

**UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF THE FATAL GAME IN
KAREN M. MCMANUS' *ONE OF US IS NEXT***

THESIS



**UIN SUNAN AMPEL
S U R A B A Y A**

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ABSTRACT

Putri, N. D. (2023). *Unlocking The Mystery of The Fatal Game in Karen M. McManus' One of Us is Next*. English Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Advisors: (I) Dr. Wahyu Kusumajanti, M.Hum., (II) Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah, M.Hum.

This study aims to unravel the mystery surrounding the game of truth-or-dare in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next* by examining the novel's plot. The novel narrates a story of an invitation raised to participate in a mysterious game called truth-or-dare. The person who becomes the game's target can select either 'truth' or 'dare.' If the targets select 'truth,' they must tell the truth; if they select "dare," they must complete a dare. However, if they choose neither option, the game's creator will reveal their secret to all their friends. The game keeps reaching its highest point till a mysterious death occurs because of it. This study focuses on two research formulas: (1) the description of the truth-or-dare game in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*; (2) the journey of the characters discovering the creators and motivations behind the truth-or-dare game in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*.

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, describing the findings. Additionally, the data utilized in this study comes in the form of words and sentences. The researcher employs the perspective of New Criticism to explain how the characters in the novel *One of Us is Next* reveal the culprits and the motives behind the truth-or-dare game and pays attention to Joyce G. Saricks's genre formula of mystery to derive greater accuracy in the findings. As secondary data sources, the researcher also uses books, journals, and other articles to support her research.

The findings of this study indicate that the truth-or-dare game assigns targets with specific criteria based on what the game creators intended. In addition, the game also has rules such as choosing between 'truth' or 'dare' and revealing secrets if the target chooses not to participate. Then, the pattern of the characters' actions follows a mystery formula, which includes the committing of the crime, the analysis of the clues, the suspect's interview, and the revelation of motive. Finally, the game creator's motivation is to exact retribution. The game is designed to prevent the suspect from being suspected of committing a crime. In addition, the reason for selecting a particular target is to show their ability in technology and intelligence.

Keywords: Mystery, New Criticism, Formula, Plot, Game

ABSTRAK

Putri, N. D. (2023). *Unlocking The Mystery of The Fatal Game in Karen M. McManus' One of Us is Next*. English Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Advisors: (I) Dr. Wahyu Kusumajanti, M.Hum., (II) Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah, M.Hum.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap misteri seputar permainan truth-or-dare dalam novel *One of Us is Next* karya Karen M. McManus dengan mengkaji plot novel tersebut. Novel tersebut menceritakan sebuah kisah tentang undangan yang diajukan untuk berpartisipasi dalam permainan misterius yang disebut kebenaran atau tantangan. Orang yang menjadi target permainan dapat memilih 'truth' atau 'dare'. Jika target memilih 'truth', mereka harus mengatakan yang sebenarnya; jika mereka memilih 'dare', mereka harus menyelesaikan tantangan. Namun, jika mereka tidak memilih salah satu dari pilihan tersebut, pembuat game akan mengungkapkan rahasia mereka kepada semua teman mereka. Permainan terus memuncak hingga kematian misterius terjadi akibat dari permainan itu. Penelitian ini hanya berfokus pada dua rumusan penelitian: (1) gambaran tentang permainan truth-or-dare dalam *One of Us is Next* karya Karen M. McManus; (2) perjalanan karakter menemukan pencipta dan motivasi di balik permainan truth-or-dare dalam *One of Us is Next* karya Karen M. McManus.

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, yaitu mendeskripsikan temuan. Selain itu, data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini berupa kata dan kalimat. Peneliti menggunakan perspektif New Criticism untuk menjelaskan bagaimana karakter dalam novel *One of Us is Next* mengungkapkan pelaku serta motif di balik permainan truth-or-dare dan memperhatikan formula genre misteri Joyce G. Saricks untuk mendapatkan tingkat keakuratan temuan penelitian yang lebih baik. Sebagai sumber data sekunder, peneliti juga menggunakan buku, jurnal, dan artikel lain untuk mendukung penelitiannya.

Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa game truth-or-dare menetapkan target dengan kriteria tertentu berdasarkan apa yang pembuat game inginkan. Selain itu, game ini juga memiliki aturan seperti memilih antara 'truth' atau 'dare' dan mengungkap rahasia jika target memilih untuk tidak berpartisipasi. Kemudian, pola aksi para tokoh mengikuti formula misteri yang meliputi tindak pidana, analisis petunjuk, wawancara tersangka, dan pengungkapan motif. Terakhir, motivasi pembuat game adalah untuk membalas dendam. Permainan ini dirancang untuk mencegah tersangka dicurigai melakukan kejahatan. Selain itu, alasan pemilihan target tertentu adalah untuk menunjukkan kemampuan mereka dalam teknologi dan kecerdasan.

Keywords: Misteri, Kritik Baru, Formula, Plot, Permainan

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

A literary work has its classification, which makes it distinct and easy to identify. A literary work is famous if its theme, method of presenting language techniques, and writing style conform to a pattern currently popular with its readers (Trismanto, 2018). Popular literature is one of the literary works with its characteristics. It consists of literary styles originating in the masses' needs, ways of thinking, knowledge, issues, and preferences. Thus, a popular literary work will have its own pattern. The pattern could also refer to the formula. John G. Cawelti then describes a formula as a narrative composed in a structure or employing dramatic techniques used in many individual works (Cawelti, 1976). So, the formula is a pattern literary writers employ to tell stories. The pattern or formula in a literary work will eventually give rise to a particular genre.

Joyce G. Saricks define a genre as any sizeable collection of fiction writers and specific titles that share similar characteristic and appeal created following a particular pattern (Saricks, 2009). In short, genre refers to each classification or grouping of literature according to specific features. There are many different types of genres. One of them is a mystery. A mystery is anything which it is unclear why and for what purpose something can occur. Mysteries are built around a puzzle in which the author hints about the solution while trying to disguise specific details so that the mystery cannot be resolved too easily (Saricks, 2009). In mysteries, an unexplained death or a crime to be investigated are typical elements (Saricks, 2009). Mystery in fiction typically explains how a phenomenon

or a crime can be explained rationally. Hence novels revolving around a mystery tend to emphasize the plot.

