaries of caregiving, and feeling the pressing need for justice and resolution for Jodie – a child so deeply betrayed by those meant to protect her.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the critical role and complexity of foster care, reflecting on the courage it takes to confront systemic abuse, and considering the urgent need for professional support to help mend a child broken by incomprehensible adult betrayals.

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Chapter 13 Summary: Integration

The chapter delves into the challenges faced by Cathy Glass, a dedicated foster carer, as she navigates the bureaucratic inefficiencies and the emotional complexities of caring for Jodie, a troubled young girl in the foster care system. The chapter begins with a humorous but telling anecdote highlighting the often slow and inefficient response of Social Services. Despite Jodie's serious disclosures about her past, her social worker, Eileen, has yet to meet Jodie, and meetings to address her needs are delayed due to Eileen's absence. This leaves Cathy concerned about the lack of proactive support for Jodie.

Cathy is tasked by Jodie's team manager, Dave Mumby, with finding a new school for Jodie after her parents filed a complaint about her lack of education. Jodie had to leave her previous school when she entered care, and her consistent moving and behavioral issues have complicated the search for a new placement. Despite Jodie's Statement of Educational Needs, which provides for a full-time assistant and should theoretically incentivize schools to accept her, Cathy faces repeated rejections. Frustrated but undeterred, she contacts a familiar school where her own children had studied, hoping they might accept Jodie.

During a walk to the post office with Jodie, Cathy observes the young girl's anxiety and fear of being stared at, stemming from her traumatic past. This is



further highlighted when Jodie expresses concern for her mother, indicating possible domestic issues at home. Jodie's behavior becomes defensive and angry, revealing her deep-seated fear and mistrust of adults, something Cathy suspects is linked to her prior abuses.

Back home, Jodie's distrust and anger manifest again as she makes a derogatory remark about Cathy's eyes, mimicking insults likely heard in her past, reflecting her own experiences of verbal abuse. A phone call from a hospital inadvertently breaches confidentiality, causing Cathy concern about Jodie's parents locating them, which could jeopardize Jodie's safety.

Throughout the chapter, Cathy's empathy and determination to protect and support Jodie amidst systemic challenges and Jodie's behavioral obstacles shine through. The narrative exposes the realities of foster care, the emotional scars borne by abused children, and the tenacity required by foster carers to navigate these complex waters.



Chapter 14 Summary: The Park

Eileen's return from her holiday marked the beginning of a pivotal time for Jodie, a young girl under the care of foster parent Cathy. With Eileen back, Dave was able to arrange a strategy meeting to address Jodie's complex situation. Jill attended on Cathy's behalf, setting into motion a series of crucial appointments. Jodie was to undergo an assessment by a child psychologist to help Social Services map out the best course for her. Additionally, a 'memorandum interview' was scheduled, a vital part of the potential criminal prosecution against Jodie's father and other alleged abusers, which involved a formal video interview with a Child Protection Officer. A forensic medical examination was also on the horizon, a troubling prospect for Cathy. She feared another traumatic experience might breach the trust she had painstakingly built with Jodie.

As Jodie and Cathy's days fell into a routine, discomfort simmered beneath the surface. Jodie's tutoring sessions with Nicola were only marginally improving her behavior, not her education, which Cathy attributed more to Jodie's emotional turmoil than her learning difficulties. Jodie remained unmotivated and indifferent to academic tasks, perceiving no value in them and lacking any desire for approval.

Cathy faced significant hurdles finding a suitable school for Jodie. Despite reaching out to various head teachers, securing a place remained elusive



because Jodie needed a specialized school. Changing her educational statement to reflect this would take nearly a year—an impractical option. Persistence led Cathy to Elmacre Primary, willing to consider Jodie's statement, although it was distant.

Meanwhile, Cathy cherished their park outings, where Jodie felt less anxious. She had developed a peculiar but effective defense mechanism—a witch-like cackle—keeping strangers at a distance. Their outdoor visits rarely deviated from the park, as Jodie found little enjoyment elsewhere. In social settings, Jodie's interactions were often misinterpreted, leading to uncomfortable encounters.

An incident in the park with a concerned father underscored the misunderstanding often faced by foster carers like Cathy. Clarifications led to apologies, highlighting how quick people were to judge without understanding the complexities of fostering.

An unexpected meeting with Fiona, Jodie's former teacher, provided a brief but heartening affirmation of Cathy's efforts, suggesting Jodie's well-being was noticeably better under her care.

A call from Elmacre brought both bad and good news. Though unable to offer a place, they referred Cathy to Adam West of Abbey Green School, hinting at further possibilities. Despite Jodie's protests against school and



her burgeoning rebellious attitude, Cathy remained determined to secure the right path for her, unswayed by Jodie's outward defiance.

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Chapter 15 Summary: Past and Present

In this chapter, we find Cathy, a compassionate foster caregiver, dealing with the challenges of raising Jodie, a deeply troubled eight-year-old girl who has endured significant past traumas. The narrative begins with Cathy being abruptly woken at 2 a.m. by Jodie's terrified screams. Jodie is gripped by visions of eyes staring at her from the walls, a manifestation of her intense fear and trauma. Cathy, though exhausted, tries to comfort her by reassuring her that the eyes aren't real and offering a comforting hug. Jodie's hallucinations have escalated from nightmares to more intense episodes that border on hallucinations, leaving Cathy concerned about the depth of Jodie's trauma.

As Cathy calms Jodie down, she notices the physical signs of her distress—red cheeks and sweaty forehead. After soothing Jodie with a bedtime story, Cathy reflects on how much her life has changed since Jodie came into it. She dedicates herself entirely to Jodie's care, which now defines her daily life.

Later that morning, as Cathy and Jodie prepare to go shopping, Jodie panics, claiming to see her father outside in a van. Her fear stems from her previous experiences, and Cathy is worried that Jodie's parents, known for their harmful behavior, might threaten Jodie's safe haven. However, upon inspection, Cathy realizes no such danger exists and reassures Jodie,



attempting to calm her fears.

The scene shifts to a department store transformed into a winter wonderland, with holiday decorations signaling the approach of Christmas. As Cathy and Jodie shop, Cathy shares her family's Christmas traditions, trying to instill some excitement and normalcy into Jodie's life. Jodie shows little interest in these stories, focusing instead on the material aspects of the holiday. This reaction underscores her lack of a joyful past Christmas with her own family, where responsibility tragically fell on her young shoulders.

Back at home, Jodie's interactions with Cathy's daughters, Paula and Lucy, exhibit her struggle to connect with others. Her inability to distinguish past from present confuses her and others, making it hard for Cathy to help Jodie integrate into her family life. Jodie often chooses solitary activities over social interactions, reinforcing the isolation learned from her upbringing, where those around her consistently brought pain.

