

Questions to help you understand *This Dark Road to Mercy*

Chapter 1, pages 1-8

1. Tell me about Easter and Ruby Quillby's family. Where (in the U.S.) does this story take place? Are they rich or poor? Are their parents married? Who is older, Easter or Ruby?
2. Who is Wade? Why does he come to see Easter and Ruby?
3. Is Easter glad to see him? Is Ruby?
4. Where are the girls living now? Why?

Chapter 2, pages 9-20

1. How did Easter and Ruby get their names?
2. How does Easter's mom die? Who is Calico?

Chapter 3, pages 22-26

1. Who is Marcus?
2. How does he visit Easter?
3. What did Easter's dad do for a living (what was his job) when he and the girls' mom were still married?
4. What does Easter want to be when she grows up?
5. Why is Marcus angry (hurt) with Easter?

Chapter 5, pages 34-44

1. Think about the opening story about Pruitt and his father. What does Pruitt's mother think about what his father did? What does Pruitt think (look at the 2nd to last paragraph on page 36). What do you think?
2. Pruitt works at Tomcat's (a restaurant/bar). Why does Pruitt talk to the Boss?
3. Why does the Boss want to find Wade?
4. What is the agreement between the Boss and Pruitt? What is Pruitt going to do? What will he get if he is successful?
5. Eddie is a friend of the Boss. What does Pruitt do to his car? (pages 42-43)
6. We don't know yet who Lane Kelly is, but Pruitt goes to his home and takes something – what did he take?

Chapter 6, pages 45-50

1. Euphrates (Phrate) Evans is a former baseball player, who played on the same team as Wade. Pruitt is visiting him to see if he knows where Wade is now. What do we learn about Pruitt during this visit?
2. Where has Pruitt been for the past four years?
3. Why does Pruitt hate Wade so much?
4. What does Pruitt do to make money besides working at the Tomcat?

Chapter 7, pages 51-59

1. Who approaches Easter while she's outside at her school? Why did he come to Easter's school?
2. Who visits Easter in her bedroom at night? Why does he come? Why does Easter agree to go with him? Who does Easter see in the bushes just as she's leaving with Wade?

Chapter 8, pages 60-68

1. Who convinces Brady Weller to become Easter and Ruby's guardian ad litem?
2. What is Brady's other job, during the day?
3. Who is Helen Crawford? (Also known as Miss Crawford.)
4. Who is Sandy? Describe the relationship between Sandy and Brady.
5. Brady is working on an investigation, but so far hasn't solved it. What is he looking for? What crime has been committed?
6. Why does Brady offer to help Sandy (last page of chapter)?

Chapter 9, pages 69-76

1. What do we learn about Brady's personal life? (His wife, daughter, etc.)
2. Describe the accident that caused Brady to lose his job as a police officer.
3. Did Brady go to jail?
4. How does Brady feel about the accident?

Chapter 10, pages 77-81

1. Where does Wade take the girls?
3. What does Wade do to their car to make them less recognizable?
4. Why does Ruby want to call Miss Crawford? Why won't Easter let her?

Chapter 11, pages 82-84

1. How does Ruby like their day at the beach? How about Easter?

Chapter 12, pages 85-100

1. Where does Wade take the girls next?
2. What happens to Easter while she is waiting in line for the haunted house? What happens during the ride?
3. Who does Easter call while Ruby and Wade are playing Pac Man? What does she tell him?
4. Wade takes the girls to the pitching cage and watches them pitch. Who comes by and what do they say to Easter?
5. Why does Wade have a pitching competition with Evan? Who wins and what is their prize? What does Easter think of Wade after the contest is over?

Chapter 13, pages 101-106

1. What are Brady and Sandy discussing over lunch?
2. What is the number that Marcus wrote on Easter's love note? (The number he saw on the back of Wade's shirt as he was taking the girls from the foster home.)
3. Brady calls the number. Whose number is it?
4. Why does Lane Kelly's wife call Brady back?

Chapter 14, pages 107-118

1. Brady and Lane Kelly meet at a fast food restaurant. Why?
2. What is Lane Kelly's business?
3. How did Lane and Wade find the money? Whose house was it in?
4. What happened when Wade found the money? What did Wade do?
5. Who did Lane tell about Wade taking the money?
6. Does Brady believe Lane's story? Why or why not?
7. Who does Brady share the information he learned from Lane Kelly with?

Chapter 15, pages 119-125

1. Why is Wade in a panic at the beginning of the chapter?
2. What does Easter find while Wade is gone and Ruby is in the bathroom? What does she put in the teddy bear's clothes?
3. What does Wade bring back for the girls?
4. Is Easter happy about dying her hair? Why or why not?