The novel's plot is a collection of interrelated events that construct its storyline. The "plot" of a dramatic or narrative work consists of the events and actions that happen in the story (Abrams & Harpham, 2015). The mystery genre drives the plot since it focuses on characters trying to solve the cases. Thus, literary works of the mystery genre tend to stress the plot, as it concentrates on the characters' experiences and responses to the situation.

One of the novels focusing on solving a case is Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*. The novel, published in 2020, is the sequel to *One of Us is Lying*. *One of Us is Next* is told from the first-person point of view by three people. The three narrators are Maeve Rojas, Knox Myers, and Phoebe Lawton, who are students at Bayview High School. *One of Us is Next* by Karen M. McManus recounts an incident that occurred to Bayview students a year after the revelation of the death of one of the students in the preceding novel. A year after the incident, Bayview High School faced a mystery case that ruined the lives of several students. This work attracts the interest of the researcher because it offers intriguing issues. This novel's author describes the plot and how the characters solve problems and are structured through various clues that lead researchers to explain the novel's formula.

In this study, researcher only found one previous study that used the novel *One of Us Is Next* as its subject. A study in the novel *One of Us Is Next* was conducted by Danette DiMarco in 2021. This study examines the intersectional injustice in Karen M. McManus's mystery book. DiMarco explores the

relationship between adults and all forms of oppression and dominance suffered by adolescents in three works – *One of Us is Lying*, *One of Us is Next*, and *Two Can Keep a Secret* - by the same author (DiMarco, 2021). The findings of DiMarco's research for this book demonstrate that the oppression of teenage characters is always navigated by all adult characters who appear in the novel. The research also shows that all the adult characters who appear in it have made mistakes that impact the teen characters. After reading the results of previous studies closely, researcher has not discovered someone who investigated the plot in the novel. Therefore, the researcher in this study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the genre of the novel *One of Us is Next*. As noted in the preceding explanation, genre study highlights the novel's plot. Hence researcher only focuses on the construction of the plot in the novel.

1.2 Problems of The Study

In line with the background above, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. How is the game 'truth or dare' described in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*?
2. How do the characters reveal the 'truth or dare' game creator in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

In line with the problems of the study above, this study aims to

1. To describe the game 'truth or dare' in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*.

2. To follow the character's journey in revealing the creators and the motive of the 'truth or dare' game in Karen M. McManus' *One of Us is Next*.

1.4 Significances of The Study

This study's results are expected to benefit both theoretical and practical concerns. Theoretically, this study is supposed to give an insight to the reader about the mystery genre. Some people who unfamiliar with genre studies believe mystery is always associated with the occult and the supernatural. In fact, the mystery is something whose truth remains unclear. Besides, this study is also supposed to provide readers with an understanding of how the plot constructs the entire story in the novel so they can grasp its meaning. This is because an excellent plot will attract the reader's emotional interest in reading more thoroughly, leading to a better understanding of the story's content. Practically, this study intends to fill a gap in the previous research on this novel, allowing future researchers to use it as a reference. Furthermore, the researcher aims to convey at retribution can have negative consequences, as it may cause harm to anyone, even individuals who are not directly involved in the problem.

1.5 Scopes and Delimitations

The scope of this study is the novel *One of Us is Next* by Karen M. McManus. This novel was published in 2020 and has several issues that can be investigated. However, this study focuses solely on the plot that constructs the novel's storyline to expound on the mystery game "truth-or-dare" and depicts the characters' journey to discover the game's creator. Then, this study also seeks the game creator's motivation for creating the game.

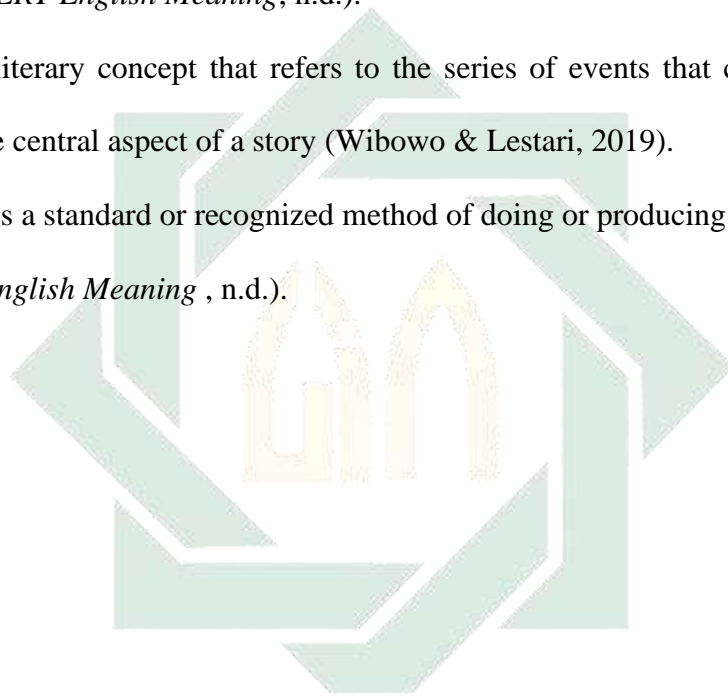
1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In order to clarify the key terms used in this study, some definitions are put forward:

Mystery is something unusual or unknown that has not been clarified or figured out yet (*MYSTERY English Meaning*, n.d.).

Plot is a literary concept that refers to the series of events that comprise a narrative or the central aspect of a story (Wibowo & Lestari, 2019).

Formula is a standard or recognized method of doing or producing something (*FORMULA English Meaning*, n.d.).



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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 New Criticism

The New Criticism was one of the most effective approaches to literary analysis experienced by twentieth-century readers. It was the method through which people learned to read, evaluate, and understand literature for decades (Dobie, 2012). According to Charles E. Bressler, New Criticism is the literary analysis approach that provides readers with a formula for determining the correct interpretation of a work based on the text itself (Bressler, 2011). The New Criticism considers literary texts as a system with a complete structure. Hence, the New Criticism the text should stand alone because the approach has a textual focus.