Cathy, reflecting on Jodie's state, acknowledges Jodie's lack of conventional attributes that might endear her to others. Despite her challenges and antisocial behavior, Cathy feels a deep commitment to Jodie, hoping against hope that love, patience, and care can mend Jodie's broken spirit. This chapter poignantly illustrates the depth of Jodie's trauma and Cathy's unwavering determination to help her heal, providing insight into the transformative power of compassion and persistence even in the face of



significant adversity.

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Chapter 16: The Spider's Web

The narrative takes place on a crisp winter morning in early December, with Jodie and Cathy engaging in a typical morning routine. Jodie's enjoyment of a lilac winter wear set, a recent gift from Cathy, illustrates a rare moment of equilibrium in their relationship. As they approach the park, Cathy is preoccupied with her concerns about Jodie's education. A recent visit to Abbey Green School had gone well, but the headmaster, Adam West, informed them that funding approvals could delay Jodie's admission by three months. Meanwhile, Jodie's homeschooling with her tutor Nicola is insufficient to meet her needs, particularly in providing the routine and social environment of a traditional school.

In the park, they admire a dewy spider's web and listen to birds, engaging in simple pleasures that seem to captivate Jodie. After several laps around the park, they return home, where Cathy reflects on how Jodie could appear as any normal child to an outsider, despite the traumatic past that shadows her life.

At home, over mugs of hot chocolate, Cathy braces herself to discuss a difficult topic. Jodie has a medical appointment that day, arranged by her social worker Eileen, though Cathy must provide the explanation herself. Jodie shows little reaction when told that a doctor will examine her private parts due to prior abuse. Her questions reflect a muddled sense of past and



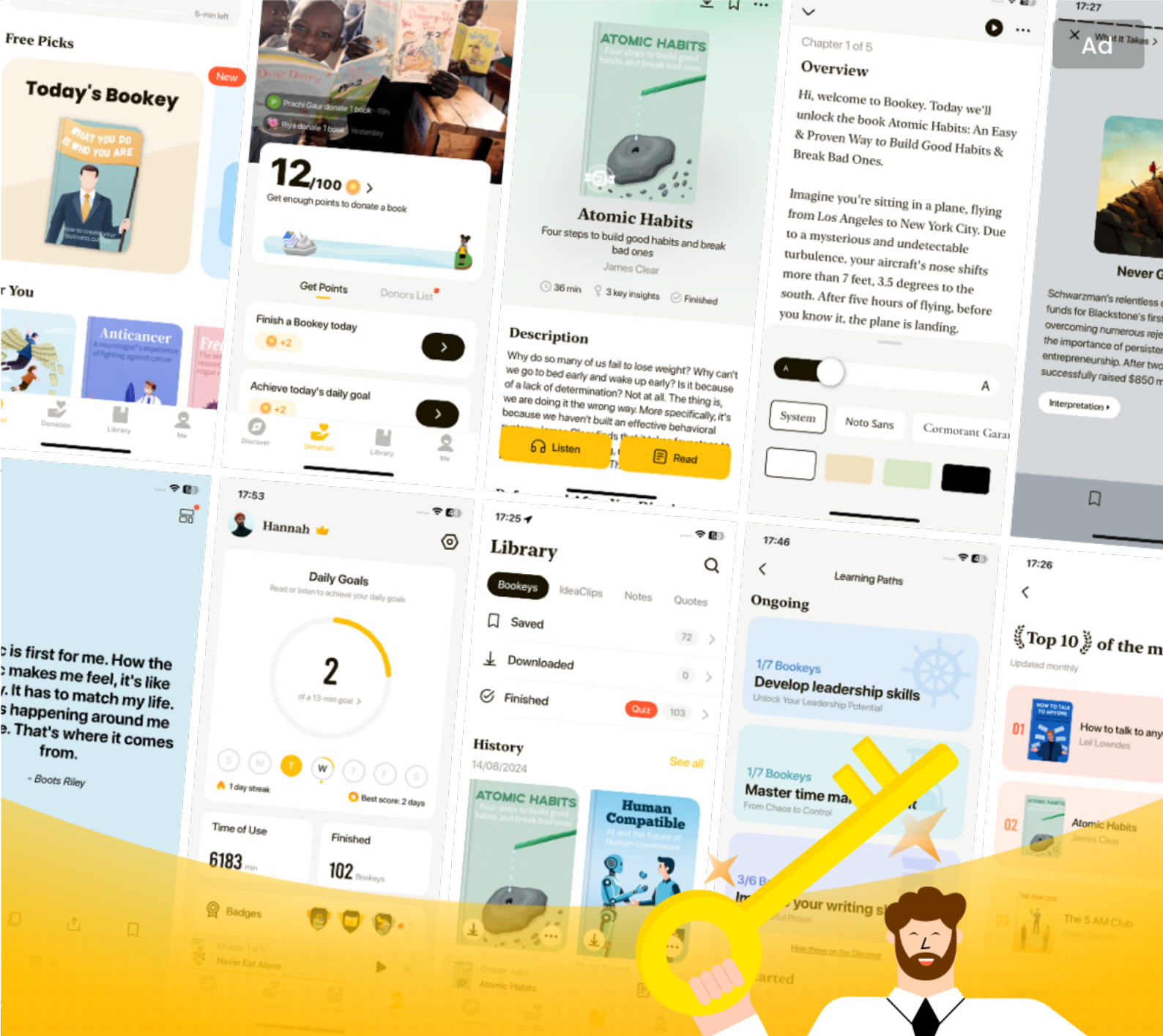
present, and Cathy is concerned that Jodie struggles to differentiate between her past traumatic experiences and her current life.

En route to the medical center, Jodie's chatter reveals unsettling details about her past, including inappropriate exposure to adult situations. Cathy stops

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Chapter 17 Summary: Nosy Cow

The chapter revolves around the troubling challenges faced by a foster carer named Cathy as she navigates the complexity of a deeply disturbed child, Jodie. After being entrusted with the care of Jodie, Cathy finds herself perplexed and burdened by the horrifying details of Jodie's abuse, particularly the involvement of Jodie's own mother in these acts. This deeply unsettling reversal of the expected maternal role shocks Cathy as she is tasked with recording these degradations in her diary. These sessions of disclosure not only weigh heavy on Cathy but also highlight Jodie's deteriorating mental state. Despite the veneer of functioning during good days, ultimately, it reveals a steady decline in Jodie's well-being.

Cathy reaches a breaking point of desperation as she conveys her feelings of inadequacy to Jill, her foster care coordinator. Understanding Cathy's distress, Jill, encourages her to seek help from a psychologist assigned to Jodie's case by the court, hoping for strategies to manage Jodie's complex needs. However, the psychologist's primary role is to assess Jodie rather than guide Cathy, damping her hope for concrete advice.

