

Absolutely Maybe Study Guide

Absolutely Maybe by Lisa Yee

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Plot Summary

Absolutely Maybe is a novel by author Lisa Yee. The story follows the main character, Maybelline "Maybe" Chestnut, as she runs away from her home in Kissimmee, Florida for Hollywood. Maybe is the daughter of a beauty queen turned charm school proprietor. Although her mother screams everything beauty queen, Maybe is the direct opposite with her Goth makeup, baggy clothes and brightly-colored hair that changes throughout the novel.

When Chessy, Maybe's mother, chooses her fiancé and soon-to-be seventh husband over Maybe, Maybe runs off to find her biological father in California. Maybe takes along her best friend, Ted, as they hitch a ride with their friend, Hollywood, who is driving out to attend film school at the University of Southern California, USC.

When the trio arrives in California, things don't work out quite the way they planned. Ted and Maybe, at first, are homeless and so they are sleeping in the lounges of the college dorms. Ted eventually lands a job as a personal assistant to a Hollywood star, so he moves on to realize his dream of dealing with the rich and famous. Hollywood starts to realize his dream of becoming a movie maker, propelling his dream into reality when he wins a documentary film contest with his documentary about Maybe.

The only one who is still struggling is Maybe, who is the reason that they go to California in the first place. As she works at a taco truck for the summer, she continues to search for her father and lives with one of her mother's ex-husbands that Chessy married twice, Sammy. By the end of the novel, Maybe realizes that life doesn't always turn out how you want it to and so it's best to learn how to work with what and who you have in your life.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

When Maybelline, Maybe, is six years old, her mother takes her to Disneyworld for her birthday. They go on the rides, Belle, from Beauty and the Beast serves Maybe her slice of cake and sings happy birthday to her. that night as Maybe's mother tucks her in, she tells Maybe that she'll always be there for her.

By the time Maybe is 16, the relationship between her and her mother is completely different. Chessy, Maybe's mother, announces to Maybe that she is marrying again. She is marrying Jake, the manager from the Piggly Wiggle. Chessy tells Maybe that she needs a makeover and to stop being a Goth. Chessy met Jake the previous summer when she went to the grocery store to pick up Maybe's cake. Chessy returned with Jake and no cake. Maybe gives her mother the finger as she walks out of the house to go to school.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The drastic change in the relationship between Chessy and Maybe suggests that one or more things happened between the age of six and 16. It foreshadows that some of these details will come as the novel unfolds. Additionally, it suggests that Chessy marries men a lot but that the marriages do not tend to last very long. Maybe also suggests that her mother was a beauty queen because she mentions Chessy's "beauty queen" smile.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Maybelline, who goes by Maybe, is named after her mother's favorite makeup brand. Maybe meets her best friend, Ted, so they can walk to school together. She first met Ted when they were freshmen in high school. The Fantastic Five, which are the most popular girls in school, were picking on Maybe and Ted scared them away. Ted and Maybe have been friends ever since.

The Fantastic Five are all pageant girls and they all attend Chessy's Charm School and use Chessy's beauty pageant consulting services. Maybe tells Ted that Chessy thinks Maybe is Goth. Maybe works in the library at school first period. When she arrives, she runs into a fellow student that works with her, Hollywood. He tells her he got accepted to the University of Southern California film school. He's always filming Maybe and Ted.

After school, Maybe goes home to freshen up. She tells Chessy she's having dinner at Ted's house. Chessy says she and Jake are going bowling so Maybe should call before she comes home. Maybe loves Ted's house because his family is so normal and they treat Ted so well. Ted was adopted after Paww found Ted at the base of a statue. Maybe asks Ted if she can spend the night and he says she is always welcome. Maybe even finds a drawer labeled with her name in Ted's room that has a toothbrush and toothpaste for maybe.

