

Flashback

by Gary Braver

Forge (an imprint of Tom Doherty Associates)

A Reading and Discussion Guide

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Nevins Memorial Library, Methuen, MA

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SUMMARY:

In a room at Massachusetts General Hospital, Jack Koryan lies in a coma. A swim to commemorate his mother's drowning death 30 years earlier has left him with jellyfish burns over his entire body. His condition has stabilized, but he is trapped in darkness, seemingly thrust into periodic periods of frenzy. Something is frightening Jack Koryan.

At the same time, an Alzheimer's patient escapes a nursing home and plunges a pair of scissors into the neck of a CVS manager. Renee Balard, a consulting pharmacist at the nursing home, discovers that the patient was participating in a clinical trial for Memorine, a drug that many believe to be the cure for Alzheimer's. The drug's main ingredient comes from a Caribbean jellyfish – the same jellyfish that put Jack Koryan in a coma.

As Renee's investigation continues and more patients experience the gruesome side effects of Memorine, she finds herself at the wrong end of powerful forces who are determined to see this billion-dollar miracle drug hit the market.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Braver raises many ethical questions in his medical thrillers. In *Flashback* he asks whether or not physicians should benefit financially from clinical trials of new drugs. What do you think?
2. If someone you loved suffered from Alzheimer's and you had the option of agreeing to a drug that would definitely improve their memory, but may also stimulate unhappy memories, what would you do?
3. If you were presented with a drug that would cure millions of people, but leave others with tragic memories, would you use it?
4. If you had the opportunity to relieve your childhood, would you? Why or why not?

5. Who are the villains in *Flashback*? Why do you consider them villains?
6. Gary Braver has been compared with medical thriller author Robin Cook. Do you agree with this comparison?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

From the Publisher

Gary Braver is the pen name of Gary Goshgarian, the author of five critically acclaimed suspense novels: three under his own name – *Atlantis Fire*, *Rough Beast*, and *The Stone Circle*, and two under his pen name, Gary Braver – *Elixer* and *Gray Matter*. He is also the author of three popular college writing textbooks – *Exploring Language*, *The Contemporary Reader*, and *Dialogues*.

A professor of English at Northeastern University, he teaches creative writing and courses in literature and popular culture. He has written book reviews and travel articles that have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Today's Education*, and lives with his family in Arlington, Massachusetts.

HELPFUL LINKS:

Gary Braver's homepage:

<http://www.garybraver.com>

Interview with Gary Braver on Bookreporter.com:

<http://www.bookreporter.com/authors/au-braver-gary.asp>

Review of *Flashback* on bookreporter.com

<http://www.bookreporter.com/reviews2/0765302519.asp>

The Boston Globe covers *Flashback*

http://www.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2006/06/15/in_medical_thriller_beware_the_cure/?page=1



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