Jodie's situation is wrapped up in bureaucratic court proceedings, introduced through Cathy's narrative, which details interim care orders and the different stages leading to a potential Full Care Order. This framework would determine Jodie's future placement, whether returning to her family or



staying under the protection of the local authorities until proper adoptive options or long-term foster care could be arranged.

A poignant incident unfolds when Cathy takes Jodie for a police memorandum interview, aimed at corroborating Jodie's accounts of abuse for both the care proceedings and potential prosecution of her abusers. In an effort to put Jodie at ease, the interview room is filled with child-friendly furnishings, staffed by specially trained officers. However, despite Cathy's preparations and coaxing attempts, Jodie remains reticent and fails to disclose key information, hindered by deep-seated fears instilled by her abusers about a “monster.” Consequently, frustrating Cathy, her testimony cannot be used, leaving her abusers potentially unpunished.

Amidst this emotional chaos, Cathy contemplates the plight of Jodie's siblings, now with other carers, hoping they have escaped the horrors Jodie endured. Cathy also reflects on Jodie's interaction with the psychologist, Dr. Burrows. Despite her intentions to seek help, Jodie remains outwardly hostile and uncommunicative during the session. Dr. Burrows highlights that Jodie's primary need remains simple care, inadvertently isolating Cathy, who desperately seeks strategies beyond the basics. Cathy struggles with the constant demands of managing Jodie's severe emotional distress and development needs, realizing the inadequacy of her training for such a complex case.



As the holidays approach, Cathy, overwhelmed by her focus on Jodie and her ominous circumstances, feels a pervasive gloom overshadowing the usual festive cheer. Her circumstances make it clear that exhaustion is seeping into her life, affecting her ability to maintain her usual vibrant Christmas celebrations for her family. Recognizing the need for respite, Cathy reaches out to Jill again to secure a short break, aiming to recharge and realign her focus for better handling of not only Jodie's needs but also those of her own family.

In sum, the chapter paints a detailed picture of Cathy's emotionally taxing journey and her dedication, sharply contrasted with the helplessness and horror induced by Jodie's past, while also highlighting the broader legal and systemic challenges faced in child protection cases.

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Chapter 18 Summary: Fire

The following day, Jill, a social worker, called to arrange a final visit with Jodie before the Christmas holidays. During our conversation, Jill inquired about Jodie's brother and sister, wondering if Jodie ever mentioned or asked to see them. I realized it was atypical for Jodie to not express any desire for contact, as siblings in foster care often form stronger bonds when separated and social services typically strive to facilitate their communication. Jill explained that concerns over Jodie's treatment of her siblings resulted in them being placed with separate carers due to occasions of Jodie's heavy-handedness when frustrated. Despite their separation, I asked Jill if Jodie might want to send Christmas cards or gifts; Jill assured that they could be forwarded.

That afternoon, I invited Jodie to shop for presents for her siblings, which she flatly rejected, expressing a deep resentment toward them. Jodie believed her mother favored her siblings, possibly shielding them from traumatic experiences involving their father, which Jodie had endured. Consequently, Jodie's grievances seemed rooted in jealousy and bitterness over their escape from the abuse she faced alone.

Jodie's isolation extended beyond her estrangement from her siblings. Devoid of grandparents or supportive relatives, our family was her only safe haven. I reflected on the readiness of my own extended family to care for my



children should they ever need it—a comfort Jodie had never known. Instead of shopping, Jodie opted for painting, where she vividly depicted a house, a car, and "stupid old dog," which alarmed me given the incident that had led her and her siblings to enter into care. During a conversation about her artwork, Jodie nonchalantly confessed to setting the dog on fire in an attempt to escape her dreadful home life. The act appeared to be both a punishment for her father, whom she detested, and a desperate cry for intervention.

In the ensuing days, Jodie became increasingly distant, embodying the self-sufficiency often seen in abused or neglected children, who develop resilience as a survival mechanism. Despite efforts to involve her in family activities, Jodie consistently isolated herself, rejecting signs of care and comfort. Her separation was stark during outings, like a shopping trip with Paula and Lucy, where she walked separately, and a visit to the cinema, where she chose to sit apart until the lights dimmed in fear of the dark. Her detachment signified a desensitization to normal childhood joys and interactions.

I held onto the hope that the upcoming Christmas would foster a connection, believing that the familial essence of the holiday could begin to bridge the gap between Jodie's loneliness and our family's warmth.



Chapter 19 Summary: Special Little Girl

As Christmas approached, Nicola came to give Jodie her final lesson before the holidays. With school and college breaking up, the household, comprising the narrator, her children Adrian, Paula, Lucy, and their foster child Jodie, was suddenly full. However, this did not mean they were united. Tensions simmered beneath the surface, largely due to Jodie's antagonistic nature. Despite attempts to treat Jodie as part of the family, her jealousy and hostility toward the others remained pervasive. It was evident that Jodie yearned for the narrator's attention exclusively, and her possessiveness created an uncomfortable dynamic in the household. While previously needing affection, Jodie now shied away from any physical contact, a likely residue from her traumatic past.

Sally, Jodie's appointed guardian, visited and spent some private time with Jodie, giving the narrator a chance to connect with her own children. Paula confided her dread of the holidays, fearing Jodie would ruin it, while Lucy expressed her frustration over the household's singular focus on Jodie. Sally, upon leaving, reassured the narrator that she was managing well but reminded her that Jodie's past trauma wasn't her burden to bear.

The narrator's stress was compounded when Eileen, a social worker, called with troubling news. Due to a clerical oversight, Jodie's parents received the narrator's address, which led to Jodie's mother threatening to visit. The



narrator was unsurprised, accustomed to such lapses in confidentiality, and took extra precautions to ensure the family's safety. Despite contemplating various options, a meeting with social services concluded that there was little to be done, especially with Christmas looming and no alternative care available for Jodie.

Finally, Eileen handed the narrator a gift from Jodie's father—a T-shirt blazoned with "Daddy's Little Girl," insensitive given Jodie's history of abuse. The narrator, dismayed by the oversight, refused to pass it on to Jodie, highlighting the gap between bureaucratic procedure and the family's lived reality. Despite the chaos, the narrator resolved to navigate the challenges with composure, determined to shield both her family and Jodie during the holiday season.

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Chapter 20: Christmas

The protagonist of the narrative is determined to ensure that Jodie, a foster child, enjoys the warmth and joy of the Christmas season, especially since foster children, like Jodie, often have difficult holiday experiences. The narrator reflects on a previous experience with Callum, another foster child who lived with a non-functioning alcoholic mother. Callum had to care for his mother rather than the other way around, which deprived him of typical childhood celebrations like Christmas. When Callum finally experienced a proper Christmas with the narrator, the gifts and love moved him to tears.