Maybe explains that her mother is a serial "marryer" since she has had six husbands, so far. Jake will be husband number six. One of her husbands, Sammy Wing, she married twice. One time, when Chessy is drunk, Maybe and Chessy get into an argument. Maybe threatens to go live with her biological father. Chessy tells maybe that her father doesn't even know that Maybe exists because she told him she miscarried. Maybe wonders if he would want to know that she is alive.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Maybe and Ted represent different ends of the spectrum. While Maybe doesn't know who her father is, her biological mother doesn't treat her as well as Ted's adoptive parents treat him. It is also ironic that the Fantastic Five, the five girls that torment Maybe, are Chessy's favorite students. Chessy seems to be searching for happiness in the men in her life. It is as if she accomplishes her goal if she gets the men to marry her, but then she realizes that marriage isn't really what she wants. There is some foreshadowing that Maybe will go out into the world to search for her father, tell him that she exists and get to know him.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Maybe notices that Jake and his things are slowly starting to live in their house within a week of the engagement news. The Fantastic Five show up for their nightly practice. As they are reciting Chessy's seven rules, Ridgeway, the dress designer pushes in a rack of gowns that makes the girls go crazy. When Maybe goes into the room where the girls are practicing, the make fun of her and Ridgeway accidentally on purpose pokes one of them with a pin. Maybe gets a bottle of mustard and squeezes it into each of their bags when nobody is looking.

At lunch, Ted and Maybe are laughing about the mustard incident. Hollywood comes up a=to join them. After lunch, Maybe goes to the girls' bathroom. While she is in the stall, someone turns off the lights. When she exits the stall, a bunch of girls jump her, beat her, tie her up and shove something in her mouth. When they leave, the principal finds Maybe on the floor and takes her to the principals' office. The principal, Mrs. Escobar, tries to get Maybe to tell her who did this to her, but Maybe says she doesn't know. Mrs. Escobar says that Maybe has good grades and that she can probably help in cleaning up Maybe's record so she can apply to colleges next year when Maybe is a senior. Even though the principal insists Maybe is, Maybe insists that she is not college material.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

It is ironic that Maybe has such a different look from everyone else when her mother is a beauty queen and she teaches other beauty queens. It could be that Maybe dresses the way she does to get negative attention from her mother because negative attention is better than no attention at all. Maybe has a low self-esteem because her mother talks down to her. when Maybe tells the principal that she isn't college material, Maybe is repeating what Chessy tells her.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The rumors are flying all over school about Maybe getting attacked in the bathroom. Ted and Maybe hitch a ride home with Hollywood. Hollywood tells them it's his last day before he goes to USC for a summer class. He says he'll miss them and they say he can them anytime.

It's the day of the pageant do Maybe has the whole had to herself. She spends it watching reruns of Nelson's Neighborhood, which is a show about a contemporary family that acts retro. That night, Chessy comes in with Jake and Ridgeway and she's very upset. Jake plies Chessy with booze and tucks her in. Ridgeway tells Maybe it was an ethical contest, but Chessy thought it was "ethnical" competition instead of an "ethical" competition.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Maybe doesn't want to reveal who her attackers are because it could jeopardize her mother's income. Since it is the Fantastic Five that jumped her in the bathroom, if she tells, they could get mad and drop out of her mother's classes. While Chessy is smart at being beautiful and teaching others how to win pageants, she is not very book smart. She confuses ethical with ethnical, which could jeopardize her business now that she has made herself the laughing stock of the pageantry business.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Maybe wakes up in the middle of the night with Jake on top of her groping her and trying to rape her. Maybe tries to fight back but Jake is too strong for her. Chessy walks in and catches Jake. Maybe is happy to see her mother until Chessy blames Maybe for trying to sleep with Jake. While Jake and Chessy are arguing in the kitchen, Maybe gets up, gets dress and leaves the house.

