

Chapter 22

The chapter opens with Jack Sawyer experiencing a surreal moment reminiscent of his past skydiving adventure, where the rushing wind triggers fragmented memories. Disoriented, he hears fire alarms and feels a sudden shift in his surroundings, as if transported from one reality to another. The sensory overload—smells of honeysuckle, the weight on his chest, and Judy's presence—culminates in a passionate, impulsive kiss between them. Their intense connection is interrupted by chaos in the hallway, where patients and staff panic amid the blaring alarms, adding to the chapter's frenetic energy.

Amid the turmoil, Wendell Green bursts into the room, disheveled and frantic, clutching a recorder and batteries. His appearance is grotesque, with torn clothes and a wild demeanor, contrasting sharply with Jack and Judy's intimate moment. Wendell's hysterical accusations of rape and assault amplify the tension, though his claims are blatantly exaggerated. His erratic behavior and distorted perception of events suggest he's grappling with his own disorientation, possibly from the same forces affecting Jack and Judy.

Jack and Judy quickly regain their composure, with Judy dismissing Wendell's outbursts. As Jack attempts to defuse the situation, Wendell escalates his theatrics, stepping on glass and stumbling into a recliner. His desperate attempts to frame Jack as a predator highlight his manipulative nature, but Jack responds with a measured punch, silencing him. The scene underscores Wendell's role as an antagonist, driven by self-interest and sensationalism, while Jack remains pragmatic and protective.

The chapter concludes with a blend of absurdity and tension, as the ongoing alarms and chaos outside the room contrast with the momentary calm inside. Jack's reference to "The Mad Hungarian" hints at his wry humor even in crisis. The interplay of memory, reality, and emotion leaves the characters—and readers—questioning what is real,

setting the stage for further unraveling of the story's mysteries. The chapter masterfully balances action, psychological depth, and dark humor, advancing the plot while deepening character dynamics.

