

# The Graveyard Book



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF NEIL GAIMAN

Neil Gaiman was born in Portchester, England, and was the oldest of three children. When he was five, the family moved to Sussex so that Gaiman's parents could study Scientology, but their religious affiliation caused some issues for Gaiman. For instance, one headmaster forced seven-year-old Gaiman to withdraw from school due to his father's role as a public relations official for the local Scientologist center. Like Bod in *The Graveyard Book*, Gaiman was a prolific reader as a child, a habit that followed him into adulthood. He initially pursued a career in journalism, but he also published several short stories, a biography of the band Duran Duran, and a book of quotations. He began writing for comic books in the mid-1980s, and the comic book publisher DC Comics hired him to write for them in 1987. There, he wrote the *Sandman* comic series, which eventually became one of DC's best selling titles and some of Gaiman's most famous work. Gaiman's novels, like the *Sandman* series, have received a lot of praise and a number of awards. In particular, *The Graveyard Book* won the 2008 Newbery Medal. In addition to writing novels and children's picture books, Gaiman has also written for and worked in film and television; he's appeared as himself in *The Simpsons* and has written episodes for *Doctor Who*. He has been married twice and has four children.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The English cemetery where most of the novel takes place offers insight into the history of England going back several thousand years. The novel often mentions barrow graves, or tumuli—underground burial sites built into hills—which became common in the Bronze Age (roughly 2900–800 BCE), when the pagan Celts inhabited the British Isles. Some British barrow graves, however, date back to the Neolithic era and are believed to have been constructed around 3600 BCE. The Romans (like Caius Pompeius in the novel) arrived in Britain in 55 BCE, and Christianity followed by the year 200 CE. The various figures buried in the graveyard (or their headstones) introduce readers to various aspects of British society, from the rise of the medieval guild system to Britain's witch-hunts. The character Liza Hempstock, who was executed on charges of witchcraft, probably died in the early 1600s, just as Britain began to codify punishments for witchcraft. She was named after Queen Elizabeth I, who died in 1603—and it was only a few years before Liza's birth that King James VI of Scotland published *Daemonologie*, which inspired many later witch-hunters and "experts" on the subject of witchcraft. Liza also

died around the time the Black Plague began to die out in England, mostly thanks to concerted efforts on the part of the government. The *Danse Macabre*, or Dance of Death, that appears throughout Chapter 5 (and is the title of the chapter) is an artistic allegory that arose in response to the Hundred Years' War between France and Britain and the rise of the Black Plague in the mid 1400s. Images of the dance were often satirical and reminded viewers that everyone—no matter their station in life—would eventually die.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Gaiman took inspiration from one of his own favorite childhood novels, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, to write *The Graveyard Book*. Both novels feature protagonists who are raised by inhuman beings and have chapters that feature their own complete story arcs. *The Graveyard Book*, like Gaiman's other children's novels [Coraline](#) and [The Ocean at the End of the Lane](#), all feature young characters but tackle complex, adult themes. In this sense, they can be grouped with children's novels like the Harry Potter series or Kate DiCamillo's *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* and *The Tale of Despereaux*. The Hempstock women are also a fairly common occurrence in Gaiman's novels; Hempstock characters appear in his novels *The Ocean at the End of the Land* and in *Stardust*. In the decade preceding *The Graveyard Book*'s publication, a number of other novels focused on the idea of making supposedly dangerous mythical creatures like vampires and werewolves into heroes and good guys. Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, which is about vampires, was published in 2005, while J. K. Rowling introduced the werewolf Remus Lupin to readers in 1999's [Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban](#).

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Graveyard Book
- **When Written:** 2005-2008
- **Where Written:** England and the United States
- **When Published:** 2008
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Bildungsroman
- **Setting:** An English graveyard and the surrounding town
- **Climax:** Bod tricks Jack into letting the Sleer capture him.
- **Antagonist:** Jack Frost and the fraternity of Jacks
- **Point of View:** Third Person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Two Decades.** It took Gaiman about 20 years from when he

first had the idea for *The Graveyard Book* to when he finally wrote it. His initial inspiration came from watching his toddler son ride a bike through a graveyard, but at the time, Gaiman felt like he wasn't a good enough writer yet to do the book justice.

**Mass Grave and a Goat.** Barrow graves, or underground burial sites built into hills, often crop up in the novel. The largest barrow grave in England is the West Kennet Long Barrow, the underground chamber of which measures 100 meters by 20 meters. Though different studies reveal different results, scientists have found bones from between 36 and 43 different people, along with a number of other cremated remains. Scientists also found one goat skeleton in the barrow.



## PLOT SUMMARY

In a small English village, a frightening-looking man named Jack prowls through a house. He's already murdered the resident couple and their daughter; all that's left is to murder their toddler son. The baby has no idea he's in danger, but he is wily and adventurous and climbs out of his crib and out the front door. The baby then toddles up the hill toward the nearby graveyard. Once the baby is inside the gates, the ghost of Mrs. Owens envelops it in a hug. Her husband (Mr. Owens) and the graveyard's other resident ghosts insist that they can't get involved with a living child. But when the ghost of the baby's mother appears, she points out Jack and begs the other ghosts to protect her child. The ghosts debate all night whether or not to keep the toddler, but they decide he can stay. The Owens name the child Nobody Owens—"Bod" for short—and they give him the **Freedom of the Graveyard**, which allows him to see and interact with the dead and also grants him some ghostly abilities like walking through walls within the graveyard. Mr. and Mrs. Owens become Bod's adoptive parents, while Silas, a vampire, becomes Bod's guardian since he can pass for human and fetch food from outside the graveyard.

When Bod is four, he becomes friends with a little girl named Scarlett and the two play in the graveyard together. Eventually, the children learn that the oldest resident of the graveyard is buried in an underground barrow grave. When they explore the barrow, it's not scary or particularly interesting. A slithering creature called the Sleer guards a few treasures for its master, who is gone. Not long after this, Scarlett moves away.

Silas introduces Bod to Miss Lupescu, who will be his temporary guardian while Silas is away for a month. Bod hates her immediately. She feeds him strange food and teaches him by giving him lists to memorize. Fed up with her boring lessons and feeling frustrated, Bod sits down on an ugly, water-stained grave to brood. Three ghouls find Bod there, listen to his tale of woe, and offer to take him to a city called Ghûlheim. They open the grave—a ghoul-gate—and toss Bod through. Bod knows he's made a huge mistake. But thanks to Miss Lupescu's

lessons, Bod remember how to call for help in the language of the night-gaunts, giant birds that inhabit Hell. While Bod is traveling against his will with the ghouls to the hellish city of Ghûlheim, a wolf attacks the ghouls. To Bod's surprise, it's Miss Lupescu—the night-gaunts alerted her to Bod's predicament. After this, Bod loves her, and she returns every summer to teach him.

When Bod is 10, he hears about a witch who was supposedly buried in the graveyard. His adoptive parents won't tell him anything about her, while other ghosts suggest that the witch and other criminals were buried in Potter's Fields, not the actual graveyard, and are bad people. But when Bod encounters the witch, Liza Hempstock, he's surprised that she's a young teen, not an ugly hag. As they talk, Liza admits that she's still upset that she was disrespectfully buried without a **headstone**. Determined to fix this, Bod goes to the barrow grave and decides to sell one of the treasures, a brooch, to an antiques dealer and use the money to purchase a headstone for Liza.

The dealer, Abanazer Bolger, a selfish, greedy man, immediately knows the brooch is special. He locks Bod in his office and calls his associate, Tom Hustings. As Abanazer and Tom discuss the brooch and whether to call a man named Jack about the boy, Liza finds Bod in the office. (Unlike other ghosts in the novel, she wasn't buried in the actual graveyard and thus isn't confined there.) She helps Bod retrieve the brooch and escape. Bod makes Liza a headstone out of a glass paperweight, which she appreciates

That winter, funny things start to happen. Bod's ghost friends start reciting rhymes about a "**Macabray**" and white flowers suddenly bloom in the graveyard. Later, when Bod can't find anyone in the graveyard, he follows the sound of music to the town square. There, he watches the ghosts leave the graveyard and come down to dance the Macabray with the living. Bod dances with Liza and the Lady on the Grey. The next day, nobody will talk to Bod about what happened.

Around the same time, Jack attends a special dinner with about 100 other men. A man called Mr. Dandy reminds Jack that it's important to finish what he started years ago and kill the boy.

As Bod gets older, Silas tells Bod about how he came to the graveyard and that Jack still wants to murder him. Bod insists on going to school so that he learn everything he can; Silas grudgingly agrees. Things go well for a few weeks, and Bod goes through his days partially invisible (one of his ghostly skills). But when Bod realizes that two kids, Nick and Mo, are bullying younger students, he knows he has to intervene. Using his ghostly abilities, Bod attempts to scare Nick and Mo into abandoning their bullying tactics, and though Bod is able to frighten Nick into reforming, Mo is set on revenge. Eventually, Bod and Silas agree that it's too risky for Bod to continue going to school. Silas does allow Bod to return to school once more to frighten Mo, though.

When Scarlett is 15, her parents divorce. She and her mother return to Bod's village. The bus system is difficult to navigate and one afternoon, Scarlett unintentionally ends up in the graveyard where she played as a child. There, she meets a friendly historian, Mr. Frost. He drives her home and strikes up a friendship with Scarlett's mother. Scarlett reconnects with Bod in a dream and visits him in the graveyard soon after. They discuss the murder of Bod's biological family, and Scarlett throws herself into researching the crime. With Mr. Frost's help, Scarlett discovers that the authorities never solved the case—and that Mr. Frost lives in the house where Bod's family once lived. When Mr. Frost uncovers new information about the murder and offers for Bod to come over and talk, Bod is unsure if he should leave the graveyard. Silas is gone, so Bod asks the Sleer for advice, but it just cryptically tells Bod to learn his name. Bod goes to Mr. Frost's house with Scarlett, hoping to find out the name he was given at birth. But there, Bod is horrified to learn that Mr. Frost is actually Jack.

Several of Jack's colleagues arrive in the village to help Jack track down Bod. Meanwhile, Bod and Scarlett run out of Jack's house and flee to the graveyard. Bod hides Scarlett in the barrow grave, and then sets about dealing with Jack and his cronies. Silas and Miss Lupescu are still abroad, so Bod has to fight alone. Mr. Dandy explains that they want to murder Bod because of a prophecy that says a boy (whom they think is Bod) will bring about the end of their organization, the Jacks of All Trades. Bod tricks Mr. Dandy and several of his men into fall through the ghoulish gate, and Bod tricks another into falling into a deep grave, where he breaks his ankle.

Meanwhile, Jack pursues Scarlett into the barrow grave. Jack seems not to care that he's the last Jack of All Trades—Bod has defeated all the others—and when he notices the Sleer's treasures, he decides to start a new organization that will begin with Bod's murder. Though Bod initially wants Jack to tell him what his birth name was, Bod realizes it doesn't matter—he's Nobody Owens. Thinking quickly, Bod encourages the Sleer to talk about its desire to find a new master, and Jack accepts the role, believing this will make him all-powerful. Instead, the Sleer winds around Jack with its snakelike body and imprisons Jack in the walls of the barrow. Scarlett, disturbed and frightened, accuses Bod of being a monster. Silas returns to the graveyard just in time to erase Scarlett's memory and convince Scarlett's mother to move back to Glasgow. Silas also finally explains to Bod that he and the Honour Guard have been pursuing the Jacks for years and that Miss Lupescu died to protect Bod.

About a year later, Bod struggles more and more to see the ghosts. It's hard or impossible to slip through walls, too. One night, Silas offers Bod a suitcase containing money and a passport—it's time for Bod to enter the real world. Bod solemnly shakes Silas's hand and walks to the gates of the graveyard. There, Mrs. Owens is waiting. She sings Bod a lullaby and disappears when Bod tries to hug her. Bod leaves

the graveyard, excited for his future.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Nobody "Bod" Owens** – Bod is the novel's protagonist and the adoptive son of the ghosts Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens. Bod is fearless and curious, qualities that save his life at the beginning of the novel when he's a toddler. Unaware that he's being hunted by an evil man named Jack (who has just murdered Bod's family), baby Bod wanders into a graveyard near his family's house. There, the resident ghosts decide to give Bod the **Freedom of the Graveyard** (the ability to see and interact with dead people) and adopt him as one of their own. But as he grows up, Bod's curiosity sometimes get him into trouble—for instance, he once decides to trust ghouls and follows them through the graveyard's ghoulish gate to Hell. However, Bod is surrounded by ghosts and mythical beings who care deeply for him and function as a kind of extended chosen family. They even attend to his education, which speaks to the novel's broader point that it really does take a village to raise a child. Over time, Bod grows curious about the outside world, what his biological name is, and who killed his biological family. As Bod reconnects with a childhood friend, Scarlett, as teenagers, they dig into the murder of Bod's biological parents. But the teens quickly realize that Mr. Frost, a friend of Scarlett's mother, is actually Jack. Bod uses all that he's learned from his ghostly community to defeat Jack and his cronies, though this also brings about the end of Bod and Scarlett's friendship. At this time, Bod also decides to accept his identity as Nobody Owens as his true identity and to stop seeking out the name his biological parents gave him. In other words, he realizes that it's the people (or ghosts) who helped him on his way to adulthood that were more integral to his identity and development than his origins. At age 15, Bod loses the ability to see ghosts and leaves the graveyard for the wider world, which suggests that his guardians have done their job and he's successfully come of age.

**Scarlett Amber Perkins** – Scarlett is Bod's only living friend throughout his childhood. Five-year-old Scarlett meets Bod when her parents take her to play in the graveyard, but her parents believe that Bod is just Scarlett's imaginary friend. (Given the improbability of a little boy living alone in a graveyard, Scarlett eventually goes along with this and believes that Bod was a figment of her imagination.) Like Bod, Scarlett is bright and fearless. She longs to experience the graveyard as Bod does, but since she doesn't have the Freedom of the Graveyard, she can't slip through walls or see ghosts. When she encounters the Sleer, for instance, she can't hear his voice and only perceives a frightening hissing noise. Around this time, Scarlett and her family move away, though she returns 10 years later. Her parents have just divorced, and Scarlett resents them

for it and for uprooting her life yet again. But Scarlett's anger and unhappiness begins to soften when she reconnects with Bod and meets Mr. Frost, a nice historian who claims to be conducting research in the graveyard. With Mr. Frost's help, Scarlett takes on the task of investigating the murders of Bod's biological parents and sister. She's caught off guard when Mr. Frost turns out to be Jack, the murderer. When Jack threatens to kill Scarlett, Bod rescues her by imprisoning Jack in the barrow grave. But even though Bod saved her life, Scarlett thinks Bod is a monster for knowingly imprisoning Jack. After this, Silas wipes Scarlett's memory and convinces Scarlett's mother to take Scarlett back to Glasgow. Even though this event marked the end of Bod's and Scarlett's friendship, it nevertheless taught him a lot about selflessly looking out for one's friends and thus aided him in his coming-of-age journey.

**Liza Hempstock/The Witch** – Bod's friend Liza Hempstock is a witch who is rumored to be buried somewhere in the graveyard where the novel takes place. But since none of the ghosts are willing to talk about Liza, Bod goes in search of her on her own. He finds out that she was buried in Potter's Fields, the unconsecrated (unblessed) ground connected to the graveyard that used to be reserved for criminals. And in Liza's day, being a witch—or even just being suspected of being a witch—made one a criminal. Though it's unclear exactly how old Liza is, it's likely she died as a young teenager in the early 17th century. The villagers believed she was a witch mostly because a village boy fell in love with her. As punishment, they drowned her, believing that her survival would indicate she was a witch. The drowning indeed killed her, but right before her death, she cursed everyone who testified against her. Her curse worked—everyone who testified against her died soon after of the Black Death. Even though Liza feels smug about this, she's still upset that she was so disrespectfully buried without a **headstone** to mark her resting place. As Bod's and Liza's friendship deepens, he resolves to buy her a headstone, even putting himself in severe danger to do so. Ultimately, the best Bod can do is construct a makeshift headstone out of a glass paperweight and paint, but Liza appreciates the gesture immensely. Because Liza was buried in unconsecrated ground (and because she's a witch), Liza is able to leave the graveyard and assist Bod in the mortal world. She becomes one of Bod's fiercest defenders and a conscience of sorts, as she's able to protect him and convince him to remain loyal to the graveyard at times when he's not *in* the graveyard and under the jurisdiction of his other ghostly mentors and guardians. But as Bod grows up, Liza grows increasingly standoffish and rude to him—she has a crush on him and resents the fact that he'll have to leave the graveyard once he's come of age.

**Silas** – Silas is Bod's guardian. The novel heavily implies that he's a vampire: he has no reflection in mirrors, he sleeps in a steamer trunk, and he assumes a batlike form when he's not in his tall, pale, human form. Because he can appear human, he's

tasked with leaving the graveyard to purchase food and clothes for Bod, since Bod's adoptive parents (Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens) are ghosts and thus cannot leave the graveyard. Because Silas can leave the graveyard, Silas is able to introduce Bod to the realities of the modern world (most ghosts in the graveyard died almost a century ago, so their knowledge of the outside world is extremely outdated). He briefly allows Bod to attend school in the village and when this ends up being too dangerous for Bod, Silas goes to great lengths to procure books for him and give him the opportunity to experience sporting events and movies. In this way, he proves pivotal to Bod's coming-of-age process and is one of his most important teachers. Although Silas is stoic and unaffectionate, Bod adores him and loves that Silas is always truthful and seems to have answers for everything. Silas is a member of the Honour Guard, an organization that protects “borderlands” and is responsible for bringing about the end of the Jacks of All Trades. His involvement with the organization takes Silas away from the graveyard for weeks at a time throughout Bod's childhood. In Bod's eyes, Silas's involvement means that Silas is inarguably good. But Silas admits that he was once as evil and monstrous as Jack—though he suggests that people can always change.

**Jack Frost** – Often referred to as “the man Jack,” Jack is the novel's antagonist and the murderer who killed Bod's family and is intent on hunting down Bod. He's a member of the mysterious organization the Jacks of All Trades, an ancient fraternity that harnesses magic by killing people. An ancient Jack foretold that a boy would walk between the living and the dead and that if the boy survives to adulthood, it will mean the end of the Jacks. The Jacks decide that this boy is Bod and so send this Jack, one of their most accomplished killers, to murder Bod and his family to prevent the prophecy from coming true. Though Jack succeeds in murdering Bod's biological parents and older sister, he loses track of Bod, who at the time is an elusive, curious toddler. Jack tracks his victims using scent, but after Silas tampers with Jack's memories to throw him off the trail, Jack struggles to find Bod. But 13 years later, Jack returns to the village where he lost Bod's trail and rents the house that Bod's family once occupied. He assumes the persona of Mr. Jay Frost, a nervous, bumbling historian who's conducting research into the residents of Bod's graveyard. As Mr. Frost, Jack befriends Scarlett's mother and uses Scarlett to get close to Bod. However, once Jack comes face to face with Bod, his affable Mr. Frost persona quickly falls away. Bod knows that Jack's weakness is his desire for glory and power, so he tricks Jack into agreeing to be the Sleer's new master in the treasure-filled barrow grave. Though Jack thinks that this will allow him to still kill Bod and start his own organization, the Sleer imprisons Jack in the barrow grave.

**Miss Lupescu** – Miss Lupescu is a Hound of God—that is, a werewolf—who acts as Bod's guardian whenever Silas is away. According to Miss Lupescu, Hounds of God don't see their

transformation to a wolf as a bad thing—rather, they see it as a gift from God. And because of this, Hounds of God are fierce defenders of everything good and will pursue foes into Hell. Miss Lupescu seems like a bit of a strange figure: she looks relatively young but has gray hair, wears oddly formal clothing, and feeds Bod greasy food. She also takes a more formal approach to Bod's education—giving him lists of boring facts to memorize—which he detests. As far as Bod is concerned, Miss Lupescu doesn't effectively tell him why he should care about anything she teaches him, and he deeply dislikes her. But when Bod accidentally goes through a ghoulish gate with several **ghouls** and finds himself in grave danger, he discovers that Miss Lupescu was actually teaching him useful information all along. Thanks to her lists, Bod remembers how to call for help in the night-gaunt's language (giant birds that inhabit Hell), and he knows that he should do everything he can to avoid getting to the ghoulish city of Ghûlheim. He finally learns that Miss Lupescu is a werewolf when she rescues him at Ghûlheim's gates in her massive wolf form. The rescue results in a tender relationship between the two—Miss Lupescu takes to calling Bod "Nimeni," and she returns yearly to teach and spend time with him. In addition to her role as a second guardian to Bod, Miss Lupescu is a member of the Honour Guard with Silas. She dies fighting the Jacks of All Trades to protect Bod.

**The Sleer** – The Sleer is a mysterious being that resides in the graveyard's barrow grave. Bod only sees the Sleer once; it's huge, with three heads featuring indigo designs and the body of a snake. It speaks in a hissing, slithery voice, and Bod can also hear its body slithering around the walls of the barrow grave's chamber. According to the Sleer, a mysterious "master" left the Sleer in the grave to guard the treasures—a knife, a cup, and a brooch—though the Sleer never explains who the master is or where he or she went. Bod is afraid of the Sleer at first, but he realizes over the years that the Sleer gives good (if cryptic) advice and can't hurt him, so long as Bod leaves the treasure alone. Since the Sleer is on the lookout for a new master to serve and protect, Bod uses this to his advantage when Jack pursues Bod and Scarlett into the barrow grave. Jack greedily thinks becoming the master will allow him to start a new order like the Jacks of All Trades and access the treasure in the barrow grave, so he agrees to be the master. But instead, the Sleer wraps itself around Jack, pulls Jack into the walls, and magically imprisons him in the grave.

**Mrs. Owens** – Mrs. Owens is a kindly ghost who appoints herself Bod's adoptive mother when the ghost of Bod's recently murdered biological mother begs the Owenses to protect the baby. Mrs. Owens is a stout woman who's generous and kind. During her lifetime several hundred years before the novel begins, she and her husband, Mr. Owens, weren't able to have children of their own. Thus, Mrs. Owens is thankful to have a chance at parenthood when Bod toddles into the graveyard. Though she doesn't figure prominently in Bod's day-

to-day life in the graveyard, she's nevertheless a loving, comforting presence in his life, and Bod strives to make her proud. She encourages Bod to appreciate his education and be polite to people like Silas and Miss Lupescu, even if they seem overly strict. Mrs. Owens is overcome with emotion when at 15, Bod begins to outgrow his **Freedom of the Graveyard** and ultimately leaves the graveyard for the real world. She's the last ghost that Bod can see—harkening back to how she was the first one to take him in—though she disappears for him before Bod can hug her goodbye.

**Mr. Owens** – The ghost Mr. Owens assumes the role of Bod's adoptive father when his wife, Mrs. Owens, insists it's their duty to protect him. In his life (which ended several hundred years before the novel begins), Mr. Owens was the head of the local cabinetry guild. This made Mr. Owens a respected member of his living community and means that all the ghosts still respect him in death. Thus, Mr. Owens's willingness to take baby Bod carries significant weight as the ghosts debate whether to allow Bod to stay in the graveyard. Despite being Bod's adoptive father, Mr. Owens doesn't figure prominently in Bod's day-to-day life. He encourages Bod to appreciate that he's getting an education at all (though to Bod, his education seems unsatisfactory) and takes on the responsibility of punishing Bod when Bod misbehaves. Mr. Owens cares deeply for his son but isn't always able to voice his affection. Thus, his goodbye to Bod is stilted and formal.

**Nick** – Nick and his best friend, Mo, are bullies at the school that Bod briefly attends. While Mo is the brains of their operation, Nick is the brawn. He's a hefty blond kid and doesn't think much. He especially loves stealing things and hitting people, but Mo tells him specifically what to steal and who to hit. Things begin to go downhill for Nick when Bod catches on to Nick and Mo's bullying tactics: they blackmail younger students by forcing them to steal something, but then Nick and Mo film the theft and threaten to take the video to the police if the kids don't hand over their weekly allowances. Bod encourages Nick to change his ways by infiltrating one of Nick's dreams (Bod has this capability because of the **Freedom of the Graveyard**). After this, Nick refuses to speak to Mo and seems to turn himself around.

**Mo** – Mo and her best friend, Nick, work together to bully younger students at the school that Bod briefly attends. Mo is the brains of their operation and directs Nick's physical strength wherever she sees fit. Together, they devise a blackmail scheme in which they force young students to steal, film the theft, and threaten to take the video to police if the kids don't hand over their weekly allowances. Bod, however, does everything in his power to stop Mo and Nick's reign of terror. Although Bod manages to frighten Mo, she later goes to great lengths to seek revenge. She calls on her uncle, a police officer, to arrest Bod on bogus charges. But when Mo's uncle learns that Mo is unfairly targeting Bod because of their issues at

school, Mo's life takes yet another turn for the worse. It's unclear if Mo ever reforms, but by the time Bod is done frightening her, her entire family is angry with her and Nick refuses to speak to her.