Maybe shows up at Ted's front door at 3 am and Maah lets her in, thinking Chessy is drinking again. The next morning, Maybe wakes up with bruises all over her body and she is sore. She takes two showers to try to scrub the disgust off her. at breakfast she tells Ted that Jake tried to rape her and that he mother doesn't believe her. She also says she's going to run away and try to find her real father. Ted says he'll tell his parents they are going to Los Angeles to stay with Maybe's fake cousin Carla and the two decide they can hitch a ride with Hollywood, who is driving out to California to go to college.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Maybe is running away from home. She doesn't ever plan on going to her house. Maybe will have to return to her house to try to find clues that will lead her to the identity of her biological father. The three kids making a road trip from Florida to California foreshadows a cross-country adventure. Additionally, another adventure awaits them once they reach California and start looking for Maybe's father.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Hollywood is excited when he finds out that Maybe and Ted are hitching a ride to LA with him. Maybe sneaks home when she knows Chessy won't be there. Maybe takes Chessy's old wedding rings, \$350 in cash and finds a photo of Chessy with a man named Gunnar. The photo was taken nine months before Maybe was born, so she assumes it could be her father. Maybe leaves Chessy a note in the liquor cabinet that says she's going to LA with Ted to stay with his cousin Carla for the summer.

Ted, Maybe and Hollywood have started their road trip. They agree to sleep in the car to save money, but one morning they wake up to three guys demanding money and drugs. Since they don't have either, one of the men punches Hollywood and gives him a fat lip. When they get to Texas, they check into a hotel room and eat out at a local diner. When they return to the room, Ted gets one twin bed and Hollywood gets the other one. Jessica takes the floor, but can't sleep. She turns on the TV to watch Nelson's neighborhood and look at the folder she has with clues about her dad.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

This will be the first time that Ted, Hollywood and Maybe are out in the "real world" on their own. It foreshadows them learning a lot of life's lessons the hard way—including getting roughed up by strangers when they are sleeping in the car. While Ted and Hollywood come from loving families, Maybe feels as if she comes from a very unloving family. Maybe also feels that the further she gets away from Kissimmee, Florida, the closer she is getting to find out who her father is.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Driving through Texas and long and hard. Ted wants to stop at every tourist trap, but Hollywood and Maybe just want to get to California to start their new lives. Maybe thinks about how much you can learn about a person on a long road trip. About 150 miles outside of LA, Maybe and Ted break it to Hollywood that there is no Carla and they need to stay with him in the dorm for a few days. Ted gets on the phone with Paaw and starts narrating everything they see. Hollywood mutters about being taken advantage of and Maybe and Ted look at each other because they didn't think Hollywood knew they were using him to get to LA. Maybe starts to panic about where they are going to live, how they will earn money and about finding her father.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Reality is starting to set in for the three teens as they make their way into California. First, they recognize the contrasts between life in their small Florida town compared to life in a big city. For example, when Hollywood cuts someone off in traffic, she honks her horn at them and gives them the finger. Maybe is also starting to realize that they have not thought out their plan all the way because they don't have a sure place to live or a steady income of any kind. She's also worrying about meeting her father.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Hollywood checks into his dorm and the girl checking him in says his roommate left him a message that he's not coming until Friday. Hollywood is so excited about the dorm room, even though Maybe thinks it's small and nothing special. Hollywood agrees to let the stay until Friday, which is three days away. Then, the three go on a tour of the campus. At the end, Ted tries to convince Hollywood they should go on a tour of the stars' homes.

They search for a cheap parking lot to park the car to catch the tour bus. As soon as they get on the bus, Ted starts peppering the tour guide with questions. They get off the bus to tour Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Maybe notices that some people are dressed in Star Wars costumes and she notices a girl with ornage hair to match Maybe's pink hair, and the girl has numerous piercings. Ted welcomes Maybe home. She realizes he means that they fit in here when they never really fit it in Kissimmee. They walk on Hollywood Boulevard and find James Dean's star, which Ted spits on and Hollywood polishes clean with his shirt. When they have dinner at a wings' place, Ted mentions something about running out of money. This causes Maybe to panic even more because she planned on borrowing money from Ted when she runs out of money.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Maybe and Ted recognize the contrast between Kissimmee and LA. They already feel like they fit into the culture of this city more than they ever have in Kissimmee. In some respect, Maybe feels as if she is a fish out water, but in other ways she is experiencing a new way of life that she has longed for for a long time. One of the contrasts she notices is how the neighborhood changes as they walk along the street. The street changes from a tourist area to a seedy part of town. This change is symbolic of the journey that Ted and Maybe area about to take in life. They are moving from the wholesome town of Kissimmee, Florida to the mean streets of Hollywood. While Ted always has the option of returning home to his loving family, Maybe might just find herself alone and living on the streets.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