On Christmas morning, Jodie wakes up early but treats it as an ordinary day despite the festivities, including pillowcases full of presents, signifying Father Christmas had visited. Though she remains emotionally flat, she participates quietly, giving hope that she might remember the day fondly eventually. Jodie meets the narrator's extended family—her parents, brother Tom, his wife Chloe, and their son Ewan. They're a lively bunch, and while Jodie seems startled and intrigued, she tries to join in by mimicking others' actions during gift exchanges.

The family gathers to play games post-dinner, with the narrator's daughters making a concerted effort to include Jodie. Unfortunately, she becomes irritable, either from the overwhelming excitement or unfamiliarity. Despite winning some games, she struggles to express joy. At one point, Jodie



complains about a pain in her nose, recalling a traumatic memory of her father hitting her, even though nothing happened that day. This suggests that Jodie is haunted by past traumas, reinforcing the importance of creating new positive memories for her.

Eventually, as the day winds down, the family departs, leaving Jodie with the hope that her first real taste of Christmas has been a small step toward feeling part of a loving, supportive family. Though not an emotional breakthrough like Callum's experience, the day possibly planted a seed of warmth and belonging for Jodie, contrasting sharply with her past, and created a foundation for happier future celebrations.

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Chapter 21 Summary: A New Year

As the New Year approached, a sense of optimism filled the air. The prospect of new beginnings always seemed promising, yet I couldn't bring myself to quit smoking, rationalizing I'd do it when things calmed down. However, the ongoing chaos around Jodie left me questioning when that would be.

Jodie's condition showed no improvement with the arrival of the New Year. Her behavior remained difficult, her nights plagued with nightmares and hallucinations. She began experiencing remembered pain, which she connected to traumatic memories with her parents. Despite these memories being from months or years ago, the pain felt real to her. While she didn't fabricate the pain, she was increasingly caught in lies, often convincing enough to make me doubt my own perception. She made false accusations against other children, claiming unknowable actions when I was present. Confronted with her fabrications, she showed anger and blamed her self-harm on imaginary friends, an act both disturbing and perplexing.

A week into the New Year, Jodie's behavior took a new turn—her imaginary friends started to assume distinct identities. On discovering Adrian's missing phone in Jodie's toy box, she denied responsibility in a childish voice and introduced herself as “Amy,” claiming innocence. This development was worrying; her personalities had started manifesting more vividly, such as



Reg, a character she adopted with aggression.

Confused and concerned, I turned to Jill, a support figure and a friend, who suggested that Jodie might be exhibiting symptoms of Dissociative Identity Disorder (D.I.D.), a condition where different identities develop as a defense mechanism against severe trauma. It seemed Jodie was only now feeling safe enough to remember past abuse, triggering these personalities. We realized Jodie displayed distinct personas: baby Amy, angry Reg, and a stern female matriarch, each representing facets of her fractured identity.

In this complex scenario, Adrian, Paula, and Lucy were briefed on Jodie's condition, grappling with the idea that she unconsciously switched personalities. Despite the strangeness, we learned to adapt, attempting to ignore these episodes in hopes they would eventually pass.

However, the situation intensified, with Jodie's personalities emerging several times a day, each with unique mannerisms and voices. The lack of support from her social worker, Eileen, was disheartening, as her detachment hampered progress. Fortunately, Jill remained my invaluable ally.

With spring term looming, I received the long-awaited confirmation for Jodie's school funding. Although hesitant about divulging her D.I.D. to the school, I decided allowing her to start afresh might be best. Her departure from home tutoring was bittersweet, marked by promising conversations



about trust with her tutor, Nicola.

Eileen eventually visited but struggled to engage with Jodie, leaving the room tense and uncomfortable. Her visit, though a formality, highlighted her ineffectiveness as Jodie's advocate.

As we ventured into the unknown with school starting, Jodie took slow, tentative steps towards restoring trust in adults. Yet, the road ahead was fraught with uncertainty as we navigated the complexities of her condition and sought a semblance of stability in our lives.

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Chapter 22 Summary: The Fox and the Owl

In mid-January, the weather turned bitterly cold and snow fell for three days, much to the delight of Jodie, a young girl in the story. Jodie's excitement mirrored the lifted spirits of the other children, especially Paula, who seemed more empathetic toward Jodie since venting her frustrations before Christmas. Paula even invited Jodie to join her and her friend Olivia for a snowy walk in their picturesque valley neighborhood. Though Jodie frequently slipped on the icy pavement, instead of reacting bitterly as she usually might, she made a humorous spectacle of her falls, suggesting a subtle yet positive shift in her attitude.

Jodie's imminent first day at school necessitated a trip to buy a new uniform. Despite behaving well during the shopping outing, she showed frustration over not getting tights like the other girls, though a compromise was ultimately reached with weekend lacy tights. Meanwhile, Cathy, the narrator, faced the ongoing challenge of finding respite care for Jodie, expressing her frustration with the agency's inability to provide respite due to Jodie's high needs.

Later that week, Cathy and Jodie visited Abbey Green, her new school, for an introductory tour with the headmaster, Adam West, whose friendly and informal manner immediately put them both at ease. The school's bright and welcoming atmosphere was accentuated by student projects on display, and



Mr. West's child-centered approach was reassuring, especially considering Jodie's special needs.

In the classroom setting, Jodie had the opportunity to meet her teacher, Mrs. Smith, and the classroom assistant, Mrs. Rice. Despite initial apprehensions, Jodie gradually opened up, touring the class and observing her peers. Mrs. Smith encouraged Jodie to participate, and although her attempt to join the class's writing exercise was marked by unintelligible scribbles, the lack of ridicule from her classmates was a relief. This respectful environment allowed Jodie to appear unfazed and even triumphant, signaling her readiness to embrace school life.

As the school day concluded with self-chosen activities, Jodie drew colorful boxes representing the class groups, showing her growing engagement. The class dispersed for the weekend with Jodie expressing enthusiasm about attending school daily, signaling a hopeful start to her educational journey in this supportive environment.



Chapter 23 Summary: Granddad

The narrative focuses on the challenges of caring for Jodie, a child with a fractured sense of time and a history of abuse that manifests in her behavior. From the outset, Jodie displays an inability to grasp temporal concepts, often acting as if past events are present and struggling to understand future plans. This leads to frustrations, such as her insistence on wearing her school uniform on a Saturday despite repeated explanations that school is closed.

The caregiver, likely Cathy, must navigate interactions with Jodie, utilizing diplomacy and allowing Jodie to feel in control of her decisions. This approach acknowledges Jodie's need for control due to her past experiences of abuse where she had none. A visit to Cathy's parents, who are beloved by Jodie and other children they have cared for, provides a momentary escape from tensions. However, Jodie's complex relationship with animals is highlighted when she attacks the family dog, possibly a reaction rooted in her abusive past.

