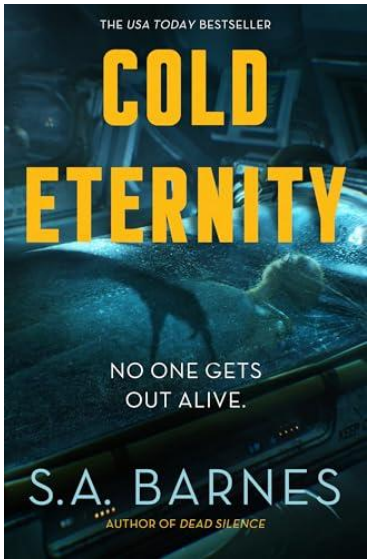




kindle

Cold Eternity

by S.A. Barnes

Free Kindle instant preview: <https://read.amazon.com/kp/kshare?asin=B0D1PQ139Y>

Annotations (92)

- 46 Highlights | Yellow (46)
- 46 Notes

Chapter 1

Page 2 | Highlight (Yellow)

his shift at the desalination plant. A briner.

Oct 7, 2026

Note: The station my be underwater. The book synopsis may have said as much, but I have forgotten.

Oct 7, 2026

Page 2 | Highlight (Yellow)

shout of recognition, no slurred proposition.

Oct 7, 2026

Note: Interesting. Recognition could come from news or prior involvement if Halley is law enforcement, inspector for some department, or politician. Coupled with "proposition", it could imply that Halley is or was a sex worker.

Oct 7, 2026

Page 7 | Highlight (Yellow)

This is the problem with relying on low-end criminal help; you get low-end results. Like someone thinking it's funny to give you a false last name—to go with your equally false first name—based on a famous children's cartoon character.

Oct 7, 2026

Note: I gather that our main char's real name includes neither Halley nor Zwick. Did someone else, some fixer, days or weeks ago give her the Zwick last name? Who gave her Halley? Or maybe she really is Halley Zwick & all these extra-legal people believe it is a false name? I am uncertain but suspect the author intended the earlier scenario: She or someone assigned fake name Halley. More recently someone assigned the fake name Zwick.

Oct 7, 2026

Page 8 | Highlight (Yellow)

My mother in a soft and shapeless pale blue sweater that I'd never seen before—that she would have died before wearing—her hair loose around her shoulders, my father with his shirt rumpled and tie loose at his neck. "Come home, Katerina, please." They were the very image of worried parents. If you didn't know them. But I do.

Oct 7, 2026

Note: oh ho. we begin to understand. Halley is Katerina is on the run from parents & maybe more

Oct 7, 2026

Page 10 | Highlight (Yellow)

Winfeld himself didn't get a chance to use his own innovation. He vanished not long after a shuttle crash took the lives of his three children (and his fourth wife). His company desperately tried to suggest he'd simply retired from public life, but persistent rumors were that he'd committed suicide, out of range of Elysian Fields, unwilling to be "saved" without his family at his side.

Oct 7, 2026

Note: Aha. So maybe Winfield is on Elysium, pulling the strings of the dead. Else he figured out that it houses a horror so he refused his own internment there. We have our second mystery , our first creepy one. (First mystery is why Katerina / Halley is on the run.)

Oct 7, 2026

Chapter 3

Page 40 | Highlight (Yellow)

jolt and then whip around to face him. Except he's not there. His face is on the vid screen near the entrance instead.

Oct 8, 2026

Note: I think Karl is AI-generated or a VR avatar for the thoughts of one of the residents. The setting reminds me of "Resurrection of the Daleks". (I think that is the title of the Doctor Who story I am remembering.)

Oct 8, 2026

Page 42 | Highlight (Yellow)

I sniff, wrinkling my nose—moldy sesame noodles.

Oct 8, 2026

Note: Sesame noodles from the previous security guard? Was that a week or a month ago, or much much longer? Or maybe Karl is a physical human who ate sesame noodles here... but I doubt that.

Oct 8, 2026

Page 43 | Highlight (Yellow)

your job is to press that button, every three hours.” Recovering from the start he gave me, I step forward for a better look. “Which—” But then I see it. It’s the one marked with words carved into the plastic surround of the board—THIS ONE—

Oct 8, 2026

Note: heh heh good one Karl

Oct 8, 2026

Page 44 | Highlight (Yellow)

“You push the button, it’s basically a check-in. The board knows everything is fine. We don’t push the button, they send in the guards.