As Hollywood unpacks and decorates his dorm room, Ted and Hollywood argue over whether USC is a film school or a football school. Maybe wanders around exploring the campus. Before they know it, it is Friday and Hollywood's roommate is scheduled to arrive, which means Ted and Maybe have to leave. Maybe slips a help-wanted flyer into her purse from the bulletin board in the student union. When she gets back to the dorm, she sees the most gorgeous guy she's ever seen in Hollywood's room. It's his roommate, Ian. They leave Ian to settle in and Ted tells Maybe he has a plan. He says they can crash dorm lounges until they save enough money for a place to live. Maybe shows Ted the advertisement for an assistant to a celebrity personage. Ted uses his cell phone to call and land an interview. They spend the rest of the day looking at lounges and pick one each for where they will stay tonight.

While Maybe tries to pretend fall asleep in the lounge, she wishes Ted were there. It doesn't seem as if the students passing by are even paying attention to her. She starts to wonder if this means she is officially homeless.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Maybe has never really been interested in dating a boy. When she sees Hollywood's roommate, Ian, she feels like she knows what love is for the first time. maybe also starts to think that if this is what college boys look like that she needs to reevaluate her decision to attend college. While Maybe has not led an idyllic life, she has always had food, shelter and clothes on her back. for the first time in her life, she is starting to know what it feels like to truly be homeless.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Maybe pawns her mother's wedding rings, but she only gets \$65 for them. She heads back to the dorm lounge to go to sleep. She has to hide out in the bathroom for a little while when a couple on a couch across from her starts making out. When they finally leave, Maybe falls asleep. When she wakes up the next morning, someone has stolen her purse. She goes to Hollywood's room but he's at work. Ian lets her in to get the rest of her stuff. While she's there, Ted burst in saying he got the job as personal assistant to Gloria de la Tour, who is a famous stage actress. Ted and Maybe head to the drugstore to buy eyeliner and lipstick. When Ted won't give Maybe any money, she slips the items into her pocket.

When Hollywood returns from his cafeteria job, he hands Maybe a paper bag with her dinner in it. Ted recounts his employment situation to Hollywood—even telling them that he gets to drive the Rolls-Royce when the chauffeur is off of work. Everyone returns to their respective dorms. By this time, Maybe is on a first name basis with the dorm security guard and knows all about his family.

The next morning Maybe wanders around applying for jobs. Without an ID, everyone is telling her that it's impossible to hire her. One girl at the sandwich shop gives her two free sandwiches because the girl made too many. As Maybe is eating, she sees a homeless woman that she saw previously and offers a sandwich to her. Maybe spends the majority of her days in the library, hiding in the stacks, reading the books and using the free bank of computers. She tries to find her real father, tries to contact agencies that help kids find their birth parents and even tries to obtain a copy of her birth certificate—all without any luck. She finds the book *A Little Princess* at the library. She tosses it out the bathroom window and goes outside to retrieve it. She takes it back to Hollywood's dorm room and reads it.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Maybe is experiencing how cold and cruel the world can be. It starts when she tries to pawn her mother's wedding rings. It carries through to when her purse is stolen. Maybe empathizes with the homeless woman because Maybe is starting to feel as if she is homeless too. She is paying forward the generosity the sandwich shop girl paid her with free sandwiches by offering the homeless woman a free sandwich too.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

Hollywood brings Maybe lunch when he can. Ted takes care of feeding Maybe her dinner. Hollywood tells Maybe that she can't keep her things in his room and come and go as she pleases anymore because Ian is missing some money. Maybe gets her things and steals Ian's jar of mints and \$20 off his dresser. She finds a bush to hide her things in and meets Ted at his dorm lounge. He talks Hollywood and Maybe into going for a ride and surprises them with the Rolls-Royce. They go to a fancy restaurant, where Ted treats them because today was payday. He tells them that Gloria says he can live in her apartment above the garage but that Maybe can't live with him.