**Nehemiah Trot** – In the graveyard, Nehemiah Trot is known as the Poet. He was a writer and a poet in life and Bod often seeks him out for advice. Nehemiah speaks in flowery sentences and often repeats himself as he tries out new words or sentence constructions. Bod finds him alternately helpful and silly. For instance, Nehemiah helpfully reminds Bod that he won't get anywhere if he doesn't try. However, Bod isn't sold on Nehemiah's thoughts on revenge: Nehemiah believes he'll one day get revenge on his critics because he insisted on being buried with his poems. He thinks that when people remember what a great poet he was, they'll dig up the poems and publish them, making Nehemiah posthumously famous. The eventual discovery of his poetic genius, Nehemiah believes, will have his critics spinning in their graves.

**Scarlett's Mother** – When Scarlett is a teenager, she and her mother are constantly at odds. Some of this has to do with Scarlett's own snotty attitude, but Scarlett's mother also seems unreasonably strict at times. Also, Scarlett's parents recently divorced, which adds to the strife. In particular, Scarlett resents her mother for uprooting her life and for not purchasing her a cell phone. Because of this strictness, Scarlett is shocked when her mother allows Mr. Frost's advances and even invites him for dinner. Following Jack Frost's death, Silas convinces Scarlett's mother to move back to Glasgow with her daughter, where Scarlett can finish growing up surrounded by her friends.

**The Ghouls** – Bod meets a group of three ghouls when he falls asleep on their ghoulish gate. Ghouls look like shrunken, leathery people, but they bound and climb more like rats. All ghouls are named after famous historical figures and so have names like The Emperor of China and The Famous Writer Victor Hugo. Bod's original captors are the Duke of Westminster, The Honorable Archibald Fitzhugh, and The Bishop of Bath and Wells. Ghouls are scavengers and live lives of debauchery and pleasure in the city of Ghûlheim, a terrifying city in Hell. They insist to Bod that being a ghoul is preferable to being human. Despite the ghouls' physical strength and belief in their superiority, they're not very smart and are actually terrified of anything that might hurt or kill them.

**Abanazer Bolger** – Abanazer is an antiques dealer that Bod meets in the Old Town shopping district, down the hill from the graveyard. He deals in all sorts of items, both legally and illegally. His normal facial expression—one of having smelled sour milk—makes it easier for him to swindle people out of their valuables, which he usually insists are next to worthless. When Bod enters his shop with the brooch from the barrow grave, however, Abanazer struggles to maintain his disinterested facade. Though the brooch itself seems to inspire feelings of

greed in everyone who sees it, Abanazer is particularly greedy and appears willing to harm Bod if it means getting to keep the brooch. Abanazer reveals that he's one of Jack's contacts as he mulls over what to do with Bod.

**Josiah Worthington** – Josiah Worthington is a ghost in the graveyard who lived about 300 years ago. He was a brewer, a politician, and served as a baronet in the British army. Due to his wealth and respected status, Josiah Worthington purchased the graveyard's land and ensured that it would remain a graveyard. In death, he doesn't feel as though the other souls appreciate him enough for performing this service. He thinks highly of himself—in life, he even reserved the best plot in the graveyard for himself—and many of the graveyard's residents defer to him. Josiah Worthington is one of the loudest voices arguing that Bod shouldn't be allowed to stay in the graveyard.

**Thackeray Porringer** – In life, Thackeray Porringer was a painter's apprentice who didn't take kindly to his boss's hazing ritual—sending Thackeray to find striped paint to paint a barber's pole. When Thackeray realized he'd been tricked, he essentially died of anger. In death, Thackeray is just as angry and jealously looks after his copy of [Robinson Crusoe](#), which was buried with him. However, as Bod gets closer to Thackeray's age—around 14—Thackeray's temper mellows and they become friends.

**Caius Pompeius** – Many in the graveyard believe that Caius Pompeius was the graveyard's first resident, though he shares with Bod that a soul much older than him was there first. A Roman who wanted to be buried in Britain rather than have his body shipped back to Rome, Caius Pompeius was buried about 2000 years ago. He generally keeps to himself, but he does come out of his slumber occasionally when Bod asks.

**The Ghost (Bod's Biological Mother)** – The ghost refers to the recently deceased ghost of Bod's biological mother. Since she's recently dead, she looks different from the other ghosts—she's insubstantial and looks like television static. Upon her death, she does everything she can to beg the graveyard's residents to protect baby Bod. Because ghosts live where their bodies are interred (and the graveyard isn't accepting new burials), she won't be able to return and care for Bod herself.

**Mother Slaughter** – Mother Slaughter is a kindly, elderly ghost in the graveyard. She's initially shocked when Mrs. Owens proposes giving Bod the [Freedom of the Graveyard](#), but over the course of the debate she becomes one of the fiercest supporters of taking Bod in. Mother Slaughter is one of the last ghosts whom Bod can see when he begins to lose his ability to see and interact with ghosts.

**The Lady on the Grey** – The Lady on the Grey is a mythical woman on a big white horse. She comes for people when they die and takes them to their death on the back of her horse. All the ghosts respect her and fear her, so when she encourages

the graveyard's residents to take Bod in, they listen. Bod dances with her during the **Macabray**.

**The Indigo Man** – When Scarlett and Bod enter the barrow grave for the first time, the Indigo Man appears to frighten them. Scarlett doesn't have the **Freedom of the Graveyard** like Bod does, so the fact that even *she* can see the Indigo Man makes it clear that he isn't a ghost. Instead, he's a "scarecrow" designed to frighten would-be grave robbers. He looks like he's been dead a long time and has purple-blue designs either tattooed or painted on his face.

**Paul Singh** – Paul is a younger boy at Bod's school and one of Nick and Mo's bullying targets. Nick and Mo blackmailed Paul into handing over his weekly allowance by forcing him to steal a CD and filming the theft. Bod helps Paul and points out that the police will be far more interested in Nick and Mo's blackmail than in Paul's single, coerced theft.

**Alonso Jones** – In life, Alonso Jones was a 19th-century explorer. He's buried in Bod's graveyard, and as Bod enters his teen years, Alonso often tells Bod exciting stories of his travels. But Alonso never appears in person in the novel. Bod knows that it's time to leave the graveyard when he can no longer see or speak with Alonso.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Mr. Dandy** – Mr. Dandy is a member of the lethal Jacks of All Trades group. Like the others in the group, Mr. Dandy's first name is Jack. He's rotund and has silver hair. Though he never shares his position, he seems higher up in the organization than Jack Frost.

**Tom Hustings** – Tom is one of Abanazer Bolger's partners, especially when it comes to dealing with the illegal goods that pass through Abanazer's shop. A hulking, red-haired man, Tom attempts to intimidate Bod (but can't, as Bod disappears with Liza's help).

**Kandar** – Kandar is an Abyssinian mummy and a member of the Honour Guard, along with Silas and Miss Lupescu. He carries a pig with him for good luck, which annoys Miss Lupescu greatly.

**Mr. Tar** – Mr. Tar is a dark-skinned, bull-necked member of the Jacks of All Trades fraternity. Like all members of the group, his first name is Jack. He has a short temper and is extremely strong.

**Mr. Ketch** – A small, dark-haired man, Mr. Ketch is a member of the Jacks of All Trades fraternity. And, like all members, Jack is his first name. Mr. Ketch kills by strangling people with a thin black cord.

**Mr. Nimble** – Mr. Nimble is a towering blond man with a moustache and a member of the Jacks of All Trades fraternity. Like all members of the group, his first name is Jack.

**Fortinbras** – Fortinbras is a 10-year-old ghost and one of Bod's best friends in the graveyard. They grow apart as Bod

surpasses Fortinbras in age.

**Mr. Pennyworth** – Mr. Pennyworth is one of Bod's ghostly teachers in the graveyard. He usually teaches Bod about "elements and humors," but he also instructs Bod in Fading.

**Miss Borrow**s – Miss Borrow is Bod's grammar and composition teacher in the graveyard. In life, she was the "spinster of the parish." Bod likes her because she's easy to distract.

**Tom** – Tom lived during the Hundred Years War and fought in the conflict. In his ghostly present, he is happily dating Miss Euphemia.

**Miss Euphemia** – Miss Euphemia lived during the Victorian Era. As a ghost, she is now dating Tom and doesn't care that they lived hundreds of years apart.

**Mrs. Caraway** – Mrs. Caraway is the mayor of the town surrounding the graveyard.

## TERMS

**Barrow** – Barrows are underground burial sites. Like the barrow grave in the novel, most barrows feature an underground room of sorts that was originally created within a man-made hill. Barrows first became common in Britain around 3600 BCE. The barrow grave in *The Graveyard Book* houses the **Sleer** and a few treasures.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



## COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, AND COMING OF AGE

*The Graveyard Book* follows the format of a classic bildungsroman—it's a coming-of-age story that focuses on the education and maturation of its young protagonist, Nobody Owens, who goes by the nickname "Bod." When Bod is a toddler, a mysterious man named Jack murders Bod's parents and older sister but is unable to find the elusive toddler. When Bod wanders into the nearby graveyard, the ghosts who inhabit it—along with the resident vampire, Silas—decide to raise Bod as their own to protect him from Jack. As Bod grows up over the course of the novel, he becomes increasingly interested about himself and how he fits into the graveyard community. With this, the novel suggests that developing a healthy community and friendships are crucial to the coming-of-age process. It's those connections

that shape a person's identity and give them insight into who they are and how they fit into the world.

The novel insists that as children grow, they gradually become more connected to their communities. Bod is curious about his community from the moment he learns to talk, so Silas sets about teaching Bod to read the headstones in the graveyard. Through this, Bod is able to learn who's who and how everyone—including him—is connected as part of the community. And as he grows, many of these ghosts become his teachers, instructing him in cursive, manners, and science, in addition to ghostly skills like Fading (disappearing) and Haunting. The werewolf Miss Lupescu, meanwhile, visits yearly to offer language lessons to Bod. With the help of these teachers, Bod integrates into the graveyard community while also developing the skills he'll need one day as an adult in the world of the living.

While cultivating a rich, diverse community is important to a child's coming-of-age process, the novel also suggests that what's even more important is that children form friendships with other kids their age. This helps children develop empathy, compassion, and responsibility to others. When Bod is about eight years old, he strikes up a friendship with a ghost named Liza. In life, Liza was believed to be a witch, so the villagers buried her in the Potter's Fields (unconsecrated ground reserved for criminals) rather than in the graveyard. Because of this, Liza wasn't given the respect of a **headstone** to mark her resting place, which is upsetting for her. Putting himself in Liza's shoes, Bod agrees that this is indeed unfair, so he sets out to buy a headstone for her—even though he's not supposed to leave the graveyard and is risking his safety in doing so. While it's possible to argue that Bod's choice to defy his caregivers and put himself in danger by leaving the graveyard is indicative of his immaturity, Bod's willingness to prioritize Liza's needs over his own safety is a mark of his growing maturity. In this sense, Bod's friendship with Liza shows him how to empathize and put someone else's needs above his own—a crucial step in a child's transition from the natural self-centeredness of childhood to the maturity of adulthood.

In the same vein, Bod's friendship with the mortal girl Scarlett helps him integrate into a new community—that of the living—using his growing ability to empathize with and prioritize others. When Bod is 14, his childhood friend Scarlett and her mother return to Bod's village after spending 10 years in Scotland. Scarlett and her mother grow close with a man named Mr. Frost, who, unbeknownst to them, is actually Jack—the man who murdered Bod's family and is still set on murdering Bod. When Jack briefly takes Scarlett hostage in an attempt to kill Bod, Bod understands that it's his responsibility as Scarlett's friend to save her: after all, if it weren't for him, she wouldn't be in this dangerous situation. Plus, none of the ghosts can do anything about Jack, while Silas (a vampire) and Miss Lupescu (a werewolf) are out of the country, the responsibility

to save Scarlett falls to Bod alone. Saving her, then, represents Bod's newfound independence and maturity—and his understanding that it's his responsibility to care for others, even if it puts his own life in danger to do so.

As Bod nears adulthood, he also gets more curious about his origins—who he was and what life was like prior to living in the graveyard. But as he explores this, Bod learns that his roots aren't as important to the coming-of-age process as acknowledging and appreciating everyone who shaped him along his path to adulthood. Bod's quest to find out his birth name embodies this lesson. Years ago, Mrs. Owens wasn't able to learn Bod's name from the ghost of his birth mother, so the Owenses decided to name him "Nobody"—a name that Silas thought would protect Bod from Jack. But understandably, as Bod gets older, he becomes more curious about his past and in particular, what his birth name was. When Bod seeks it out for advice, the Sleer (an ancient creature in the graveyard) even confirms that Bod will know who he is when he learns his name. But when Jack offers to share Bod's birth name in the moments before he plans to kill Bod, Bod realizes he already knows his true name: Nobody Owens. Accepting the name that his ghostly parents gave him and giving up on finding the name that his biological parents gave him symbolizes Bod's understanding that it's more important to honor and acknowledge the people (or ghosts) who nurtured him and guided him to adulthood than it is to search for his past. This allows Bod to leave the graveyard weeks later as a young adult, content in the knowledge of who he is. Coming of age, the novel suggests, means discovering one's identity and one's place in the community—but those things are, in many ways, one and the same. Bod's mentors, guardians, and friends are precisely what shaped his identity and helped him make the leap from childhood to adulthood.



## PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

After brutally murdering Bod's family, Jack, the novel's antagonist, sets his sights on murdering Bod, too. Lucky, a ghost couple in the nearby graveyard, Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens, swiftly adopt Bod and commit to protecting him from the murderer. And ultimately, every ghostly resident of the graveyard works together to raise, teach, and guide Bod on his journey to adulthood, literally fulfilling the age-old adage that it "takes a village" to raise a child. Indeed, *The Graveyard Book* proposes that the responsibility to look out for and protect children falls to every adult in a community, not just biological parents. And in the end, the novel suggests that if parents and guardians are successful, children grow into capable adults themselves and no longer need the protection of their parents.

*The Graveyard Book* suggests that parents and guardians don't have to be only biological or legal; anyone can become a parent if they dedicate themselves to protecting and nurturing a child



like a parent would. Mrs. Owens does this in the novel's first pages, when Bod toddles into the graveyard, unaware that Jack intends to murder him. Mrs. Owens immediately obscures Bod and scolds the other ghosts when they insist that they have no business meddling with a live boy. But the appearance of the ghost of Bod's biological mother only strengthens Mrs. Owens's resolve. The ghost begs Mrs. Owens to protect her baby now that she no longer can (in the world of the novel, ghosts live where their bodies are buried; Bod's mother has no way to return to her living son). Ultimately, Mrs. Owens succeeds and the graveyard takes Bod in. And as the years pass, this sense of responsibility to Bod grips everyone in the graveyard. A number of ghosts become Bod's teachers, educating him in subjects like reading and history, while others look out for his safety as he plays amongst gravesites that aren't structurally sound. The visiting werewolf Miss Lupescu even goes so far as to put herself in danger to rescue Bod when a group of ghouls kidnap him and take him to their ghoulish city in Hell. All of these characters function as Bod's guardians because of the care and protection they show him.

Indeed, the novel makes the case that parenting isn't something that one or two people can do alone. Rather, it's essential that a child have a variety of people to teach and care for them. For instance, even though the Owenses are more than willing to be Bod's adoptive parents and attend to his emotional and moral development, as ghosts, they can't feed Bod or introduce him to the modern world. Thus, the graveyard appoints Silas, a vampire, to be Bod's guardian. As a vampire who can pass for human, Silas can move through the mortal world and can therefore introduce Bod to life outside the graveyard—something that the Owenses, as ghosts who died several hundred years before the novel begins, cannot do. Between Silas, the Owenses, and the other graveyard ghosts, raising Bod becomes a communal effort. Ultimately, it's this closely connected and highly invested web of guardians that helps Bod defeat Jack and his cronies when they enter the graveyard. Bod's many guardians willingly keep tabs on Jack and his cronies' whereabouts in the graveyard, which allows Bod to set traps for the interlopers with percent success. Bod also draws on the many lessons his ghostly tutors taught him over the years as he sets his traps, driving home that it takes a village—or a graveyard—to successfully raise a child.

With this, the novel comes to one of its most important and bittersweet conclusions: that whether or not a child has two biological parents or a number of ghostly guardians, successful parenting equips a child to take on the world alone. Bod sees this happening in the weeks after he thwarts and imprisons Jack in the graveyard's barrow grave (an ancient underground gravesite). When the Owenses adopted Bod and inducted him into the graveyard community, he was given **the Freedom of the Graveyard**. The Freedom of the Graveyard didn't just give Bod the ability to see ghosts; it also symbolized his integration

into his new family and his new family's commitment to protect him. Now that Bod no longer needs that protection, though, he no longer needs the Freedom of the Graveyard like he once did—and so the ghosts become increasingly difficult to see. Everyone takes this as a sign that Bod is finally ready to leave behind his adoptive parents and the graveyard and enter the wider world as an adult, without the ghosts to guide him anymore. As sad as this parting is for Bod, Silas, and the Owenses, the novel nevertheless proposes that this moment is a victory, not a tragedy—after all, it means that Bod is ready to move forward and navigate the rest of his life, guided by the wisdom and lessons that his adoptive parents and guardians have imparted to him. In this sense, Bod's departure isn't just a mark of his maturity and burgeoning adulthood. Rather, the novel suggests that when children grow up and move away, it's proof that their parents and guardians successfully equipped their children for adulthood.



## LIFE AND DEATH

*The Graveyard Book* is riddled with death. The book opens in the moments after three gruesome murders, and many of the book's characters are dead. On the whole, the novel shows that death is a safe state to find oneself in, as dead people no longer have to worry about concerns that plague the living, like the existence of schoolyard bullies or, in Bod's case, the possibility that one will be murdered. However, Bod's adoptive, ghostly parents and guardians still insist that Bod should under no circumstances give in and allow Jack to murder him; Bod has the rest of his life ahead of him and should make a point to stay alive and live it. Thus, *The Graveyard Book* proposes that death may offer comfort, security, and predictability, but the ever-present prospect of death is nevertheless a constant reminder that life is worth living in the meantime.

Though *The Graveyard Book* emphasizes that dying can be traumatic and horrifying, its treatment of the graveyard's ghosts suggests that actually being dead provides a person contentment and security. This is because, in the graveyard, life is predictable and safe—nothing can hurt or kill ghosts, after all, because they're already dead. So instead of worrying about the things that might end or alter a mortal person's life, ghosts can peacefully reflect on the life they lived. With this, the novel suggests that the main quality separating the dead from the living is this sense of security. Life for ghosts who are already dead is fundamentally safe, but the same cannot be said for their living counterparts.

Bod's circumstances, meanwhile, emphasize that mortal life is dangerous—Jack, who murdered Bod's parents and older sister, still wants to murder Bod. And Bod also discovers that as a living person, he should fear ghouls. While the ghouls pay no attention to the graveyard's ghosts, Bod can either provide them with a tasty snack or be transformed into a ghoul himself,

a fate Bod decidedly doesn't want. Bod's foes, in other words, are both mortal and supernatural—and they're foes only because Bod is alive.

But even though Bod's life is dangerous, his ghostly guardians also insist that this doesn't mean a person should race towards death. Rather, they suggest, the fact that life is dangerous is all the more reason to throw oneself into living. This is why, throughout the novel, Bod's parents and guardians don't get too angry with him when he ventures out beyond the graveyard (in the graveyard, Bod is safe from Jack; Bod gives up that protection when he leaves the premises). Bod's vampire guardian, Silas, and the ghosts suggest that it's natural for Bod to want to learn more about and immerse himself in the world of the living, dangerous as it may be. But this doesn't stop Bod from asking, at times, whether he can die and stay with his adoptive parents and friends in the graveyard for all time. Because Bod's friends and guardians are all ghosts, he sees little wrong with being dead. Silas, however, suggests that this outlook is understandable but ultimately misguided. Death, he warns Bod, seldom gives people what they hope it will—and in Bod's case, dying would mean he won't be able to enjoy the life that Silas and Bod's adoptive parents worked so hard to give him.

Even though *The Graveyard Book* clearly lays out these differences between life and death, it nevertheless suggests that the two are intrinsically connected: death is a fact of life, and remembering this makes life seem all the more precious and worth living. The novel explores this most fully through the event of the Macabray. **The Macabray** is an iteration of the mythical danse macabre, in which the living and the dead can see each other and dance with each other for one night only. When it occurs in the novel, the joyous event allows everyone in the village to see the dead as Bod sees them: as people who are just as happy as anyone else to have a frivolous night of fun. However, the Macabray has a deeper purpose both within the world of the novel and in the real-world religious and mythical beliefs surrounding the danse macabre: it reminds the living that death could come for them at any moment. It is, at its heart, a reminder to enjoy life to the fullest while it lasts. And while the Macabray may be a fictional event unique to *The Graveyard Book*, it nevertheless encourages readers to savor and appreciate life, because it will inevitably come to an end.



### GOOD, EVIL, AND ASSUMPTIONS

*The Graveyard Book* subverts common notions of good and evil. While werewolves, vampires, and ghosts feature as villains in many classic novels and stories, in *The Graveyard Book*, it's the vampire Silas, the werewolf Miss Lupescu, and the ghosts of the graveyard who are the inarguable "good guys." And instead of positioning living humans as forces for good in a fight against nefarious supernatural beings, *The Graveyard Book* features human

villains almost exclusively. By subverting these expectations about who or what is good and evil, Gaiman implies it's impossible to tell whether a person (or being) is good or evil just by looking at them and making assumptions. Rather, one should judge a person's goodness based on their actions and how they treat others.

The novel suggests that judging someone as good or evil based solely on appearances is a learned behavior. When baby Bod toddles into the graveyard, he has no idea that the human (but magical) Jack behind him is bad or that the ghosts in front of him are good. Instead, when the ghost Mrs. Owens envelops the baby in mist, protecting him from Jack, Bod simply responds to her interest and her kindness. And going forward, he accepts her wholeheartedly as his adoptive mother because she cares for him and supports him as he grows. As a baby, Bod hasn't yet internalized cultural narratives that dictate that ghosts are dangerous (or that they don't exist at all). He's therefore able to embrace Mrs. Owens and Mr. Owens as his adoptive parents without any hesitation. And later, when Bod briefly attends school in the village and encounters bullies, he uses the knowledge that the bullies have learned to fear or not believe in ghosts to his advantage. Bod wouldn't have been able to scare the bullies into leaving younger kids alone had the bullies not grown up hearing that anything supernatural must be evil and frightening.

In addition, *The Graveyard Book* also suggests that it's unhelpful and even harmful to judge whether a person is good or evil just by looking at them—from the outside, it's often impossible to tell. This is reflected in the way that the ghosts talk about the individuals buried in the Potter's Fields, a piece of unconsecrated (unblessed) ground and where the villagers buried "suicides, criminals, and witches." The ghosts give Bod the impression that the people buried there are evil, simply because they engaged in criminal acts or because they didn't die in an appropriate manner. But Silas encourages Bod to remember that, "in days gone by you could be hanged for stealing a shilling. And there are always people who find their lives have become so unsupportable they believe the best thing they could do would be to hasten their transition to another plane of existence" (that is, commit suicide). In other words, seeing the residents of the Potter's Fields as wholly bad means ignoring that justice systems aren't always just. And for Bod, it would mean that his ghostly friend Liza, who was buried in the Potter's Fields because villagers believed she was a witch, isn't worth associating with. But Liza proves to be far from evil and indeed, becomes one of Bod's most loyal friends in the graveyard.

Ultimately, the novel proposes that whether a person is good or evil comes down to one's individual choices—and it makes it clear that having made bad choices in the past doesn't mark someone as evil for life. Silas encapsulates this idea when he bids 15-year-old Bod farewell. As they discuss Silas's

involvement with the Honour Guard—a mysterious organization that protects the mortal world and saves Bod from Jack—Bod insists that Silas did the right thing killing Jack and his cronies, since they're all “monsters.” But Silas shares that in his lifetime, he has also done monstrous things. However, he says simply, “people can change.” With this, Silas insists that good and evil aren't as clear cut as young Bod might think they are. Rather, a person can contain both good and bad qualities and have done good or bad things in their lifetime. What matters most, he suggests, is that a person continues to strive to do the right thing, no matter who they are or what they've done in their past.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### LIZA'S HEADSTONE

Liza's headstone represents friendship and compassion. In her lifetime, Liza was accused of being a witch, so instead of being buried in the graveyard alongside other community members, she was buried among criminals in the unconsecrated Potters' Fields. Even more humiliating than this, the villagers didn't give her the basic respect of marking her resting place with a headstone. Marking a person's burial site with a headstone implies that they're worth remembering, so in denying Liza a headstone, the villagers implied that her life was meaningless and unremarkable.