The New Criticism was more directly conceived as a reaction to the focus on the biographical and historical context of works, lessening the stress on the literature itself (Dobie, 2012). So, this literary critique was created to focus on the literary work itself, ignoring the author's influence and its historical context. The practice of New Criticism emphasizes reading texts closely and appreciating order (Dobie, 2012). In New Criticism, close reading aims to determine the true meaning of a text being analyzed. In addition, this practice seeks to examine and describe precisely, thoroughly, and deeply the interconnections and interweaving of literary elements such as plot, character, and theme that comprise the overall meaning. In this study, the researcher employs the concept of New Criticism to demonstrate how the characters in *One of Us is Next* expose the culprits behind the game "truth or dare." Under the perspective of New Criticism, the researcher

applies close reading to the novel *One of Us is Next* in order to determine how cases can be solved.

2.1.1 Character and Characterization

Characters are the people or objects that populate the story's world.

According to Abrams and Harpham, characters are the individuals who are shown in a play or story, and the reader assumes they have certain ethical, intellectual, and emotional traits based on what they say and how they say it, as well as their actions (Abrams & Harpham, 2015). Characters are typically designed with unique traits and characteristics. The character is not only recognizable by age, physical appearance, look, wardrobe, or action but also by their inner disposition (Rondonuwu, 2020). So, characters play a crucial part in a narrative since they make it conceivable and bring it to life.

A writer then constructs a characterization to bring a character to life in a story or drama. Baldick argues that characterization is how people are portrayed in stories and plays. The portrayal of characterization can be done directly or indirectly. Direct characterization includes describing or commenting on a character's traits, while indirect characterization has the reader infer characteristics from a character's actions, speech, or appearance (Baldick, 2001). So characterization is an attempt by the author of a story or play to show who the character is or what kind of person they are. As a result, the researcher in this study also focuses on the employment of characters and characterization because characters play an essential part in conveying the culprit's motivations in the novel. The characters play an important role in the disclosure of the crime happening.

2.1.2 Plot

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a story's plot consists of a series of occurrences. A plot is the sequence of events and situations chosen and structured to emphasize relationships between incidents and interest the reader or audience's attention about an event in a story (Baldick, 2001). Arbain mentioned in his study that the author's intelligence and memories are embedded in the plot, which is why the plot plays such an essential role in the novel (Arbain, 2016). The plot is a crucial component of a story since it guides the reader in determining its meaning and how to interpret it. It is a unified composition. However, it can appear to be an unchanging grid, giving the author of a fictional work godlike power over the characters (Childs & Fowler, 2006). Therefore, plot not only explains what occurs in a story, but also how and why it occurs.

According to Gustav Freytag, the plot of a story can be described as a narrative structure composed of a beginning, middle, and ending. Then, it is divided into five distinct sections, similar to the standard five acts of a theatrical production. The section includes an introduction, a rise, a climax, a return, and a catastrophe (Freytag, 1863). The five sections form a structure in the story's plot that makes it perfect and well-expressed to the readers.

2.1.2.1 Exposition

The beginning of the narrative contains exposition. Freytag refers to the exposition as the introduction. According to Freytag, the introduction or exposition is the beginning of a narrative that typically describes the protagonist's setting, time, nationality, and relationships (Freytag, 1863). The exposition or introduction is commonly understood as the initial segment of a play or narrative,

in which the characters and their situations are presented, frequently through references to prior occurrences (Baldick, 2001). In essence, exposition refers to an event that triggers a conflict and serves as the primary means of introducing the key fictional elements of a narrative, such as setting, place, time, and characters.

2.1.2.2 Rising Action

The stage of rising action marks the initial emergence of complexity. According to Freytag, the rising action stage is characterized by the commencement of the act itself, the manifestation of the main character's traits, and the arousal of interest (Freytag, 1863). The rising action delves into the central struggle of the plot leading up to its highest point moment, or it can be called the climax. During this particular stage, various actions and events occur that ultimately culminate in a state of conflict.

2.1.2.3 Climax

A literary climax refers to a specific moment of increased intensity within a work of literature (Baldick, 2001). Climax represents an essential point in the story where the level of tension reaches its maximum threshold. According to Freytag's dramatic structure, the climax is the point in the narrative where the culmination of the rising action is most intense and definite (Freytag, 1863). The significance of the climax in the narrative lie in its function as the point at which the protagonist's central conflict is unveiled, rendering it the core of the issue.

2.1.2.4 Falling Action

The falling action is the sequence of events that occurs after the climax. At this point, the main character is grappling with the aftermath of the crucial

moment in the narrative. Furthermore, the falling action is intended to culminate in the story's conclusion, commonly called the catastrophe.

2.1.2.5 Resolution

According to Freytag's plot structure, the final stage is the resolution or completion of the plot, which contains the closing action (Freytag, 1863). At this point, the conflict has been entirely resolved, and the character undergoes closure. Furthermore, this phase is anticipated to settle any unresolved plot points, culminating in a conclusion that may be either happy or sad.

2.2 Mystery Genre

As previously expounded in chapter one, the concept of mystery pertains to an unresolved aspect of reality that remains vague or enigmatic. According to Saricks, mysteries are structured as puzzles accompanied by hints of the solution, but the author conceals specific details to prevent a simple resolution. The audience and investigator become invested in the mystery to solve it (Saricks, 2009). In short, the mystery genre centers around the initiation of a crime and its subsequent investigation, which serves as the narrative's core and presents a puzzle that captivates readers.

Several Mysteries contain more than simple, pattern-based puzzles. Most of these works entail complicated stages of narrative and character exposition that require a gradual revealing of concealed information, resulting in the eventual resolution. Also, the investigator's role is significant because this genre's primary goal is to investigate the clues and figure out the puzzle. Hence, the portrayal of investigators in the mystery genre plays a crucial role in advancing the plot of a narrative.

2.2.1 Amateur Detectives

As previously explained, the primary objective of the mystery genre is to figure out the solution to a given case and reveal the root of the issue, so it requires a systematic process or formula to solve it. Joyce G Saricks states that a mystery novel adheres to a particular structure. Saricks argues, "Novels that fall within the Mystery genre follow a particular pattern: a crime is committed, an investigator pursues the clues, interviewing suspects and drawing conclusions, then the crime is solved, and the culprit is brought to justice." (Saricks, 2009). In specific literary works, this particular structure can attain a greater complexity. However, the most frequent formula is as described above.