Parker, the security guard in the dorm where Maybe is staying, wakes her up. He tells her that they are cracking down on loiterers since the thefts started in the dorms. He says he knows she doesn't live in the dorm and that she can't stay there anymore. He gives her \$80 and tells her she can stay tonight but that tomorrow she has to be gone.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

It seems as if Ted and Hollywood's lives are progressing but Maybe's is not. She keeps hoping that if she can find her father that it will change everything. In reality, however, finding her father is really a pipe dream. Even if Maybe does find her father, the odds of him being rich or a great guy that takes her in and changes her whole life are slim to none. Parker has been turning his head to the fact that Maybe is sleeping on the couch in the lounge. Since he can't afford to lose his job, though, he tries to give Maybe some money to help her, but he can't risk his family's welfare over Maybe.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

Maybe sleeps in Hollywood's car for the next couple of days. Ted is so busy with his job that she hardly sees him. She spends her days at library and following people who are eating, so she can gather the food they throw away in trash cans. She still hasn't spent the money Parker loaned her. Maybe runs into Ian on campus, who tells her they caught the thief on campus. Maybe uses Parker's money to buy supplies to give herself a makeover. While she is coloring her hair in the Burger King bathroom, Maybe gets kicked out by the manager. While sitting on the curb, the homeless woman who calls herself Audrey Hepburn, sits down next to maybe. Maybe realizes the woman talks like Ted and looks like Maybe.

While they are driving around in the Rolls-Royce, all Ted keeps talking about is Mrs. De la Tour this and Mrs. De la Tour that. Maybe hands Hollywood a \$20 bill to pay him back for some of what he loaned her. Instead of taking the money, he hands her cash and tells her it is for a bus ticket back to Kissimmee. Maybe makes Ted pull over and she gets out of the car. When she realizes she is in a bad neighborhood, she gets back into the car. Ted says he thinks he has a plan on where Maybe can live. She says as long as it isn't a detention center, homeless shelter or back in Kissimmee.

Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

The homeless woman represents who Maybe thinks she is going to become if she doesn't find her father soon. Ted and Hollywood realize that things haven't turned out well for Maybe. Things definitely have not turned out the way she planned. They know they have to do something about her living situation. Even as bad as things are for Maybe, the last thing she wants to do is return to the way her life was.



Chapters 25 and 26

Chapters 25 and 26 Summary

Ted picks Maybe up in the Rolls. Maybe assumes that Ted is moving out of the garage apartment and has found them their own place. When she says this to Ted, he remains silent. Ted pulls up to a beautiful house with a bunch of gas windows. A model-like woman answers the door and seems to recognize Maybe. When they go inside, there are pictures of Chessy and maybe all over the walls. The woman says "he" will be back soon and she's sure they want to catch up.

An hour later, Sammy, Chessy's husband that she married twice walks n the door. This is Maybe's favorite of the husbands and she always though Sammy would adopt her, so when she sees him, she runs into his arms. Maybe tells Sammy about getting in a fight with her mother, but doesn't tell him what it is over. Eventually, Ted asks if Maybe can stay with Sammy. Sammy says she can but makes her call her mother to tell her. Maybe leaves a message on the answering machine. Sammy hits redial and leaves his own message.

Sammy takes Maybe to a room that is decorated in pink and white for a 10-year-old girl. Maybe remembers how her and Chessy were supposed to move out with Sammy to this very house, but that one of them never made it there. When Willow, Sammy's girlfriend, finds out Maybe is taying, she throws a fit. She accuses Sammy of never getting over Chessy.

