

The Haunting of Hill House

Shirley Jackson

Chapters 1-2

Pgs 1-55



The Characters

- **Eleanor Vance** ~ lonely single woman. Lives with sister and brother in law. Mother just died.
- **Theodora** ~ Fashionable single woman. Lives with a “friend”. Seems to know what others are thinking.
- **Dr. Montague** ~ leader of the experiment. Wants to publish a book about the supernatural.
- **Luke Sanderson** ~ Nephew of the owner of Hill House. Will someday inherit the house. Single, carefree.



The Premise

- Four people are spending time in an old mansion ~ Hill House.
- Dr. Montague invited seven people, who have displayed some ability/contact with supernatural to visit the house.
- Two people, Eleanor and Theo, agreed to go.
- Luke is there to “watch” the house for the family.
- Together, the four of them will try to determine what makes Hill House so evil.



Chapter One Summary

- Describes the character of Eleanor in great detail.
- She is the character the book will center around.
- Eleanor is 32 years old. She spent her life caring for her sick mother.
- She now lives with her sister's family and has no control over her own life.
- She feels lost and alone and is looking for a place to belong.
- She goes to Hill House because she has never had an adventure or a life for herself.



Eleanor's "Gift"

- When Eleanor was a little girl, stones fell on her house for three days.
- She did not know it at the time, but she was the one that made the stones fall.
- She has a some psychic ability that she is unaware of.
- Hill House desires this ability and will seek to draw in Eleanor.



Chapter One Quotes

1. *No living organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality...*
2. *Whatever walked there, walked alone.*
3. *During the whole underside of her life...Eleanor had been waiting for something like Hill House.*
4. *Hill House always waited for her at the end of her day.*
5. *Hill House is vile, it is diseased; get away from here at once.*

Chapter Two Summary

- Eleanor meets Mrs. Dudley and Mr. Dudley, the caretakers.
- Mrs. Dudley explains that she and her husband do not stay at Hill House after dark.
- Eleanor is scared as soon as she enters the house; she gets a bad “vibe”.
- The rooms are dark and dreary and she wants to leave and go home...then Theo arrives.
- Theo finds the house creepy as well, but mocks the house and their shared fear.
- The women get to know each other and realize that neither of them know Dr. Montague.
- They talk and Eleanor invents a happy life for herself; she and Theo pretend they are long lost cousins.
- The two women go exploring and find a brook. They are scared by a rabbit.

Chapter Two Quotes

1. *Exorcism cannot alter the countenance of a house; Hill House would stay as it was until it was destroyed.*
2. *I leave before dark comes...so there won't be anyone around if you need help...in the night...in the dark.*
3. *Journeys end in lovers meetings*
4. *I am like a small creature swallowed whole by a monster.*
5. *I am not the sort of person for Hill House, but I can't think of anybody who would be.*
6. *We never know where our courage is coming from.*
7. *Theodora, I don't think I can, you know*
8. *Eleanor, would you let them separate us now?*



Study Questions

1. What do you think motivates each character to come to Hill House?
2. Why do you think Dr. Montague does not tell his guests the history of the house before they arrive?
3. Give three examples of figurative language that describe the house as a living thing.
4. Find one literary allusion in the chapters.
5. Why is Theo trying so hard to make Eleanor comfortable? Do you find her trustworthy?



The Haunting of Hill House

Chapter 3



A Quick Review

- Eleanor was 1st to arrive at Hill House. The house itself frightened her.
- Theo arrived next and the two women helped each other settle in.
- Mr. & Mrs. Dudley will not stay at the house after dark.
- Luke Sanderson, the owner's nephew will arrive at Hill House to watch over the houseguests.
- Dr. Montague is hosting the “house party” ...he wants to investigate paranormal experiences within the house.



Meeting Luke & Dr. Montague

- Luke is a young man, happy to interact with the two women. He's polite and friendly and he flirts a bit.
- Dr. Montague is also friendly, but older than the rest of the guests. He is the father figure to this little "family" and he is in charge.
- At first, the house does not seem to frighten the men, although they admit it is a creepy old house.