Apart from observing specific patterns, research about mysteries can also be done by following the investigators who lead the reader to conclude about a case that has occurred. Focusing on investigator types, according to Saricks, is the easiest way to evaluate the mystery because these characters' personalities drive the plot and readers' interest in the book (Saricks, 2009). The amateur detective is one kind of investigator in a mystery. Most individuals who engage in amateur detective work perceive their investigations as puzzles to be solved. According to Saricks, these detectives are not experts with specialized training in investigating techniques; they are prone to "fall into" a case featuring a person they know, and they typically work on a single case at one time (Saricks, 2009).

As amateur detectives typically have personal involvement in their cases, they are not qualified professionals and do not receive compensation for their services. Notwithstanding their lack of professional qualifications, amateur

detectives often possess skills that enable them to resolve a case successfully. Amateur detectives often depend on their intuition and understanding of human behavior, rather than employing a systematic inquiry, to uncover the veritable essence of the crime and the perpetrator (Saricks, 2009). Therefore, crime novels highlighting amateur detectives are often characterized by a lighthearted and genial attitude toward criminals. However, some amateurs approach their cases and investigations with a heightened level of dedication, meticulously pursuing leads with the same level of accuracy as experienced investigators (Saricks, 2009). Amateur detectives are more concerned with evaluating clues to solve the case.

Based on the description above, the researcher in this study investigates the mystery of truth-or-dare games and how the characters, as amateur detectives, reveal the game creator. The researcher then utilizes a close reading approach emphasizing analyzing the plot while carefully considering the mysterious genre formula rules mentioned above to obtain precise analytical outcomes.

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CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. According to Fraenkel, a qualitative descriptive method elaborates deeply on the essence of a relationship, an action, or a condition (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Furthermore, a narrative format was used to present the study's findings. As a result, this method assists the researcher in thoroughly examining and elucidating a phenomenon related to the data.

3.2 Data Collection

The following explanation will elucidate the techniques employed in gathering, analyzing, and displaying the data in this investigation, thereby ensuring its academic foundation.

3.2.1 Research Data

The present study employs textual excerpts from a literary work, including words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, to comprehensively investigate a particular phenomenon. This approach is grounded in the literature-related context of the research. The data is subjected to meticulous refinement to facilitate its utilization in addressing the research questions in this study.

3.2.2 Data Sources

This study employs both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data source is Karen M. McManus's novel *One of Us Is Next*. This study concentrates solely on words, sentences, paragraphs, and novel conversations

about the truth or dares game and related incidents throughout the novel.

Additionally, the researcher utilizes secondary data sources to obtain more information for her research. The secondary data sources include relevant journal articles, books, web articles, and previous research theses.

3.2.3 Instrument

Fraenkel stated that in certain types of qualitative research, there may not be a required tool, such as a standardized test or a rating scale. In this particular research technique, the researcher assumes the role of the primary instrument for data collection (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Consequently, as the researcher evaluates the literary work that focuses on words, sentences, paragraphs, and dialogues, the researcher takes herself as the role of the research instrument in this investigation.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

To collect data for this study, the researcher followed several procedures, including:

1. The researcher read Karen M. McManus's novel *One of Us Is Next* attentively.
2. The researcher then collected the words, phrases, and conversations related to the game Truth or Dare and the characters' journey to finding the suspect behind the game in the novel.
3. The researcher creates a data table and classifies the data based on the pattern of the mystery genre and the plot elements to interpret and comprehend how the characters reveal the suspect behind the game and the motivation of the game's creator.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

To conduct this research, the researcher processes the data in several steps, including:

1. The researcher examines the plot using a new criticism lens and close reading to determine how the narrative develops from the crime's beginning to the perpetrator's discovery.
2. To obtain accurate research results, the researcher continues to consider the mystery patterns developed by Joyce G. Saricks.
3. The researcher concludes her research findings.



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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher tried to answer the research question concerning the mysterious game that appears in the novel and how the characters attempt to identify the culprit of the mysterious game. As stated in the previous chapter, the researcher analyzes this research from the lens of the New Criticism theory. The researcher then employs close reading focusing on plot analysis, paying close attention to the above-described mysterious genre formula rules to acquire accurate analysis results. Before entering a detailed analysis, the researcher has to explain the novel briefly to help the reader grasp the concerns raised.

The novel *One of Us is Next* describes the condition of Bayview High School one year after a student's death incident. In the previous novel by the same author, *One of Us is Lying*, a character named Simon dies due to a peanut allergy. Simon was a student who invented the rumor-spreading application 'About That' to spread rumors about his friends. Normalcy returned to Bayview High School when the mystery surrounding Simon's death was solved. Nevertheless, a year after Simon's death, a new incident occurred. The novel *One of Us is Next* is narrated from three different characters' perspectives. The narrators are Maeve Rojas, Knox Myers, and Phoebe Lawton. After last year's tragedy, Bayview High School was again surprised by the appearance of a mysterious game whose creator is unknown. An invitation to participate in the game was delivered by broadcast message to all students' numbers at Bayview High School. The game's

statement even though she did this when Emma and Derek broke up. Emma and her ex-boyfriend have no relationship again. Phoebe was forced to remain silent and consider her actions became the worst possible. She felt like the worst sibling ever. As Emma continued her sentence, Phoebe was quiet. She also said that she hated Derek and Phoebe. Then she said that she did not want to speak a word to either of them for the rest of her life. Emma felt she hated them, so she could not talk to them.

In addition to the conflict with her sister, Phoebe experienced bullying at Bayview High School because of the secret revelation in the following quotation.