Chapter 16, pages 126-131

1. What does Pruitt do to scare Lane Kelly and make him say where he thinks Wade is?
2. Where does Kelly think Wade has gone? (Where does he tell Pruitt that Wade is?)
3. Why doesn't Pruitt follow Lane and his wife into the woods?

Chapter 17, pages 132-136

2. Easter wakes up in the middle of the night. Why isn't Wade sleeping?
3. In what state did Wade meet Easter's mom?
4. What do you think about Wade's honesty with Easter that night?
5. What are the two things Wade wanted in life?

Chapter 18, pages 137-141

1. How does Brady know Roc?
2. What was Wade's nickname when he played for the Gastonia Rangers? (page 139)
3. Why was he called that?
4. What does it mean to "fix" a game? Why did Wade do this?
5. What ended Wade's baseball career? (See "yips" on page 140)

Chapter 19, pages 142-147

1. How would you describe Brady's relationship with his daughter Jessica?
2. What is Brady's resistance to Jessica's college choice (Peace University)?
3. Brady is conflicted (unsure) about Wade's kidnapping of Easter and Ruby. What is he struggling with? What are his choices?
4. What advice does Jessica give him?

Chapter 20, pages 148-157

1. Why does Wade's mom open the door and let Pruitt into her house?
2. What does the smell of coffee initially remind Pruitt of?
3. His coffee-smell memory than changes. How?
4. Why does Wade's mom think Pruitt is there (has visited her)?
5. Describe Wade's old bedroom. What is Pruitt holding in his hand as the chapter ends?

Chapter 21, pages 158-169

1. Where does Wade take Easter and Ruby?
2. Why was Ruby screaming when Wade came back to the car?
3. What does Wade ask Easter to do for him at the convenience store? Why?
4. Ruby wants to go home – why?
5. What does Wade tell Easter while Ruby is in the bathroom?
6. Why do they decide to go to St. Louis?
7. What does Ruby tell the waitress?
8. Who does Easter see in the parking lot across from the Waffle House?

Chapter 22, pages 170-174

1. Why does Pruitt go back to the street Wade's mom lived on?
2. What does the police officer notice about Pruitt while they're talking (pg. 172)?
3. What important information does Pruitt get from the Waffle House waitress?

Chapter 23, pages 175-178

1. Who does Sandy think killed Wade's mom?
2. Why won't Sandy keep looking for Easter and Ruby? (Pg. 177, bottom)
3. What does Sandy suggest to Brady about the case? (pg. 178)

Chapter 24, pages 179-186

1. Why does Brady want to talk to Tommy Broughton?
2. What does Brady discover during his talk with Broughton? (pg. 184)
3. Do you agree with the way Brady treats Broughton?

Chapter 25, pages 187-191

1. Sandy and an FBI agent, Barnwell, stop by Brady's house to see him. Why?

2. What's Brady's response? (Pg. 191)

Chapter 26, pages 192-197

1. What is Wade's long-term plan for him and the girls?
2. What does Wade mean by "Because we're looking for the Promised Land." (page 195)

Chapter 27, pages 198-199

1. Why does Brady go to see Roc?

Chapter 28, pages 200-202

1. Why does Pruitt call Tommy Broughton?
2. What is Broughton's reaction to Pruitt's demand?
3. How does Pruitt get his ticket to the game?

Chapter 29, pages 203--208

1. Is Wade able to get tickets for him and the girls?
2. Two exciting things happen to the three of them during the game. What are they? (pages 207-208)

Chapter 30, pages 209--210

1. How does Brady know that Wade and the girls are at the game?
2. What does Brady find when he gets to them?

Chapter 31, pages 211-213

1. Where do Pruitt and Wade meet?
2. How does Wade get the attention of other people?
3. Someone screams "Stop!" (page 213) – who are they screaming at?
4. Why is Wade running? Where is he running to?

Chapter 32, page 214

1. What happens when Wade goes back to the girls' seats?
2. How does Easter know Wade isn't coming back?

Chapter 33, pages 215-218

1. Where is Pruitt now?
2. What is a Deluxe Delta 6000? (page 216)
3. Why does Wade call Brady?
4. What is Brady's dilemma (decision he has to make)?

Chapter 34, pages 219-226

1. Why is Brady waiting for Easter and Ruby at school?

2. Where are the girls going next week?
3. Do you believe Brady when he says that he “really did want to see y’all one more time” before the girls went to Alaska? (page 223)
4. Why does Easter think Brady has brought the girls to the park? (page 225)
5. Why does Easter touch her nose and run her hands down her arms? (page 226)

Chapter 35, pages 227-230

1. Would you be able to forgive Brady like Easter does?
2. Who sent the package to Easter and Ruby?
3. What do you think “stay on base” means? (page 230)