A History of Hill House

- After dinner, Dr. Montague gives the guests a history of Hill House.
- He begins by telling them that Hill House has not been lived in for over twenty years.
- The house has a reputation of being tainted, unclean, and forbidden.



Hugh Crain

- Hugh Crain was the builder and original owner of Hill House.
- His first wife was killed the night they were to move into the house...her horse and buggy crashed just outside the gate.
- Hugh and his two daughters moved into the house.
- The second Mrs. Crain died of a mysterious fall.
- The third Mrs. Crain died in consumption, in Europe.



The Younger Sister

- The younger sister married and moved away.
- She did not live in Hill House, but there were valuables she wanted from the house.
- She especially wanted a set of dishes that were gold rimmed.



The Older Sister

- The older sister lived in Hill House.
- She hired a companion, a younger woman from the town, to live with her.
- The older sister eventually died of pneumonia...did the companion call the doctor in time?
- The companion lived alone in Hill House.



Conflict Over Ownership

- The older sister left the house to the companion.
- The younger sister thought the house should go to her and her husband. She tried to sue the companion.
- The companion claimed that the younger sister snuck into the house at night to steal things and move things around.



The Companion

- The companion lived alone in Hill House.
- She always felt that people were sneaking in at night to torment her.
- She eventually hanged herself from the turret.
- The house passed to her family, the Sandersons.
- Luke is a descendent of the companion.
- Since the companion's death, no one has lived in the house for more than a few days.



A More In Depth Look at the Characters

- Theo seems to sulk if she is not the center of attention; at least that's Eleanor's perception.
- Eleanor denies having anything to do with the rocks that fell on her house as a child.
- Theo does not comment either way on her psychic ability.
- Eleanor lies to Theo about her home situation; she invents a little apartment, a home of her own.
- Theo is very quiet about who she lives with. She says "we" or "my friend" and the implication may be that her friend is a woman.



Literary Allusions

- Luke makes an allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* on page 57.
- Theo makes an allusion to *Dracula* on page 57.
- “First and Second Murderers” are characters from *Macbeth*.
- Count Dracula is from Stoker's novel.



Important Quotes

1. *I am the fourth person in this room; I am one of them; I belong.*
2. *What is wrong with Hill House? What is going to happen?*
3. *Hill House will be quiet tonight.*
4. *The concept of certain houses as unclean or forbidden—perhaps sacred—is as old as the mind of man.*



Important Quotes

5. *I will not put a name to what has no name.*
6. *Perhaps it has us now, this house, perhaps it will not let us go.*
7. *The evil is the house itself.*
8. *The house. It watches every move you make.*



Questions for Discussion

1. Why might it be dangerous for Eleanor to begin to feel comfortable in Hill House?
2. Which character in the Hugh Crain story do you think Eleanor might relate to the most and why?
3. Find one quote that might imply that Theo is involved with a woman.
4. Why does Eleanor feel the need to invent a home for herself while talking to Theo?
5. Do you think Dr. Montague is right to be wary about what might occur in Hill House? Why?

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Chapters 4-5



Exploring Hill House

- After the first night in Hill House, the foursome go exploring.
- When they reach the library, where the tower is, Eleanor cannot go in.
- Something about the smell of the room bothers her; reminds her of caring for her mother.
- Dr. Montague explains that Hill House was built “wrong.”
- The angles are slightly off, making the house off center and off balance. This is what makes the house so confusing.



The Statue

- In the drawing room, there is a huge statue of four people.
- Theo says it is a family portrait.
- She says it is Hugh Crain and the two daughters and the companion.
- Theo is kidding, but the statue make everyone uneasy.



The Nursery

- After lunch, the four go to visit the nursery.
- Dr. Montague claims it is the heart of the house.
- The hallway right outside the nursery has a cold spot that cannot be explained away.



Bumps in the Night

- Eleanor wakes up and hears knocking.
- At first, she thinks she is still caring for her mother.
- She then realizes it is Theo calling for her.
- The two women huddle together in Theo's room.
- Something bangs outside and then laughs when Eleanor yells to go away.
- Luke and the Dr. are outside, chasing a “dog” they saw.
- The house is trying to separate its guests.