Several hundred years later, this indignity still bothers Liza's ghost. Bod is moved by this and sets out to procure a headstone for her—as her friend, wants to cheer her up and make her happy, but more than that, he also wants to emphasize how much he values and respects her. Although Bod isn't able to purchase an actual stone headstone for Liza, the glass paperweight he finds and paints with Liza's initials is nevertheless meaningful for her. In fact, it's perhaps even more meaningful than a standard headstone would have been; the makeshift headstone came directly from Bod, so it's imbued with his respect and compassion for her.



### FREEDOM OF THE GRAVEYARD

Symbolic of community and chosen family, the Freedom of the Graveyard refers to the privileges Bod has that allow him to see ghosts and perform ghostly antics, like Haunting and Fading. When Bod is just a baby, the ghosts in the graveyard choose to give him the Freedom of the Graveyard to protect him from Jack, and in doing so, they make him one of their own. Despite the fact that Bod is a living,

mortal boy, the Freedom of the Graveyard allows him to integrate into the ghostly, supernatural community so he has a safe place to grow up. In other words, in granting Bod these privileges, the graveyard's ghosts declare him chosen family and commit to raising him as such.

When Bod begins to outgrow the Freedom of the Graveyard as a teenager—he gradually loses his ability to see and interact with the dead—this represents his growing maturity and leap into adulthood. As a young adult, Bod no longer needs the close supervision of his ghostly parents and guardians to stay safe or to ensure that he's making the right decisions. However, losing the Freedom of the Graveyard doesn't mean Bod loses his ghostly community and chosen family entirely; near the end of the novel, he decides to keep the name his ghostly adoptive parents gave him rather than seeking out the one his biological parents gave him at birth. So although Bod can no longer physically see his community and chosen family and doesn't need them in the same way as he did in his youth, their love, friendship, and support is still integral to his identity.



### THE MACABRAY (DANSE MACABRE)

The Macabray, a dance between the dead and the living, represents the idea that death could come at any moment. The Macabray doesn't occur on a regular schedule and instead occurs only when specific flowers in the graveyard bloom. Likewise, a person can't plan for or foresee their death—just as the Macabray that happens only when a certain flower unfurls its petals, death often comes unexpectedly and unfolds on its own timeline. It's also significant that it's been 80 years since the last Macabray took place; this is close to the average lifespan in England and the U.S., where the novel is set, so it's a reminder that death comes for everyone eventually.

But beyond just emphasizing that death can come at any moment, the Macabray also encourages those who are still living to enjoy life while they can. At the event, Bod dances with the living, not the dead, so it reminds him that he will soon have to leave the graveyard and make the most of his life—it's not yet time for him to accept his death and join the ghosts permanently. In other words, because death eventually comes for everyone, and often unexpectedly, people must enjoy their lives while they can.

During the Macabray, the dead are able to leave the graveyard and intermingle with the living, which more broadly symbolizes the interconnectedness between life and death. The novel suggests that for humans, death is a fact of life, while for the dead, there may be life after they pass away. The two realms, the novel suggests, are intertwined. As a human who lives in a graveyard and has some ghostly powers (**the Freedom of the Graveyard**), Bod himself reflects this connection between the two spheres. The day after the Macabray, Bod is confused to


find that none of the ghosts remember the event (or they perhaps do remember but are either unwilling or unable to discuss it). Likewise, the living participants (aside from Bod) don't seem to remember it either. The fact that Bod alone remembers this dance between the dead and the living represents how he has a foot in each realm; he's a living human but not quite a regular human, and he has ghostly abilities and lives in a graveyard but isn't a ghost.

while Bod likely disappears from Jack's view because of Mrs. Owens supernatural abilities as a ghost, the novel also implies that her love and commitment to Bod is in part what protects Bod in this scene.

“It must be good,” said Silas, “to have somewhere that you belong. Somewhere that's home.” There was nothing wistful in the way he said this. His voice was drier than deserts, and he said it as if he were simply stating something unarguable. Mrs. Owens did not argue.

**Related Characters:** Silas (speaker), Mrs. Owens, Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 28

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Silas sits with Mrs. Owens and baby Bod as the rest of the graveyard's residents debate whether or not Bod can live among them as a sort of honorary ghost. As they discuss how Mr. and Mrs. Owens can't leave the graveyard, Silas insists that it's good to have a home and a sense of belonging.

The novel positions Silas, a vampire, as existing in a liminal, or in-between, space. According to the novel, vampires are neither living nor dead, which means that Silas toes the line between those two spheres. This has certain benefits—for instance, unlike the ghosts, Silas can pass for a living, breathing human and thus can venture into town to get food for Bod—but it also means that he struggles to find belonging. He's a vampire, so he's not at home with the living in the real world, but he's also not at home with the ghosts in the graveyard. Even though Silas has a version of the Freedom of the Graveyard—allowing him to inhabit the graveyard and converse with the ghosts—he's still an outlier there.

Silas and Bod are similar in this way. Like Silas, Bod exists somewhere between the living and the dead, thanks to the Freedom of the Graveyard that enables him to see and interact with the ghosts. And likewise, both Silas and Bod only temporarily call the graveyard home. When Bod officially comes of age, he's essentially forced to leave the graveyard and enter the real world, while Silas, having successfully fulfilled his duties as Bod's guardian, also packs



## QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperCollins edition of *The Graveyard Book* published in 2010.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

Mrs. Owens bent down to the baby and extended her arms. “Come now,” she said, warmly. “Come to Mama.”

To the man Jack, walking through the graveyard towards them on a path, his knife already in his hand, it seemed as if a swirl of mist had curled around the child, in the moonlight, and that the boy was no longer there: just damp mist and moonlight and swaying grass.

**Related Characters:** Mrs. Owens (speaker), Jack Frost, Mr. Owens, Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 17

### Explanation and Analysis

After asking her husband to agree to be Bod's adoptive father, the ghost Mrs. Owens scoops the toddler up in her arms—which instantly makes Bod invisible to Jack, who wants to murder Bod.

Bod's sudden disappearance from Jack's sight in this passage encapsulates some of the novel's key ideas about what parenthood means and entails. Most notably, this moment suggests that parenthood essentially comes down to making the choice to be responsible for a child's safety. As soon as Mrs. Owens takes on the role of “Mama” and holds Bod for the first time, she effectively becomes Bod's parent. What makes Mrs. Owens a parent is this commitment to protecting and nurturing Bod—it's not necessarily about having a blood relationship to Bod (they aren't related) or filling out legal paperwork (Mrs. Owens is a ghost). Instead, Mrs. Owens commits to loving Bod like a parent loves a child, and this is what makes her a mother. So

up to move on. The key difference between the two, though, is that while Bod is still a living boy with his life ahead of him, Silas is not. The novel implies that Bod will go on to find acceptance and belonging in the world of the living—no matter his atypical childhood—whereas Silas will never truly find home or a sense of belonging because of his status as a vampire.

☛ Silas said, “Out there, the man who killed your family is, I believe, still looking for you, still intends to kill you.”

Bod shrugged. “So?” he said. “It’s only death. I mean, all of my best friends are dead.”

“Yes.” Silas hesitated. “They are. And they are, for the most part, done with the world. You are not. You’re alive, Bod. That means you have infinite potential. You can do anything, make anything, dream anything. If you change the world, the world will change. Potential. Once you’re dead, it’s gone. Over.”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens, Silas (speaker), Jack Frost

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 179

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Silas explains to Bod that Jack killed Bod’s biological family and still plans to murder Bod. But because Bod has been raised by ghosts, he doesn’t see anything wrong with death and is thus unperturbed by the threat Jack poses.

In response, Silas makes it clear that while there’s nothing wrong with being dead, it’s still important that Bod make the most of his life while he can. Life, Silas suggests, contains endless potential. As a living person, Bod has the opportunity to travel, meet people, and learn new things—privileges that ghosts don’t get. In this sense, Silas acknowledges that death affords people a sense of comfort and is a dependable state to be in. Dead people, after all, don’t have to worry about Jack or anyone else trying to murder them; their existence in the graveyard is quiet, calm, and safe. This doesn’t mean, though, that one should rush towards death—on the contrary, Silas suggests that it’s important to live life to the fullest while it lasts, since death could come at any time anyway.

With this, Silas encourages Bod to see himself as fundamentally different from his ghostly friends. It doesn’t mean that Bod shouldn’t still be friends with ghosts, but it does mean that Bod should keep in mind that his life is on a very different path than those of the ghosts. While the


ghosts have the rest of time in the graveyard to look forward to (and it seems, at this point, that this is what Bod thinks his life will be like, too), Bod needs to look forward and prepare himself for the rest of his mortal life. This will mean eventually distancing himself from the ghosts—and one day, leaving the graveyard.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ “You were given the Freedom of the Graveyard, after all,” Silas would tell him. “So the Graveyard is taking care of you.”

**Related Characters:** Silas (speaker), Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 38

### Explanation and Analysis

When young Bod begins asking questions about life in the graveyard, Silas explains that Bod’s privileges are known as the Freedom of the Graveyard. On a practical level, the Freedom of the Graveyard protects Bod from Jack, who’s still out in the world somewhere and wants to kill Bod—basically, as long as Bod is in the graveyard, he’s safe from the murderer. The Freedom of the graveyard also allows Bod to interact with his adoptive parents and his friends, all of whom are ghosts.

But on an emotional level, having the Freedom of the Graveyard suggests that Bod is a member of the graveyard family and community—and that the graveyard itself will go out of its way to protect him, because he’s part of it. When Silas discusses the Freedom of the Graveyard and what it does for Bod, it helps Bod trust in his family and his community to love and protect him. This is especially important for Bod as an orphan who is set apart from the “real” world of the living; better understanding the Freedom of the Graveyard helps Bod grasp that, despite his tragic past, he *does* have a family who loves and supports him. And as Bod continues to come of age, this trust in his community’s unwavering love and support helps to ground him as he comes to terms with his identity and prepares to step out into the land of the living.

☝ “What are you doing now?”

“ABCs,” said Bod. “From the stones. I have to write them down.”

“Can I do it with you?”

For a moment, Bod felt protective—the gravestones were *his*, weren’t they?—and then he realized how foolish he was being, and he thought that there were things that might be more fun done in the sunlight with a friend. He said, “Yes.”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens, Scarlett Amber Perkins (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 41

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Bod agrees to practice the alphabet with four-year-old Scarlett, a living girl whom he just met that day in the graveyard. Bod’s thoughts surrounding whether or not he owns the gravestones showcases him beginning to let go of the selfishness that characterizes childhood. Bod feels protective of the gravestones, which is understandable—as a boy raised in the graveyard, they are part of his home. They are representations of his ghostly friends and family members, in addition to teaching tools as he learns to read. To young Bod, this makes the gravestones almost sacred, which is why he’s initially unwilling to share them with Scarlett.

However, Bod quietly begins to grasp that he can’t go through life with just his graveyard family for support and companionship. At some point, he’s going to have to let other people into his life—specifically, other people who are alive. As Bod’s first living, breathing friend, Scarlett is the first person to show him the benefits of friendship and of expanding his community. And thanks to the lesson he learns here from Scarlett, Bod becomes curious about the outside world and the living people who inhabit it, which helps prime him to eventually enter that world as a young adult.

☝ “But you aren’t dead, are you, Nobody Owens?”

“Course not.”

“Well, you can’t stay here all your life. Can you? One day you’ll grow up and then you will have to go and live in the world outside.”

He shook his head. “It’s not safe for me out there.”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens, Scarlett Amber

Perkins (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 60

### Explanation and Analysis



As Scarlett and Bod say goodbye as young children, Scarlett points out that Bod will have to leave the graveyard eventually. With this assertion, Scarlett suggests that Bod will one day come of age, whether he likes it or not. Since Scarlett is a year older than Bod, she’s portrayed as being slightly more mature than he is—so at this young age, she’s better able to grasp that everyone grows up and leaves home someday, no matter where home is. Because of this maturity, Scarlett recognizes that Bod’s existence in the graveyard is a temporary one, and that since he’s not a ghost who’s dead, Bod is aging, just like she is.

While Bod’s circumstances may be well outside the ordinary and more dangerous than usual, Scarlett implies that Bod nevertheless will have to grow up and enter the real world. As a young child, Bod doesn’t get this quite yet. He’s still content to live in the safe confines of the graveyard, where his parents and the other ghosts can protect him. But since Bod is alive, he will one day reach an age where he has to leave and become an independent adult.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ Silas had brought Bod food, true [...] but this was, as far as Bod was concerned, the least of the things that Silas did for him. He gave advice, cool, sensible, and unfailingly correct; he knew more than the graveyard folk did, for his nightly excursions into the world outside meant that he was able to describe a world that was current, not hundreds of years out of date; he was unflappable and dependable, had been there every night of Bod’s life, so the idea of the little chapel without its only inhabitant was one that Bod found difficult to conceive of; most of all, he made Bod feel safe.

**Related Characters:** Miss Lupescu, Silas, Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 68

### Explanation and Analysis

Six-year-old Bod is distraught when Silas goes away for a month, leaving him in Miss Lupescu’s care. While Bod’s ghostly parents assure Bod that Silas will be back soon to

bring him food, but this isn't what Bod is concerned about. Bod makes it clear that while feeding a child is certainly an important part of being a parent or a guardian, it's by no means the most important part. Rather, Bod loves Silas because of all the other ways that he supports and teaches Bod, including giving him an insight into the world outside the graveyard. As a vampire, Silas may not technically be alive, but he nevertheless represents a link between Bod and the mortal world—and the *modern* mortal world, not that of the early 20th century or earlier. Silas is, in this sense, the best person in the graveyard to prepare Bod for life outside of it.

But more than that, Silas's calm, steady nature and constant presence is what makes Bod feel secure in his world. To Bod, losing his guardian feels like losing an essential part of his world or his identity, even if this loss is just a temporary one. And because Bod is still so young and childishly selfish, it's impossible for Bod to fathom why Silas would leave him at all—or to truly trust that Silas will return. In this sense, while Bod's angst is entirely understandable, some of it merely reflects Bod's youth and immaturity.

## Chapter 4 Quotes

☞☞ “Let's see, it's been a while since I've been down that way. But I don't remember anyone particularly evil. Remember, in days gone by you could be hanged for stealing a shilling. And there are always people who find their lives have become so unsupportable they believe the best thing they could do would be to hasten their transition to another plane of existence.”

**Related Characters:** Silas (speaker), Liza Hempstock/The Witch, Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 104

### Explanation and Analysis

When Bod asks Silas whether there are “evil” people buried in Potter's Fields (unconsecrated ground reserved for burying criminals), Silas reminds Bod that people's ideas of what constitutes “evil” or “bad” change over time. What Silas essentially proposes here is that the criminals buried in Potter's Fields aren't bad people. Rather, they were victims of a shockingly unjust justice system that punished them with death for simply trying to get by. Good and evil, Bod learns, aren't as simple as he might think. For instance, stealing might be a criminal act in society's eyes, but that doesn't mean that people who steal are fundamentally evil

and ruthless. They may have good reason to steal—and it may seem like their only option if they want to make it in the world.

Silas also brings up suicide when he references the people who “hasten their transition to another plane of existence.” Villagers also used to bury people who died by suicide in Potter's Fields, so in Bod's incomplete understanding, those people are also evil people. But again, Silas encourages Bod to think more critically than that. There are always people, he suggests, who feel like their lives are unlivable—and such people sometimes feel that the only way to deal with their circumstances is to die. Silas seems to imply that these people deserve understanding, pity, and compassion, not to be labeled as inarguably evil. As Silas encourages Bod to think critically about the so-called criminals buried in Potter's Fields, he helps Bod grow up and develop a more nuanced way of thinking about the world around him. This new way of considering people will help Bod expand his community, as Bod will be less likely to make assumptions about a person's morality based on where they're buried.

☞☞ “They say there's a witch in uncons—unconsecrated ground,” he said.

“Yes, dear. But you don't want to go over there.”

“Why not?”

Miss Borrowes smiled the guileless smile of the dead. “They aren't our sort of people,” she said.

“But it is the graveyard, isn't it? I mean, I'm allowed to go there if I want to?”

“That,” said Miss Borrowes, “would not be advisable.”

**Related Characters:** Miss Borrowes, Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), Liza Hempstock/The Witch

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 106

### Explanation and Analysis

During one of Bod's lessons with Miss Borrowes, he asks her about the witch supposedly buried in unconsecrated ground, but her answers are vague and unsatisfying. For one thing, Miss Borrowes's answers suggest that she sees Liza (the witch) and the other people buried in Potter's Fields as inferior, simply because they're not buried in the graveyard proper. By saying that “they aren't our sort of people,” Miss Borrowes suggests that the ghosts in Potter's

Fields are unfit to associate with the upstanding citizens buried in the regular graveyard. To Miss Borrowes, the issue isn't her own prejudice but rather is the other ghosts' evil reputations.

But unlike Miss Borrowes, Bod doesn't see things as being quite so clear cut. He just wants to know if Potter's Fields is technically part of the graveyard—and therefore, if he's safe there like he is in the rest of the graveyard. In other words, Bod's only concern is whether entering Potter's Fields is going to jeopardize the protections that the Freedom of the Graveyard affords him, not whether he'll find himself among "bad" people.

☞☞ "What's your name?" he asked.


"Got no headstone," she said, turning down the corners of her mouth. "Might be anybody. Mightn't I?"

"But you must have a name?"

"Liza Hempstock, if you please," she said tartly. Then she said, "It's not that much to ask, is it? Something to mark my grave. I'm just down there, see? With nothing but nettles to show where I rest." And she looked so sad, just for a moment, that Bod wanted to hug her.

**Related Characters:** Liza Hempstock/The Witch, Nobody "Bod" Owens (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 112

### Explanation and Analysis

When Bod meets Liza Hempstock, the witch buried in Potter's Fields, she's hesitant to introduce herself and is upset that she was buried without a headstone to mark her resting place. Liza's emotional outburst suggests that identity matters just as much to the dead as it does to the living.

Had Liza been given the basic respect of a headstone, visitors to the graveyard would be able to acknowledge Liza's identity and life by reading her name and an inscription on her headstone. Her headstone would give someone a sense of who she was in life and help people form a connection with her. Without a headstone then, Liza is effectively nonexistent to living people (aside from Bod). There's no way for a living person to know that Liza is buried under nettles. Significantly, nettles just look like part

of the wilderness and, to an unsuspecting person, don't actually mark Liza's resting place.

This loss of identity is difficult and uncomfortable for Liza. It forces her to remember on a daily basis that she was condemned to death and then murdered by her peers and neighbors. Her lack of a headstone is a constant reminder that they didn't care enough about her to go to the trouble of marking her gravesite. And for Bod, this makes Liza sympathetic and more interesting—and spurs him to try to find a headstone for her to show her that she does matter.


## Chapter 5 Quotes

☞☞ "You'll do," he said. "Now you look like you've lived outside the graveyard all your life."

Bod smiled proudly. Then the smile stopped and he looked grave once again. He said, "But you'll always be here, Silas, won't you? And I won't ever have to leave, if I don't want to?"

"Everything in its season," said Silas, and he said no more that night.

**Related Characters:** Nobody "Bod" Owens, Silas (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 149-150

### Explanation and Analysis

In the winter when Bod is 10, Silas decides it's time for Bod to graduate from wearing a gray sheet to wearing modern street clothes. While Bod is initially happy with how he looks, this is still an anxiety-inducing shift for him—it's a reminder that Bod will one day have to live outside the graveyard.


At 10, Bod is still a child and feels as though he needs adults around to take care of him. Home—the graveyard—is still a comfort for him at this age. However, Bod is also entering into a stage where he wants to feel grown-up and mature. Thus, his new clothes speak to a number of truths that are, at this point, uncomfortable for Bod. While on some level Bod probably knows that he will have to leave the graveyard someday, he's young enough that the thought of actually leaving is too much to fathom. Similarly, the thought of going through the day without Silas around to guide him is just as frightening. Again, this is because Bod still needs the protection of the graveyard and Silas's guidance; he's still a child. But Silas nevertheless alludes to the fact that one day, Bod will have to leave. It will happen "in its season"—so it won't happen right away, and in all likelihood, Bod will be




ready for it when it comes.

●● He straightened up, and looked around him. The dead had gone, and the Lady on the Grey. Only the living remained, and they were beginning to make their way home—leaving the town square sleepily, stiffly, like people who had awakened from a deep sleep, walking without truly waking.

**Related Characters:** The Lady on the Grey, Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 162

### Explanation and Analysis

When the Macabray (the dance between the living and the dead) comes to an end, Bod and the rest of the living participants suddenly find themselves alone in the town square. Though Bod doesn't yet realize it, this moment is significant in that it emphasizes that Bod ultimately belongs with the living, not with the dead. In this passage, he's waking up like the rest of the living, and he's not back in the graveyard already (which is presumably where the dead are now) with his ghostly friends and family.

However, though Bod is waking up like the rest of the living, he also seems to be the only living person who understands what just took place. He remembers, for instance, that the dead were here and that the Lady on the Grey was, too—something that the living don't seem to fully comprehend or remember. Rather, the rest of the living people behave as though they've come out of a dream that's increasingly foggy. Bod's understanding, then, again speaks to how he exists somewhere between the living and the dead. Though Bod is definitely alive, he still moves through the world as an honorary ghost. He can perform ghostly actions like moving through walls and becoming invisible, thanks to the privileges of the Freedom of the Graveyard. Because Bod exists somewhere between the living and the dead, he gets a more objective view of what just transpired.


●● Josiah Worthington said, “The dead and the living do not mingle, boy. We are no longer part of their world; they are no part of ours. If it happened that we danced the *danse macabre* with them, the dance of death, then we would not speak of it, and we certainly would not speak of it to the living.”

“But I'm one of you.”

“Not yet, boy. Not for a lifetime.”

And Bod realized why he had danced as one of the living and not as one of the crew that had walked down the hill, and he said only, “I see...I think.”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens, Josiah Worthington (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 163

### Explanation and Analysis

On the day after the Macabray, Bod attempts to talk to several ghosts about the dance. None of them will talk to him about it—and Josiah Worthington makes it clear that this is because Bod is alive, not dead.

This is a bit of a shock for Bod. Because he doesn't remember his life before coming to the graveyard and being granted the Freedom of the Graveyard, Bod doesn't remember what it's like to be a normal, living person. Instead, Bod has grown up existing midway between the living and the dead. For instance, Bod is solid and can speak to living people, but he can also perform more ghostly actions like Fading (becoming invisible) and Haunting. In this moment, then, Bod realizes that he's different from the ghosts who have raised him—and that the implications of this are far-reaching. This impresses upon Bod that he'll one day have to join the living in the world outside of the graveyard.

Josiah Worthington also makes it clear that the Macabray isn't something that people should talk about—or that living people even remember. He implies that since the dead and the living “do not mingle,” talking about an event in which they do mingle is taboo. This is possibly because living people generally don't want to think about death, while ghosts (per the novel) often can't speak to the living. Few beings, alive or dead, want to actually acknowledge their counterparts in the opposite realm. But Bod, as someone who exists in between the living and the dead, remembers and can speak about the Macabray. Death isn't as taboo or frightening for him as it is for other living people, while living people aren't as out of reach for him as they are to his

ghostly friends and guardians.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ “And the teachers here have taught me lots of things, but I need more. If I’m going to survive out there, one day.”

Silas seemed unimpressed. “Out of the question. Here we can keep you safe. How could we keep you safe, out there? Outside, anything could happen.”

“Yes,” agreed Bod. “That’s the potential thing you were talking about.”

**Related Characters:** Silas, Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), Jack Frost

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 180

### Explanation and Analysis

As Bod and Silas discuss Jack’s desire to murder Bod, Bod insists he wants to go to school. It’s essential, he suggests, for him to learn more about the world beyond the graveyard if Silas ever expects Bod to survive out there.

While Bod’s childhood in the graveyard and experience of being raised by ghosts isn’t something that other living children experience, this conversation nevertheless speaks to a normal part of growing up. It’s normal for parents (or guardians) and children to disagree on how a child should move through life and what they should learn. And in particular, Silas’s desire to protect Bod and keep him safe is a normal, expected impulse from a parent figure. Bod’s desire to get out into the world and learn more about it, meanwhile, speaks to where he is now in his development. At about 12 years old, Bod now desires more independence than he did as a child. He’s also more curious about the outside world that he knows he’ll inhabit one day. Therefore, he prioritizes his freedom and learning about the outside world over his safety.

However, Bod also sees that it’s possible to spin Silas’s talk of “potential” in more than one way. Earlier, Silas made potential seem like an amazing thing—when Bod grows up and enters the real world, he can travel, fall in love, and do anything. Now that Silas wants to keep Bod safe, though, potential refers only to the potential for bad things to happen. But Bod knows that the potential exists for him to learn all sorts of things, including how to exist in the world—and possibly, how dangerous the world is.