Oct 8, 2026

Note: If Karl is not physical as this reader suspects, who has been pressing the button for the past few days?

Oct 8, 2026

Chapter 4

Page 51 | Highlight (Yellow)

My holocomm gives a warning beep, reminding me of the timer I set before starting my explorations. I’m down to ten minutes before I’ll need to go push the button in the SecOffice.

Oct 8, 2026

Note: If communications are so horrible, are we certain the Board will get the message if someone forgets to press the button? The automation could log presses & transmit it when they are in range of a strong access point.

Oct 8, 2026

Chapter 7

Page 84 | Highlight (Yellow)

And the longer it goes on, the longer he remains in harmless mode, silent and “normal,” the more my doubt—in that black hole in my gut where I had stuffed the whispers of uncertainty, every one of my misgivings, over the years—grows,

Oct 9, 2026

Note: Wait a sec. Halley as a kid was unsettled by the holo presentation & has ever since suspected that they were not programmed holos, that they were something more? She told us that they were ahead of their time & of her time: fair. She did not tell us that the memory of them gnawed at her ever since.

Oct 17, 2026

Page 85 | Highlight (Yellow)

Dead, dead, dead. We're all dead. You'll be next. He walks here still. I shiver at the memory. I can still feel Aleyk's grip on my wrist, an agreed-upon impossibility that still somehow managed to occur.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: I searched but did not find prior mentions of Aleyk nor variations of "you'll be next". This is the first we are learning of Halley's anxiety & possible impossible experience on the ship as a kid. Trauma such as that is fair, but Halley should have hinted at it earlier. Springing it on us out of nowhere this late in the game is... I don't know what it is, but it shouldn't be done that way. Trauma would have affected Halley's willingness to take the job. She should have hinted at it & why she would take the job anyway. And it would have created interest. And Halley spends so much time in her head considering options & being indecisive that in-character behaviour would require both the hint & Halley's internal justification.

Oct 17, 2026

Page 87 | Highlight (Yellow)

Chills rise along my skin. It's not real. Just Svalbard throwing a tantrum. But the horror of it looks real enough.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: Halley you, like some other of Barnes's characters, can be as dumb as a teen in a slasher film. Now is not the time to give a shit about the malfunctioning holo. Not your problem. Nothing you can do about it. And there is urgency to hiding from visitors as Karl instructed (unless you want to use the visitors to confront him). Instead of being distracted by fear & memories, you should skiddadle to the floor Karl indicated, hide from the visitors.

You had a similar moment of "how feeble-minded are you" aboard the transport ship.

Oct 17, 2026

Page 88 | Highlight (Yellow)

Fuck. I don't have time to ponder it now.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: no shit, dumbass

Oct 9, 2026

Page 88 | Highlight (Yellow)

He called me Katerina.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: i noticed that, too

Oct 9, 2026

Page 90 | Highlight (Yellow)

I left my very modern, very out-of-place holocomm in Viviane's room. With my stupid snack mix. Under the chair that's sitting in the middle of her room, right next to her tank, not along the wall where it's supposed to be. In a room we're not supposed to be spending time in, except to check for leaks or whatever. I squeeze my eyes shut.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: Yup. I have been wondering whether the author forgot to mention that you grabbed your holoconn before dashing out of Vivienne's room. I guess she didn't forget. I am sorry to say that I think you are an airhead, Halley. I really am sorry because I am enjoying the story & want to like & respect you.

Oct 9, 2026

Page 91 | Highlight (Yellow)

hesitate for a second, then slip through the door, cutting a direct path to the SecOffice. I need to know where they are. If I have a chance of fixing my mistakes—all of them—without getting caught, all the better.

Oct 9, 2026

Note: I do not follow the rationale for returning to Sec Office, but you do you, airhead. Maybe you want to watch for them on the cameras? But didn't you sprint down a flight of stairs? Can't you just stay in a safe place instead of risking making everything even worse?

The answer is No because what is about to happen, whatever it is, deepens the mystery. So let's get on with it, airhead.

Oct 9, 2026

Page 93 | Highlight (Yellow)

Something about this is odd. I can't shake the feeling that I've missed a connection, a detail of some kind, and that it matters.

Oct 10, 2026

Note: yes you have, but i still suggest you hide in your cabin, or in one near it, for a while.

Oct 10, 2026

Chapter 9

Page 98 | Highlight (Yellow)

Fuck. Fuckity-fuck.