“Don’t get greedy just cause you’re hitting that,” Sean says. “There’s plenty of Lawton love to go around. Right, Phoebe? Twice as nice. Sharing is caring.” He’s cackling now. “Listen to me, Bran. I’m a poet and I know it.”(McManus, 2020, p. 51)

The quote reveals that Sean, a student at Bayview High, made fun of Phoebe for thinking she and her sister could switch turns having sex with him. Sean tells Phoebe that having sex together is fun. However, Sean’s tone remained mocking and sarcastic, as if he were making fun of Emma and Phoebe’s sibling relationship. Sean said that sharing was good, but the context in the quotation was having sexual intercourse together. Sean noted that Phoebe and Emma frequently shared a variety of interests and that they also often engaged in sexual activity together with someone else. Sean then began to chuckle about it. Sean did not care about Phoebe’s feelings; he kept surrounding her and making fun of her for what she had done without investigating the facts and relying solely on rumors. The effects of the disclosure of secrets ruined Phoebe’s life. She believed nobody was on her side.

problem with Knox as soon as possible. She appeared to be pleading with Knox to give him a chance to explain. However, Knox was unwilling to accept and unhappy with what had occurred to him and Maeve. Although he agreed many issues would be resolved together, Knox said he wanted Maeve to leave. Knox texted Maeve back, telling her not to bring this up again.

Some students at Bayview High School were affected by the truth or dare game, for which it is unknown what the motivation was. Some of them were also disadvantaged because of the game. People who should enjoy their school life comfortably have to deal with numerous problems, such as losing close friends, becoming the focus of humiliation, losing closeness with their siblings, and impacting other people who do not even participate in the game. This shows that the game is hugely harmful.

4.2 The Revelation of The Game Creator

After what occurred to Maeve, an incident pulled the entire Bayview High School back into the spotlight and was reported on Bayview's local television stations.

“We’re continuing to bring you the latest from Bayview, where tragedy has occurred at an abandoned construction site. The story is still developing, but what we know so far is that a group of local teens were in a blocked-off area when one boy fell through the roof of a partially constructed building. Another boy was also injured, although it’s not yet clear how. And we just got word, from one of the officers here, that the young man who fell through the roof has been confirmed dead.” (McManus, 2020, p. 167)

The above quote depicts a reporter from the E! network reporting on an incident in an abandoned construction site near a mall in Bayview. There was a gathering of teenagers, and one fell to his death from the roof. Liz also reported

realize after viewing the contents of the video they received from Sean that the game of “truth or dare” does not end with Maeve and Knox. They noticed Brandon also participated in the “truth or dare” game. Later, they also determined that Brandon chose to accept the given dare.

“Maeve swallows hard. “You guys got the gist of that, right?” she asks. “The game didn’t end with Knox and me, after all. Brandon was doing a Dare.” “Yeah. Got it.” I blink back tears and press my hands to my stomach. If I’d eaten lunch before watching that, I’d have thrown it up. “Oh my God. That was horrible.” (McManus, 2020, p. 208)

This quote indicates that the “truth or dare” game does not finish with Maeve and Knox. Maeve recognized Brandon’s action as a dare issued by the game’s creator. This can be heard in the video taken by Sean because he was pleased and provoked Brandon to jump. Brandon also said that what he got was unpleasant because only a few people could see it. However, Brandon continued participating in the challenge since his friends provoked him. Brandon then jumped and fell, as previously proved. His friends were not expecting that the foothold Brandon utilized to land would not support his weight even though the pedestal should be extremely sturdy and capable of resisting huge loads.

The data shown above indicate that the impact of the game truth-or-dare is worsening. After previously causing Maeve and Knox to avoid each other, Phoebe to be bullied by her friends, and different adverse outcomes, the game now causes the death of someone for following the gameplay designed by the game’s creator.

4.2.1 Motivated Investigator

After seeing what happened to Brandon, Knox felt that Brandon's death had something wrong. Especially before he watched Sean's video, Knox had overheard his parents talking about Brandon's death.

“Lance has some nerve.” Mom's voice is tight. “I hope this is just the grief talking. I feel for him, of course, because—my God. To lose your son. It's a nightmare. But for Lance to bring up the possibility of a lawsuit after the strings he pulled to keep Brandon out of trouble—it's beyond hypocritical.” (McManus, 2020, p. 191)

Knox witnessed his parents having a conversation. Knox's parents were discussing Brandon's death. Lance's behavior was quite risky, according to Knox's mother. Lance Weber was Brandon's father. Knox's mother hoped that Brandon's father's actions were exclusively motivated by grief over the death of his son. In addition, her mother also emphasized that she knows what it is like to lose a child and that she is saddened and concerned about Lance Weber's situation. However, Knox's mother revealed that if Lance intended to bring a new lawsuit to dispute his son's death, she believed he would do so in a completely hypocritical manner. Before this, she was overheard claiming that Brandon's father had used his influence covertly to resolve a problem involving Brandon.

In addition to hearing his parents talk about Brandon, one of Knox's father's workers, Nate Macauley, also had an opinion about how Brandon died, which added to Knox's interest. At the time, Knox's father's company assisted in determining the cause of Brandon's tragedy at an abandoned construction site. Nate gives Knox his perspective on Brandon's tragedy.

“Because of what's not there, I guess. There's not all the debris you'd expect when a well-constructed landing crashes down. Some of the beams don't even have any joists so, like, how were they supposed to stay up in the first place?” Nate narrows his eyes at his

site where Simon Kelleher was previously active. Maeve is constantly observing what people are doing. During this time, Maeve also spied on a user with the username Darkestmind, frequently mentioning Bayview. When Maeve saw the user's post, she was shocked that the user had mentioned Phoebe. The message in the post indicates that Darkestmind users are enraged with Phoebe. He used simple words and claimed that Phoebe completely ignored him. Phoebe did not arrive at the location specified by the user. The user subsequently explained that he dared to reveal Phoebe's name because he felt she had ignored him. In addition, users claim they have an agreement, but Phoebe is considered to have betrayed the user because she refused to meet him.

Previously, Maeve had observed a site used by Simon while he was still alive. Maeve discovered the website because she was once intrigued about the person behind the truth or dare game. She seeks to find the game designer's relationship with Simon. Then, while searching for this, she found a Reddit site that Simon had previously used to remark on revenge issues. After Simon's demise a year ago, the site now appears to be back online. *Vengeance is Mine* is the name of a site based on Reddit that hosts conversations between users.