☞ Bod said nothing. Then he said, “It’s not just the learning stuff. It’s the other stuff. Do you know how nice it is to be in a room filled with people and for all of them to be breathing?”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), Mo, Nick, Silas

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 193

### Explanation and Analysis

When Bod gets more involved with bullies at the village school than he wanted to be, he and Silas discuss that Bod just shouldn’t return to school. But school, for Bod, is more than just a place where he attends lessons and learns about the world he’ll one day inhabit. It’s an opportunity for Bod to be among people who are like him because they’re alive and his age. This shows just how much Bod has grown in just a few weeks. It was only a few weeks ago that Bod was uninterested in life and wanted to rush towards death, since all his friends are dead. Having grown up in the graveyard playing with ghosts (and having only had one living friend, Scarlett), Bod simply didn’t see the point of doing anything but hanging out in the graveyard with his ghostly friends. Now that Bod has had a taste of what it’s like to live out in the world, though, he understands that it’s where he belongs—even if it is a dangerous place.

☞ “That’s the difference between the living and the dead, ennit?” said the voice. It was Liza Hempstock talking, Bod knew, although the witch-girl was nowhere to be seen. “The dead dun’t disappoint you. They’ve had their life, done what they’ve done. We dun’t change. The living, they always disappoint you, dun’t they? You meet a boy who’s all brave and noble, and he grows up to run away.”

**Related Characters:** Liza Hempstock/The Witch (speaker), Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 197

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Liza catches Bod preparing to run away and tries to shame him into returning to the graveyard. Through this, Liza expands on the idea that being dead is a stable, unchanging, safe state of being. The dead, as she notes, can’t disappoint anyone. They’ve already gone through life and

can no longer experience either success or failure. Once a person is dead, it's impossible for them to continue to disappoint people.

The living, on the other hand, are constantly at risk of disappointing others. This, Liza suggests, is part of what it means to be alive and have the ability to make choices for oneself—no matter what choice a person makes, it's possible that they're going to anger or disappoint someone, even if there are other people who might approve.

In this moment, then, Liza has to confront that Bod—whom she clearly admires and is eventually implied to have a crush on—is inevitably going to disappoint her. He has a choice, though. Bod can choose to run away and disappoint Liza now, while they're still children. Alternatively, Bod can return home, spend another few years in the graveyard, and then leave—but either way, Bod is nevertheless going to run away and abandon Liza. But Liza proposes that it will be more disappointing and hurtful to her if Bod leaves now, thereby giving up on the protection that she and others in the graveyard have shown him over the years.

“He’s out here, somewhere, and he wants you dead,” she said. “Him as killed your family. Us in the graveyard, we wants you to stay alive. We wants you to surprise us and disappoint us and impress us and amaze us. Come home, Bod.”

“I think...I said things to Silas. He’ll be angry.”

“If he didn’t care about you, you couldn’t upset him,” was all she said.

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens, Liza Hempstock/The Witch (speaker), Silas, Jack Frost

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 198

### Explanation and Analysis

As Liza tries to convince Bod to return to the graveyard instead of run away, she reminds him that his family in the graveyard wants him to stay alive. Even if they’re angry with Bod now, this doesn’t mean that Bod can’t still return home and be accepted. With this, Liza offers a more nuanced view of the situation than she did only a few minutes ago, when she accused Bod of being selfish and abandoning her. It’s possible Liza recognizes that it’s far more effective to remind Bod that he has people who love him and care about him than it is to make him feel unworthy of her love and admiration.

Regardless of Liza’s reasoning for changing tack, Bod’s mention of his fight with Silas shows that her argument is convincing. Bod is afraid to go home because he fears Silas won’t love him anymore. This fear, while normal, reflects Bod’s youth and immaturity. He knows he said hurtful things to Silas (he said he’d rather die than stay in the graveyard) and he knows how difficult it is to hear such things. But in his immaturity, Bod doesn’t yet grasp that as a guardian, Silas will forgive Bod, since this kind of conflict is a normal part of growing up for any child.

Further, Liza also reminds Bod that family has a distinct purpose. Family members, in her understanding, are there to support each other and help each other grow. If Bod runs away to spite Silas, it’s guaranteed that Bod will die—thereby depriving his family of the ability to watch him grow, “disappoint” them, and “amaze” them. Bod owes it to his family to return to the graveyard so he has a chance at life. He owes his family the opportunity to watch him grow up and move into the world when it’s safe for Bod to do so.

“You weren’t selfish. You need to be among your own kind. Quite understandable. It’s just harder out there in the world of the living, and we cannot protect you out there as easily. I wanted to keep you perfectly safe,” said Silas. “But there is only one perfectly safe place for your kind and you will not reach it until all your adventures are over and none of them matter any longer.”

**Related Characters:** Silas (speaker), Nobody “Bod” Owens

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 209

### Explanation and Analysis

Upon Bod’s safe return to the graveyard after his attempt to run away, Bod apologizes for behaving selfishly and wanting to attend school. Silas, however, makes it clear that what Bod did and wanted is perfectly normal. Just as it’s normal for any child to want to be around other kids their own age, Silas knows it’s normal for Bod to want to spend more time with living kids, not just his ghostly friends in the graveyard. Bod is alive and will one day have to spend all his time with other living people, so it’s important that he learn how to do that. And just as it’s important for all kids to forge connections with people who aren’t their immediate family members or caregivers, it’s also important for Bod to build friendships with people other than his ghostly family.

Then, Silas also admits here that he was wrong to try to

forbid Bod from going to school in the first place. In addition to recognizing that it's normal for Bod to want to be around living people, Silas also realizes that it's impossible to keep Bod totally safe. Since Bod is mortal, his life is fundamentally at risk—he could be hurt or die at any moment, for any reason. The only safe place, in Silas's estimation, is death itself. But being dead would mean that Bod wouldn't be able to live the life that his parents and Silas have worked so hard to give him, so it's not yet time for Bod to give in and die.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☞ Mrs. Owens reached out a hand, touched her son's shoulder. "One day," she said...and then she hesitated. One day she would not be able to touch him. One day, he would leave them. One day.

**Related Characters:** Mrs. Owens (speaker), Silas, Jack Frost, Nobody "Bod" Owens

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 217

### Explanation and Analysis

Bod is upset because Silas has, once again, left the graveyard—this time without leaving someone like Miss Lupescu in charge of Bod. Mrs. Owens is trying to comfort her son and assure him that he'll understand everything "one day," but instead, Mrs. Owens ends up realizing that one day, Bod won't be around for her to care for anymore.

This shows that Mrs. Owens knows that if parents and guardians do their jobs well, their children will one day grow up, leave home, and won't need their parents anymore. While living parents may still be able to enjoy their adult children from afar or during visits, this won't be possible for Mrs. Owens—eventually, Bod will lose his Freedom of the Graveyard and with it, his ability to see and interact with his mother. Raising Bod, then, is especially bittersweet for Mr. and Mrs. Owens. They won't be able to give adult Bod advice or hug him when he returns to their home for holidays, so all the time they do have with Bod feels especially precious.

☞ In the graveyard, no one ever changed. The little children Bod had played with when he was small were still little children; Fortinbras Bartleby, who had once been his best friend, was now four or five years younger than Bod was, and they had less to talk about each time they saw each other; Thackeray Porringer was Bod's height and age, and seemed to be in much better temper with him; [...]

**Related Characters:** Thackeray Porringer, Fortinbras, Nobody "Bod" Owens

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 229

### Explanation and Analysis



As Bod gets older, he becomes more aware of the fact that while he's changing every day, none of his ghostly friends are. Fortinbras will never be any older than nine or 10, while Thackeray Porringer will always be 14. And as Bod gets older, he'll naturally outgrow his friendships with Fortinbras and others his age and gradually grow into friendships with ghosts who are closer in age to Thackeray Porringer. In this way, Bod notices the passing of time and his own increasing maturity because he sees how his relationships with those in the graveyard change.

It's telling, too, how Bod now thinks of Thackeray. It wasn't that long ago that Thackeray angrily chased Bod down when Bod borrowed Thackeray's copy of *Robinson Crusoe*. At that point, Bod saw Thackeray as a mean, selfish older boy. But now that Thackeray and Bod are closer and age and are better able to connect, Bod gets to see a new side of Thackeray. With this, Bod gets to experience firsthand that a person isn't good or bad based purely on how they behave at one point in time. Rather, people can change and improve as time goes on and as they make better, kinder decisions.

☞ "You want to know your name, boy, before I spill your blood on the stone?"

Bod felt the cold of the knife at his neck. And in that moment, Bod understood. Everything slowed. Everything came into focus. "I know my name," he said. "I'm Nobody Owens. That's who I am."

**Related Characters:** Nobody "Bod" Owens, Jack Frost (speaker), Silas, Mrs. Owens, Mrs. Owens, Scarlett Amber Perkins

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 282

### Explanation and Analysis



While Jack prepares to slit Bod's throat and dangles the proposition of sharing Bod's birth name with him, Bod realizes he doesn't care about finding out his birth name. In this moment, Bod fully accepts his identity as Nobody Owens. He accepts that his parents are Mr. and Mrs. Owens, even if they are his ghostly adoptive parents and not biological parents.

This is significant because in this instance, Bod realizes that a huge concern of his—who he was before he came to the graveyard—doesn't actually matter that much to him. It's enough for Bod to acknowledge that his biological parents loved him and ensured he'd have protection from the ghosts in the graveyard. What matters more, though, are all the people and ghosts who went out of their way throughout Bod's childhood to make him the Nobody Owens he is today. Most importantly, this includes his adoptive parents, Mr. and Mrs. Owens, and it includes Silas. But while they may be the most obvious people for Bod to acknowledge as he comes to terms with his identity, Bod still can't ignore that more than 300 ghosts were present on the night of his arrival and agreed to take him in. In this sense, accepting the name that the Owenses gave him means accepting the love and the care that his adoptive family and wider community showed him. It means deciding that this family is the most important family Bod has, because they're the ones who guided him to this place where he can say, with certainty, that he's Nobody Owens and the graveyard is his home.

☝ “Look, it's okay. I dealt with them.”

Scarlett took a step away from him. She said, “You aren't a person. People don't behave like you. You're as bad as he was. You're a monster.”

**Related Characters:** Scarlett Amber Perkins, Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), The Sleer, Jack Frost

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 287

### Explanation and Analysis

After Bod tricks Jack into letting the Sleer imprison him in the barrow grave—thus saving both Bod's and Scarlett's lives—Scarlett is horrified and calls Bod a monster. In Scarlett's mind, it's unthinkable that a person would

knowingly imprison another person belowground, especially with a being like the Sleer. Now, though, Scarlett has to confront the fact that Bod isn't an innocent child, like she is. Instead, in this sense, Bod far surpasses her in terms of maturity since he has to fight for his life and is willing to go to such lengths to stay alive.



In Scarlett's eyes, this makes Bod less than human. Humans, she believes, are inarguably good—while the Sleer, ghosts, and even Bod (since he exists in between the living and the dead) are “monster[s].” This, again, is a simplistic, immature way of looking at the world, but it's not a surprise that Scarlett thinks this way. The villains in her life are mainly her parents—and they're only villains because they do things she doesn't like, like get divorced or refuse to buy her a cellphone. As a young teenager, she hasn't yet had to confront the more pressing types of evil in the world—including the evil of people like Jack, who murder others. So while Bod may have a more nuanced view of good and evil at this point and be able to recognize that killing Jack was his only option, Scarlett isn't ready or able to understand this.

☝ Bod said, “She was scared of me.”

“Yes.”

“But why? I saved her life. I'm not a bad person. And I'm just like her. I'm alive too.”

**Related Characters:** Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), Jack Frost, Scarlett Amber Perkins, Silas

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 289

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Bod and Silas again discuss that Scarlett was afraid of Bod after Bod imprisoned Jack in the barrow grave. Silas never answers Bod's question—he leaves it up to Bod to figure out.

Bod's insistence that he's “not a bad person” and that he's “just like her” betrays his innocence and an incomplete understanding of good, evil, and where Scarlett was coming from. To Bod, Jack was undeniably evil and deserved what he got—and disposing of Jack (and avoiding stooping to his level and actually murdering him) means that both Bod and Scarlett can continue to live. In this sense, Bod believes that he and Scarlett should be on the same side.

But for Scarlett, it's not as simple as that. While it's true that she, like Bod, wants to live, she also spent a week getting to know Jack as Mr. Frost. It requires a major shift for her to recognize and truly believe that the kindly Mr. Frost she knew was a disguise, not a real person—and to accept that Jack would've killed her without a second thought. So to her, Bod looked callous, cruel, and almost inhuman when he made the choice to imprison Jack in the barrow grave.


## Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ “Can't I stay here? In the graveyard?”

“You must not,” said Silas, more gently than Bod could remember him ever saying anything. “All the people here have had their lives, Bod, even if they were short ones. Now it's your turn. You need to live.”

**Related Characters:** Silas, Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 302

### Explanation and Analysis

When it's time for 15-year-old Bod to leave the graveyard for the world beyond, Silas gently tells Bod this fact. Leaving the graveyard is a terrifying prospect for Bod—the graveyard is his home and has been for the last 14 years, so it's understandably difficult to stare down leaving. Silas seems to understand this, given how uncharacteristically gentle he is as he tells Bod it's time to move on. This marks Silas, once again, as a caring and generous guardian. He cares deeply for Bod's emotional wellbeing and wants to do whatever he can to make things easier for Bod. In this situation, that means giving Bod hard news gently—while also making it clear that there's no room to argue.

Silas also makes the case that, at this point, it's time for Bod to break with the dead and fully join the world of the living. It doesn't matter now that all of Bod's friends and family members are ghosts. What matters is that the time has come for Bod to enjoy his life, which his friends and parents spent 14 years protecting and nurturing. In order to honor their care and their sacrifices, it's essential that Bod head out into the world and make the most of his mortal life.

☞ “But you did the right thing. I mean, stopping the Jacks. They were terrible. They were monsters.”

[...]

“I have not always done the right thing. When I was younger...I did worse things than Jack. Worse than any of them. I was the monster, then, Bod, and worse than any monster.”

[...]

“But you aren't that any longer, are you?”

Silas said, “People can change,” and then fell silent.

**Related Characters:** Silas, Nobody “Bod” Owens (speaker), Jack Frost

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 303

### Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, as Silas and Bod discuss good, evil, and the necessity of killing the Jacks of All Trades, Silas reveals that he hasn't always been the upstanding, caring guardian that Bod knows. Silas has, in his past, done evil things. But this doesn't mean that Silas can't be a good person now, or that he can't dedicate his life to doing the right thing in the present and in the future. Instead, Silas suggests that, like most people, has made choices he regrets—being a vampire doesn't make him that much different from anyone else in this regard.

It's significant that both Bod and Silas use the word “monster.” This word connotes that a person or being is less than human and is evil. For Bod, the distinction is clear—people who do evil things, like murder families, are monsters. But since Silas is a vampire—a being that many would consider a monster to begin with—this complicates things. Silas suggests that it's possible for him to be more humane by choosing to do good things. And alternatively, he can accept a more monstrous version of himself if he does things that someone like Bod would consider evil. Through this, the novel proposes that it's not possible to neatly divide the world into good people and evil people. Rather, it's essential to judge people by their actions and to accept that people can always strive to do better.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

A man named Jack holds his knife in front of him. The knife is sharp and wet with blood. Jack has already killed a man, a woman and a child, but he has one more victim to attend to: a small toddler. He climbs the stairs to the bedroom at the top of the house, vowing not to smile until he's done. When Jack reaches the bedroom, the moonlight is just bright enough to illuminate the crib. But when Jack raises the knife to stab the figure in the crib, he stops—it's just a teddy bear. The baby is gone. Jack sniffs and memorizes the baby's milky smell. He follows the scent through the house and out the front door. On the porch, Jack grunts in frustration. It's a foggy night. He marches up the hill.

The baby has been a terror ever since he learned to walk. He loves climbing and wandering. Earlier, a crash woke him up. Since he was bored, he scaled his crib and fell onto a pile of soft toys. Taking care to not cry—crying attracts attention—the baby left his room and slid down the stairs on his bottom, pacifier in hand. At the bottom of the stairs, the wet diaper fell off. The baby toddled out of the house and up the hill.

The fog is thinner at the top of the hill. The narrator asks the reader to notice the abandoned funeral chapel, stone tombs and headstones, and various animals. But the narrator says readers wouldn't be able to see a "pale, plump woman" who's just misty shadow. The woman approaches the graveyard's locked gates and calls for Mr. Owens, her husband. Mr. Owens stares at the baby at Mrs. Owens's feet, who reaches out to grab Mrs. Owens's finger. Mrs. Owens asks what to do with the baby, but her husband points out it's not their concern—the baby is alive. Mr. Owens notes that a man—presumably the baby's parent—is coming into the graveyard. But Mrs. Owens insists the man doesn't look like family.

*Starting the novel in the immediate aftermath of three murders begins the story on an ominous note and suggests that death is going to figure prominently in the novel. This passage also sets Jack up as the novel's clear antagonist—and a particularly cruel one at that, given that he's willing to murder babies in cold blood. But with its family murdered, the baby is now entirely on its own.*



*The baby already knows how to navigate his world remarkably well, given his still limited mobility. Understanding that crying attracts attention speaks to the baby's intelligence and his ability to get his own way—and in this case, it might keep the baby safe from Jack.*



*Describing Mrs. Owens as "misty shadow"—coupled with the graveyard setting—suggests that Mr. and Mrs. Owens are ghosts, not living people. Thus, it makes sense that they want nothing to do with a live baby—it doesn't seem as though the baby can actually touch them, after all. Interestingly, the baby can see the ghosts and isn't scared of them—the novel's first indication that fear of supernatural things is learned rather than intrinsic. It seems that, to the baby, Mrs. Owens is just a person who's interested in him and therefore appears trustworthy.*



Even though he's a ghost himself and has been dead for several hundred years, Mr. Owens's mouth drops open when he sees a ghost appear. This ghost isn't a normal one: it's gray like static and barely in focus. In a panicky voice, the ghost screams that the man that's approaching (Jack) is trying to hurt her baby. Mrs. Owens realizes this ghost is the baby's mother; she just died. The ghost's panic wakes other ghosts in the graveyard. As ghosts gather, Mrs. Owens puts an arm around the new ghost and speaks quietly to her. The ghost begins to fade, but Mrs. Owens promises to "try" and asks her husband if he'll be the baby's father—the ghost is asking them to protect her son. The man scales the fence and catches sight of the infant as Mr. Owens agrees. The staticky ghost disappears.

Mrs. Owens puts her arms out and beckons the baby. Jack watches as the baby disappears in a swirl of mist. Jack calls to the baby several times, and a strange man appears before him. Though Jack's clothes are dark, this stranger's clothes are darker—and he somehow manages to look even more terrifying than Jack himself. Jack explains that he's looking for a lost baby. The stranger pulls out keys and leads Jack to the gate. Jack pulls out his knife, knowing he could murder this man, but then the stranger says that Jack probably saw a fox, not a baby. The stranger opens the gate as Jack mulls this over.

The stranger locks the gate behind Jack and says that Jack doesn't need to remember this conversation. Jack agrees and realizes he only saw a fox. After watching Jack walk back down the hill, the stranger then heads to the middle of the graveyard, where the landscape forms a natural amphitheater. Josiah Worthington bought the graveyard 300 years ago and ensured it would remain a graveyard. He reserved the best spot at the top of the hill for himself. Though the graveyard houses about 10,000 souls, fewer than 300 gather in the amphitheater to discuss the matter of the baby.

Josiah Worthington insists this is ridiculous. Mr. Owens—who, in life, made furniture for Josiah Worthington and still admires the man—haltingly says that his wife sees it as her duty to keep the baby. At this, Josiah points out that the "creature" must return to its "natural home." Mrs. Owens cuts Josiah off and insists that this is silly—she should be worrying about getting the baby food, not arguing with "fiddle-pated old dunderheads." She also reminds everyone that the baby's mother made her promise to care for the baby Caius Pompeius, the old Roman, asks what Mrs. Owens plans to feed the baby. Mother Slaughter, meanwhile, asks where the baby will live. She looks shocked when Mrs. Owens suggests they give the baby the **Freedom of the Graveyard**.

*That the ghost of the baby's mother looks so drastically different from the other graveyard ghosts suggests that it takes time to transition from life to death. When the Owens agree to be the baby's adoptive parents, it suggests that ghosts may actually be able to interact with the living but usually choose not to.*



*The baby presumably disappears as Mr. and Mrs. Owens agree to take him in as their own. This not only blurs the lines between the living and the dead—there's no indication the baby died when he was adopted moments ago—it also suggests that anyone, even a ghost, can be a parent. And being a parent, this suggests, gives a person the unique ability to protect a child from harm.*



*In this passage, Jack undergoes a sudden shift from being determined to kill the baby and certain that he sees it to agreeing that he only saw a fox. This dramatic shift, coupled with the stranger's suggestion that Jack need not remember this conversation, suggests that the stranger somehow erased or reworked Jack's memory of seeing the baby in the graveyard. Meanwhile, that only 300 out of 10,000 ghosts emerge to discuss the baby suggests that within the larger ghostly community exists a smaller, more engaged one.*



*This argument highlights that there are different perspectives among ghosts regarding how, when, and even if they should interact with the living. The language that Josiah Worthington uses to describe the baby is dehumanizing—which is ironic, given that the baby is human while Josiah is an ancient ghost. Referring to the infant as a "creature" shows that he sees the baby as fundamentally different from himself and the other ghosts. While this may be true, Josiah seems to believe that this means the ghosts have no responsibility to care for the baby. But Mrs. Owens insists that they're not done interacting with the world just because they're ghosts.*





Caius Pompeius concedes that they've given the **Freedom of the Graveyard** to someone before, but that someone isn't a living human. Reluctantly, the stranger—Silas—approaches the ghosts and says he supports Mrs. Owens. It will “take a graveyard” to raise this baby. Since he can leave the graveyard, Silas offers to fetch food for the baby. When Mother Slaughter points out that Silas could easily have to abandon his duties, Silas offers a suggestion: the Owenses will be the baby's parents, while Silas will be a formal guardian. He promises to find another caregiver if he ever has to leave.

Silas asks Mrs. Owens if the baby has a name. She wasn't able to learn anything from the ghost of the baby's mother, but Silas says a new name will protect the baby. Several ghosts note that the baby looks like people they knew in life, but Mrs. Owens spits that the baby looks like “nobody but himself.” Silas declares that they'll call the baby Nobody Owens. Nobody, who's been sleeping, wakes up, stares at Silas, and then wails. Caius Pompeius sends Mrs. Owens away so the other ghosts can discuss the matter without her.

Mrs. Owens waits with Nobody outside the funeral chapel, which was declared a building of historical interest 40 years before. It's been empty and dilapidated for decades. Mrs. Owens sings a lullaby she remembers from her childhood, but she forgets the final line. She sings until Silas joins her. He leads her into the building and puts down a cardboard box full of food. Then, he pulls out a banana, a fruit Mrs. Owens has never seen and Silas has never eaten. Baby Nobody eats it happily as Silas suggests they house the boy here. Flustered, Mrs. Owens insists she doesn't want to bother Silas. As Mrs. Owens cleans Nobody's face, Silas says he can leave the graveyard. When Mrs. Owens says she can't, Silas says it must be good to belong.

The ghosts discuss into early morning. But the arrival of a beautiful woman on horseback—the Lady on the Grey—stops them short. She's the one who takes each person to their death. She announces that “the dead should have charity.” After this, the ghosts decide to give Nobody the **Freedom of the Graveyard**. Within the hour, Nobody is fast asleep in the Owenses' tomb. Just before sunrise, Silas goes to the house of Nobody's birth parents and inspects the bodies. Meanwhile, Jack grows increasingly angry. He can't figure out where he went wrong in his attempt to murder the toddler. Jack plots his next move and decides he doesn't need to tell the Convocation that he failed.

*Caius Pompeius implies that Silas is the one who isn't alive, forcing readers to question what Silas is, since he's neither ghost nor human. Regardless, Silas agrees with Mrs. Owens that the graveyard has a responsibility to care for the baby. Setting up a formal guardianship shows Silas's understanding that children need more than two people to raise them—indeed, it takes a village, or in this case a graveyard, to raise a child.*



*Giving Nobody a name is one of the first acts of love and protection that Silas and Mrs. Owens perform for Nobody. It protects Nobody from Jack, as a new name will make it far harder to for him to track down the toddler. This also gives Nobody the beginnings of his own identity.*



*The way that the narrator describes the funeral chapel gives the impression that the graveyard as a whole is frozen in time and set apart from the outside world. Silas's willingness to house Nobody in the chapel and fetch food shows that, like Mrs. Owens, he's fully committed to raising Nobody. The novel begins dropping hints that Silas is a vampire: he can pass for human (which is why he can get food), he doesn't eat real food like bananas (which would make sense if he only drinks blood), and he is neither alive nor a ghost. His comment about it being good to belong suggests that because he exists in this in-between state, he has no real home.*



*Giving Nobody the Freedom of the Graveyard turns Nobody into a real member of the graveyard community. It seems to allow Nobody access to the Owens's tomb—which, presumably, is locked or otherwise inaccessible to the living—and formalizes his adoption by Mr. and Mrs. Owens. It also clearly protects Nobody from Jack, since Jack can't find the toddler. But because Jack is still looking for Nobody, it suggests that Bod will have to hide from this particular villain for a while.*



## CHAPTER 2

Bod grows into a quiet child with gray eyes and mousy hair. Once he learns to talk, he asks questions incessantly. Ghosts often give him confusing answers, so Bod turns to Silas. Silas explains that Bod can't leave the graveyard because this is where his family is and where he's safe. He also explains that Bod will learn some skills, like Fading, Sliding, and Dreamwalking, if he practices—though Bod will have to wait much longer to learn other skills. Silas carefully notes that Bod was given the **Freedom of the Graveyard**, which means that the graveyard is taking care of Bod. One day, Bod asks who's in a particular grave. When Silas realizes that Bod hasn't been learning to read, he obtains alphabet books and begins teaching Bod, using the inscriptions on headstones.