During a meal with Cathy's parents, Jodie's understanding of familial relationships and their boundaries becomes alarmingly clear. She innocently questions why her grandparents didn't abuse Cathy's children, revealing the normalization of her traumatic experiences. The caregiver navigates these questions with firm reassurance, hoping to instill an understanding of normal and healthy family dynamics. This conversation is jarring for Cathy's



parents, revealing the extent of Jodie's trauma and raising questions about the extent of abuse in her life, including potentially from her grandfathers.

That night, Jodie further discusses her grandparents, revealing instances of abuse framed as acts of affection in her mind. Cathy reinforces that these actions were wrong, trying to edge Jodie towards a healthier understanding of love and family. Despite the seriousness of these revelations, Jodie responds with a request for a simple bedtime story, highlighting her desensitization and Cathy's sense of inadequacy in addressing the deep psychological scars left by the abuse.

The following day, Cathy faces Jodie's boundless energy and barrage of questions about school, indicators of her anxiety and anticipation for her first school day in over a year. A walk to expend some of this energy leads to a tantrum when Jodie demands snow, emphasizing her impulsivity and struggle with delayed gratification.

The chapter closes with Cathy managing Jodie's heightened states with patience and, despite her own sense of inadequacy, preparing her for the monumental first school day. The focus remains on balancing the affirmation of normality against the backdrop of Jodie's profound trauma, highlighting the complex journey of healing and understanding that Cathy, Jodie, and the supporting characters must navigate.



Chapter 24: Friends

In this chapter, the story revolves around Cathy, a caregiver, managing her first day of sending Jodie, a child in her care, to school. Jodie is excited yet nervous about her day, hinting at underlying concerns related to her learning difficulties and troubled past. Cathy reassures Jodie as they arrive, handing her off to Mrs. Rice, a teacher assigned to help Jodie transition daily.

Back home, Cathy receives a call from Jill, a figure involved in child welfare investigations, about critical updates on Jodie's case. Despite Cathy's earlier suspicions regarding Jodie's "granddads," it is confirmed these individuals and other so-called relatives are likely part of a network of abusers. These adults had masqueraded as family members to gain access to Jodie, which emphasizes the sinister environment Jodie was subjected to. The forensic evidence affirms Jodie's experiences of abuse but lacks the crucial information needed for a legal conviction. This revelation leaves Cathy frustrated and concerned for Jodie's future.

While navigating these emotional stresses, Cathy plans for a Looked After Children (LAC) review, a procedural meeting to assess Jodie's progress and needs. Various stakeholders, excluding Jodie's biological parents, will attend to chart a path forward given the deeply traumatic circumstances.

Despite the day's tense start, Jodie returns from school in high spirits,



excitedly sharing stories about her new friends. Her enthusiasm, however, contrasts with Cathy's concern about whether Jodie's past will affect her new school relationships. The evening is abruptly interrupted when Jodie awakens crying, having been upset by memories of losing a previous friend. She confides in Cathy that her friend was not allowed to visit after Jodie

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Chapter 25 Summary: Denial

In this chapter, Cathy, a dedicated foster carer, grapples with the challenges of supporting Jodie, a young girl with a complex and traumatic past. Jodie has been thrust into this system due to disturbing family allegations that remain shrouded in silence, partly because former friends and acquaintances of Jodie's family, the Smiths, refuse to speak out. This silence is particularly frustrating for Cathy and those who believe Jodie's accounts, as it shields those responsible for her trauma from facing justice.

Jodie is an eight-year-old with learning difficulties, haunted by what appears to be Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), a condition that has developed as a coping mechanism to her trauma. This disorder manifests as alternate personalities, with "Reg," a particularly aggressive alter, emerging during stressful situations. Her condition presents significant challenges both at home and in school, disrupting her ability to lead a normal life and causing incidents that alarm those around her.

During a routine Looked After Child (LAC) review meeting, Jodie's inability to focus becomes evident as she acts out, turning what should be a constructive session into a spectacle. The professionals involved in her care, including Cathy and her social worker Jill, are frustrated by the bureaucracy and lack of immediate intervention for Jodie's therapeutic needs. Despite the disruption, Cathy and Jill share a moment of understanding about the



severity of Jodie's condition.

The school, where Jodie spends part of her day, encounters the challenges of managing her unpredictable behaviors, particularly when her alter, Reg, makes an appearance. During one such incident, Jodie assaults a classmate during a seemingly trivial conflict, prompting a serious discussion with the school's headteacher. Cathy reluctantly explains Jodie's DID, emphasizing that while she has a psychologist assessing her, meaningful therapy is stalled, pending court hearings.

Cathy is acutely aware of the urgency for Jodie to receive therapy, but legal and systemic hurdles delay this, leaving her feeling powerless. Despite these setbacks, she remains a pillar of support, advocating for Jodie's mental health needs with the psychologist and other professionals involved.

In contrast to these heavy moments, there's a glimpse of hope during a Comic Relief event at the school. Amidst the playful chaos of a school fête, Jodie experiences a rare moment of unbridled joy, partaking in games with her classmates, offering a glimpse of the childhood she deserves. This event temporarily lifts the weight of her past, providing Cathy with a bittersweet vista of what normalcy might look like for Jodie, even if just for a fleeting moment.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Power of Advocacy Amidst Challenges

Critical Interpretation: In the poignant chapter, Cathy's unwavering dedication to advocating for Jodie's mental health epitomizes the profound impact of steadfast advocacy in the face of daunting systemic challenges. As you delve into Cathy's struggles and relentless pursuit of therapy for Jodie, it becomes clear that ardent advocacy can be a beacon of hope, even when bureaucratic hurdles seem insurmountable. Cathy's journey inspires the belief that, through resilience and persistence, you, too, can become a vital voice for those unable to speak for themselves. This commitment to advocacy cultivates resilience, fostering moments of transformation and joy amid adversity, much like Jodie's experience during the school event.

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Chapter 26 Summary: Links in the Chain

The narrative unfolds in a school setting, where the protagonist, presumably a foster carer named Cathy, engages in detailed handovers with Mrs. Rice, Jodie's teacher. These exchanges serve the dual purpose of ensuring Jodie's well-being and keeping track of her progress. Jodie is a complex child dealing with behavioral issues, which often lead to conflicts, particularly with another pupil named Robert. Mrs. Rice, tasked with managing both children, employs a technique called 'differentiating work' to cater to their unique needs during class.

An altercation over a red pastel vividly illustrates Jodie's struggles with impulse control, culminating in a playground confrontation. This leads to emotional outbursts in the car, where Jodie defensively insists that she is being bullied by Robert, contrary to the evidence. Despite Cathy's efforts to explain the situation, Jodie remains firm in her belief, reflecting a broader challenge in addressing her behavioral issues.