Quotes from Chapter Four

- *Nothing in this house moves, until you look away and then you just catch something with the corner of your eye.*
- *Like a doorway of a tomb...the heart of the house.*
- *Promise me absolutely that you will leave, as fast as you can, if you begin to feel the house catching at you.*
- *Something is knocking on the doors...it was looking for the room with someone inside.*
- *Doesn't it begin to seem that the intention is, somehow, to separate us.*



Eleanor Feeling Comfortable

- Instead of being scared from the events of the night before, Eleanor wakes up feeling happy and right at home.
- The others do not seem scared either; they have to remind themselves that what happened the previous evening was scary.
- Eleanor, more than anyone else, is very happy to be at Hill House. She does not want to be left out of anything.



The Writing On The Wall

- Whatever is lurking in Hill House is getting more bold.
- The spirits of the house are calling out to Eleanor.
- There is writing, in chalk, on the hallway wall. It mentions Eleanor by name.



The Events in Theo's Room

- Later the same day, Theo goes to her room.
- Her clothes are ruined, covered in blood.
- The same writing from the hallway is on the walls of Theo's room.
- It again calls out to Eleanor.
- Theo is terrified and has to move into Eleanor's room and wear Eleanor's clothes.
- Eleanor begins to feel resentful and angry toward Theo.



Hand Holding...

- That night, Eleanor wakes up and hears noises coming from the room that used to be Theo's.
- She and Theo hold hands in the night, frightened, and listen to the noises.
- It sounds like a voice, first babbling, then crying like a child.
- Eleanor yells at the voice and Theo wakes up.
- Eleanor realizes that Theo was asleep the entire time and that she, Eleanor, was NOT holding Theo's hand in the dark.



Quotes from Chapter Five

- *HELP ELEANOR COME HOME*
- *It knows my name!*
- *I can't picture any world but Hill House.*
- *I think it's biding its time.*
- *God, God---whose hand was I holding?*



Questions

1. Why, after they are so badly frightened in the night, do the houseguests not feel scared in the morning?
2. What connection does fear have to the rational mind? Did they rationalize their fear away?
3. Why is the house calling to Eleanor? Why might she be the person the house is attracted to the most?
4. What does Eleanor mean when she says if only she could “surrender”?



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Chapters 6-7



Eleanor and Luke

- Eleanor talks privately with Luke.
- In earlier chapters, it seemed Eleanor might be interested in Luke.
- Now, Eleanor finds Luke selfish.
- She feels he only flirts with her and does not understand what she needs.
- Eleanor is looking for someone to care for her.



Eleanor and Theo

- Theo, noticing that Eleanor seems interested in Luke, decides to give Eleanor some advice.
- Theo tells Eleanor that Luke is harmlessly flirting and is not interested in Eleanor at all.
- Eleanor takes offense at Theo's comments.
- She starts to resent Theo.



A Walk At Night...

- Eleanor and Theo take a walk at night.
- They are arguing.
- As they walk, the path begins to glow and the temperature drops.
- They don't notice at first, but then get frightened.
- They don't turn back, but keep walking down the glowing path.
- Eleanor and Theo come to a clearing and they see a ghostly picnic.
- As they run back to the house, Luke and the Doctor come looking for them. It turns out they've been missing for hours!



Chapter 6 Quotes

- *You must be a very lonely person.*
- *The path led to its destined end and died beneath their feet.*
- *Don't look back—don't look—run!*



Mrs. Montague and Arthur

- Mrs. Montague and Arthur arrive at Hill House.
- Mrs. Montague loves the idea of communing with spirits/ghosts
- She insists on sleeping in the nursery so she can talk to the spirits all night.
- She also brings a planchette, and is going to use it to commune with ghosts.



Planchette

- There is a description of planchette on page 187.
- It works like a Ouija board, but has a holder for a pen.
- Mrs. Montague speaks of it as if it were a person.
- When she says “planchette” she is really referring to the spirit making the planchette move.