One sunny day, Bod is copying inscriptions when a little girl appears and makes faces at him. Bod is impressed and feels dowdy next to her. She wears bright colors, while Bod is in his usual gray sheet. They introduce themselves and the girl—Scarlett—is sad to learn that Bod doesn't celebrate birthdays. Scarlett decides that Bod is five, like her. She says that her mother is reading at the bottom of the hill and told her to not talk to strangers. Bod, she says, *isn't* a stranger—he's her friend. She asks if she can join him in finding letters on gravestones. Bod feels protective of the headstones but realizes he'll have more fun with a friend. They search until Scarlett's mother calls for her. That night, after Scarlett tells her parents about Bod, her parents discuss that imaginary friends are normal for five-year-olds.

On sunny days, one of Scarlett's parents brings her to the graveyard. They sit and read while Scarlett finds Bod. Bod introduces Scarlett to his other friends. She doesn't care that she can't see these friends—her parents believe Bod is imaginary, so Scarlett figures Bod has imaginary friends, too. Scarlett is a lonely child since her family moves a lot. Her father teaches particle physics and has to move for each teaching job. As they traverse the graveyard, Bod tells Scarlett about his friends and the tombs. Scarlett tells Bod about airplanes and TV.

*Here, Silas confirms that the Freedom of the Graveyard makes Bod a part of the graveyard family. The graveyard itself protects Bod, and it also gives him access to people who care about him, which is another layer of protection. Silas also implies, somewhat cryptically, that Bod will one day die—he'll have to "wait much longer" for other skills that the ghosts have. This reminds readers that, despite his ghostly family and surroundings, Bod is indeed alive and mortal, and he still has to face his death someday. Similarly to how Silas is neither a ghost nor a living human, Bod toes the line between the living and the dead thanks to the Freedom of the Graveyard.*



*Meeting Scarlett, a living girl, is an important moment in Bod's growth. She introduces Bod to the world outside of the graveyard—the world of the living. It's telling, then, that she's dressed so colorfully compared to Bod. This subtly suggests that, compared to death (which is a peaceful, albeit boring state), life is vibrant and exciting. In this passage, the novel also suggests that childhood is a naturally selfish state, which is why Bod feels protective of the headstones. However, as Bod decides to share his graveyard with Scarlett, he takes a small step toward maturity and realizes the importance of generosity and making friends.*



*As children, both Bod and Scarlett are naturally open and accepting of each other's differences. It's not an issue that Bod (seemingly) has imaginary friends, and Bod seems to either not know or not care that Scarlett's parents think he's imaginary. This openness allows the children to learn about new worlds they don't otherwise have access to. For Bod this insight into Scarlett's world is especially important, since, unbeknownst to him, he'll one day join the living in the wider world.*



One afternoon, Scarlett asks who's the oldest person in the graveyard. Bod thinks Caius Pompeius, who came to Britain 100 years after the first Romans, is the oldest. Then, Scarlett asks if they can play in one of the "stone houses." Bod explains that they're locked. He can get in because he has the **Freedom of the Graveyard**, but Scarlett can't. Scarlett accuses Bod of being mean and storms away, though she suspects she's being unfair. Over dinner that night, Scarlett asks her parents who inhabited Britain before the Romans. Her mother tells her about the Celts. In the graveyard, Bod asks Silas the same question. Silas affirms that there were people in Britain before the Romans, but Silas is more interested in Bod's progress with the alphabet. He promises to find Bod someone who will teach him cursive.

After Silas leaves the graveyard, Bod calls Caius Pompeius and asks if he's the oldest in the graveyard. Caius says that there's a grave here for a person who lived before the Celts. Caius points to a hill and says the person is buried inside it. He explains that 300 years after Caius's death, someone found the entrance to the gravesite and went in, seeking treasure. He came back out with white hair. Then, 200 years ago, someone found the grave again. This time, the man who went into the grave didn't come back. Caius says he's not sure who's in the grave. But since Caius was buried, he's been able to feel "waiting" deep in the hill.

The next day, Scarlett shares what she learned from her parents: that the people before the Romans buried their dead underground with treasure. The graves are called barrows. Bod nods and asks if Scarlett wants to see a barrow. Though Scarlett is nervous, Bod holds up a key and assures Scarlett she'll be able to enter. Bod leads Scarlett to the Frobisher mausoleum, which is at the top of the barrow and has a secret tunnel down into the hill. When Bod points out the entrance to the tunnel, Scarlett is afraid. Remembering Caius Pompeius's stories, Bod realizes he can't assure Scarlett that everything will be fine. Instead, he suggests she stay in the mausoleum and he'll report back. Instead, Scarlett follows him in.

Bod can see in the dark, so he takes Scarlett's hands and guides her down the steps. He describes paintings and carvings in the walls and then says they've come to a big room. Bod can see a slab of stone and a ledge with small objects on it. There's one old corpse on the floor. Both children hear a "rustling slither" as a dead man, the Indigo Man, walks toward them. He has purple designs on his skin and says that he's the master of this grave. The Indigo Man tells the children to leave and doesn't react when Bod says he has the **Freedom of the Graveyard**. This normally placates ghosts, so Bod asks Scarlett if she can see the Indigo Man. She can.

*Explaining to Scarlett that she doesn't have the Freedom of the Graveyard is the first time that Bod and Scarlett have to confront their differences. When Silas is more interested in Bod's education than in talking about the graveyard's residents, it suggests that he hasn't forgotten that he must prepare Bod to one day enter the world of the living. Thus, it's essential to find ghosts willing to teach Bod to read and write—essential skills in the modern world.*



*Though Caius Pompeius wasn't thrilled to accept Bod into the graveyard at first, he's now willing to talk to Bod and answer questions. At this point, it seems that Caius—like the other ghosts—accepts that it's his duty to care for and guide Bod to adulthood. And since Bod sought Caius's advice specifically, it shows that Bod knows he has a number of people to look after him and answer his questions.*



*Having grown up in the world of the living, Scarlett is conditioned to believe that entering graves or being around the dead is scary or dangerous. In contrast, since Bod has grown up in a graveyard amongst dead people, this isn't a concern he shares. In this sense, even though both Bod and Scarlett are alive, there are still fundamental differences between them. Bod knows that if he wants Scarlett to come with him, he needs to be a good friend and help her feel safe. This is a new experience for her and it's his responsibility to make it positive.*



*Earlier, Silas said the Freedom of the Graveyard protects Bod. It's likely because of this that Bod isn't afraid of the Indigo Man—as far as Bod knows, nothing in the graveyard can hurt him. And especially since the Indigo Man doesn't behave like a normal ghost, it's a clue that something is amiss here. Bod shows that he's a rational, logical child who doesn't let fear get the better of him. Because he has this skill, he's able to talk Scarlett through this scary situation.*



As the Indigo Man howls menacingly, Scarlett apologizes for saying the ghosts are imaginary. Bod, however, says this one isn't real—Scarlett can't see dead people. Scarlett realizes Bod is right and suggests it's a scarecrow. Bod has never heard of scarecrows, but Scarlett explains that scarecrows are made-up things that look like people but frighten birds. Bod tells the Indigo Man that he's not scary. At this, the Indigo Man lies down on the rock slab and disappears. Then, Bod and Scarlett hear something huge slithering around the room. The something says, "we are the Sleer." Bod feels nervous, but Scarlett can't hear it. She just hears the slithering noise.

The Sleer says that they "guard and protect" "the resting place of the master." When Bod points out that the Sleer can only scare him and Scarlett, the Sleer says that fear is its greatest weapon. Noticing a brooch, a cup, and a knife on the ledge, Bod notes that the treasures are silly. The Sleer insists that they guard the treasures for the master. Bod shakes his head, which feels fuzzy, and leads Scarlett out of the barrow and the mausoleum. Then, they hear many people shouting for Scarlett. A police officer descends on the children and leads Scarlett to her parents, who are waiting in the chapel. No one notices Bod. Scarlett tells the adults what she and Bod found, but nobody believes her tale.

At twilight, Silas finds Bod at the amphitheater. Bod says unprompted that it's all his fault that Scarlett is in trouble. He tells Silas that they went into the barrow grave, but they only found "a Sleer who scares people." Three weeks later, Scarlett and her parents return to the graveyard. Once Scarlett's parents look away, Bod greets Scarlett. Scarlett explains that she and her parents are moving to Scotland, which is a long ways away. She asks if Bod is dead. When he says he isn't, she says he'll have to grow up and live in the world someday. Bod insists he has to stay put for his safety. Scarlett calls Bod brave before returning to her parents.

## CHAPTER 3

The narrator explains that every graveyard has a ghoulish gate, which is marked by a gravestone that is cold, covered in fungus, and water stained. Back in the story, Bod is furious: Silas is leaving and won't tell Bod why. He says only that he's going "away" to uncover "things." Bod kicks the ground as he walks to the northwestern side of the graveyard, which is overgrown. He wakes up a family of Victorian children to play and, later, runs back to the chapel. There, Bod finds a woman, whom Silas introduces as Miss Lupescu. She's not pretty and looks disapprovingly at Bod. After circling him and sniffing, Miss Lupescu tells Bod to report to her upon waking and before sleeping. She refers to Bod as "boy" and refuses to use his name.

*By working together, Scarlett and Bod are able to figure out the mystery of the Indigo Man and realize he's harmless. Each of them has new information to add, thanks to their different upbringings in the mortal world and in the world of the ghosts. Friendship, this suggests, can help people get through difficult situations more easily than if a person acted alone.*



*Bod again shows that he's levelheaded and cool under pressure. Fear, Bod already understands, is a powerful tool—but it doesn't work if he doesn't give in. The chaos that Scarlett and Bod find when they come back out of the grave drives home that Scarlett isn't at home in the graveyard like Bod is. Her parents understandably want to make sure that she's safe—and her true account of what's in the barrow likely does nothing to placate them. Bod's world (and his very existence as a boy being raised by ghosts) is too different from their own to even sound plausible.*



*Despite her young age, Scarlett understands an important truth: that every child, even Bod, will have to grow up and leave home one day. For Bod, this means he'll have to leave the graveyard—a thought that hasn't occurred to him.*



*As a child who still believes the world revolves around him, it's unthinkable to Bod that Silas could ever have a good reason to leave him. Bod's angst seems somewhat justified given the way Miss Lupescu treats him. It's rude and disrespectful to refuse to use Bod's name, as it suggests Miss Lupescu doesn't genuinely care about who Bod is as a person. Miss Lupescu's arrival might mean that Bod's community is expanding, but it doesn't mean that everyone in Bod's community is as kind and committed to him as Silas is.*



Silas tells Bod he'll be in good hands, but Bod shouts that Miss Lupescu is horrible. Bod apologizes only because he knows Silas is leaving and doesn't want to disappoint him. Since Silas isn't someone who accepts hugs, Bod shakes Silas's hand and watches him leave. Then, Bod goes to his parents to complain about Silas. Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens cheerfully assure Bod that Silas will be back to bring Bod food, but Bod thinks food is unimportant. Unlike the ghosts in the graveyard, Silas gives Bod modern information that's always correct. He also makes Bod feel safe.

Later, Miss Lupescu sets down her first meal for Bod: beetroot-barley stew and a salad dripping with vinegar. This is a change from the food Silas provides, which usually comes in packets. Bod eats some of the stew but can barely keep the slimy salad down. Miss Lupescu forces Bod to eat one more piece of salad and then begins their lesson. Bod is annoyed; he doesn't usually have lessons in the summer and has more than enough teachers the rest of the year. But Miss Lupescu sniffs and, in her slightly accented voice, asks if a six-year-old boy knows everything. She asks him to tell her why he should avoid ghouls and to list the "different kinds of people." Bod can do neither. Miss Lupescu accuses Bod of willful ignorance.

Miss Lupescu's preferred teaching method is to make Bod memorize lists, and she spends three days teaching Bod to call for help in every language. When she asks him to call for help in the Night-Gaunt language, Bod says this is stupid since he forgot what a night-gaunt even is. Miss Lupescu explains that they fly in the red skies surrounding Ghûlheim and ignores Bod's insistence that he'll never need to know this. He makes the eagle-like cry and asks if the dog he's seen in the graveyard belongs to Miss Lupescu. She says it doesn't and gives him another list to memorize. Bod tries to study, but he's too angry. His parents won't listen to his complaints and send him to study.

Bod kicks stones and wanders around. When he spots the dog and tries to call it, the dog walks away. Bod stops next to a grave that captures his mood: it's water stained and covered in fungus. Bod sits down and falls asleep. Meanwhile, three ghouls race toward the graveyard from the village. They scuttle like rats. At the edge of the graveyard, the ghoul the Duke of Westminster smells a werewolf, but the Bishop of Bath and Wells insists it's just a normal dog. The ghouls pause beside the ghoul-gate when they find Bod. They introduce themselves as "most important folk" and Bod tells them how no one cares about him.

*Here, Bod reveals why exactly he's so upset to lose Silas, even if temporarily. Now that Scarlett is gone, Silas represents Bod's only connection to the outside world—the world that Bod will one day inhabit. With this, the novel suggests that Bod is already differentiating himself from the ghosts in the graveyard. Though they may provide care and companionship, they can't effectively prepare Bod for his future.*



*Miss Lupescu's accented way of speaking suggests that she's not originally from Britain. This, coupled with her different teaching style and food, forces Bod to confront his internalized fear of or discomfort with difference. At this point, the stark differences between Silas and Miss Lupescu make Bod think that Miss Lupescu is evil, just because she's not what he's used to. This points to Bod's immaturity.*



*To Bod's credit, Miss Lupescu's teaching methods perhaps do require more focus and discipline than a six-year-old can muster. But she nevertheless teaches Bod useful information, like knowing how to ask for help in all sorts of languages. Bod's inability to see the utility in this speaks again to his lack of maturity, in addition to his personal dislike of Miss Lupescu as a substitute for Silas.*



*Bod's unwillingness to pay attention to Miss Lupescu's lessons may have major consequences—while he saw the gravestone as something that mirrors his emotions, it's actually something that may be dangerous. And given that Miss Lupescu previously wanted Bod to know why he should avoid ghouls, it seems likely that the ghouls are dangerous beings to avoid.*



Bod asks to accompany the ghouls to wherever they're going, especially once they mention that the food is amazing there. The ghouls agree. Despite being only a little bigger than Bod, the ghouls lift him, open the ghoul-gate, and toss Bod into the darkness. Bod hasn't experienced total darkness in years, since he sees as ghosts do. He's terrified, but excited too. Bod and the ghouls emerge from a high wall with tombstones jutting out everywhere. The sky is a nasty red, while the sun is small and gives no heat. Bod looks around as the ghouls toss him amongst themselves and descend the wall. Suddenly, two more ghouls emerge from a grave and approach Bod's new friends.

Bod's new friends introduce him to the Emperor of China and the 33rd President of the United States. The Bishop of Bath and Wells explains to the newcomers that Bod is going to become one of them, and the ghouls explain what that means. Bod will have strong teeth, a tongue capable of flaying flesh, and he will be free and dangerous. When Bod asks what happens if he doesn't want to become a ghoul, the ghouls insist that Bod wants to join them. Then, they see a group of ghouls bounding down the path below. The ghouls toss Bod around as they race to join their fellows. When they reach a barren plain with a road running through it, Bod catches sight of the city of Ghûlheim. The city looks like "a huge mouth of jutting teeth."

The ghouls lift Bod and still tossing him between them, lope toward the city. Bod feels stupid and sick. When he catches sight of night-gaunts—huge winged beasts—Bod makes the cry like Miss Lupescu taught him. A night-gaunt starts to descend, but the ghouls shush Bod. As the night-gaunt returns to the sky, Bod's hope disappears. The sun sets and two moons rise. One moon looks like moldy cheese, but the ghouls seem excited to see it. They stop, start a fire, and tell stories about how great it is to be a ghoul. The ghouls ignore Bod's request to go home. When they hear a howl in the distance, the ghouls are terrified and fall silent for a bit. After a while, they resume singing and assure Bod that becoming a ghoul is great and that he won't remember where he came from.

Bod falls asleep for several hours. When he wakes up, the ghouls are arguing: several of the ghouls in their group have disappeared without a trace. The ghouls pick Bod up and resume their run to Ghûlheim. To Bod, it seems like they're running from something. At midday, the ghouls stop. As night-gaunts circle overhead, the ghouls argue. Some believe the disappearance of their friends is concerning. They arm themselves with pebbles as another howl booms over the plain. The ghouls agree that they heard nothing and then begin the climb up to Ghûlheim. When night-gaunts circle, the famous writer Victor Hugo throws Bod in a sack over his shoulder.

*That Bod can't see in the darkness of the ghoul-gate suggests that wherever he is now, the Freedom of the Graveyard doesn't protect him. In this sense, Bod is totally alone, without anyone to care for him. This foray through the ghoul-gate, then, will test whether Bod is ready to tackle life on his own yet. His willingness to follow the ghouls implies he thinks he is, while his willingness to trust nefarious ghouls calls his maturity into question.*



*For as much as Bod wants to escape Miss Lupescu, becoming a ghoul wasn't what he had in mind. He still likes who he is and where he lives, and he's invested in his life as Nobody Owens. Becoming a ghoul would represent giving up on that identity and creating a new one amongst an entirely new community. And for that matter, the ghouls don't act like good friends, as they don't listen to Bod when he voices his discomfort, and Ghûlheim looks far from inviting.*



*Bod discovers that Miss Lupescu wasn't teaching him useless information—he is, after all, in need of help from a night-gaunt. As Bod recognizes that Miss Lupescu's lessons were purposeful, it's possible he'll begin to change how he thinks about her. He may be able to see that despite her strictness and unappetizing food, she still had his best interests at heart. The ghouls, meanwhile, don't care about what Bod wants.*



*Because Bod is a child without his guardians and is in a strange land, he doesn't have much or any power to push back against the ghouls. Indeed, he's so powerless that they put him in a sack—thereby taking away his ability to even see what's going on. However, since Bod does know how to call for help in the language of the night-gaunts, it's possible he has more of a community right now than he realizes. The circling night-gaunts seem to at least make the ghouls nervous, which is hopeful for Bod.*



While the ghouls race up the rocks, Bod finds a screw inside the bag he's trapped in and digs at the fabric. He hears another howl and realizes that whatever is howling might be even worse than the ghouls. Bod figures that if he dies, he'll at least die knowing who he is and where he came from. When the hole is big enough for Bod to see through, he looks down at the desert floor. Now, it's several hundred feet below him. The cliff face has giant-size steps cut into it, and Bod decides he'll have to risk a long fall. Then, Bod notices a huge gray monster chasing after them. Sharp teeth bite the bag until Bod tumbles out and lands between a wolf's paws. The wolf is huge, with red eyes. The ghouls abandon Bod and continue toward Ghûlheim.

Bod vows to get home, so he leaps down to the next step. He lands on his ankle, twists it, and falls off the cliff. He hears the wolf, in Miss Lupescu's voice, say, "Oh, Bod!" Bod is terrified. Something grabs him and begins to rise. Bod sees that a night-gaunt rescued him. He says "help" and the night-gaunt hoots in response. As they land, Miss Lupescu races for them and informs Bod that this is the third time the night-gaunts have saved his life since he left. The night-gaunt helps Bod onto Miss Lupescu's back and chuckles when Bod attempts the screech that means both "thank you" and "goodbye." Miss Lupescu begins to run. She explains that she's a Hound of God, so she has her own path out of Hell.

When they reach the boundary between Hell and Earth, Bod looks up at the stars. Miss Lupescu offers to teach him their names as they resume their journey. Moments later, Bod is in Miss Lupescu's arms and Mrs. Owens takes Bod from Miss Lupescu. The next day, Bod limps up the hill and retrieves Miss Lupescu's last list of facts to memorize. The first item on it is "The Hounds of God." The explanation reads that while men refer to these creatures as werewolves, the creatures refer to themselves as the Hounds of God. They believe their transformation is a gift from God and will pursue villains to Hell's gates.

Silas returns at the end of the month with a stiff right arm and a model of the Golden Gate Bridge for Bod. Bod tells Silas he learned a lot and points out several constellations. Both Silas and Miss Lupescu say that they learned things as well. Miss Lupescu suggests she might come back next summer to instruct Bod again. Silas raises an eyebrow at Bod, but Bod says he'd like that.

*Describing the steps as "giant-sized" may reflect Bod's childish perspective—or it may suggest that no human belongs on the steps of Ghûlheim. Bod decides to accept his death because it'll mean that he won't have to become a ghoul and instead can retain who he is and remember where he came from (the graveyard) up until his final moments. If he were to become a ghoul, he'd lose all of that. In this moment, then, Bod decides that his family and his home are more important to him than anything else.*



*Bod doesn't realize that Miss Lupescu is right in front of him until it's too late. While it's impossible to fault Bod for this too much (especially since Miss Lupescu didn't tell Bod that she's a Hound of God), this suggests that at times, Bod does let his fear get the better of him and cloud his judgment. Learning the language of the night-gaunts helps Bod form connections with others who now make up his community—if he ever returns to Hell, he'll have someone to look after him.*



*After Bod's foray into Hell, he now knows that Miss Lupescu isn't teaching him useless facts just to bore and punish him. She's teaching him things that apply to his life and will help him in the future. As Bod learns this, he comes to respect Miss Lupescu more. He knows now that while she's different from him and definitely different from Silas, she's not against Bod—if he lets her, she'll become part of his community.*



*While Bod clearly learned a lot from his substitute guardian, it's telling that Miss Lupescu openly admits that she learned things as well. This shows Bod that his quest for knowledge will never be over, no matter how old or mature he gets—there's always something to learn.*



## CHAPTER 4

Everyone knows there's a witch buried on the edge of the graveyard. Eight-year-old Bod isn't allowed to go near that area; according to Mrs. Owens, it's dangerously damp down there. Since Bod is an obedient child, he often stands and looks out at the wasteland beyond the graveyard fence, but he never ventures closer. He knows Mrs. Owens's story isn't the whole story, so he seeks out Silas and asks what's down there. Silas says it's unconsecrated ground, or ground that hasn't been blessed. He explains that here in England, people bless the ground around churches and leave unconsecrated ground—like Potter's Field—for people who died by suicide or who were criminals. Bod asks if the people buried there are bad people, but Silas says no one is particularly evil. He reminds Bod that laws used to be very harsh, and there are always people who think killing themselves will fix things.

Silas notes that on the whole, committing suicide doesn't actually fix anything. When Bod asks about the witch, Silas says there are "suicides, criminals, and witches" in Potter's Field and then sends Bod off for lessons. Bod is late meeting Mr. Pennyworth, who's in a terrible mood. Mr. Pennyworth announces that today, they'll work on Bod's Fading. Reluctantly, Bod tries to Fade. Nothing happens, so Mr. Pennyworth scolds him. Bod imagines himself fading into the wall of the mausoleum, but he can't. When Mr. Pennyworth's lesson is over, Bod goes to Miss Borrowes for grammar and composition lessons. Bod asks about the witch, but Miss Borrowes tells Bod to not walk on the unconsecrated ground—the people there "aren't our sort of people."

Since Bod is curious but obedient, he climbs his favorite apple tree that hangs over the fence instead of walking into Potter's Field. He sits and looks down on the Potter's Field and wonders if the witch is old and ugly. When his stomach rumbles, Bod notices a single apple on the tree. As he reaches for it, the branch breaks. Bod comes to in the gardener's compost heap. A voice tells Bod to hush and inspects his leg. The voice deems Bod's leg sprained. When Bod looks up, he sees the speaker is the ghost of a teen girl. She's heard of Bod. When Bod asks if she was a suicide or a thief, the girl says she didn't steal anything. Bod tells her that supposedly, there's a witch here.