“I open another browser tab and type AnarchiSK—Simon's old username—into the search bar. I used to Google that names all the time, back when I was trying to figure out who might have it in for Simon. There are thousands of results, mostly from old news articles, so I narrow the search to the past twenty-four hours. One link remains to a Reddit subforum with the words *Vengeance Is Mine* in the URL” (McManus, 2020, p. 77)

Maeve initially believed that she and Knox would do a hacking together, but Knox refused because he lacked computer expertise. Then, Knox stated that he intended for Maeve to hack Knox's mother's laptop by herself.

After hacking his mother's laptop, Knox and Maeve attempt to gain the true identity of the person responsible for the truth or dare game and Brandon's death. They go to observe the residence of the intense guy they believe to be the cause of all the problems.

“It's almost eight thirty on Friday night, and we're settled into a window table at a coffee shop in Rolando Village. The coffee in this place is awful, but the view is ideal. We're almost directly across from the house we followed Intense Guy to from Callahan Park” (McManus, 2020, p. 271)

According to the quotation, Maeve and Knox are surveilling the person they believe to be the root of all their problems. They were inside a coffee shop at the time. The location is directly opposite the target's home, which belongs to an intense guy. Previously, after going to Callahan Park to find out who it was, they were able to find his address. In addition, they were presently observing Intense Guy's activities at his residence.

While monitoring the man's residence, Knox and Maeve look for additional information regarding the man's actual identity. In addition, Maeve attempts to access documents she obtained by hacking into Knox's mother's laptop. They continue to find clues that may help them establish a connection between the numerous occurrences. Then, Knox asks Maeve about the letter left for Phoebe by the man while searching for information on his identity. He wanted to know if there were any hints there. When Maeve attempts to show Knox a photograph of

Knox recounts Maeve Eli's murder threats. Later, Knox remembered Sandeep's assertion that Eli's letter containing death threats had to be related to the D'Agostino case. Due to his part-time employment at Until Proven, Knox can access the information he stores on the G drive. Then, Knox opened his files and learned about the D'Agostino case. He showed it to Maeve. The document is a spreadsheet that lists the individuals implicated in the D'Agostino case. Then, Knox began tracking down the name David Jackson and searching for possible connections.

Subsequently making multiple attempts with different keywords, Knox found one result that matched the keyword he had inputted. The information pertains to a person named Ray Jackson.

“Officer Ray Jackson, defendant. Accused of assisting Sergeant Carl D’Agostino in blackmailing and framing seventeen innocent people for drug possession. Age: 24. Status: In jail, awaiting trial”
(McManus, 2020, p. 274)

After accessing his G-Drive, which contained multiple documents, Knox discovered something. He found that Ray Jackson is involved in the D'Agostino case. The prosecution against D'Agostino, charged with extortion, included Officer Ray Jackson. Ray Jackson was accused of extortion and accusing seventeen people of drug possession. After it was determined that Ray Jackson assisted Sergeant D'Agostino in the case, he is currently incarcerated and awaiting trial.

After discovering this information, Knox investigated Ray Jackson's background. Due to his position in prison, he and Maeve believed Ray Jackson could not carry out a series of activities, including sending death threats and

false allegations. However, Maeve is still unsure how the case relates to Phoebe and Brandon. She was also curious about Jared's role in Brandon's deaths and why he designed a game that claimed so many victims.

4.2.2.2 Looking for The Background Information of The Suspects

For a criminal act to be solved and a solution to be found, it is necessary for investigators to discover existing clues. The same thing applies to Knox and Maeve. After successfully identifying the criminals behind several incidents they faced, Maeve and Knox looked for clues and information related to the criminals to arrive at solutions and resolutions. After discovering Jared Jackson's real identity, Knox searched for personal information about him. Knox discovers an article about Jared's past that describes a case he has encountered.

“I just plugged Jared Jackson into Google, and there's a lot here.” His eyes flick up and down the screen. “So, yeah, he was arrested for stealing from a convenience store right after he graduated high school. Got probation, did that mentoring program, started working for a construction company.” (McManus, 2020, p. 275)

Knox was looking for Jared's Background on Google. Then, Knox discovered a lot of news and information concerning Jared Jackson's background. Jared Jackson was once detained for shoplifting in a supermarket. He received a suspended sentence after being detained. After getting a mentoring program, Jared Jackson worked for a construction company during the suspended sentence.

Knox observed Jared carrying a bag pack and preparing to go while searching for more information on him. This was accompanied by a PingMe alert informing Maeve that the Reddit site she monitored was being updated. Maeve was shocked to see this when she read Jared's message because it appeared suspicious. This is evident from the following quotation.

The quotation depicts a detective visiting Phoebe after the bombing at the arboretum. According to the police, the primary culprit Jared Jackson was indeed arrested. Phoebe had to wait for her sister, who was getting treatment in the hospital. Thus, she was not present when Maeve and Knox were there. The police inform Phoebe that Jared Jackson's statement claims that Phoebe was involved in a case of revenge. Jared and Phoebe are accused of conspiring to exact revenge.

According to Jared's statement during his interview with the police, Jared and Phoebe had an agreement in which they aided each other in taking out their respective enemies. They meet at a revenge forum called Vengeance is Mine on the Reddit platform. Jared told the police that they had agreed to carry out an agreement in which Jared would assist Phoebe in getting rid of Brandon, and Phoebe would help him in getting rid of Eli. He also asserts they are close because they believe they share the same family fate. Later, Jared also revealed to the police that he had played Truth or Dare to assist Phoebe in getting rid of Brandon.

The authorities added to their statement about Jared's interview and told Phoebe about that. This is evident from the following quotation:

"The actions that led to Brandon Weber's death were the result of a Dare issued to him. Mr. Jackson made use of his background in construction work to remove supports from beneath that landing, causing Brandon to fall to his death. In return, you were supposed to help Mr. Jackson get revenge on Eli Kleinfelter for putting Mr. Jackson's brother in jail. However, Mr. Jackson says you fell out of touch after Brandon Weber's death and became unresponsive to his attempts to contact you. Thus, tonight's attack. He decided to take matters into his own hands and conclude the deal without you."
(McManus, 2020, p. 299)

According to the police, Brandon Weber's death was caused by his participation in a Bayview High School "truth or dare" game. The police added that Jared used his construction knowledge to remove supports beneath Brandon,

causing him to collapse. Jared has experience in the construction industry and a basic understanding of building structures. In exchange for his assistance in exacting vengeance against Brandon, Phoebe was asked to assist Jared in exacting revenge against Eli, who had imprisoned Jared's brother due to false accusations and extortion. After Brandon Weber's death, Jared claimed that Phoebe stopped responding to his attempts and could not contact her. Jared ultimately decided to carry out the agreement without Phoebe and exact his vengeance on Eli using explosives.