Jodie's difficulties extend beyond her interactions with Robert. A revelation that Freya, a classmate, knows Jodie's family raises alarms about her safety. Freya's connection to Jodie's past, where their parents socialized at a pub, threatens to expose the school's location to Jodie's biological parents, posing potential risks. Cathy discusses these concerns with the school head, leading to the decision that Jodie and Cathy should utilize a more secure



staff entrance to prevent any unwanted confrontations.

The narrative further explores Jodie's emotional disconnect when the trio—Cathy, her daughter Paula, and Jodie—witness an elderly lady named Maureen fall in the park. While Paula and Cathy actively assist Maureen, Jodie's lack of empathy becomes evident. Despite verbalizing concern, Jodie's words seem empty, highlighting her struggle with genuine emotional connection. Her past trauma manifests in a protective shell, limiting her ability to process and express empathy naturally.

The storyline takes another turn when Mrs. Rice unexpectedly takes leave. The headmaster informs Cathy of the change, acknowledging the challenging nature of working with children like Jodie. Cathy's interaction with the head suggests an understanding of the emotional toll such responsibilities can impose. She contemplates Mrs. Rice's exhaustion and reflects on her own, realizing the significant impact Jodie's traumatic past and constant state of alertness have on those trying to support her.

Cathy's experience is emblematic of the broader struggles faced by those caring for children with challenging backgrounds. The narrative captures the cycle of managing behavioral issues, addressing safety concerns, and grappling with emotional connections—all while navigating a school environment. It paints a poignant picture of the resilience required to support vulnerable children like Jodie and the toll it takes on caregivers and



educators alike.

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Chapter 27 Summary: Silence

In this poignant chapter, the narrator reflects on the poem by T. S. Eliot, which describes April as the "cruellest month," a sentiment that seems to hold true this year. The narrative centers around Cathy, a caretaker, and Jodie, a young girl dealing with severe trauma. Despite the bleak weather mirroring the prolonged winter and emotional climate, Jodie has been with Cathy for almost a year. The arrival of this anniversary brings with it a storm of emotional distress for Jodie, marked by acute anxiety and fear stemming from past abuse by her father.

Cathy, longing for escape, fantasizes about tropical vacations but knows that Jodie's issues with adults make such travels impossible. A call from the school secretary interrupts her thoughts, reporting that Jodie is inconsolable, fearing her father has come for her. Cathy rushes to the school, where she finds Jodie panicking, clinging to a radiator. Through firm reassurance, Cathy manages to calm her down, understanding that Jodie is experiencing flashbacks where past trauma invades her present reality.

Back home, Jodie retreats to the safety of her bed, where she spends hours unresponsive and staring blankly, suggesting a psychological shutdown. Cathy's concerns grow as she attempts to break through Jodie's silence with no success. A call to Jill, a supportive figure, confirms that Jodie's condition might be a protective reaction to her traumatic experiences, a post-traumatic



shock shutting her brain down for self-protection.

As Cathy converses with Jill, a narrative thread unfolds involving efforts to manage Jodie's care, understanding the depth of her trauma. Cathy's family adapts to Jodie's needs, maintaining a quiet household as Jodie oscillates between silence and infantile behaviors, which she uses as a coping mechanism. The illusion of recovery is shattered as Jodie continues to break down, missing more school and growing increasingly detached and malnourished, unable to find solace in food or normalcy.

Throughout the chapter, Cathy feels overwhelmed, confronting the limits of her ability to help Jodie through what appears to be a severe emotional crisis. Jill agrees to visit and sees firsthand Jodie's deteriorating condition. Despite both women acknowledging the rarity yet possibility of a child experiencing a breakdown from such profound abuse, solutions are evasive.

The depiction of Cathy's interaction with Jodie underscores the weight of responsibility and helplessness in the face of trauma as they await Dr. Burrows' intervention. With the weekend passing without improvement, Cathy holds on to hope that the appointment with Dr. Burrows might offer some guidance or relief for Jodie's suffering, even as it is uncertain whether Jodie can leave the house for the visit. The chapter closes on a note of anticipation mixed with a palpable sense of despair and urgency for healing.



Chapter 28: Assessment

In this chapter, we witness a Monday morning routine involving Jodie, a troubled young girl under the care of the narrator, Cathy. Despite Cathy's efforts to engage Jodie, she remains unresponsive, skipping breakfast and staring into space. Cathy and Jodie head to a clinic to meet Dr. Burrows, a psychologist tasked with helping Jodie overcome her emotional struggles rooted in a troubled past.

As they arrive at the clinic, Jodie's demeanor dramatically shifts from lethargy to a violent tantrum upon seeing Dr. Burrows, indicating a deep-seated aversion to therapy or confrontation with her issues. Despite Dr. Burrows' calm and soothing attempts to reassure her, Jodie's anger is palpable, culminating in self-harm, which prompts Cathy to intervene by restraining her. The emotional storm subsides, leaving Jodie quiet but withdrawn, signifying the complexity and depth of her internal battles.

Dr. Burrows then attempts to build a connection with Jodie, employing a soft, non-threatening approach aimed at coaxing her out of her shell. Despite these efforts, Jodie remains non-communicative, staring into nothingness, embodying her resistance and fear. Cathy supports the doctor's attempts by recounting Jodie's past challenges, hoping to establish trust and demonstrate that Dr. Burrows is aware of and sensitive to Jodie's situation.



Despite the focus shifting from assessment to therapy, the session seems fruitless as Jodie remains unyielding in her silence. Dr. Burrows shifts tactics to engaging Jodie in simple activities like tidying up toys, seeking to spark some level of participation or response. However, Jodie is detached, barely acknowledging the world around her.

As the session concludes without visible progress, Cathy and Jodie prepare to leave. The chapter ends with Cathy experiencing a profound sense of foreboding, overwhelmed by the difficulty of Jodie's path to healing and the uncertainty of future sessions. This moment encapsulates the profound challenge of aiding a child deeply impacted by past trauma, highlighting the importance of patience, professional support, and hope for eventual breakthrough in therapy.

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Chapter 29 Summary: Therapy

The chapter captures a poignant episode in the life of Cathy Glass, a dedicated foster carer, as she grapples with the deteriorating mental and emotional state of her foster child, Jodie. Cathy, concerned for Jodie's wellbeing, reflects on Jodie's regression into silence and withdrawal. She worries about how Jodie's personality is fracturing under the weight of her traumatic past. Cathy recalls a recent session with Dr. Burrows, a court-appointed child psychologist, which underscores Jodie's deep-seated issues and the need for urgent intervention.