*In talking about Potter's Field's damp landscape, Mrs. Owens evades talking about the people actually buried there. When Silas explains who's buried in Potter's Field, it's more understandable why Mrs. Owens wants Bod to steer clear of the area. Silas, however, tries to show Bod that it's not okay to think someone is evil just because they died a criminal by society's standards. This ignores the fact that justice systems often punish people for silly reasons. By teaching Bod to think more critically, Silas helps Bod become more accepting of people's differences and less judgmental of their mistakes or circumstances.*



*While it's unclear why Silas won't discuss specifics about the witch in Potter's Field, it's possible he simply doesn't see a witch as worth mentioning—she may be just a normal person to him, not someone to fear, avoid, or gossip about. Unlike Mrs. Owens, Miss Borrowes doesn't try to hide her feelings about Potter's Field and its residents. Miss Borrowes seems to believe that everyone there is evil and therefore inferior to those who were buried in the graveyard proper.*



*Though Bod doesn't agree with Miss Borrowes's insistence that the residents of Potter's Field are evil, he nevertheless holds preconceived notions of his own. He expects a witch to be old and ugly, so he doesn't think to wonder if the ghost of this young girl might be the witch. This moment suggests that part of coming of age is shedding these preconceived notions and judging people based on their actions, not buying into stereotypes.*





The girl says there is—she was drowned, burned, and buried without a **headstone**. Bod is impressed. The witch sits down with Bod and says that they came for her at dawn. Everyone in the village testified against her, and one woman accused her of seducing a village boy with witchcraft. They drowned her, believing that if she were a witch she'd survive. The girl said she died, which disappoints Bod. But the girl assures Bod that she's definitely a witch—after the villagers fished her out of the pond, she cursed them and *then* died. When she says she doesn't have a headstone, she looks wistful. Bod asks what happened to her accusers. The girl says that a week after her death, a carpet arrived from London, carrying the plague. Everyone who watched her execution succumbed and was buried in a mass grave.

As Bod stands and gingerly tests his injured leg, he asks if the girl was a witch before she cursed everyone. She snaps that it didn't take witchcraft to woo the boy. Bod thinks this doesn't answer the question but stays silent. He asks the girl's name. Reluctantly, she introduces herself as Liza Hempstock. Liza sadly says she doesn't have a **headstone**. Bod heads back into the graveyard and vows to find Liza a headstone. He decides to keep his quest to himself and spends days plotting. Bod is so distracted that Mr. Pennyworth snarls that Bod's Fading is getting even worse. Since Bod is thinking about shops where living people buy headstones, he barely listens. Later, he asks Miss Borrowes how money works and what headstones cost. Bod has some money, but not enough to buy a headstone.

Bod decides to visit the Indigo Man's tomb. He climbs down the steps into the stone chamber. The Sleer coils around the room, but Bod isn't afraid. He informs the Sleer that he's going to take something away and asks if this is the Sleer's grave. Cryptically, the Sleer says that the "master" left them here to guard the treasures until the master returns. Bod can feel the Sleer trying to scare him, so he picks up the brooch from the stone slab. The Sleer hisses that "it comes back" as Bod climbs out of the tomb. Once he's outside, Bod inspects the brooch. The stone is huge and red and seems to pull at Bod's soul. It's set in black metal worked into a three-headed, snakelike creature. Bod wonders if it's what the Sleer looks like.

Bod races down to Potter's Field and calls for Liza. When she appears, Bod asks her what she wants on her **headstone**. She says she'd like an "E" and an "H," but she doesn't care about dates. The sun rises, and she disappears. Bod knows he'll need real clothes to leave the graveyard. Not wanting to alert Silas to his plans, Bod changes into the gardening jeans and workman's jacket that are stored in the gardener's hut. He feels very fancy in his too-big clothes and walks out the main graveyard gate.

*Despite Bod's preconceived ideas of what a witch looks or acts like, he has no trouble accepting that this girl is the infamous witch. It's telling that the witch was buried without a headstone. Not burying her with one was a way for the villagers to dehumanize and disrespect her, even after her death. It deprives the witch of any identity and any way for others to know she even existed.*



*Bod's choice to find Liza a headstone is a mark of his growing maturity. While he was once a selfish child, he now recognizes the importance of being kind to others and putting them first sometimes. And most importantly, finding a headstone for Liza will make her feel like a real part of the graveyard community despite being over in the unconsecrated ground. Without one, there's no proof of her existence. A headstone would validate Liza's life, her death, and her existence in the graveyard.*



*Since he's already entered the barrow grave with Scarlett and encountered the Sleer, Bod doesn't think that the creature is anything to fear. And to Bod's credit, the Sleer doesn't do anything frightening when Bod takes the brooch. The Sleer does, however, start to explain what Caius Pompeius described in the second chapter as "waiting." The Sleer is waiting for its master to return and has clearly been waiting several thousand years.*



*Rather than just going out and putting just anything on Liza's headstone, Bod makes an effort to ask her how she'd like to be remembered. In this sense, Bod doesn't make assumptions about Liza—a mark of his own maturity and of their budding friendship.*



Abanazer Bolger runs an antiques shop in the Old Town. He trades over the counter for some things, but much of his business happens in the back room. Though Abanazer sees lots of odd people in his line of work, Bod is the strangest person he's ever seen. As a general rule, Abanazer doesn't buy from kids. But when Bod pulls out the brooch, Abanazer is shocked. It's snakestone, and Abanazer accuses Bod of stealing it from a museum. Bod threatens to take his business elsewhere, so Abanazer smiles and invites Bod to have cookies and chat. They enter a windowless back room and Abanazer offers Bod a cookie.

Abanazer inspects the brooch again. He thinks it's priceless, but he tells Bod it's almost worthless. Before they can strike a deal, though, Abanazer says he needs to know where Bod got it. Bod stays silent for a few minutes, but then says he got it out of a grave. Seeing the look of greed on Abanazer's face, Bod stops talking and refuses to say where he found the brooch. When Abanazer realizes that there are no parents waiting for Bod, he locks Bod in the storeroom. Out in the shop, Abanazer hears the bell ring. Nobody is in the shop, though, so Abanazer locks the door. It begins to storm outside as Abanazer calls a man named Tom.

Bod feels foolish and wonders what Silas would say. He looks for a way out and digs through the desk drawers. When he finds paint pots, he pockets them—he could throw them in the man's face. Liza whispers in Bod's ear and asks what he's doing. She's unimpressed when he won't say and tells Bod to slip through the wall. Bod explains that he can't; the **Freedom of the Graveyard** only lets him do that in the graveyard. He asks Liza why she can be out during the day, unlike the other ghosts, and she sniffs that she doesn't have to follow the graveyard's rules since she's buried in unconsecrated ground. Liza goes into the shop area to watch Abanazer.

Feeling as though someone is watching him, Abanazer looks around suspiciously. He already regrets calling Tom Hustings, and he regrets that he'll have to sell the brooch. He wants it more the longer he looks at it. As Abanazer thinks about Bod, he reluctantly pulls out a black-edged card with "Jack" handwritten in the middle. Abanazer's own handwritten directions for how to contact Jack are on the back. When Tom arrives, Abanazer lets him in and brandishes the brooch, explaining that it's from a pagan barrow grave. Tom says it might be worth it to go about this deal legally; a museum would pay and name the exhibit after him and Abanazer. Abanazer, though, says he knows people who will pay more.

*Just as the brooch seemed to exert a pull on Bod, it does the same with Abanazer. But while Bod is motivated by his love for his friend and his desire to help her, Abanazer appears to be motivated by money alone. Indeed, Abanazer wants the brooch so badly that he's willing to break his own rules (not buying from kids) to acquire the brooch.*



*Once Bod realizes that Abanazer isn't playing fair with him, he realizes he made a mistake in coming here. But because Bod is still a child, he doesn't seem to have the capacity to get out of this mess alone. The novel also seems to imply that Bod isn't wrong to suspect that Abanazer is evil and dangerous. By making Abanazer—a living person—one of the novel's antagonists, the novel emphasizes that the only safe place for Bod is in the graveyard, among the dead. In this way, the novel continues to subvert readers' expectations about good and evil; while literature usually depicts evil ghosts and werewolves being vanquished by heroic humans, in this novel, the ghosts are kindly and the human is evil.*



*Liza's unexpected arrival—which probably accounts for the bell ringing that Abanazer heard earlier—shows Bod that even when he's outside the graveyard, there are still members in his community who can and will help him. Because of where Liza is buried, she has more privileges than some of the other ghosts in the graveyard (which is ironic given that being buried among criminals in Potter's Field is far from a privilege). Furthermore, the fact that Liza uses these privileges to come to Bod's aid suggests that Silas was right to encourage Bod to think critically about the people in Potter's Field—clearly, Liza is on Bod's side and means him no harm.*



*The business card is presumably for the Jack who tried to murder Bod as a toddler—more proof that Bod isn't safe amongst the living at this point. This also means that Abanazer is even more of a villain than he seemed at first, given that he may have personal interest in seeing Bod killed. He's not just interested in the brooch and the money he could make from it; he's somehow involved with murderers.*



Then, Abanazer says he has a different kind of treasure: he knows someone looking for a particular boy, and he thinks he has the boy. The boy found the brooch. At this, Tom points out that they won't find the rest of the treasure if they turn the boy in. Bored of listening to the men argue, Liza returns to Bod. She finds him with his fists clenched and his face scrunched up. He explains he's trying to Fade and then picks up a glass paperweight. Bod says he could just hit Abanazer with it and run. Liza says there's another man now and asks why Bod is here at all. In a small voice, Bod says he was trying to get Liza a **headstone**. Liza says this is the first nice thing anyone's done for her in centuries. She puts a spell on Bod so he can Fade.

When Tom opens the door a moment later, he can't see Bod. Abanazer pokes his head in and decides Bod is hiding. Now invisible, Bod holds still as the men search the room. Liza giggles, which the men are able to hear. Then, she blows her lips together and the lights go out. The men leave the office and lock it behind them. Out in the shop, Abanazer discovers that Tom put the brooch in his pocket. They argue over who owns the brooch and if they should tell Jack about the boy. Abanazer returns to the office for whiskey and puts several drops from a black bottle in the whiskey. Bod hears Abanazer pour Tom a drink and Tom accuse Abanazer of poisoning it. After a crash, everything goes quiet.

Liza says she and Bod should slip out. Bod notices the key is still in the keyhole, so he pokes it out onto a piece of paper slid under the door. When he slides the paper—and the key—back into the office and unlocks the door, Liza is impressed. Out in the store, she and Bod find Abanazer and Tom both knocked out. Bod pockets the brooch and Liza tells Bod to take the card too. The card disturbs Bod, so he suggests they burn it. Liza gasps and forces Bod to take it, if only to give to Silas. Bod puts it into an envelope. Two hundred miles away, Jack wakes up. He knows something is happening.

Bod hurries toward the graveyard. It's early evening now and Silas suddenly appears in front of Bod. Silas says he's disappointed but envelops Bod in his cloak. As they travel back to the graveyard, Bod says he knew that Silas would save him. He mentions Liza's help, too. When they arrive at the chapel, Bod gives Silas the card and shares everything that happened to him. When Bod asks if he's in trouble, Silas says that Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens will punish Bod. He then disappears to dispose of the card. Bod runs up to the barrow grave and returns the brooch. The Sleer says, "it always comes back."

*Once Liza realizes that Bod was going out of his way to help her, she knows she has no excuse to not help Bod in return. She realizes in this moment that Bod is a true friend who's willing to risk his safety and perhaps his life to show her the respect and compassion she was denied in life. And for this, Liza goes out of her way to make sure that Bod stays safe, helping him Fade (disappear) when he struggles to do it on his own. It may mean that Liza won't get a headstone, but Liza seems to realize that a friendship with Bod is more meaningful than a headstone.*



*It's unclear if Liza can perform these tricks because she's a ghost or because she's a witch—but regardless, it's clear that Liza is frightening Tom and Abanazer for commendable reasons. This shows readers again that it's important to judge people by their actions and intentions rather than relying on stereotypes. Abanazer's willingness to poison his business partner, meanwhile, reinforces that he's dangerous and seemingly without a moral compass.*



*It seems likely that the card is imbued with magic of some sort, since Bod's touch seems to wake Jack. This suggests that even as Bod moves into his future, he can't escape his past—or Jack. Liza, however, encourages Bod to do everything he can to make his past as harmless as possible by giving the card to Silas.*



*If the brooch is destined to return to the barrow, it's possible that the Sleer had a hand in making sure that Bod was able to escape and bring it back. Bod may have more allies than he thinks he does.*



Bod runs through the graveyard, his bottom stinging—the Owens died long before it was decided that parents shouldn't beat children, so Mr. Owens spanked Bod as his punishment. Bod slips into the Potter's Field, but Liza doesn't answer his calls. He pulls the glass paperweight out of his pocket. Then, Bod pulls out the paint and paintbrush and carefully paints "E.H." and "we don't forget" on it. He puts it down where he thinks Liza's head would be. As Bod runs back to the graveyard, he hears Liza's voice say, "not bad."

*Even if Bod didn't succeed in getting Liza a proper headstone, the paperweight is perhaps more meaningful than a stone marker might have been. Bod made it himself, so the gravestone says as much about his friendship with Liza as it does about Liza herself.*



## CHAPTER 5

Bod knows something is happening when Mrs. Owens kicks him out into the winter night so she can hem her dress and dust. As Bod turns to go, Mrs. Owens sings a couplet: "Rich man, poor man, come away. / Come to dance the **Macabray**." She refuses to explain what it means. Bod then finds Mother Slaughter squinting at a climbing plant. She asks Bod to tell her if the flowers are blooming and scolds him for saying that nothing blooms in winter. Mother Slaughter says that *everything* blooms in its time and recites a couplet that mentions the Macabray. When Bod asks what the Macabray is, Mother Slaughter disappears. Bod then asks his friend Fortinbras to play, but Fortinbras is busy getting ready for "tomorrow night." Fortinbras's grandmother sends Bod away and recites another couplet.

*As all the ghosts talk about something called the Macabray, Bod feels out of the loop and as though he's not a real part of the community. And in some ways, Bod isn't—he's the only living person in the graveyard and is therefore fundamentally different from his parents and peers. But Bod still doesn't see himself as being all that different from the ghosts in the graveyard. The ghosts are Bod's playmates and guardians, and Bod is so used to being in the graveyard that he may not even notice that he's different. The Macabray, then, throws Bod's mortality into sharp relief.*



Confused, Bod heads for the church to wait for Silas. Early in the morning, Silas arrives with a bag of clothes for Bod. He explains that Bod is 10 now and old enough to dress like a living person. Once Bod learns to tie his shoelaces, he asks Silas what the **Macabray** is. Silas says that it's a dance, but he can't tell Bod anything more. Silas notes that one needs to be dead or alive to dance the Macabray—and he is neither. Bod wants to hug and comfort Silas, but Silas isn't the affectionate type. Silas compliments Bod's new outfit and observes that he looks like he grew up outside the graveyard. When Bod asks if he can stay in the graveyard forever with Silas, Silas says simply, "Everything in its season."

*Allowing Bod to graduate from wearing a sheet to modern street clothes reinforces that Bod is different from everyone else in the graveyard. While his gray sheet may have made him look more ghostly, now it's more obvious that Bod is alive. It's possible that Silas brought Bod clothes in preparation for the Macabray, since Bod, as a living person, can dance it. Silas's inability to participate (as a vampire, he's neither alive nor dead) again suggests that Silas may be Bod's beloved guardian, but that doesn't mean that Silas is truly at home here.*



The next day, Bod smells something floral and follows his nose to vines that are covered in clusters of white flowers. When Bod hears footsteps, he fades into the ivy. Three living men and a woman arrive, carrying baskets and scissors. The men instruct the woman—the town mayor, Mrs. Caraway—to fill the baskets with blossoms. Mrs. Caraway thinks this is ridiculous, but one of the men says it's a tradition. Later, he explains, they'll distribute a flower to every person in the Old Town. Another man says that the winter blossoms haven't bloomed in 80 years, and the third says, haltingly, "One to leave and one to stay and all to dance the **Macabray**." None of them believes in ghosts, but they feel like someone is watching them.

*It's telling that Mrs. Caraway and her associates seem to have only a cursory understanding of what they're doing and why. This suggests that what's happening is beyond their understanding or their control—it may be happening "in its season," as Silas and Mother Slaughter said. The 80 years that have passed between this Macabray and the last seems to point to the average lifespan of a person in England—so the Macabray may have to do with life and death. This is also supported by the fact that now, Bod has heard both ghosts and living people talking about it.*



Darkness comes early that evening. Bod can't find any ghosts to play with, and he starts to panic when he can't find Silas either. From the graveyard's front gates, he can hear music. It sounds like a prelude or an overture. Bod walks into the Old Town and passes Mrs. Caraway, who's pinning flowers to people's lapels. Everyone Bod sees has a flower. The music seems to be coming from "the edge of perception." Bod realizes with a start that everyone is walking in time with the music. He asks one of Mrs. Caraway's associates for a flower. The associate explains that it's an old tradition to give away the winter flowers to everyone.

The music gets louder. Bod wonders if he can hear it better thanks to his flower and feels like dancing. Instead, he jogs down to the municipal garden in front of the Old Town Hall. People are gathered there, listening to the music. It's the most living people Bod has ever seen at once. Bod knows that whatever's happening, this is unusual. He tries to ask a young woman with a baby what's going on, but she just sways. Suddenly, the music stops. The clock strikes midnight and then, the ghosts walk down the hill from the graveyard. They walk five in a row and step in time. When the dead reach the square, Josiah Worthington asks Mrs. Caraway to dance. As their hands touch, the music begins in earnest.

Liza grabs Bod's hand and leads him into the dance. Bod feels a "fierce joy" and his feet seem to know the steps. After Liza, Bod dances with Fortinbras. He sees Abanazer Bolger dancing with Miss Borrowes. The dancing couples form long lines and Bod finds himself next to Liza. She can't answer where the music comes from but says that the ghosts always remember. Then, she points excitedly to a horse carrying a beautiful woman. The Lady on the Grey dismounts, curtsies to the dancers, and then joins them. The dance gets faster and Bod marvels that everyone is dancing. But then he notices Silas standing alone. Bod calls to Silas to join them, but Silas disappears.

Someone announces the last dance and Bod finds himself dancing with the Lady on the Grey. Bod compliments her horse and asks if he can ride it. The Lady says that someday, Bod will—everyone does. As the dance ends, Bod bows to the Lady and feels suddenly exhausted. The clock chimes 12 times and Bod doesn't know how long he's been dancing. He realizes the dead are gone, but the ground is covered in the white flowers.

*This is the first time since Bod was an infant that he's found himself totally alone, so it's understandably unsettling for him. However, it's telling that in this moment, Bod runs toward the living rather than waiting for the dead or Silas to appear. This reinforces that even though Bod is part of the graveyard family, he's still part of the living, too. And in times like this, when the supernatural realm seems to cross over into the world of the living, Bod is reminded of this fact.*



*Even though Bod doesn't know what's going on, he doesn't seem as afraid at this point. This may be because the supernatural music feels familiar and makes this seem less worrying. Seeing the ghosts walk down the hill and begin the dance reinforces that the Macabray is a version of the danse macabre, or the dance of death: an artistic allegory from the Late Middle Ages. The living dance with the dead, and it's a reminder for the living that death can come for them at any time—so it's important to live life and enjoy it while it lasts.*



*Though Bod seems to think he's just dancing with his friends, it's telling that he dances as one of the living, not as one of the dead (the couples seem to be made up of one live person and one ghost, which is why Bod is paired with ghosts). Silas, however, can't join the dance because as a vampire, he's not living or dead. The whole town and graveyard seems to be here and be participating; that Silas is set apart reinforces his feelings of unbelonging.*



*As the person who carries everyone to their death, the Lady on the Grey knows that Bod will die someday, just like everyone else. It's possible to read Bod's request to ride the horse as an innocent one, but Bod may also ask because he doesn't see anything wrong with being dead. He doesn't entirely understand that he's different from the ghosts.*



When Bod wakes up the next day, he's eager to talk about the **Macabray**. But Mrs. Owens snorts and reminds Bod he's not allowed out of the graveyard. Bod finds Josiah Worthington and says that Josiah started the dance. Josiah says that "the dead and the living do not mingle," and points out that if they danced the *danse macabre*, they wouldn't talk about it—especially not to the living. Bod realizes he danced with the living, not with the ghosts. He leaves Josiah and races down the hill, looking for Silas. Bod tells Silas not to lie to him: he saw Silas watching the dance last night. He asks why nobody will talk about it. Silas says that people can't talk about some things and others don't remember. Bod is afraid and confused, but it starts to snow and Bod forgets all about the Macabray.

*Silas essentially proposes that some things are too fantastical to talk about—and for the living, some things are too strange to remember. But because Bod toes the line between the living and the dead, he can remember. In this sense, Bod may understand the symbolism of the Macabray better than anyone. He knows what it's like to be dead, since all of his friends and parents are ghosts. On some level, Bod knows that he'll join them one day. But because Bod knows what a ghost's existence is like, he may understand better than others why he should endeavor to live and enjoy it.*



## INTERLUDE

One of the ballrooms at a swanky hotel is hosting a private function. The 100 attendees are all men and all wear black suits, but they hail from all over the globe. A cheery man stands in front of the others and announces "Good Deeds Done." Jack sits at a table at the front, talking with a man with silver hair. The silver-haired man reminds Jack that time is passing and that Jack failed. Jack was supposed to "take care of" the baby. A waiter pours coffee for the entire table. The other men at the table pay close attention to the speaker and ignore Jack and the silver-haired man.

*Jack and the silver-haired man are presumably discussing Bod. This conversation reminds readers that Bod and Jack aren't done with each other yet—Jack's associates clearly need him to murder Bod for some reason. It's possible that the other men at the table ignore Jack and the silver-haired man in deference to the other man, as he seems to be more powerful than Jack.*



Jack insists that he has a lead that's connected to the "trouble" he had in San Francisco. The silver-haired man, Mr. Dandy, asks if Jack ran this by the secretary, but Jack explains the secretary isn't interested; he just wants results. Mr. Dandy says they all want results. The other men at the table nod in agreement.

*Readers may recall that Silas brought back a model of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco for Bod when he left Miss Lupescu in charge—the "trouble" may be Silas trying to protect Bod. This reveals that Silas leaves Bod so that he can fight these men and give Bod a chance to live.*



## CHAPTER 6

One rainy day, Bod sits in a sheltered spot in the graveyard, reading. When he hears a voice coming his way and cursing, Bod looks up and sees Thackeray Porringer. Thackeray died of anger at 14, after his employer tricked and humiliated him. He died clutching his only possession—a copy of *Robinson Crusoe*—and he wants his book back. Bod reveals himself and promises to give the book back when he's done, but he hands it over when he sees how hurt Thackeray looks. Thackeray punches Bod's ear, but it seems to hurt Thackeray's hand as much as it does Bod's head. Bod heads down the path, slips, and almost runs into Miss Euphemia and Tom.

*Bod's desire to read reflects his growing curiosity about the world. But living in a graveyard, Bod has few opportunities to find books that will teach him about the world outside of the graveyard, hence his implied theft of Thackeray's book. Thackeray's violence adds insult to injury, as it may make Bod feel less welcome in the graveyard. This all situates Bod in a phase where he's growing more independent and curious, while also finding that the graveyard can't satisfy all his curiosities.*



Tom and Miss Euphemia warn Bod to be careful and then note that Silas is looking for him. When Bod finds Silas, he explains what happened with Thackeray. Silas cuts Bod off. He states that Bod has been here for 11 years and it's time to discuss where Bod came from. Bod's heart pounds. Silas says that Bod is obviously different—Mrs. Owens and Mr. Owens took Bod in and Silas is his guardian, even though Bod is alive. Before he came to the graveyard, Bod had parents and an older sister, but someone killed them. Silas believes that person still wants to kill Bod. At this, Bod shrugs—all his friends are dead. Silas says that this is true, but Bod is alive. That means he has the potential to do anything. If he's dead, he can't do anything.

Bod thinks this isn't totally true that one can't do anything once they're dead; his ghostly parents still adopted him even though they're dead. He asks Silas about Silas's existence. Silas explains cryptically that he's not alive, but if he's "ended," he'll just stop existing. His kind either "are" or "are not." Bod doesn't follow, but Silas reiterates that it's essential to keep Bod safe. Silas is legitimately surprised when Bod says he wants to go to school. Bod points out that he'll have to live outside the graveyard one day, and he needs to know more. Silas argues, but Bod says that Silas has it all wrong. The question isn't who's going to protect Bod outside the graveyard. Instead, the question is who's going to protect Bod's prospective killer from Bod. At this, Silas agrees to find Bod a school.

At school, most people don't notice Bod. His teachers suspect he's religious, since he doesn't have a computer or a phone. He's a model student and spends most of his time in the library. Nick and Mo, on the other hand, are not model students. Nick is big and likes to steal, while Mo is small and smart. She tells Nick what to steal and who to intimidate. As they count the money they've taken from a bunch of 11-year-olds, they lament that Paul Singh hasn't paid up yet. Mo tells Nick to remind Paul that Paul stole a CD. She says they're a good team, like Batman and Robin. They hear a voice say that they're more like Jekyll and Hyde.