Oct 10, 2026

Note: my friend Mike Y. used to say that

Oct 17, 2026

Chapter 12

Page 132 | Highlight (Yellow)

Once I’m comfortable—pillow adjusted, covers up to my chest, and one leg out on top of the covers to regulate body temperature—

Oct 10, 2026

Note: that is how i sleep when the weather is not as cool as i prefer

Oct 10, 2026

Chapter 15

Page 158 | Highlight (Yellow)

All the more reason to hurry your ass up, Halley.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: true but you never get it in gear no matter how obvious the need so that won't happen

Oct 11, 2026

Chapter 16

Page 177 | Highlight (Yellow)

Aleyk tilts his head to the side, giving me a rueful smile. “Regret.” “No.” I laugh, the sound clotted and thick. “Don’t do that. Don’t be nice ... It makes it harder.”

Oct 11, 2026

Note: I guess I understand what Katerina means, but if so she selected inaccurate words. Aleyk isn't being nice. He is saying that he wishes it hadn't happened that way but he accepts it. I would not call that "nice". I might call it trying to be mature or tough or apologetic.

Oct 17, 2026

Chapter 17

Page 181 | Highlight (Yellow)

There's always a deal to be made. You have to find the right person and apply the appropriate amount and type of pressure. That is chapter and verse from my mother—the Book of Tatiana. The issue is that Karl isn't that person. Not for something this big. And reporting all of this anonymously, once I'm away from here and hiding elsewhere, is not going to work.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: At last Katerina is using the brains we expected her to have!

Oct 11, 2026

Page 181 | Highlight (Yellow)

Or—a stomach-churning possibility dawns—they knew and went along with it voluntarily. Ianthe and Bryck, they worked for Zale. Were they in on these plans?

Oct 11, 2026

Note: That could explain why the Ianthe & Bryck holos act less living than Aleyk. Maybe the uploaded Ianthe & Brick minds are content to stay in a cyberspace sandbox as intended. Aleyk rebels & the only outlet, for some reason of software construction, is through the Aleyk holo.

Oct 11, 2026

Chapter 18

Page 187 | Highlight (Yellow)

Her skin is pale, fragile-looking, even in this state. Unlike the real Viviane, this imposter's face is thin, no chubby cheeks from childhood. The brow and cheekbones are prominent, as if the flesh has been pulled tight. Her mouth is small and gray, the lips flaking and dried. And beneath the thick and glossy hair, the edge of an ugly scar at her temple.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: What if someone is cheating death by uploading their mind into a thawed corpse-cycle? As Katerina told us many pages ago, the revivification process is flawed so the bodies fail within hours. What if the revived body lasts days or a couple of weeks? It rots. They must thaw another resident & upload into that body. Karl (who I suspect is not a corporeal human) acquires new residents via paid customers such as the recent young man & kidnapped employees such as Katerina. What if this new Viviane was Katerina's predecessor?

Zale Winfeld is my candidate for the mind who uses this terrible form of life extension.

Oct 11, 2026

Page 188 | Highlight (Yellow)

Maybe one of the tanks failed.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: Even if it is tank failure, it ain't just one tank, Katerina.

Oct 11, 2026

Page 189 | Highlight (Yellow)

Can that be from one bad tank?

Oct 11, 2026

Note: No. At this point I suspect that you are smelling the currently animated corpse. I now suspect that Karl is the death-cheater. More precisely, Karl is a fake identity. Karl is a pseudonym. What you see on screens is generated like we have AI that generates images or video. Whether the Karl on screen is entirely generated or is a video skin over the images captured of the animated corpse, using those images to show the generated video how to move... I don't know.

I am upset that Katerina has returned to being slow on the up-take. I thought she passed that. Maybe the author does it on purpose to raise tension in the reader.

Oct 17, 2026

Page 189 | Highlight (Yellow)

The tank is tilted on its side on the floor, the occupant spilled out.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: This casts doubt on my idea that someone is uploading their mind into revived corpse-cicles because, if they were doing that, this is a waste of a hard-to-replenish resource. Or maybe there was something about this resident that made them inappropriate for thawing & uploading.

Oct 17, 2026

Chapter 19

Page 198 | Highlight (Yellow)

Immediately the image of that dangling vent cover above the desk in Zale's study pops to mind. The bare toe prints in the dust. The noises that I hear in the walls ...