Despite Cathy's love and patience, Jodie remains trapped in her trauma, manifesting in disturbing behaviors and a lack of improvement. Cathy is left feeling helpless and inadequate, her usual methods proving ineffective against the severity of Jodie's condition. Yet, there's a glimmer of hope when Jill, another case worker, informs her about an emergency meeting that might mark a turning point.

At the social services building, Cathy meets with a team including Jill, Sally (Jodie's guardian ad litem), Gail (the new team manager), Mary (from finance), and Dr. Burrows. Cathy shares her observations of Jodie's initial progress and subsequent decline, emphasizing the urgent need for specialized therapy. Sally corroborates Cathy's concerns with insights from her interactions with Jodie's parents, who are implicated in Jodie's abuse.



The meeting takes a pivotal turn when Dr. Burrows presents her findings. She recommends intensive, long-term therapy at a residential treatment facility called High Oaks, run by respected psychologists specializing in child sexual abuse recovery. The proposed treatment is costly, but deemed necessary due to Jodie's severe disintegration and learning difficulties. The recommendation suggests that a traditional family setting cannot provide the support Jodie needs to heal.

Cathy is taken aback by the recommendation for residential placement. She fears Jodie will feel abandoned and rejected, mirroring her past experiences. Despite reassurances from the team and acknowledgment of Cathy's invaluable support, Cathy struggles with feelings of failure. She realizes intellectually that the move is in Jodie's best interest, but emotionally she grapples with the idea that she couldn't save Jodie with her love and care.

The chapter closes with Cathy reflecting on how to break the news to Jodie. She is haunted by the thought that the little girl's time with her might seem wasted, as Jodie's condition worsened rather than improved. Nonetheless, Cathy is resolved to maintain contact with Jodie, hoping this continuity will minimize feelings of abandonment and plant the seeds for eventual healing. This chapter underscores the complexity of fostering deeply traumatized children and the limits of individual care without specialized therapeutic support.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Recognize When to Seek Specialized Help

Critical Interpretation: It's crucial to understand your limitations and recognize when a challenge exceeds your ability to handle it alone. Cathy's decision to seek intensive, long-term therapy for Jodie underscores the importance of acknowledging that some issues require more specialized intervention. By accepting that it takes a village, or in this case, a team of dedicated professionals, to support healing, you can inspire change not only in your life but also in others. It's a potent reminder that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a profound step towards providing the optimal care and attention necessary for genuine recovery and growth.

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Chapter 30 Summary: Green Grass and Brown Cows

In this chapter, the narrator, Cathy, reflects on her experiences as a foster parent through her "Rogues' Gallery" photo album, which contains pictures of all the children she's cared for over the years. She recalls the various children and their unique personalities, noting the successes and occasional sadness of not maintaining contact with them all. A critical moment arises as Cathy acknowledges a sense of failure with her current foster child, Jodie, a troubled girl for whom traditional support has not worked.

The narrative shifts focus to Jodie's deteriorating emotional state. Despite Cathy and her children Adrian, Lucy, and Paula's efforts to engage and comfort Jodie, she remains withdrawn, historically having a difficulty forming attachments due to her traumatic past. An emergence of hope arrives with a letter from Ron Graham, representing a potential new direction for Jodie. Ron and his wife, Betty, run a facility in the country for children with complicated backgrounds—a place where Jodie might find the help she needs.

Initially, Jodie is excited by the letter's promise of a new beginning. However, her initial enthusiasm turns to fear and skepticism, as past trauma causes her to view new adults as threats. Despite Cathy's reassurances about Ron and Betty's intentions, Jodie's trust issues resurface, manifesting in destructive behaviors.



Ron's phone call brings some comfort to Cathy, who feels burdened and isolated due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and the inadequacy of social services provided by Jodie's social worker, Eileen. Ron's proactive approach and deep understanding of Jodie's case bolster Cathy's hope that Jodie will receive the care she needs, even though it involves Jodie leaving her current home.

On the day of Ron and Betty's visit, Jodie surprises Cathy by interacting positively with them, showing a facade of normalcy and curiosity, especially when the topic of farm animals arises. The visit is successful, with Jodie enthusiastically responding to the idea of visiting their facility, High Oaks, and the chance to explore new experiences, including the possibility of meeting cows.

Ultimately, Jodie's interest in Ron and Betty and the subtle shift toward acceptance hint at the beginning of a new chapter for her. Cathy wrestles with mixed emotions—relief at finding a viable path for Jodie, but also resignation at the reality of their impending separation. The chapter closes with Jodie creatively expressing herself through painting, symbolizing her willingness to consider reinvention in a supportive environment, with her art depicting a hopeful image of the new life she might soon embark on.



Chapter 31 Summary: High Oaks

A week after the previous events, there is a sense of anticipation as we arrive at High Oaks, a grand and imposing manor. Jodie spends much of the drive either dozing or engaging with her life-size doll, Julie. As High Oaks comes into view, she becomes silent and eager to see the house, which is much larger than expected, featuring fourteen bedrooms and a sizable annex that serves as the therapy and 'quiet' room. The manor, likely built in the mid-nineteenth century, has an elegant presence with its ivy-draped arched porch and gabled roof.

Upon arrival, Jodie swaps my hand for Betty's after being intrigued by the old-fashioned bell, which the residents chose to keep over a modern one. Betty, a familiar face but newly acknowledged by Jodie, leads us into a cheerfully decorated hall. We are soon greeted by Ron, who inquires about our journey. Our conversation reveals that Jodie remains apprehensive about the visit, having previously stated that she wouldn't partake.

Betty guides us to a spacious lounge at the back of the house. It is practically furnished and opens up to a play area outside, complete with swings and a treehouse. Ron explains the living arrangements at High Oaks, which houses ten children and nine carers. Clare and Val will soon become familiar figures to Jodie, alongside Betty and Ron. The housekeeper, Shirley, manages the meals, which the children help clear away, a process they all engage in.



Despite her growing confidence, Jodie inquires about the cows she expected to see. Ron reassures her they are likely in the upper fields, promising she will see them from her bedroom window. As Betty continues the tour, Jodie's excitement is piqued by the playroom and the prospect of next joining a teddy bears' picnic.

In the kitchen, we meet Shirley, a kindly woman who adds warmth to the home's atmosphere. Sensing Jodie's eagerness, we proceed to her freshly decorated bedroom, a space filled with peach tones and quality furnishings. From her window, Jodie joyfully identifies the cows. Leaving her cherished doll behind for companionship until her next visit is a positive sign of her adapting to this new environment.

Betty shows us the rest of High Oaks, ensuring Jodie feels acquainted yet respects the private spaces of her future housemates. As we descend, the previously quiet hall fills with excited children returning from a walk. Though initially overwhelmed, Jodie's curiosity stirs, and with Betty's encouragement, she briefly greets them, showing promise for future interactions.