*Silas recognizes that Bod is curious about the world around him—and along with that, Bod is probably also curious about his own history. It's telling that Silas seems to focus more on the death of Bod's biological family than on how important it is that the Owens adopted Bod. This suggests that Silas wants to frighten Bod into staying alive. For Bod, though, death isn't scary. He's surrounded by dead people all day. But just as the novel previously noted that everything has a season, Silas insists that it's not Bod's season to die, as he hasn't yet lived his life.*



*Silas's existence as a vampire complicates his neat explanation of the world. Meanwhile, given Bod's curiosity about the world, it's perhaps not surprising to readers that Bod wants to attend school. His reasons for attending are also sound—he will have to make it in the real world someday, and he won't have Silas's help then. Bod's insistence that he can take down Jack reads as immature at this point, but the sentiment suggests Bod is growing up and gathering the skills to protect himself.*



*Nick and Mo are cruel bullies: they're blackmailing younger kids into handing over their money and probably bully kids in other ways, too. Since Bod has a strong moral compass thanks to his upbringing, this bullying is unacceptable to him. He's presumably the boy who calls Mo and Nick Jekyll and Hyde. This is a reference to Robert Louis Stevenson's novella [Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde](#) and suggests that the bullies, with their opposite strengths, are like the two personalities (Dr. Henry Jekyll and Mr. Edward Hyde) of the novella's central character. As commendable as Bod's commitment to justice is, though, his willingness to speak out suggests that Bod doesn't fully understand student politics. Standing up to Nick and Mo may make things far more difficult for him.*



Out in the hallway, Bod sees Paul Singh looking at coins in his hand. Bod asks if Nick and Mo are waiting for the money. He suggests that Paul refuse to pay up. Bod knows that the bullies filmed Paul stealing the CD, but he suggests that the police will be more interested in Nick and Mo's blackmail than in the fact that Paul was forced to steal. At this, Paul smiles for the first time in weeks. He and several of his friends refuse to play along with Nick and Mo's bullying. They demand their money back and threaten to go to the police. Mo believes "Bob Owens" is to blame.

Since Bod is used to people ignoring him, he's acutely aware when Nick and Mo follow him after school one day. Bod goes slowly, making sure they follow him to a tiny graveyard behind the local church. Once in the graveyard, Nick threatens to punch Bod. But when Nick swings, Bod suddenly disappears. Mo begins to feel nervous and afraid. Once Mo voices her fears, Nick is terrified too. Together, they run all the way to Nick's house. As Bod watches them go, a female ghost compliments Bod on his Fade and his Fear. The ghost is thrilled to meet Bod, "the live boy," and she wakes up her husband and her husband's first wife. They suggest other ways that Bod can frighten Nick and Mo if this incident doesn't work.

When Bod excuses himself, the husband sends Silas his regards. He says it's nice to know that the Honour Guard is there; Bod has no idea what this means. Even though Bod now attends school during the day, his nightly lessons don't stop. Mr. Pennyworth is thrilled with Bod's Fading progress these days and tells Bod about Hauntings. Their lesson goes until four in the morning. At school later, Bod struggles to stay awake. He's so tired that he barely notices when a student from another class stops in to borrow a textbook—until that student turns out to be Nick. Nick stabs a sharpened pencil into Bod's hand. In the halls later, Mo tells Bod that he's weird and friendless.

Bod wonders if he shouldn't have gotten involved. Nick and Mo now spread rumors about Bod and everyone seems to know who Bod is. Silas had told Bod to go through school partly Faded, but now this is impossible. That night, Bod tells Silas what happened. Silas is livid. He points out that in the modern era, "they" can keep track of Bod. In his estimation, the only thing to do is for Bod to not go back. After a moment, Bod says that he doesn't just like learning—it's nice to be in a room with living people. Silas says scathingly that he wouldn't know what that's like, and he forbids Bod to go back to school. Bod spits that he'd rather leave the graveyard than give up on school. He walks away.

*Again, Bod shows himself to be logical and measured. He understands that Nick and Mo have warped Paul's understanding of the situation and filled him with guilt so that Paul won't even think to go to the authorities. Due to Bod's unique existence as somewhere between life and death, then, he may have a unique perspective on interpersonal relationships at school. He may also feel like it's his duty to intervene if he wants to be able to think of himself as a good person.*



*Bod knows that lots of people grow up learning that ghosts and supernatural occurrences are frightening and dangerous—so it's easy for him to use that preconceived notion to his advantage here. All he has to do is get Nick and Mo to the graveyard, where he can use the privileges the Freedom of the Graveyard gives him. While it's possible to say that Bod is being unnecessarily frightening here, his underlying intention is to stand up for other students. He knows it's his responsibility to help others in need.*



*At this point in Bod's education, Mr. Pennyworth's lessons are particularly useful—Bod may want to learn about Hauntings so he can frighten Nick and Mo again, if need be. Like Abanazer Bolger, Nick seems to have no qualms about hurting others for his own gain. This situates Nick as a cruel, selfish antagonist.*



*It's a mark of Bod's growing maturity that he goes to Silas about his problems at school. As a younger kid, Bod might have tried to hide it and deal with it himself. But now, Bod recognizes that he can't handle this alone. Silas's answer, however, ignores Bod's deep desire to be in school. It not only teaches Bod about the world of the living—it allows Bod to be around living people like himself, something Bod craves as he grows up and becomes more independent.*





Nick is asleep and dreaming he's a pirate captain. Suddenly, his dream changes—he's alone and an ugly, scary ship is coming for him. Nick finds himself on the deck of the new ship, talking to a scary man who closely resembles Bod. The man says he's Nobody and tells Nick to "turn over a new leaf" or things will get bad. Nick's dream changes again and he finds himself in a school corridor. The floor pitches like the sea. Nick points out that Bod can't hurt him in a dream, but Bod cocks his head and says that "they" are hungry below deck. Bod says that if Nick doesn't reform, he'll have to go below and confront the creatures there. Nick wakes up screaming. Outside Nick's window, Bod is proud of his Dreamwalk. He knows Nick will leave younger kids alone now.

Bod wanders away. He tries to decide if he wants to hole up in a library or find an island, like Robinson Crusoe. Unbeknownst to Bod, Mo is watching him. Bod enters an alley and Liza whispers in his ear. She asks if he's running away and says that the living are disappointing. The living, she insists, seem brave—but they just run away. Liza points out that Bod will hurt Mrs. Owens by leaving, but Bod says that he had a fight with Silas. He tells Liza a bit about what happened at school. Liza, however, says that "he" is out there and wants to kill Bod. Everyone in the graveyard wants to keep Bod alive so he can surprise, impress, and disappoint them. Bod notes that Silas will be angry, but Liza says this is because Silas cares.

Bod decides Liza is right. He turns back toward the graveyard. Suddenly, Liza tells Bod to run or Fade. A big car with a light on top stops in front of Bod and two policemen get out. Mo follows them out of the car and says Bod broke things in her garden. One policeman grabs Bod and demands a name and address. The officer doesn't believe that Bod's name is Nobody and shoves Bod in the backseat with Mo. The officers let Mo out at her house and Bod learns that one of the officers is her uncle. On the way to the station, Bod asks if there's a prison for kids, but Mo's uncle won't answer. As Bod looks out the window, he sees a large bat-like creature.

One officer tells Bod that this can be easy if Bod cooperates. As the car turns, it hits something that looks like a person. The officers get out to inspect the damage and Bod discovers his doors are locked. When Bod leans over to see what happened, he sees Silas. Bod bangs on the windows and says Silas is his dad. Silas is deathly still and Bod accuses the officers of killing him. As the officers argue about what they saw, Bod tells them what he saw: Mo's uncle agreed to do her a favor, arrested Bod without a warrant, and ran Bod's dad over. The officers return to arguing and Bod Fades. Silas swirls around Bod and picks him up to take him home. They both apologize to each other and Bod agrees to not return to school.

*Here, Bod again uses his supernatural powers to frighten Nick—but in the name of good. Bod understands that if he sticks with the tools available to the living (talking about the bullying problem to teachers or principals, for instance), Nick and Mo will never stop picking on younger students. Again, while it's possible to argue that Bod is abusing his power when he threatens Nick in the dream, Bod is doing what he thinks is necessary. Now, Bod can know that he did the right thing—and that he probably made Mr. Pennyworth proud, too.*



*At this point, Bod feels too connected to the living world and too at odds with Silas to return to the graveyard. But Liza points out that no matter Bod's thoughts on the matter, the fact remains that the people in the graveyard care about Bod and want him to survive. The world of the living is still unsafe because Jack is still out there. If Bod wants to be able to join the world of the living one day, he must return to the graveyard today.*



*Just as Bod turned to more extreme measures to force Nick into shaping up, Mo is doing something by calling in her uncle to get revenge. And though Bod originally believed that going through mortal channels wouldn't work, he now sees how powerful the systems guiding the mortal world are. Liza can't do anything for Bod when Bod is in a police car, speeding toward the station. This shows Bod that he's not yet ready to leave the graveyard and the protection it offers.*



*Once Bod realizes that Silas is coming to rescue him (hence the batlike creature he saw out the window), Bod finds his voice and is able to stand up for himself. This shows that Bod still needs Silas's guidance to get out of sticky situations. However, more than guidance, Bod just needs Silas's presence and the knowledge that Silas will help him if things get tough. In this sense, Bod gets to experiment with his growing independence under Silas's watchful eye. And by apologizing to Bod, Silas agrees to reaffirm his commitment to caring for Bod.*



Mo is having the worst week of her life. Nick won't speak to her, her uncle and parents are livid, and the little kids aren't afraid of her anymore. To make things worse, she has to clean the science labs alone—Bod was supposed to help her, but he disappeared from school. The supervising teacher doesn't even remember Bod, which annoys Mo even more. After the teacher leaves, Mo gets cold. Mo thinks someone is watching her as the dead creatures in jars begin to move. She says out loud that she's not afraid and Bod appears. He notes that it sucks to be frightened and calmly says he's leaving school. He asks if Mo has ever been haunted. Mo asks if Bod is going to haunt her, but Bod disappears without answering.

Bod and Silas stand at the top of the hill. Bod admits that he was wrong to “selfishly” stand up for the other kids at school, but Silas says that Bod wasn't selfish. He just needs to be around other living people. The problem is that the only way to be truly safe is to be dead—and death means that a person's adventures are over. Bod says that his potential killer is still out there and asks if Silas is going to forbid him from leaving the graveyard. Silas says that they can work something out. He suggests that Miss Lupescu could take Bod to a football match when she visits next. Silas also says that “they” are still looking for Bod, but he won't explain who “they” are.

## CHAPTER 7

Silas has been busy. He often leaves the graveyard for days or weeks at a time. Bod enjoys Miss Lupescu's visit over Christmas, but she leaves for “The Old Country” after three weeks—leaving Bod without a guardian who can leave the graveyard. Mr. Owens, Mrs. Owens, and Josiah Worthington are upset about this. Mrs. Owens believes that Silas is hurt. She throws up her hands when Josiah Worthington mentions that Silas left Bod grocery money and goes to find her son. She finds Bod, who's now 14, at the top of the hill. Bod asks how they know that the man who wants to kill him is still out there. Mrs. Owens says that Silas told them, which doesn't impress Bod.

Bod begs Mrs. Owens to tell him what his prospective killer looks like and asks why Silas didn't kill the man when he had the chance. Mrs. Owens insists that Silas isn't a monster. Bod wants to know what the man's name is. He insists it matters—he can dedicate himself to learning everything he possibly can. Mrs. Owens reaches out to her son. She knows that one day, he'll leave the graveyard and she won't be able to touch him. She says the man's name is Jack.

*Given the way that Mo relies on fear to maintain power over the younger kids, she has a lot in common with the Sleer. The Sleer seems to think that it's terrifying and therefore, powerful—but since it doesn't frighten Bod, it has no power over him. Similarly, now that no one's afraid of Mo, all her power is gone. And indeed, Mo is suddenly the frightened one. This hopefully teaches Mo that terrifying others for her own gain is a horrible, cruel way to go through life. No one, Bod suggests, deserves to live life in fear.*



*In hindsight, Silas recognizes Bod's desire to go to school was reasonable. He's a developing preteen, and it's natural that he'd want to spend time around other kids his own age—and other people who are alive, like him. Now that Silas also recognizes it's impossible to keep Bod totally safe, he's more willing to let Bod to take risks in controlled settings. In this way, he teaches Bod how to safely manage his risk.*



*As far as Mrs. Owens is concerned, it's not good enough that Silas left grocery money if Bod can't leave the graveyard to use it. The way she sees it, Silas abandoned Bod, intentionally or otherwise. But even without Silas around, Mrs. Owens knows it's still her duty to act as Bod's mother. This means comforting him when he's sad and moody, and it means making sure Bod doesn't lose trust in Silas. Even if Mrs. Owens doesn't trust Silas right now, Bod must for his safety.*



*It's telling that Mrs. Owens uses the word “monster” here. Calling someone a monster implies that they're barbaric and inhumane, while Silas is good, kind, and noble. His choices are what define him. She also recognizes here that if she and Silas do their jobs well, Bod won't need them when he becomes an adult.*



Scarlett Amber Perkins is 15 years old and hates everything. She hates her parents for divorcing, she hates her mother for moving back to this town, and she hates this town for being simultaneously familiar and foreign. After taking the wrong bus, Scarlett accidentally finds herself in Old Town. The driver lets her off in front of imposing iron gates to get another bus back into the city. As Scarlett heads down the hill on foot, she thinks that this is why she needs a cellphone—her mother will be livid that Scarlett is late tonight.

Scarlett passes the gates and feels a sudden sense of déjà vu. She enters the graveyard and reacquaints herself with the old church and the little bench in front of it. As she sits, she hears a voice behind her nervously ask for her help. A man is trying to take a grave rubbing, but his paper is curling. Scarlett helps him hold the paper flat and after he takes the rubbing, the man stands up. He looks like “a friendly owl.” It starts to rain, so Scarlett helps the man gather his things. The man says he knows what Scarlett is thinking and tells her about the church’s history. Scarlett, however, says that her mother will kill her for being late. At this, the man tosses Scarlett his things and runs to fetch his car.

Scarlett approaches the car but tells the man she doesn’t accept rides from strangers. He offers Scarlett his phone to call her mother. When Scarlett realizes she’s more afraid of her mother than the man, she tells him her address. The man walks Scarlett to the door and explains the situation to Scarlett’s mother, who shocks Scarlett by offering the man tea. He introduces himself as Mr. Frost as Scarlett tells her mother what happened. But when Scarlett mentions the graveyard, her mother drops her teacup and becomes suddenly icy. She explains that Scarlett used to play in the graveyard with an imaginary friend named Nobody. Scarlett doesn’t remember this. When Scarlett’s mother hears that Mr. Frost is unmarried, she invites him for dinner on Saturday.

That night, Scarlett remembers being in the graveyard as a child. When she falls asleep, she dreams she’s walking in the graveyard. When she comes across a boy her age, she calls to him. He introduces himself as Bod and recognizes Scarlett from earlier that afternoon. Then, when Scarlett remembers that Bod was her imaginary friend from childhood, Bod mentions that they went into the barrow grave, saw the Indigo Man, and met the Slerer. At this, Scarlett remembers everything and wakes up.

*Scarlett’s villains are fairly innocuous. Her parents are evil in her eyes because they divorced and destroyed the life she knew, not because they’ve done something objectively horrifying. In other words, Scarlett’s sense of good and evil is very different from Bod’s, but this is because Scarlett has lived a comparatively sheltered life.*



*Like Bod, Scarlett is naturally trusting when new people enter her life—her reaction to this man mirrors Bod’s reaction when the ghouls found him asleep on the ghoul-gate. But given that most of the humans in the novel are villains, Scarlett’s easy trust in this man reads as unwise. And as much as Scarlett detests her mother right now, Scarlett nevertheless knows that her mother cares about her. Her mother will hate that she’s late, which is annoying to Scarlett but is nevertheless a sign of care and concern.*



*Scarlett’s fear of her mother makes this man look less concerning to her. This speaks to the way that a parent’s concern—while necessary and well meaning—can push their children to trust people they possibly shouldn’t. Rediscovering the graveyard gives Scarlett an opportunity to learn more about her childhood and track her development over the last decade.*



*It’s possible that this is entirely Scarlett’s dream—but it’s also possible that Bod experiences this meeting, too. If Bod does experience Scarlett’s dream along with her, this suggests that Bod is becoming more connected to living people as he gets older. Scarlett was the first to introduce him to the world of the living, and it’s fitting that Scarlett is the first to reconnect with him as a young adult.*



Now that Silas is gone, Bod doesn't leave the graveyard. He loves the graveyard, but things are also changing for him. This is because no one else in the graveyard is changing. These days, Fortinbras is too young to connect with, while Thackeray Porringer now tells Bod stories about his former friends. And though Liza and Bod have been close for five or six years, she seldom shows herself to him and is rude when she does appear. According to Mr. Owens, this is just something women do. He says that he was friends with a girl as a child, but she hated him when they got to be teenagers and even threw an apple at his head. Mrs. Owens sniffs that it was a pear, not an apple.

Bod has no living friends, though he still remembers Scarlett. He's disturbed that he didn't recognize Scarlett right away when he saw her in the graveyard. Bod wanders through the graveyard's abandoned and dangerous corner in search of the Poet, Nehemiah Trot. When Nehemiah shows himself, Bod asks if he should go find a girl he wants to talk to. Nehemiah is thrilled. He tells Bod to write poems to win the lady's heart and brushes away Bod's safety concerns—revealing himself to living people is dangerous. Nehemiah insists that if a person doesn't take chances, they won't get anywhere. This answer pleases Bod, so he asks about revenge.

Nehemiah proceeds to tell Bod how he bested his literary critics by asking to be buried with his poems. This means that when people realize he's a genius, they'll dig up his grave and publish his poems. Bod isn't convinced this is the best way to get revenge and heads back to the chapel for food. When Bod reemerges from the chapel, wondering how to find Scarlett, he sees a young woman on the bench. Bod Fades, but the girl—Scarlett—sees Bod and calls to him. She explains that she helped Mr. Frost with his grave rubbings. Later, she'll have tea with him before he takes her home. She asks if she can hug Bod and hugs Bod so hard it hurts. Bod is glad for the touch. Scarlett is thrilled that Bod is real and promises to come back over the weekend.

At Mr. Frost's house, Scarlett refuses tea and cookies. As they leave Mr. Frost's tall, narrow house, she offers to help him with his grave rubbings. Meanwhile, hundreds of miles away in Krakow, Poland, Silas, Miss Lupescu, and the Abyssinian mummy Kandar enter deep underground caves. The group lost its fourth member, Haroun, to an enchanted mirror in an upper cave. Silas saved the others, since he's impervious to mirrors. Now, they discuss that there are three of them, in addition to Kandar's lucky pig. Miss Lupescu is annoyed by the pig and insists it's not lucky. Silas silences his companions and says "they" are coming, and there are a lot of them.

*It's a mark of how much Bod is grown that 14-year-old Thackeray now treats Bod like a friend—it wasn't that long ago that he punched Bod for borrowing his book. Mr. Owens's advice about Liza also suggests that Bod is getting to the age where he'll become interested in romantic relationships. Bod and Liza are probably about the same age now, and it's possible that Liza has a crush on Bod. But because Bod's alive and she's not, it may be more painful for her and make her behavior even worse.*



*Now that Bod knows that Scarlett is back in town and has been to the graveyard, it feels important to him to figure out how to reconnect with her. Doing so would reconnect him with a piece of his childhood and offer him a window into his future out in the wider world. Nehemiah Trot, while humorous, seems far more interested in creating a dramatic narrative than looking out for Bod's safety. But Bod's understanding of what's safe and what's not speaks to his growing maturity.*



*Hugging Scarlett helps Bod connect with his future life among the living. Assuming he's able to best Jack, Bod will eventually leave the graveyard and join people like Scarlett. Scarlett, for her part, doesn't seem to worry that Bod was raised in the graveyard. To her, he's just like any 14-year-old boy.*



*Silas not having issues with mirrors is another clue that he's a vampire: legend holds that vampires don't have reflections in mirrors. It's also increasingly obvious that Silas doesn't use his vampiric powers for evil. Rather, when he can, he uses them to help his friends, his colleagues, and Bod. These selfless actions mark Silas as a good person—despite being a seemingly terrifying vampire.*



In the graveyard that weekend, Scarlett and Bod discuss the murder of Bod's family. Bod mentions that his guardian is going to tell him more when he thinks Bod is ready. When Scarlett asks if Bod's guardian thinks Bod is going to go on a murderous rampage, Bod very seriously says yes. Scarlett asks if Bod's guardian is dead too. Bod, however, refuses to talk about Silas. Offended, Scarlett excuses herself and heads down the path. Bod hears Liza call Scarlett "Miss high and mighty."

Scarlett helps Mr. Frost make grave rubbings until midday, and Scarlett asks where she'd research a local murder. Mr. Frost goes pale and says he doesn't like to think about it. When Scarlett says it's for a friend, Mr. Frost suggests she try the library. Scarlett asks for a ride, but Mr. Frost seems not to hear or notice her. He then explains he's just trying to plan his afternoon and asks if Scarlett's mother would prefer wine or chocolate. At the library, an elderly librarian shows Scarlett how to look at old newspapers using a projector. Scarlett figures that the murder of three people would be on the front page. However, she finds it hidden on page five. The small article just says the family died and says nothing about a missing baby boy. There was no follow-up article, either.

Scarlett does learn the murdered family's address, however. She knows the house. After she gets home, Scarlett calls Mr. Frost and informs him that 13 years ago, the Dorian family was murdered in his home. He's shocked. Mr. Frost offers to look into the mystery. When Scarlett tries to reach out to Bod in her dreams again that night, she can't make it work right. She dreams instead of wandering Glasgow. Meanwhile, in Krakow's caves, Miss Lupescu falls. Silas cradles her bloody head and says he won't leave her. She tells him that "they" will come back and raises herself to a standing position. Though she's covered in blood, she snarls that they'll "end this."

On Sunday afternoon, the phone rings in Scarlett's kitchen. Scarlett's mother picks up; it's Mr. Frost. After a minute, she hands the phone to Scarlett. Mr. Frost says he's found some things out for Scarlett's friend: the family that was killed had a fourth member, a baby who survived. He invites Scarlett to bring her friend to learn the rest. A bit later, Bod walks down into the barrow grave for the first time in six years. The Sleer doesn't speak until Bod touches the knife. It seems perplexed that Bod wants advice. Bod says he doesn't know what to do. He can learn things about his family's killer, but to do so, he has to leave the graveyard and all the ghosts who want to keep him safe. The Sleer says nothing except "yes" when Bod says he has to do this alone.

*Given that Silas has never been wrong when it comes to teaching Bod important information, Bod feels no compulsion to doubt Silas now. He may also recognize that mentioning Silas is a vampire wouldn't go over well with Scarlett, if she'd even believe him.*



*Scarlett knows that the murder of any person, let alone three people, is a big deal, so it's alarming that it didn't seem to matter to anyone at the time. Mr. Frost's squeamishness when it comes to talking about murder makes Scarlett trust him even more, as it seems obvious to her that he couldn't have had anything to do with it. She believes he's a good, trustworthy person because he looks and acts like one—but not necessarily because she has proof he's actually kind and generous.*



*If Scarlett were a bit more critical when it comes to Mr. Frost, it might seem suspicious that he's so interested in a murder that took place in his house when he looked nervous at the mention of murder earlier. Death might not be as abhorrent to Mr. Frost as he tried to let on. In the caves, Silas again distinguishes himself as a fiercely loyal friend. His willingness to help Miss Lupescu and encourage her to go on show that he's kind and caring.*



*For millennia, the Sleer has probably had little to do but frighten the errant grave robber and wait for its master to return. But over the years, Bod has come to suspect that there's more to the Sleer than fear and a desire to serve—being so old, it might have some wisdom to share with someone like Bod. Though the Sleer says little, it nevertheless gives Bod the space to talk through his situation and come to the answer himself. In this way, the Sleer helps Bod practice being an adult and making his own decisions without the help of a guardian.*



Then, the Sleer whispers that it's supposed to guard the treasure until its master returns. It asks Bod if he's its master. Bod says he isn't and turns down the Sleer's advances—in a whiny voice, it says that they'd protect Bod in their coils forever if Bod would be their master. Angry, the Sleer tells Bod to find his name and goes silent. Bod hurries up the stairs and finds Scarlett waiting outside the barrow. He tells her that he'll come with her, so she leads him to a tall house in the middle of a row. Bod is shocked that the house doesn't seem familiar. He knocks on the door until Mr. Frost lets them in and shakes Bod's hand. Mr. Frost seems impatient and excited.

