

Strong Medicine

Richard MacAndrew

Before reading

1. Work out or find out what the expression *strong medicine* means. When might someone use it and how?
2. Read the blurb on the back cover. Who is the main character? Where does the story take place? What kind of story do you think it is?
3. What do you know about California? Make a list of places, then make notes on the geography and people. What is California famous for?
4. Look at the maps on page 5. Which famous places in California are given? Where does most of the story take place? What do you know about this place from the bottom map?
5. Look at the characters. Several of them work in one profession, and one works in another. What are those professions? How did they get connected in this story?
6. If you have the recording, listen to Chapter 1.

Check your reading

CHAPTER 1

1. Answer these questions.
 - a Who is 'a mountain of a man'?
1 Mark Latto, 2 Detective Martinez, 3 Officer Seymour
 - b Who is 'tall with dark brown hair and blue eyes'?
1 Mark Latto, 2 Detective Martinez, 3 Officer Seymour
 - c Who is 'a short, grey-haired man in his late fifties'?
1 Mark Latto, 2 Detective Martinez, 3 Officer Seymour
 - d Who is 'in his early thirties'?
1 Mark Latto, 2 Detective Martinez, 3 Officer Seymour
2. How does Detective Martinez think Deborah Spencer died?
3. How does Mark Latto think Deborah Spencer died?
4. What were Latto and Spencer both working on?
5. Why did Latto come to visit Spencer?
6. What do you think will happen in the next chapter?

CHAPTER 2

1. Put these events in the correct order.
 - a Latto sat outside and thought about Deborah Spencer
 - b Someone hit Latto on the head with a plant pot.
 - c Latto went back to the motel and slept.
 - d Latto went to eat dinner.
 - e Latto decided to try and find Deborah Spencer's assistants.
 - f Latto went back to Deborah Spencer's house.
2. Latto went back to Deborah Spencer's house at night because
 - a he wanted to talk to the police scientists.
 - b he wanted to find her laptop computer.
 - c he'd left his sunglasses there earlier in the day.
3. Martinez thought the man who hit Latto was
 - a the person who killed Deborah Spencer.
 - b a kid who realised the house was empty.
 - c a well-known computer thief.
4. What does Latto think about the robbery?

CHAPTER 3

1. Match the beginnings and endings of the sentences.
 - 1 Ray and Sylvia
 - 2 Latto is just starting
 - 3 The police scientists
 - 4 The doctors tell Latto
 - 5 Ray Molinaro
 - a to look at his emails.
 - b that Deborah Spencer was writing a book.
 - c come to Latto's motel to meet him.
 - d uses Latto's bathroom before he leaves.
 - e think Deborah Spencer died of a heart problem.
2. Why does Ray Molinaro have to leave?
3. What is the problem about Deborah Spencer's book and the theft of her laptop?
4. What will Latto do when he sees Martinez later that day?

CHAPTER 4

1. When Latto looks at his emails, which of these things does he find?
 - a A letter from Ray and Sylvia
 - b A programme for his visit to Santa Cruz
 - c A letter from his brother
 - d A letter from Deborah Spencer
 - e A letter from his bank
2. Why did Latto think Santa Cruz was a strange place?
3. How does Latto try to find the man who hit him?
4. What does Latto suggest was the reason for the theft of Spencer's laptop?
5. What do you think Detective Martinez will do next?

CHAPTER 5

1. Put the adjectives in the box into the correct sentence.

direct	rich	unusual	pretty	interesting	excellent
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- a Mark Latto thinks Sylvia Koning is a woman.
 - b Mark and Sylvia have an meal at Giovanni's.
 - c They drank a white wine from the Santa Cruz mountains.
 - d Koning thinks Latto is an person.
 - e Latto finds Koning's questions very
 - f Koning thinks Latto has an family.
2. Put these events in the correct order.
 - a Mark runs along the wharf after the man.
 - b Mark finds his computer is missing.
 - c Mark and Sylvia are walking back to Mark's motel.
 - d Mark sees the robber has something under his arm.
 - e Mark sees someone climbing out of his room.
 3. Apart from Koning, three people come to Mark Latto's room after the theft. Who are they?
 4. Who does Martinez think stole the computer?
 5. Look at the last paragraph. What do you think Latto realised?

CHAPTER 6

1. What was it that Latto realised about Molinaro as he fell asleep the night before?
2. Where does Latto go in the morning?
3. What does Latto feel about Sylvia Koning?
4. True or false?
 - a Latto parked his car near Molinaro's office.
 - b It was eight thirty in the evening.
 - c A young woman drove up and tried to get into Molinaro's office.
 - d The young man had a bag.
 - e Latto recognised the young man because of his hair.
 - f When Molinaro came he gave the young man a large brown envelope.
 - g The young man gave the bag to Molinaro.
 - h Latto took some photographs of the view.
5. What did Latto think might be in the bag?
6. What did Latto do after Molinaro drove off in his car?
7. Where did Molinaro go, and what was surprising about this to Latto?
8. What do you think the significance of the hole in the orange juice bottle top is?