Oct 11, 2026

Note: Oh ho! I had thought that the undisturbed dust in the Winfeld suite indicated that the monster never went there, but there were those marks in the dust on Zale Winfeld's desk & maybe around it. So that office is not safe, & it could probably enter the other rooms. It is also a reminder that any room with an overhead vent might be infiktrated by the monster.

Oct 11, 2026

Page 203 | Highlight (Yellow)

flinch, hoping that Amli wasn't aware or that if she was, she couldn't feel anything. I can't imagine the horror of waking up to find yourself on the ground in a strange place, with teeth tugging and ripping at your belly and being too weak or unable to scream for help.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: Pandorum (film), a momentary camera shot

Oct 17, 2026

Chapter 20

Page 212 | Highlight (Yellow)

I'm taken aback for a moment by his questions, complete with actual words instead of pieced-together phrases and syllables. "You're talking again," I say dumbly.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: oh jeez not dumby mode again. stop it Katerina!

Oct 11, 2026

Page 213 | Highlight (Yellow)

Horror slip-slides around in me. He knew. He knew that people were trapped in here, along with him and that creature, and he said nothing? For how many years?

Oct 11, 2026

Note: he did say, years ago when he said they would die or she would die or whatever he told kid Katerina

Oct 17, 2026

Chapter 21

Page 216 | Highlight (Yellow)

but that's how I ended up here. I am done with it. Done with running, done with letting other people decide what value system I'm going to follow.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: So... Katerina's internal claim here does fit into what we know of her back story, but even with that back story, this is the first we have heard of anyone dictating the morals that Katerina will follow much less that she has been struggling with that & is fed up. Like, we heard that her parents considered her an asset & their own ethics are squishy due to their choice of profession, but we heard nothing about them manipulating her or her ethics. It sounds like Niina's ethics resemble those of Katerina's parents, & working for Niina somehow landed Katerina in a situation (due to nature of the job) where her ethics disagreed with Niina, but Katerina is on the run because she chose to honor her ethics. We have not been told that Niina manipulated Katerina.

As the first time we learned that Katerina was traumatized on the school trip to Elysium Fields, this comes out of nowhere later into the story than it should.

Besides, Katerina already has reasons to stay& help. Immediate exit is impossible. "Karl" will attempt to thwart it, so exit is easier said than done. She still has a crush on Aleyk & wants to help him.

This new "fed up with letting others pick my ethics" is out of nowhere & unnecessary.

Oct 11, 2026

Page 217 | Highlight (Yellow)

look up, taking in the deep lines of concern in Aleyk’s brow, and meet his gaze. “Then

Oct 11, 2026

Note: irrefutable logic from Katerina at last! (seriously)

Oct 11, 2026

Page 223 | Highlight (Yellow)

It’s a flat video, not a holo, of a bearded man in a thick tie that appears to be knitted from multiple colors of yarn. This, whatever it is, is old. Late twentieth or early twenty-first century. “It’s certainly an intriguing possibility,” the man says, his voice crackling and broken, “the idea that Earth might have been visited by interstellar beings long before we would have understood what they were.

Oct 11, 2026

Note: I wonder if we are getting a description of a movie that exists in our world. Doctor Who. Quatermass. The Carl Sagan / Jodie Foster film whose name I forget.

Oct 11, 2026

Chapter 23

Page 240 | Highlight (Yellow)

“Ah, Katerina, I thought you weren’t going to make this so difficult for me.” Karl’s voice drifts after me as I speed toward the door next to the SecOffice.

Oct 13, 2026

Note: I guess if Karl captures her, he will either injure her so that Behloth, not up to full strength, can attack her, or he will put her in a cryo-tank.

Oct 13, 2026

Page 240 | Highlight (Yellow)

Not running, making slow, steady progress in a strangely uneven, clomping gait.

Oct 13, 2026

Note: I have abandoned my belief that Karl is virtual, but maybe he is a cyborg with cheap, malfunctioning legs. Or maybe he simply has old injuries that never healed.

Oct 13, 2026

Chapter 25

Page 259 | Highlight (Yellow)

We have proof now of your collaboration with Ayis in the Nova Lennox riots."