As we prepare to leave, Betty reassures us about contacting us the next day, emphasizing their support throughout Jodie's transition. The day has tested Jodie's emotional capacities, resulting in exhaustion as she swiftly falls



asleep on the drive back. This echoes a sentiment of hope but also the challenges of accepting that, despite my attachment and hope for her recovery, High Oaks represents the best opportunity for Jodie's healing and development.

While dealing with practical matters on the journey back, like Jodie's improved urgency in needing to use the bathroom, I am reminded of the burdens she still bears. Her revelation about the abuse she endured jolts me back to the reality of her past. As her carer, I balance revulsion with deep empathy, striving to maintain a facade of calm while continuing to provide the love and patience she profoundly needs.

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Chapter 32: Overnight Stay

In this chapter, we delve into the complex dynamics of Jodie's transition from her foster home to High Oaks, a therapeutic care facility. The transition underscores the emotional turbulence faced by both Jodie and her foster parent, Cathy, as well as the intricate process of preparing a child for a significant life change.

Jodie's initial confusion and anger about her surroundings, particularly her desire to see the cows she associates with High Oaks, serve as a manifestation of her deeper struggle with change and attachment. Cathy meticulously plans to ease Jodie into the move, avoiding direct statements about her departure to prevent feelings of rejection, and instead highlighting the positive aspects of High Oaks, like having her own room and fun experiences with Ron and Betty, the caregivers there.

Cathy's dedication shines through as she balances between empathy for Jodie's volatile emotions and the necessary discipline to manage her outbursts. Her own feelings of loss and rejection are palpable when Jodie readily shifts her affections to Betty, highlighting Jodie's impaired ability to form stable attachments due to past abuse. Despite these challenges, Cathy remains committed to fostering an environment of love and understanding.

As Jodie's move approaches, Cathy navigates the administrative aspects and



goodbyes with the various professionals involved in Jodie's case. This includes Sally, the guardian who must detach herself after building a rapport, offering a glimpse into the emotional toll on those who work with children in crisis. Jill, another supporting social worker, bids farewell with a meaningful gift, demonstrating standard practice in social work to provide closure for the child.

Regrettably, interactions with Eileen, Jodie's ongoing social worker, lack warmth and empathy, contrasting sharply with the care shown by others. Eileen's detached attitude underscores systemic challenges in social work, where the very individuals meant to provide sustained support may fall short emotionally.

Despite Jodie's mixed feelings about High Oaks, her actions reveal a dual desire for stability and adventure, as shown in her eagerness to pack for the move. Cathy's reflection on Jodie's lack of experiences, like never having been on holiday, highlights the deprivation many foster children endure and the unmet milestones in Jodie's life.

In the backdrop, Cathy's own children exhibit understanding and patience, sensing the weight of Jodie's departure more than with past foster children. The narrative closes on a bittersweet note, as Cathy acknowledges that while Jodie's path is fraught with challenges, High Oaks offers a glimmer of hope for healing and a new beginning under the care of dedicated professionals.



This chapter poignantly captures the heartbreak and hope inherent in the world of foster care and the journey toward a child's recovery from trauma.

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Chapter 33 Summary: Goodbye

On the morning of the move to High Oaks, Jodie sat at the kitchen table, refusing breakfast and waiting impatiently. As I packed her belongings into the car, Jodie demonstrated her characteristic aloofness and indifference to the change happening around her. Although she feigned disinterest, it was clear, especially to her friends Adrian, Lucy, and Paula, who came to bid her farewell, that there were unspoken emotions beneath her façade. Her dismissive attitude continued as we drove, with her insisting she didn't need me now that she had Betty, a caretaker at High Oaks.

Upon our arrival at High Oaks, an establishment known for its dedicated care for children with emotional challenges, Jodie initially pretended to be asleep but quickly brightened and hurried inside past Ron and Betty, the compassionate couple who ran the place. While inside, I completed necessary paperwork and handed over Jodie's personal items, including a bank book—a small fund I contributed to weekly—and a life story book documenting our time together, filled with photographs, ticket stubs, and notes of our shared experiences. Ron praised the effort put into this book, acknowledging its importance in helping children, like Jodie, understand their past as part of their therapy.

Despite Ron's reassuring words about the high quality of care at High Oaks and his gratitude for the care I had provided, the separation was bittersweet.



When it was time to say goodbye, Betty brought Jodie downstairs, counting steps in a familiar ritual that we used to share, symbolic of Jodie's transition to her new life.

In our final embrace, I hoped to convey all my care and wishes for her future, even though our journey together was ending. It was difficult to let go, due to the deep bond we had formed. Yet I understood that this new chapter offered Jodie the opportunity she needed to heal and grow. As I departed, I was comforted by the knowledge that Jodie would be well-cared-for in her new home under the nurturing guidance of Ron and Betty.

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Chapter 34 Summary: Progress

The setting opens with a sense of quiet isolation, punctuated only by the ringing of a phone, as the protagonist, Cathy, lies in bed reflecting on the departure of Jodie. Jodie, a troubled child with a history of alleged abuse, has left Cathy's care for a new environment, possibly a group home or foster care setup. Cathy is left grappling with mixed emotions: concern for Jodie's well-being and hope that she might find solace among children with similar experiences, countered by fear of Jodie facing rejection.

Cathy's contemplation is interrupted by a phone call from Jill, who reveals a breakthrough in Jodie's case. The police have arrested her parents, along with other family members, due to new evidence of their involvement in a widespread pedophile ring. The Smiths, neighbors who had stopped their daughter Louise from interacting with Jodie, have come forward with accusations, further corroborated by DNA evidence and a trove of incriminating photographs.

The revelation of long-standing abuse draws Cathy into a deeper reflection on the systemic failures that allowed Jodie's suffering to continue unchecked. Cathy agrees to support the investigation by providing her accounts and logs. The narrative delves into the complexities surrounding pedophilia, underscoring the perpetrators' delusion of innocence, which makes them particularly elusive.



Upon visiting Jodie's now-empty room, Cathy discovers an envelope addressed to her. Inside is a letter written by Paula, a mutual acquaintance, on behalf of Jodie. The letter reveals Jodie's gratitude towards Cathy for her kindness and understanding, expressing a heartfelt wish for Cathy to become her new mother once she is healed. This poignant moment brings Cathy to tears, reinforcing the meaningful connection she managed to establish with Jodie despite the challenges.

Through these unfolding events, Cathy's resolve is strengthened. Jodie's small yet significant message affirms the impact of her care and gives Cathy a renewed sense of purpose, reinforcing her belief that she has indeed touched Jodie's life positively. The chapter closes with Cathy's silent promise to Jodie, a testament to her commitment and hope for the child's future.

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