CHAPTER 7

1. Match the beginnings and endings.
 - 1 Latto thinks that
 - 2 Martinez's boss tells him
 - 3 Martinez and his boss Becker
 - 4 Latto tells Martinez about
 - 5 Martinez says that
 - a what he saw at Molinaro's office that morning.
 - b don't like each other very much.
 - c someone put a drug into his orange juice.
 - d Latto would make a good detective
 - e that he's off the Spencer case next morning.

2. What does Latto suggest about the young man who gave the bag to Molinaro?
3. What does Martinez tell Latto about Sylvia Koning?
4. What do you think Martinez is going to tell Latto about Ray Molinaro?

CHAPTER 8

1. Martinez tells Latto about Molinaro. Which of these things are true?
 - a Molinaro likes to play cards for money.
 - b He goes to Las Vegas twice a year to play
 - c He's very good at playing cards.
 - d He's just won \$150,000 playing cards
 - e The casinos are after Molinaro to pay back some money
2. Why wouldn't Keiffenheim Laboratories like Deborah Spencer's work?
3. What do Latto and Martinez think Molinaro has done and why?
4. Martinez makes two phone calls. Who does he phone, who does he pretend to be, and why does he call?
5. What do you think Latto's plan might be?

CHAPTER 9

1. Who does Latto phone?

2. What does he offer him?
3. Why does Latto say Molinaro wants the money?
4. Latto arranges a meeting with Crocker. Answer the questions about it:
 - a where? b when? c why there and then?
 - d what must Crocker bring? e who must he come with?

CHAPTER 10

1. Put these events in the correct order.
 - a Martinez puts two microphones onto Latto's jacket.
 - b Koning follows Latto and Martinez in her car.
 - c Latto walks down to the open-air theatre.
 - d Martinez and Latto drive to the arboretum.
 - e Martinez hides behind some trees.
 - f Martinez parks his jeep inside the arboretum.
2. Why is it interesting that Martinez's boss Becker goes to the same club as Crocker?
3. Why is the arboretum dangerous?
4. Who is helping Crocker?
5. Why is Latto in a bad situation at the end of the chapter?

CHAPTER 11

1. Why does Latto start asking Crocker questions?
2. How did Deborah Spencer die?
3. Why is Martinez angry?
4. Why does the situation look 'hopeless' to Latto?
5. Who do you think says 'Drop your guns and don't move'?

CHAPTER 12

1. Check what happens. Are the facts correct?
 - a Someone shoots Molinaro in the hand.
 - b Latto knocks Molinaro down.
 - c Martinez takes the gun from Molinaro.
 - d Max runs away into the trees.
 - e Max is surprised to find Sylvia Koning.
 - f The mountain lions attack Latto.
 - g Max shoots the mountain lion.
2. Why is Koning so good at shooting?
3. What was really on the CD?
4. Why is Crocker still satisfied?

CHAPTER 13

1. Who actually killed Deborah Spencer, and how?
2. Who ordered her to be killed?
3. Why is Koning surprised about Molinaro killing Spencer?
4. Why did Max put Cloperoxomine in Latto's orange juice?
5. Why can't Martinez say anything about his boss Becker?

CHAPTER 14

1. What do Latto and Koning do in the next two weeks
 - a professionally?
 - b socially?
2. Why did Latto and Koning 'try not to think about the time when Latto would return to Scotland'?
3. Why was Martinez able to give Latto his laptop back?
4. Is the email on Spencer's laptop good news or bad news? Why?

After reading

Choose some of these activities.

1. What do you think happens to Mark Latto and Sylvia Koning next?
2. Imagine you are making a film of *Strong Medicine*; who would you choose to play the main characters?
3. Write an email to Richard MacAndrew, the author, telling him what you did and didn't like about *Strong Medicine*.
4. Imagine the conversation between Crocker and Molinaro when he takes Latto's laptop to Keiffenheim Laboratories; don't forget to include Crocker's phone-call to Max.
5. Imagine you are sitting outside Mark Latto's motel room. Write a letter to a friend describing what you can see.
6. Make a quiz about the story for other students to do, e.g. some True/False questions or some Correct/Incorrect sentences.
7. Write a biography about either Mark Latto or Sylvia Koning. Use the information they give about themselves on pages 25–26. You will need to invent some other information.
8. Find out about mountain lions on the Internet and write some paragraphs about them.
9. Write a book review for a newspaper which recommends why people should read *Strong Medicine*.