Phoebe denies the accusations made by the police after hearing them. Phoebe repeatedly confirmed to the police that she did not know Jared and had only recently known his name.

“I'm going to be sick. “No. That's not...I wouldn't in a million years do anything like that,” I say. An image flashes through my brain of Brandon in my apartment, assaulting me and hurling insults. “Why would I? Brandon and I aren't....we didn't get along all the time, but he wasn't my *enemy*”.” (McManus, 2020, p. 300)

As evidenced by the preceding citation, Phoebe claimed she did not comprehend all the accusations against her. She denied everything the authorities claimed. She has just learned the cause of Brandon's demise. She was ever close to Brandon before the truth-or-dare game began. She had never imagined doing such a thing, even though Brandon frequently disturbed her after revealing a secret about her. Phoebe repeatedly refuted what the authorities claimed because she did not wish to do so. Even though Brandon had attacked and hurt Phoebe then, Phoebe stated that it had never occurred to her to harm Brandon.

Detective Mendoza, questioning Phoebe and repeatedly receiving responses from her, eventually told her that Brandon's actions had caused her father's death.

Emma was displeased with her younger sibling, so she assumed her identity. Emma stated that her accord with Jared had no bearing on the anger. Emma was angry with her sister because Phoebe had cheated on her with her ex. When they were connected online, Emma informed Jared about her father's death case. Jared continues by offering to help Emma resolve her problem. Emma continued by stating that Jared never brought up Eli.

Then, Emma reveals to her lawyer, following her confession to Detective Mendoza, what occurred between her and Jared. Emma claims everything began when she attempted to review her mother's files.

“It's true, what Jared said about how we met online. I was going through a bad time. I'd just found out that Phoebe and my ex-boyfriend hooked up, and I was really upset.” “But then I was looking through Mom's files, trying to figure out how much money we have set aside for college, and I found the settlement paperwork from Dad's accident. I was...so angry.” (McManus, 2020, p. 323)

The data above tells that Emma's involvement started when she became quite upset with Phoebe. Emma learned at that moment that Phoebe had slept with her ex-boyfriend. Emma also confirmed that the online meeting she had with Jared was true. Emma said she intended to check her mother's files at the time. She was curious about how much money her mother had collected for the college tuition of her daughter and son. Emma unexpectedly discovers her father's settlement documents while looking for all her mother's documents. Emma found a document that detailed her father's death and the restitution the victim's family received. Because of her issue with Phoebe, Emma was upset and lost control. She was upset at everything that had happened to her at that time.

Then, because Emma could not think clearly that day, she decided to do something that had only briefly entered her mind.

“When I read about what Brandon did, I hated him so much that I couldn’t think straight. I wanted—I don’t even know. I wanted to *do* something. I remembered Simon Kelleher’s old revenge forum, and I went looking for it. It had moved, but I found it eventually. I made up a name and signed on. I met Jared there, and we started talking. We sort of—bonded, I guess. He suggested we talk offline with ChatApp. We used real names then. Well, I used Phoebe’s name.”
(McManus, 2020, p. 324)

Emma continued confessing to her lawyer. Emma asserted that she had come to hate Brandon even more after reading the chronology in the paperwork. Emma admitted that she was struggling to think clearly at that very moment. Then, driven by her feelings of rage and loathing, Emma wanted to take action. Emma thought it was unfair that Brandon could keep on with his activities despite doing terrible things to others. Emma attempted to find Simon Kelleher’s prior forum for retaliation because she could not think clearly. After Emma looked for it, the forum moved from 4chan to Reddit. Even after the forum had moved, Emma could still find it. Then, Emma signed up, gave herself the username Bayview2020, and started participating in the forum discussions.

Later, Emma told her lawyer where she had first met Jared. At that moment, Jared replies to Emma’s forum posts as Darkestmind. Jared proposed moving to Chatapp after the two got along well after exchanging comments. After moving, Emma and Jared could formally acquaint themselves and initiate a dialogue by exchanging their respective names. Emma used her sister’s name to get Jared to call her Phoebe since she was also annoyed with her sister at that moment. Jared persisted in his search for Phoebe due to this reason.

Emma then returned to discuss how she and Jared had made a deal. Emma proceeds to describe how she met Jared and how they became friends. Emma,

extraordinarily important in his life. Emma agrees to Jared's proposal, indirectly involving her in an agreement. So, what Emma has said is the same as Jared's previous statement to the police.

Maeve and Knox were able to determine the identity of the creator of the game truth-or-dare, who is also a suspect in Brandon's murder, after accumulating various clues and identifying some of the information from these clues. Maeve and Knox found out who was behind all the bad things that happened to them and stopped the murder case against Eli. This is because all the issues that have happened so far are connected. In addition, having successfully uncovered all clues and identified the perpetrators, they turned the case over to the police so that the motives behind all these incidents could be revealed.

4.2.3 The Motive of The Game Creator

As explained in the previous discussion, Jared and Emma agree on something. The agreement they reached resulted in considerable commotion. Not only does it harm one individual, but the confusion forces others to get involved who are not affected by the same issues. Also, the impact of Jared and Emma's agreement ruined several people's lives. After interviews conducted with Emma and Jared, it was proven they had motives for creating the game. A primary motive drives the game's creator, and an additional underlying motive influences the perpetrator's decision to pick a particular player for participation.

