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Chapters 1–10: Setup and the Rescue

Murphy "Murph" Shepherd, a reclusive former priest living alone on a small island near Jacksonville, Florida, tends an abandoned chapel. He's grieving the recent deaths of his closest friends, Marie (his childhood sweetheart and ex-wife) and Fingers (his mentor). He plans a solo boat journey on his Boston Whaler, *Gone Fiction*, to spread their ashes at "the end of the world" (Cape Horn). While navigating the Intracoastal Waterway, he rescues a woman named Summer from a burning yacht. She's injured and desperate—her 16-year-old daughter, Angel, has been kidnapped by sex traffickers after being lured aboard a party boat. Murph's protective instincts kick in; he treats her wounds and agrees to help find Angel.

- How does Murph's grief over Marie and Fingers set the tone for his character? In what ways does his pain make him more relatable or heroic?
- What does the "water" symbolize early on (e.g., the chapel, the boat, spreading ashes)? How might it represent healing or God's presence?

- When Murph rescues Summer from the burning yacht, what does this say about his instinct to help the "one lost sheep"? How does this reflect Jesus' parable?
- Discuss Summer's desperation as a mother. How does her story highlight the brokenness in our world, and where do you see glimmers of hope or faith?

Chapters 11–21: Building the Team & First Clues

Murph takes Summer shopping for clothes and supplies. They pick up a stray Labrador (whom they name **Tabby**) and an ex-convict named **Clay** (a former inmate with skills and a heart for redemption). The group bonds as they track leads. Murph uses his mysterious connections (he's secretly involved in rescuing trafficked victims) to follow the yacht's trail. Tensions rise with chases on the water, close calls, and revelations about Murph's painful past, including his failed marriage and deep guilt over Marie.

- How do the new team members (Summer, Clay, and even Tabby the dog) represent different kinds of brokenness and redemption?
- Murph's past failures (especially his marriage) are revealed gradually. How does guilt affect his ability to trust or love others?
- What role does forgiveness play in the early team dynamics? Can you relate to any character's struggle with regret or second chances?
- The story introduces subtle Christian elements (e.g., Murph's priest background). How does faith show up in action rather than words here?

Chapters 22–35: Deep into the Hunt

The team disguises Murph's boat and pursues the traffickers south along the coast. They uncover the operation's scale—multiple girls are being held. Murph shares more about his "other life" rescuing victims, guided by the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Summer opens up about her regrets as a mother. Romantic tension builds between Murph and Summer. They rescue a few girls along the way, but Angel remains missing. High-stakes action includes boat pursuits, fights, and narrow escapes.

- As the pursuit intensifies, how does the team grow closer through shared trials? What does this teach about community and bearing one another's burdens?
- Discuss the romantic tension between Murph and Summer. How does love (agape and romantic) serve as a redemptive force?
- Murph often references the "needs of the one outweigh the ninety-nine." How does this challenge common ideas about faith and justice?

- Where do you see God's hand in the coincidences or narrow escapes? How might these mirror real-life experiences of divine intervention?

Chapters 36–45: Confrontations & Heartbreak

The group infiltrates a major trafficking hub. Intense violence and graphic threats occur (handled tastefully but realistically). Murph faces his demons head-on, confronting traffickers and reflecting on his own losses. A major betrayal and loss shake the team. Murph's backstory deepens: his marriage to Marie fell apart due to his dangerous work, and she later faked her death (twice) to protect him, but ultimately died in his arms years later.

- The book confronts the harsh reality of evil (trafficking). How does Charles Martin handle this topic with grace while still showing its horror?
- What are the biggest moments of heartbreak, and how do they push characters toward (or away from) redemption?
- Murph's backstory deepens—his failed marriage, Marie's sacrifices. How does understanding loss help him (and us) forgive others?
- In the face of betrayal or failure, what does the story suggest about clinging to faith when hope feels lost?

Chapters 46–54: Climax, Rescue, and Resolution

In a gripping finale, Murph and the team storm the traffickers' compound. They rescue Angel and several other girls in a high-action sequence. Murph sacrifices greatly, risking (and nearly losing) everything. The story ends with redemption—broken people finding healing through love, forgiveness, and faith. Murph spreads the ashes as planned, but with new purpose. Summer and Angel are safe, and Murph's heart begins to mend. A cliffhanger sets up the next book: Murph gets pulled into another urgent mission.

- The final rescue is intense—discuss the themes of sacrifice and laying down one's life for others. How does this echo Christ's love?
- How do the rescued girls (especially Angel) represent hope and new beginnings? What message does their healing send about God's power to restore?
- Reflect on the ending: Murph spreads the ashes with renewed purpose. How has his journey brought full-circle redemption?
- Overall, how does the book portray God's relentless pursuit of the lost? In what ways has it challenged or encouraged your own faith?