Scarlett finally asks Mr. Frost what he found out. Mr. Frost says that oddly, no one investigated the murder and no one searched for the missing toddler. "They" squashed it. Frustrated, Scarlett asks who Mr. Frost is talking about. At this, Mr. Frost apologizes for being secretive. After he confirms that Bod has a "personal" interest in the murders, he says he found something under a floorboard and tells Bod to follow him upstairs. Bod shoots Scarlett a concerned look, but Scarlett smiles and thinks it's Bod's right to learn first. Mr. Frost leads Bod to the top of the house and asks if Bod is the boy in question.

They reach the attic bedroom and Mr. Frost pulls aside the carpet. He says they don't know who did it, but Bod says he knows: the man's name is Jack, and he has black hair. Mr. Frost says that hair fades, but his name is Jack. He turns around, holding a big knife. From downstairs, Scarlett calls that there's someone at the door. In the moment that Jack glances away, Bod Fades. Jack growls that he can still smell Bod as Bod exits the room and locks the door behind him. Bod reaches the bottom of the stairs and tells Scarlett that Mr. Frost is Jack—and Jack tried to kill him. Scarlett is flabbergasted, but she opens the front door to follow Bod out.

There are four men on the porch. They ask for Mr. Frost and say they're friends. Scarlett tells the men that Mr. Frost went to buy a newspaper and excuses herself. She can barely see Bod as they walk up the hill. Bod says that the men didn't feel like real people. Back on Mr. Frost's porch, the big man, Mr. Tar, says he doesn't like this. The men discuss that after Krakow, Melbourne, and Vancouver, they're the last four left. Mr. Ketch fingers his moustache as Mr. Tar says they should go after Scarlett. Mr. Dandy, the white-haired man, asks for silence. He sends Mr. Nimble and Mr. Ketch after Scarlett and tells Mr. Tar to come inside with him. The door is magically reinforced, but Mr. Dandy says it's not something a Jack can't fix. He whispers words "older than English" and Mr. Tar pushes the door open.

*Telling Bod to find his name suggests that the Sleer knows more than it lets on—its master might be all the Sleer talks about, but that doesn't mean the Sleer doesn't listen to what else goes on in the graveyard. Further, telling Bod to find his name recalls Liza's sadness about not having a headstone. The Sleer implies that Bod is missing part of his identity because he doesn't know the name he was given at birth, which makes Bod feel even more like he has to go through with meeting Mr. Frost.*



*Scarlett believes that she's doing a good, kind thing for Bod by connecting him with someone who can illuminate mysterious parts of his past. And because she trusts Mr. Frost entirely, nothing Mr. Frost says reads as suspicious to her. But to Bod, who isn't in the practice of trusting living people, Mr. Frost seems suspicious. Separating Bod and Scarlett means they won't be able to help or support each other if things go wrong.*



*Despite Scarlett and Bod's physical separation, Scarlett is still able to help Bod. She may not know she's doing it, but it's possible that Bod and Scarlett are connected on perhaps a deeper or supernatural level (especially given that they reconnected in Scarlett's dream). It's a shock for Scarlett to learn that Mr. Frost isn't the kind, nervous man she thought he was. Now, she'll have to decide which version of Jack is true—the one who was nice to her, or the one who will keep trying to kill Bod.*



*Given Bod's relationships with ghosts, vampires, and a werewolf, he probably has a firm grasp on what "real people" feel like. So while Scarlett may assume that the men on Jack's front porch are all people because they look human, Bod's senses are much sharper. Indeed, Mr. Dandy's incantation suggests that he and his fellows use magic at the very least, which may make them seem not quite human.*



Mr. Dandy and Mr. Tar hear a crash above them, and Jack Frost comes racing down the stairs. Jack explains that Bod got away and will be in the graveyard. When Bod and Scarlett get to the graveyard, the gates are locked. Bod tells Scarlett to put her arms around him, hoping his **Freedom of the Graveyard** might help Scarlett. He passes through the bars with her and explains that since the graveyard is his home, he “can do things here.” Mr. Ketch and Mr. Nimble reach the far side of the fence and call to Scarlett. Mr. Ketch pulls a silk cord into his hand and runs his fingers along it. He promises not to hurt Scarlett while Mr. Nimble says they need to ask her questions. Bod tells Scarlett to run.

The men see a boy with Scarlett. Mr. Nimble boosts Mr. Ketch over the fence and into the graveyard. Ahead of him, Bod leads Scarlett through the graveyard. They discuss that the men want to kill them. Bod says they need to hide Scarlett; then, he'll deal with the men. Caius Pompeius rises from his grave and suggests that Scarlett hide in the barrow grave. Bod leads Scarlett to the barrow, talking to ghosts along the way. Once Scarlett is inside the hill, Bod turns to his friends and family. Mr. Owens tells Bod where the men are and assures Bod he can do this without Silas or Miss Lupescu, who are still abroad. Bod asks that Mrs. Owens keep an eye on Scarlett and then heads to where he knows Mr. Ketch is waiting. He tells himself that he's a part of the graveyard.

Bod finds Mr. Ketch first. Bod Fades, slips past Mr. Ketch, and then makes himself visible. Mr. Ketch begins to trail him as Bod walks into the overgrown section of the graveyard. When Nehemiah Trot appears, Bod asks the Poet to say something when Mr. Ketch gets close. Bod stops on the far side of a grave. Nehemiah tells Bod when Mr. Ketch is a few yards behind. As Mr. Ketch leaps for Bod, he tumbles into the old grave. The grave is 20 feet deep and the fall shatters his ankle. Miss Euphemia and Tom appear and say that there are three men heading up the hill, and Jack is at the chapel.

As Bod passes the apple tree, Liza's voice points out that there are four killers on the loose. Bod asks her to confuse the men, but Liza tells him to Fade, hide in Mrs. Owens's tomb, and wait for Silas. Bod cuts her off and asks Liza to meet him at the lightning tree, a tree that lightning struck 20 years ago. As Bod hurries there, he tries to remember Miss Lupescu's old lessons. He finds an ugly, water-stained grave and knows it's the ghoulgate when it's cold to the touch. Bod settles himself on it, ignores Liza's taunts, and makes himself visible. Soon, three men run toward him. When they're close, Bod asks why they want to kill him.

*Because Bod cares about Scarlett and wants to ensure her safety, the Freedom of the Graveyard temporarily extends to protect her as well. This suggests that as Bod gets older, he has more say in who's part of his chosen family and his community. And especially if he wants to use the powers afforded to him through the Freedom of the Graveyard for good, it may be easier for him to extend them to others. Inviting Scarlett into the graveyard like this inducts her into Bod's community and offers her protection, just like Bod.*



*When Mr. Ketch infiltrates the graveyard, it represents the arrival of true evil in Bod's home for the first time. Now, Bod knows it's his responsibility to protect his home and the people he loves, both living and dead. Mr. Owens's reassurance that Bod can do this without help reminds Bod that he's growing up and is more prepared now than he's ever been. He knows how to use the privileges inherent to the Freedom of the Graveyard, and he has an entire community of ghosts to help him if his own skills fail him.*



*Bod is able to outsmart Mr. Ketch because he has intimate knowledge of all the graveyard's nooks and crannies. Mr. Ketch does not, so he's at a disadvantage despite his association with Jack and with magic. When Bod tricks Mr. Ketch by Fading, it shows Bod using lessons he learned from those in the graveyard to protect himself and his loved ones.*



*While Bod called on Mr. Pennyworth's lessons on Fading to best Mr. Ketch, now, Bod has to remember what Miss Lupescu taught him. This ordeal becomes a test of whether Bod has learned enough over the years to navigate this dire situation alone. By combining everything he learned from people in the graveyard to do away with these villains, Bod is able to honor his family's hard work and their contributions to his education.*



Mr. Dandy explains that he's a member of the Jacks of All Trades, and they know a specific type of magic that one harnesses through killing. Bod thinks this is ridiculous, but Mr. Dandy says they killed Bod's family for protection. Back in ancient Egypt, one of the Jacks foresaw a child who would live in between the living and the dead. If this boy were allowed to live, it'd be the end of the Jacks. They sent "the most dangerous of all the Jacks" to kill Bod. Now, Jack is tracking down Scarlett. Bod utters three ancient words and opens the ghoulish gate. Mr. Tar and Mr. Nimble fall through, but Mr. Dandy stands on the edge and points a gun at Bod. Bod gives Mr. Dandy advice for navigating Hell and when Mr. Dandy glances away, Bod Fades.

Mr. Dandy hears a voice say that it's impossible to leave ghoulish gates open for too long. The earth shakes and Mr. Dandy falls. He catches hold of the headstone. Bod reveals himself and says that he's going to let the gate close. Angrily, Mr. Dandy says that Bod can't escape the Jacks of All Trades, but Bod says it's over—Silas is seeing to that. Mr. Dandy lets go and Bod closes the ghoulish gate. Fortinbras tugs at Bod's sleeve—Jack is heading up the hill, toward Scarlett.

In the graveyard, Jack can't follow Bod's scent. He can, however, follow Scarlett's scent, and he knows that Bod will come for her. As Jack climbs the hill, he realizes that the Jacks who accompanied him here are gone. He's not sad; now, he can resume his rise to the top of the Order. When Jack loses Scarlett's scent, he follows it back to a mausoleum. He pulls coffins off of shelves, scatters the contents, and finds a hole in the wall. Scarlett hears the crashes and carefully descends the stairs. She's terrified of Mr. Frost and of Bod. Bod doesn't seem quite human. Scarlett vows to force her mother to buy her a phone as Jack clamps a hand over her mouth.

Bod makes his way down the stairs. He can see Jack holding Scarlett and Fades, but Jack threatens to hurt Bod. Jack asks if Bod knows who he is. Bod says that Jack killed Bod's family—and he should've killed Bod too. Bod says that Jack messed up, since Bod made it to adulthood and there are no more Jacks. Jack insists that this is all the more reason to kill Bod and Scarlett. The Sleer begins to wind around the room and says that it guards the treasure for its master. Scarlett only hears a hiss, but Jack and Bod can hear the words. The Sleer hisses that this is a place of treasure and power. It's waiting for its master.

*If one takes Mr. Dandy's prophecy at face value, it's possible to see that Jack actually created Bod's situation by killing Bod's biological parents—had he not been orphaned as an infant, Bod wouldn't have found his way to the graveyard, where he grew up between the living and the dead. The Jacks made assumptions about baby Bod and in doing so, they created their worst enemy. Sending these three Jacks to Hell and the ghouls will allow Bod to do away with the Jacks without killing them and stooping to their level. In this way, Bod can maintain his integrity and his sense that he's doing the right thing.*



*With his growing maturity and understanding of the world, Bod now understands that Silas has been going away to track down and defeat the other members of the Jacks of All Trades organization. This makes Bod feel even closer to Silas, as it's clear now that Silas hasn't just been going on vacation. Even when Silas isn't around, he still acts in service of his adoptive child.*



*The way that Jack describes the Order suggests it's a highly political and ruthless organization, where people try to gain power and wind up at the top. Jack is cruel and selfish, so he's unbothered by his peers' deaths—instead, he sees it as an opportunity to gain more power for himself. He also recognizes that Bod is the opposite in this regard. Bod cares about his friends and his community, which means that at some point, Bod will come for Scarlett and find Jack in the process.*



*As far as Jack is concerned, Bod is naïve and doesn't understand the concept of looking out for oneself. Given that Bod has grown up in a functional family that taught him to be generous and compassionate, Bod has no understanding of why Jack wouldn't mourn the loss of his fellows. The fact that Jack can hear the Sleer's voice but Scarlett can't suggests that Jack, like Bod, might reside somewhere between the living and the dead. Killing people, in this sense, might bring about a sort of death of oneself.*





Bod asks what his name used to be, before Jack murdered his parents. Jack refuses to say, but he notices the altar stone with the cup, the knife, and the brooch on it. He smiles and says that even if the Jacks are over, there can be a new Brotherhood. The Sleer says, “power” and Bod feels it grow more excited. Jack asks Bod to bring him the cup, the brooch, and the knife. With the items in hand, Jack tells Scarlett to lie down. She’s certain she’s going to die. Jack tells Bod to kneel on the altar stone and asks if Bod wants to know his name. Suddenly, Bod understands everything. He says that his name is Nobody Owens and asks the Sleer if it still wants a master.

At this, the Sleer reveals itself: it has the body of an enormous snake and three heads with long-dead, purple faces. Bod tells Jack that the Sleer needs a master to serve. Jack says that he’ll be the Sleer’s master. As Jack moves to slit Bod’s throat, Bod asks the Sleer what it’s going to do with its new master. The Sleer says that it’s going to protect the master and hold him in its coils. Then, it starts to loop its coils around Jack. Jack begins to flail and slash with the knives in his hands. Terrified, Scarlett turns on her flashlight keychain. She can’t see the Sleer, but she does see Jack’s terrified face as the Sleer pulls him through the wall.

When Jack is gone, Bod puts the knife, the goblet, and the brooch back on the altar stone. Aboveground again, Scarlett says that Bod told her the Sleer couldn’t hurt them. When she realizes that Bod knew the Sleer would take Jack, she accuses Bod of using her as bait. She asks where the other men are and calls Bod a monster, even though Bod assures her the other men aren’t dead. She doesn’t seem to care that they got through this ordeal alive. Scarlett turns to run, but she comes face to face with Silas. Calmly, Silas suggests they go for a walk and talk about what Scarlett should remember. Silas tells Bod that it’ll be safest for everyone if Scarlett forgets this. Bod watches as Silas leads Scarlett away. He hopes that Scarlett will turn around, but she doesn’t.

Silas takes Scarlett home. After the fact, Scarlett’s mother learns that Mr. Frost had to leave town. Scarlett’s mother decides that she and Scarlett should move back to Glasgow. When Silas returns to the graveyard, he finds Bod sitting in the amphitheater. He tells Bod that he took Scarlett’s memories and apologizes. Bod tries to smile, but he can’t. He asks if Silas is the “trouble” the Jacks referred to in Krakow, Melbourne, and Vancouver. When Silas says he wasn’t alone, Bod asks if Miss Lupescu helped—but the look on Silas’s face is concerning. Silas says that Miss Lupescu fell while fighting for Bod.

*Like Jack, the Sleer is motivated by power and control. It’s exciting for the Sleer to see someone who respects the treasures as symbols of power and not just for their monetary value. In this moment, Bod realizes that he has a choice—he can, like Jack and the Sleer, selfishly pursue his childhood name. Or, he can accept the name, the life, and the love that his adoptive parents and guardian have given him. As Nobody Owens, Bod knows that he can work with the Sleer to defeat Jack.*



*Tricking Jack is easy for Bod because Jack is so obsessed with amassing power. In this way, the novel proposes that selfishness and cruelty put people at a disadvantage to others who have a more generous way of seeing the world. When Scarlett sees Jack get pulled through the wall, it probably doesn’t make sense to her. The supernatural nature might be hard to grasp, but what Scarlett does see is Jack’s fear. To her, this makes him more relatable and turns him into someone to pity, even if he did try to murder her friend.*



*Scarlett doesn’t fully understand the situation, and her understanding of good and evil are still relatively simplistic. And especially since she’s terrified, she naturally lashes out at Bod. To her, Bod appears callous and unfeeling—the same way that Jack looked to Bod. Being lumped in with a villain like Jack is painful for Bod, as he believes that he did the right thing. In his estimation, he saved them and he ensured that the graveyard is going to be a safe place for them from here on out.*



*It’s a mark of Bod’s maturity that he isn’t extremely angry with Silas for taking Scarlett’s memories and sending her away. Even though this is difficult for him, he recognizes that Silas is right—letting Scarlett move on and live her life in peace is the best thing for everyone. Bod trusts that Silas has his best interests at heart and won’t lie to him. This is why Bod also feels comfortable asking about Silas’s trips.*



Bod shares that the Sleer has Jack, and he tells Silas the fate of the other four Jacks. After a moment of silence, Bod says that Scarlett was scared of him. He doesn't understand why, since he saved Scarlett's life and they're both alive. Bod pauses for a moment and asks how Miss Lupescu fell. Silas says simply that Miss Lupescu died in battle, protecting others. He then suggests that they have a meal in town—Bod can leave the graveyard now, since no one is trying to kill him. They walk down to a pizza parlor and Silas teaches Bod how to use a menu. Silas orders a salad but doesn't eat it while Bod eats his pizza.

Eventually, Silas talks. He says that “we” had known about the Jacks for a while, but it wasn't until the Jacks murdered Bod's family that Silas was able to figure it all out. Bod asks if “we” refers to Silas, Miss Lupescu, and the Honour Guard, a question that shocks Silas. But Silas tells himself that children listen and pretends to sip his water. (The narrator interjects that an attentive observer might notice that Silas has no reflection in the shiny tabletop.) Bod asks if Silas is going to stay in the graveyard now that Bod is grown, but Silas says that Bod *isn't* grown up. Finally, Bod asks again why Scarlett was afraid of him. Silas doesn't answer and leads Bod out of the pizza parlor.

## CHAPTER 8

In late spring, Bod begins to lose his ability to see the dead. Now that it's summer, he can see even fewer ghosts. Bod wanders to the overgrown part of the graveyard and notices a fox and a cat. The animals run, which is unusual—Bod has known them for years and they sometimes let Bod pet them. Bod tries to slip through the ivy but has to actually push through it. Finally, he reaches the grave of Alonso Jones, a 19th-century world traveler. Alonso Jones has been telling Bod stories of his exploits. But today, when Bod calls for Alonso, Alonso doesn't answer—and when Bod tries to push his head into the grave, Bod just knocks his head into the ground.

Bod makes his way back to the better-maintained part of the graveyard and comes across Mother Slaughter. She asks him to pick the blooming nasturtiums and put them on her grave. Bod lays the flowers down gently and asks where everyone else is. Mother Slaughter doesn't answer and instead, asks what Bod did to his forehead. As Bod starts to explain, Mother Slaughter notes that Bod isn't really a boy anymore. Bod says he's about 15 now, but Mother Slaughter talks over him. She says she still feels young and remembers the night that Bod arrived. She remembers the Lady on the Grey telling everyone to be charitable, and she's glad Bod came to them. Then, Mother Slaughter stands, spits on her sleeve, and scrubs Bod's forehead. As she turns away, she warns him to keep safe.

*Because Bod feels so strongly that he did what he had to do when it came to the Jacks, it's unfathomable that Scarlett would be afraid of or upset with him. But Bod has also had an unusual upbringing and sees the world differently than Scarlett does. In this way, Bod is more mature and is able to grasp the nuance of the situation. Because Scarlett doesn't want to acknowledge the existence of true evil in the world, she can't fathom that Jack was brought to justice.*



*When Bod continues to ask why Scarlett was afraid of him, it shows that Bod is confronting an aspect of himself he didn't know existed. Before he disposed of the Jacks, Bod only suspected he was capable of condemning people to death or worse—and now he's done it. Though Bod thinks he did the right thing, he still has to face that other people won't feel the same way.*



*Losing his ability to see ghosts suggests that Bod is outgrowing his Freedom of the Graveyard. Since the Freedom of the Graveyard is what made Bod an honorary member of the graveyard community, it follows that losing that status indicates Bod has come of age. It's time now for him to consider leaving the graveyard for the outside world, where Bod can actually travel instead of just listen to stories about the world's wonders.*



*It may be that all the other ghosts are still around but Bod just can't see them anymore. Mother Slaughter might be trying to soften the blow to Bod by not enlightening him to this possibility. But the fact remains that even to Mother Slaughter, it's undeniable that Bod is now a young man, not a boy anymore. She suggests that Bod's arrival to the graveyard gave the ghosts a second chance at life. This, she implies, was a gift—one that she and the other ghosts aren't likely to receive ever again. Cleaning Bod's forehead in such a way may be Mother Slaughter's final way of saying that she cares for Bod before he leaves.*



Bod feels like something's amiss. He heads for his parents' tomb and, as he gets close, he notices that his parents look oddly formal. Mr. Owens greets Bod and says that he and Mrs. Owens couldn't have asked for a better son. When Bod turns to his mother, she's gone. Awkwardly, Mr. Owens says that it's hard to know what to say, and he sends Bod to meet Silas. Bod waits on the bench by the chapel and hears Liza ask him to say that he'll miss her. He hasn't heard from her since the night of the Jacks over a year ago. Liza says, "life is wasted on the living," tells Bod again to say he'll miss her, and calls him stupid when he's confused. Liza kisses Bod, catching him off guard. Liza says that she'll miss him, and then she's gone.

Bod gets up, finds the key, and unlocks the chapel. He doesn't even try to slip through the door. Inside he can hear Silas, but it's too dark for Bod to see. Silas lights a candle, which illuminates a large steamer trunk and Silas's bag. The trunk is open and Bod touches the white silk lining. He asks if it's Silas's bed, and Silas says he sleeps in it when he's "far from [his] house." This shocks Bod, as he thought the graveyard was Silas's home. Silas explains that his house is far away, but he's not sure it's habitable anymore. Bod is taken aback that Silas is leaving—he reminds Silas that Silas is his guardian. In response, Silas says gently that Bod is old enough to take care of himself now.

Bod asks if he can stay in the graveyard, but Silas says that it's Bod's turn to go out and live. Silas assures Bod that even if Bod never sees Silas again, Silas will keep an eye on Bod. With this, Silas leads Bod down the stairs and offers him a small suitcase. Instead of taking it, Bod asks who else is in the Honour Guard and what the Honour Guard does. Warily, Silas says they "guard the borderlands" and do what they have to do. Bod insists that Silas and the Honour Guard did the right thing stopping the Jacks, since "they were monsters." At this, Silas admits that he hasn't always done the right thing. He used to be a horrific monster himself. Bod says that Silas isn't a monster anymore, and Silas agrees that people can change.

Silas says it's been an honor to be Bod's guardian and offers Bod a wallet. Bod takes it and says that when he went to see Alonso Jones earlier, Alonso either wasn't there or Bod couldn't see him. Bod asks if he can go to all the places that Alonso talked about. Silas says Bod can; there's a passport in the suitcase. Bod asks if he can come back to the graveyard, but he answers his own question: if he comes back, it won't be home. Silas offers to walk Bod to the gate, but Bod says he'll go alone. Awkwardly, Bod tells Silas to call him if he needs help, even though Silas doesn't get into trouble. Bod solemnly shakes Silas's hand, picks up his suitcase, and heads for the gate.

*Mr. Owens's goodbye is awkward and stilted, but it reflects the kind of relationship Bod had with his adoptive father—Mr. Owens was a part of Bod's life, but he didn't figure as prominently in Bod's day-to-day activities as Liza did. Liza, on the other hand, was a major part of Bod's journey to learn compassion and kindness. Kissing him goodbye gives Liza one human experience before Bod leaves and confirms that she's probably had a crush on him for some time now.*



*Not being able to see in the dark, like not being able to see ghosts, is another clue that Bod is outgrowing his Freedom of the Graveyard. And along with this, Bod and Silas's relationship shifts as well. Now, Silas is more willing to let Bod in on how Silas lives his life, as he no longer has to maintain a sense of separation or authority. He can now treat Bod as more of an equal, since Bod is, in Silas's eyes, a fellow adult.*



*Even though Bod is more or less an adult now, there are still things he wants to know that only Silas can teach him. Silas's final lesson to Bod is that people aren't always what they seem or who they were in the past; it's essential to judge a person based on their actions and intentions in the present. And even more important than that, one must recognize that people have the power to change, for better or for worse. For his part, Silas changed for the better and has now brought Bod into adulthood. Now, it's Bod's turn to strive to be better as he moves into adulthood himself.*



*Even if Bod realizes on some level that he's an adult, he still needs the comfort of asking Silas if he can really travel the world now. Bod isn't done growing up, as he still has more to learn about himself and the world of the living that's now safe for him to traverse. Offering his help to Silas is Bod's attempt to try to repay his guardian for his years of advice and assistance.*



Bod half expects to find the gates locked since it's after midnight. But the pedestrian gate is open and Mrs. Owens is standing next to it, crying. She asks Bod what he's going to do, and Bod says he's going to meet people and see the world. Then, Mrs. Owens sings the song she sang to Bod on the night he came to the graveyard. Now, she can remember the final lines of the song: "Face your life / Its pain, its pleasure, / Leave no path untaken." Bod promises to travel every path and tries to hug his mother, but she disappears. As Bod exits the graveyard, he thinks he hears a voice say it's proud of Bod. He heads toward the city, smiling. One day he'll ride with the Lady on the Grey, but for now, he has to live.

*Finally, it's time for Bod to say goodbye to his adoptive mother, who's possibly the most important person to him in the graveyard. She's the reason he grew up here, safe from Jack—and she's therefore the reason that Bod even survived to adulthood. While it's unclear whether Mrs. Owens purposefully disappears or whether Bod loses his ability to see her, her disappearance suggests that Bod is now officially on his own. It's his responsibility to live his life and show his parents, guardian, and friends that their hard work won't go to waste.*





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