Chapter 26

The chapter explores the contrast between ordinary homes, which symbolize stability and sanity, and the eerie, otherworldly nature of Black House. Most houses in French Landing, like those on Robin Hood Lane, represent a defense against "slippage"—the collapse of order into chaos. Black House, however, defies this norm. Its exterior, though unsettling with its black facade and leaning structure, appears deceptively ordinary. Inside, it defies logic, stretching into near-infinite spaces filled with remnants of lost souls, creating a labyrinth of terror and disorientation.

Black House’s interior is a nightmarish realm where dimensions warp and time distorts. Corridors and rooms extend beyond reason, littered with bones and relics of past victims, including children. The house hums with unnatural sounds—distant machinery, howling winds, and the barking of a demonic hound. This unsettling environment reflects its malevolent purpose, serving as a prison and hunting ground for its inhabitants. The chapter emphasizes the house’s duality: a mundane shell hiding a vast, predatory interior.

The narrative shifts to a decrepit sitting room within Black House, where Charles Burnside, an aging killer, lies wounded. The room, adorned with yellowed news clippings of infamous murders, mirrors Burnside’s grotesque obsessions. His dialogue with Mr. Munshun, a sinister entity, reveals his dwindling control. Munshun insists Burnside move Tyler Marshall, a captive boy, to End-World, fearing Jack Sawyer’s ability to navigate the house’s infinite spaces. Burnside resists, weakened by injuries inflicted by a "blind man," but Munshun’s authority prevails.

As Munshun materializes—a monstrous figure with a shark-like eye—the chapter builds tension around Burnside’s impending forced awakening. Munshun’s presence underscores the supernatural forces at play, manipulating Burnside as a pawn. The chapter closes with the inevitability of Burnside’s compliance, setting the stage for

Tyler’s transfer to a darker realm. The house’s malevolence and the looming threat of End-World heighten the stakes, leaving readers uneasy about the boy’s fate and the heroes’ pursuit.