

High Life, Low Life

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Summary

Private eye, Nat Marley, meets old acquaintance, the homeless Annie Clayton, at Grand Central station, New York. She suffers a cardiac arrest. Marley administers emergency resuscitation. Annie is taken to Bellevue hospital and later tells Marley she wishes to make a will. The next day, Marley is summoned to Mrs. Joanna Whittaker, an elderly widow, at the opulent Century Apartments on Central Park. Having read the story of Marley saving Annie's life, she wants to make him sole beneficiary in her will, which incurs the displeasure of her spooky maid, Martha. Marley wants no part in this.

Annie asks her friend Leona to take Marley to collect a box from her underground home. At the hospital, Annie shows Marley a photo of her lost son Jackie as a teenager, asking Marley to find him before she dies. Later, Marley learns more about the Whittaker family. Marley is the spitting image of the late Tom Whittaker. Mrs. Whittaker leads a reclusive life and has alienated her son and daughter. Marley's colleague, Joe Blaney, discovers the old lady is besotted with Marley.

The search for Jackie takes Marley to the East Village, where he learns that Jackie used to work for a taxi business run by Mr. Wiseman, which Joe Blaney discovers to be a cover for a stolen goods operation. Jackie is in hiding from his old boss. Journalist Ed Winchester shows Marley an old story about Ernst Weissmann (a.k.a. Wiseman) and Jackie Clayton being acquitted of handling stolen goods. Marley tips off Captain Oldenberg at police headquarters about Wiseman Cabs.

Marley is called to the Whittaker apartment – Mrs. Whittaker has died. Marley is struck by Martha's indifferent attitude to her dead employer. Marley is suspicious but cannot prove anything. Marley

meets the son, Charlie Whittaker and explains that he does not wish to be the beneficiary of his mother's will. Meanwhile, Stella, Marley's P.A., has located Jackie's workplace in Chelsea, but an attempt to make contact proves abortive. Annie Clayton continues to keep a slender hold on life.

The next day, Charlie Whittaker summons Marley. Martha has disappeared with Mrs. Whittaker's money and has trashed the apartment. Marley is sure that Mrs. Whittaker was murdered, and the police are called. Charlie hires Marley to find Martha. Meanwhile, Marley finds a home address for Jackie. Marley and Joe finally corner him and take him to the hospital to be reunited with his mother. At Century Apartments, Marley finds clues indicating Martha could be gambling with Mrs. Whittaker's money in Atlantic City.

The autopsy results on Mrs. Whittaker are inconclusive; verdict – natural death. Marley needs a confession from Martha. She is found in a casino, where she confesses to murder under pressure from Marley. Later that night, Annie finally dies. Oldenberg asks Marley to approach Jackie – the deal is a clean record for Jackie if he testifies against Wiseman. Martha is not charged with the murder for lack of hard evidence, but is charged with theft.

At the reading of Annie's will, it transpires that Tom Whittaker is actually Jackie's father. Thus Jackie Clayton, Charlie Whittaker and his sister, Betty Osborne, are related. Annie has kept a gift of stock certificates from Tom Whittaker, which prove valuable. The story ends a year later with the opening of the Annie Clayton Center in Harlem, a safe refuge for homeless women, jointly funded by Charlie Whittaker, Betty Osborne and Jackie Clayton, in memory of their mothers.

Worksheet answer key

BEFORE READING

- Chapter 1 b
Chapter 2 c
Chapter 3 e
Chapter 4 a
Chapter 5 d

CHECK YOUR READING

CHAPTER 1

- a Nat Marley
b Annie Clayton
c Nat Marley
d Stella Delgado
e Dr. Fischer
f Annie Clayton

CHAPTER 2

- a Mrs. Whittaker
b Nat Marley and Stella Delgado
c Mrs. Whittaker,
d Martha Bianchi
e Stella Delgado
f Nat Marley

CHAPTER 3

- 1 b, 2 f, 3 e, 4 a, 5 d, 6 c

CHAPTER 4

1. f, a, b, e, c, d

CHAPTER 5

1. a T, b F, c F, d F, e T, f T

CHAPTER 6

1. a Lieutenant Brandstein
b bartender
c bartender
d Mr. Wiseman
e Joe Blaney
f Joe Blaney
g Wilma Patterson

CHAPTER 7

1. **Joe Blaney** had been taking photos of Wiseman Cabs all afternoon. **Dr. Fischer** phoned from the hospital to say that **Annie Clayton** was getting much worse. At McFadden's Bar, **Ed Winchester** showed Marley a newspaper story. Five years ago, **Ernst Weissmann** and **Jackie Clayton** had been found not guilty of buying stolen property. Marley compared the newspaper photo with Joe's photo, realised that **Ernst Weissmann** and Mr. Wiseman were the same person and called **Captain Oldenberg** at police headquarters. Finally, **Stella Delgado** persuaded Marley to buy air conditioning for the office.

CHAPTER 8

1. 1 d, 2 f, 3 b, 4 a, 5 c, 6 e
2. Student's own answer.

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CHAPTER 9

- Nat Marley
 - Martha Bianchi
 - Mr. Wiseman
 - Joe Blaney
 - Jackie Clayton
 - Nat Marley

CHAPTER 10

- F
 - B
 - C
 - B
 - F
 - F

CHAPTER 11

- Jackie had been hiding from Wiseman for the last **twelve** months because he wanted a **normal** life. Martha had taken out **tens of thousands** of dollars from Mrs. Whittaker's bank account. **Joe** noticed that Martha had underlined sentences in a book called *The Perfect Murder*; **Marley** thought Martha's message 'Gone to play ball' probably meant that she was interested in **gambling**. Marley and Joe went to look for Martha in **Atlantic City**, which was **several** hours away from New York.

CHAPTER 12

- Jackie Clayton
 - Joe Blaney and Nat Marley
 - Martha Bianchi
 - Martha Bianchi
 - Dr. Fischer
 - Annie Clayton
 - Nat Marley

CHAPTER 13

- ✓
 - ✓
 - ✓
 - ✓
- Father and son
 - Brother and sister
 - Half brothers

CHAPTER 14

- all
 - Jackie Clayton
 - all
 - Jackie Clayton
 - all
 - Jackie Clayton
 - Charlie and Betty Osborne
 - all