Oct 15, 2026

Note: Maybe we will get the final details on why Katerina went on the run & became Halley. Or maybe we get the version that Niina & Bierhas intend will become the accepted truth.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 259 | Highlight (Yellow)

"That's not—" I begin and then snap my mouth shut. She must mean my message to Ayis's people, but it's partial and dated after the riots themselves. Is she threatening to manipulate the facts? At this point, unless she's threatening to eat my liver, she's picked the wrong place and time to try to scare me.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: Aha. The Bierhas people intend to control the truth.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 259 | Highlight (Yellow)

you'll have to get your parents on board with the messaging.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: I remember now that Katerina's parents work for Ayis. Katerina worked for Niina worked for Bierhas. So Katerina is a pivot in a conflict. I had not made that inference earlier. From previous hints from Halley, I had inferred that Ayis was a democracy demolisher, which makes me wonder why Katerina would have done anything to help Ayis & anger Bierhas, but maybe we will learn that in the next few paragraphs.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 261 | Highlight (Yellow)

"Do you know how much damage he would have done in—" "They chose him, Niina. Or they would have. And that's it. That's all you know. Except that you were willing to sink to his level to win.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: So the Bierhas team manipulated the election before the Ayis team could. Whether they removed votes, altered them, or injected fakes, or they slandered Ayis or whatever, by Katerinas's standards they unethically manipulated the election. Niina implicitly agreed that they manipulated an election, but she is using "ends justify the means" ethics (probably acceptable to her for the nonce due to her more foundational

"what serves me is just" ethical rule).

Oct 15, 2026

Page 262 | Highlight (Yellow)

Niina sighs. "Katerina. Yes, he knows. Of course he knows." Even though I assumed as much, it still hurts to hear that he's not the person I believed him to be.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: I see. So Katerina hoped that the unethical actions were limited to team Niina, that Bierhals was ethical. Another part of her concluded that Bierhals must have known, even approved of it.

Also, doesn't Ayis have a lawsuit or publicity campaign about how the election was manipulated (or "stolen", as one Waste of Skin in our universe & time would say)? That is the work Katerina's parents are doing for him. So the democracy destroyer, dangerous in the big picture, is in the right on this isolated issue.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 262 | Highlight (Yellow)

"No," I say evenly. "The 'caretaker' is eviscerated on the stairs behind that door." I jerk my thumb back the opposite direction in the corridor, toward the stairway. "It's Zale Winfeld, or what's left of him after being possessed for the better part of a couple of centuries." I pause. "By an alien."

Oct 15, 2026

Note: I love how Halley just ssys it. I am so tired of "That's what I've tried to tell you" & "You don't understand!" & "We have to get out of here" & "It's a thing I can't explain!" I don't mean in this book. I mean in tons of books & films. Halley just says it directly & concisely. If listeners want to sputter or ask follow-ups, they can.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 263 | Highlight (Yellow)

Three, no, four out of the original dozen. "It's coming," one of the men shouts in a shaking voice. "It was climbing down from the—"

Oct 15, 2026

Note: I like how significant horrifying qction occured out of site for us. We did not need the details for each kill nor the reactions of the soldiers. We & Halley can guess it. Now the soldiers, if not Niina & Jahn, are believers in the monster, are weakened, & are horrified without wasted words from our point of view.

Oct 15, 2026

Page 263 | Highlight (Yellow)

He wobbles back and forth for a moment, like he's trying to get his balance. But then he finally drops, sliding off the clawed portion of Behloth's hand. In the space behind the man, centered in the darkened corridor but highlighted by Jahn's light, is Behloth.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: Aaaand now Jahn & Niina are believers, too.

Oct 15, 2026

Chapter 26

Page 265 | Highlight (Yellow)

I brace myself for the rain of body parts. For the crack of bones, followed by the gurgle of lungs filling with blood and the wet smack of intestines hitting the ground. But there's nothing.

Oct 15, 2026

Note: Oh right! A few chapters ago (like 10 minutes in-world), Behloth expressed interest in possessing a woman. At the time, Halley would have been the only candidate. Now it has Niina.

I wonder how she will take to it. If hosts early in the life cycle retain more of their identity than Behloth's, she might like it. She will be deadly because she is a clever, strategic planner. She will quickly figure out how to neutralize (kill) the soldiers, then continue the death ship's journey. Or if she visually appears to be Niina, she might order the soldiers to capture or kill Halley. She might leave on her ship, return to society, a cannibal in secret. With political power, she might be able to arrange for regular cannibal meals. Whichever plan she makes, a Niina / Behloth hybrid is bad news, much worse than Zale / Behloth ever was in either the short or long terms. Yowza!

Oct 15, 2026