Planchette's Message

- QUESTIONS:

- *Who are you?*
- *Nell who?*
- *What do you want?*
- *Do you want to go home?*
- *What are you doing here?*
- *Waiting for what?*
- *Why?*
- *Is Hill House your home?*
- *What do you want?*
- *Why?*
- *Where is your mother?*
- *Where is your home?*

- ANSWERS:

- *Nell*
- *Eleanor, Nellie, Nell, Nell.*
- *Home*
- *Want to be home.*
- *Waiting.*
- *Home.*
- *Mother*
- *Home.*
- *Mother.*
- *Child*
- *Home.*
- *Lost, lost, lost.*



A Restless Night...

- The message unsettles everyone except Mrs. Montague and Arthur.
- Mrs. Montague goes to sleep in the nursery and Arthur stands guard.
- Dr. orders Theo and Eleanor and Luke to stay in his room.
- The house goes wild...banging, talking, laughing and the rooms seem to move around.
- This goes on all night.
- Eleanor feels like she should surrender herself to the house.
- Mrs. Montague and Arthur hear NOTHING.



Chapter 7 Quotes

- *The spirits dwelling in this house may be actually suffering because they are aware that you are afraid of them.*
- *I will recline in your haunted room...and will endeavor to get in touch with the elements disturbing the house.*
- *I am disappearing inch by inch into this house.*
- *I'll come.*



Questions

1. Why is the house so drawn to Eleanor?
2. Does Mrs. Montague seem to understand how seriously the guests take the hauntings? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the author rarely lets readers “see” the ghosts? Why is it mostly noises?
4. What is so disturbing about planchette’s message?



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Chapters 8-9



Eleanor and Theo

- After the sleepless night, everyone seems not frightened, but calm.
- Eleanor is especially calm.
- She announces to Theo that when they leave Hill House, she will be coming to live with Theo.
- Theo tells Eleanor that they will be friends, but that Eleanor cannot live with her.
- Eleanor keeps insisting and Theo finally gets mad.



Eleanor Eavesdropping

- Eleanor, more and more in her own world, eavesdrops on people's conversations.
- She keeps thinking they are talking about her and wonders when people are going to start talking about her.
- She feels that the house thinks she is the most important and so people should be talking about that.



Eleanor's Walk

- Eleanor goes for a walk with Luke and Theo.
- She wanders away and they stay behind to talk/flirt.
- As she walks, she begins to get scared.
- She hears a ghost calling her name.
- Eleanor now sees/hears ghosts that nobody notices.



Chapter 8 Quotes

1. *I can hear everything, all over the house.*
2. *You have your life back home. I have my life...Hill House is not forever, you know.*
3. *I've never been wanted anywhere.*
4. *"Eleanor, Eleanor" and she heard it inside and outside her head; this was call she had been listening for all her life.*
5. *When are they going to talk about me?*
6. *Eleanor turned and looked at the empty corner of the room where someone was walking and singing softly and then heard it clearly.*
7. *None of them heard it...nobody heard it but me.*



In Her Own World...

- Eleanor has almost completely lost touch with reality.
- She wakes in the night and goes up and down the hall, banging on everyone's doors.
- She then goes to the library and climbs up the stairs to the balcony.
- She has been summoned by the ghosts...and almost kills herself.
- Luke saves her.



The Last Day

- The entire group has breakfast in the morning.
- The Doctor tells Eleanor that she must go home right away.
- She finally admits that she has no home of her own and begs to stay.
- Eleanor is sent away.
- She is longing to stay at Hill House.
- Eleanor drives her car into a tree and dies.
- We can assume that she now haunts Hill House...home at last.



Chapter 9 Quotes

- *Mother, she said aloud. Come along, a voice answered.*
- *You're here somewhere, somewhere.*
- *I dare you to open your door and come and see me dancing in the hall of Hill House.*
- *I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home.*
- *I want to stay here.*
- *The house was waiting now and it was waiting for her; no one else could satisfy it.*
- *It's the only time anything's ever happened to me. I liked it.*
- *I won't go and Hill House belongs to me.*
- *Silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House and whatever walked there, walked alone.*



Questions for Discussion

1. Why has the activity in Hill House centered around Eleanor all along? What does the house realize about her?
2. For what is Eleanor truly looking? Does she find it in the end?
3. Do you think the house made Eleanor crazy or what she crazy before she arrived?
4. Do you think Eleanor is at peace now? Why or why not?