4.2.3.1 Taking A Revenge

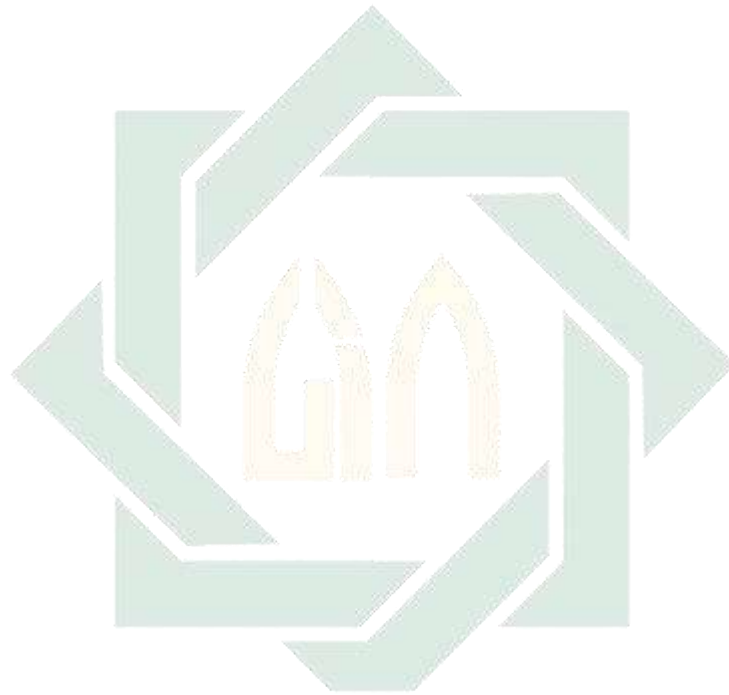
As previously expounded, the primary motivation of Jared and Emma is to seek vengeance. After receiving confirmation from Emma, her lawyer inquired once more about the possibility of a truth-or-dare game involving several students

In the above quote, it is clear that Emma's lawyer asked her to explain how the game's initial system worked. Emma says that Jared asked her to send him some names the game might use. Emma came up with the name Phoebe first. At the time, she was upset with her sister, so she told Jared a secret about Phoebe. Then Emma Returned and said that she had suggested other possible players. Emma thought of Sean and Jules because she knew how much they liked being the center of attention. Emma is sure that they will pick a dare.

Then, Emma told her lawyer again that Maeve's participation in the game they planned to create was Jared's idea. Jared had an ulterior motive for including Maeve on the player roster. In the quotation, Emma tells her lawyer that Jared wanted to include Maeve in a game he was making because of her role in the Simon case. Jared considers Maeve intelligent because she can uncover Simon's motives for disclosing gossip on the 'about that' application. Besides, Maeve, with her expertise, revealed the motive behind Simon's death at that time. So this reason made Jared want to fool and deceive people, which Simon could not do. He does this to demonstrate to Maeve that he is cleverer than Simon. Jared wants to show his ability to do things that he thinks are even better than what Simon did before. Jared wanted Maeve to realize that he could fool her through this game.

In this section, the two perpetrators' motivation for creating a game is to exact revenge on Brandon and trick other people so that their actions are not considered murder. Additionally, through this game, one of the criminals wants to show his ability to conduct crimes without revealing himself so that one of the players cannot quickly identify the criminals as she had in the past. However, this

did not detract from the fact that the prominent motive of the game was designed to exact retribution by causing someone to lose the most valuable thing in his life.



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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

By presenting the research's conclusions in this chapter, the researcher intends to provide readers with information and opportunities to learn quickly about the findings. After thoroughly analyzing the mystery surrounding the truth-or-dare game in Karen M. McManus' novel *One of Us Is Next*, it is possible to conclude that all issues began with establishing the game at Bayview High School. Besides, the characters follow a specific pattern to identify the culprits and the motives behind the game. This includes a crime that has occurred, the analysis of clues, the suspect's interview, and the disclosure of motive.

The action of crime occurs when the game of Truth or Dare puts several people as targets within the game. Then, the crime escalated as some of the targets experienced the impacts of the game, including bullying, friendship and sisterhood rifts, and even death. Since many things have occurred because of the game, some victims are motivated to identify the actual perpetrator and the motivation behind it. Maeve and Knox are encouraged to investigate the truth behind the 'truth or dare' game.

As described previously, Motivated investigators seek these facts by analyzing case-related clues. The analysis of these clues includes investigating the suspect's identity and looking for information about the suspect's background. Maeve and Knox had previously discovered that the creator of the truth or dare game and the suspicious person who kept looking for Phoebe were the same. However, they do not know the person's real identity. Therefore, Maeve and Knox

used several methods to investigate the suspect's identity. These methods include analyzing clues about Brandon's death and his past, identifying several people who might be related, hacking Knox's mother's computer to obtain information, and following a suspicious person whom they assume is the game creator. Maeve and Knox continued their investigation after determining the suspect identity by searching for background information, such as investigating the criminal's past and his connection to one or more cases.

After gathering some information about the suspect and stopping the attempts of the suspect they were pursuing to murder someone, Maeve and Knox contacted and reported their findings to the police. The police interviewed suspects because they had more authority than Maeve and Knox. The police then received information from Jared about his motivations for committing his crimes, revealing all the facts, including Jared's motivation for creating the game and his agreement with Phoebe's sister, Emma. Then, it was disclosed that Jared and Emma had agreed to take revenge together. After discussing their problems online, they decide to assist one another in taking vengeance. They agreed to take vengeance because they believed their lives had been destroyed by Brandon and Eli, the intended targets of their retribution. Emma then disclosed that she and Jared chose the 'truth or dare' game that prompted all the incidents because they wanted to build their revenge slowly so that no one would discover the cause of Brandon's death.

After learning all the facts surrounding their reasons for taking action, the true motivation for the revenge becomes clear. All the incidents are motivated by a desire for vengeance against someone who destroyed their life. Brandon ruined

Emma's life because he killed her father, and now he can live life as usual, whereas Eli ruined Jared's life because he imprisoned his elder brother, who then made his mother commit suicide. In addition to pursuing vengeance, Jared also desires to prove his abilities in doing his action to Maeve, so he selects her as one of his game targets. Maeve solved the mystery surrounding Simon's death as in the previous novel. Jared wants Maeve to recognize his superiority over Simon because he can effectively fool her instead of revealing what he did. However, as previously explained, Maeve and Knox identified him as the suspect from the mysterious "truth or dare" game that triggered all the incidents at Bayview High.



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