Chapters 25 and 26 Analysis

The inference is that Ted has found Chessy's grandparents, rather than her father. It is also seems as if Chessy has relatives and a life that Maybe doesn't know anything about, but is about to uncover. The bond that Maybe and Sammy have is like that of a real father and a real daughter. It foreshadows Maybe realizing that a father-daughter bond doesn't have to be biological. Hence it's more about the relationship that two people have with each other.



Chapters 27 and 28

Chapters 27 and 28 Summary

Over breakfast, Sammy tells Maybe he spoke to Chessy and that she says Maybe can stay with him. He tells Maybe he expects her to get a job or do something that kids her age are doing. When Sammy leaves for a photo shoot and Willow for an audition, Maybe decides to clean the house to thank Sammy for letting her stay. When she finishes four hours later, the cleaning lady shows up to clean.

Maybe leaves the house to get out of the cleaning lady's way. She wanders until she comes across a taco truck. She asks the girl if she is still serving. The girl says officially no, but offers to make something for Maybe. Four tacos and a soda later, Maybe and the girl have been chatting. She says she'll see Maybe tomorrow.

Chapters 27 and 28 Analysis

The fact that Sammy's house is a shrine to Maybe and Chessy, with their pictures everywhere, indicates that Sammy never got over his breakup with Chessy and his losing Maybe. Maybe thinks that Willow even reminds Maybe of a version of her mother. Maybe meeting the girl that works in the taco truck indicates that the two girls become friends, and Maybe might even get a job working in the taco truck for the summer until school starts again.



Chapters 29 and 30

Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

When Sammy gets home, he tells Maybe that he got her a job as a nanny. Maybe explains to Sammy and Willow that since Willow mentioned the Santa Anas were coming to visit that Maybe cleaned the house. Willow bursts out laughing and Sammy tries to stifle a laugh as he explains the Santa Anas are winds that drive the whole town crazy.

Maybe meets with Tessa, who is the mother of the triplets she'll be babysitting for. Tessa agrees to pay Maybe \$11 an hour to work Monday through Friday and some weekends when Tessa and her husband have events to attend. Maybe visits Jess at the taco truck and it occurs to her that she could work for Jess instead. Maybe begs Jess to hire her and Jess relents.

Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Sammy wants Maybe to get a job so she stays out of trouble. Sammy pulls some strings to land Maybe a job, but Maybe is convinced that the kids she'd be sitting for are the devil's spawn. Instead, Maybe decides to work for Jess at the taco truck. It foreshadows Sammy getting mad at Maybe for turning down the nanny job to work in a taco truck instead.



Chapters 31 and 32

Chapters 31 and 32 Summary

Ted and Hollywood show up at Sammy's house as Sammy and Willow are on their way out to a movie. Hollywood tells Maybe and Ted that he's entering a documentary into a contest so he'll be busy working on that for a while. Maybe tells them about getting a job working on the taco truck and how she turned down the job as a nanny. Hollywood mentions that he wants to make Maybe proud. After Hollywood leaves, Ted asks Maybe if she likes Ted.

Maybe shows up the following morning for work. From the time Jess pulls up in the truck until it's time to go home, Maybe is extremely busy. She basically does everything Jess tells her, starting with changing out of her baggy t-shirt into a Benito's Tacos shirt that is tight on her. Jess hands Maybe a bag when it's time to go home. Maybe finds enough food for a week, \$42 in cash, and two t-shirts in it. It's just Willow and Maybe at home because Sammy is away on a People magazine shoot in San Francisco. They both eat their respective meals and talk about how each one is freeloading off of Sammy.

Chapters 31 and 32 Analysis

Hollywood seems to have a crush on Maybe. It appears as if Ted notices this or that Hollywood has told Ted that he likes Maybe. Ted, therefore, is trying to find out if Maybe likes Hollywood. Willow reminds Maybe so much of Chessy and this is one of the primary reasons that Maybe dislikes Chessy. It seems as if Sammy has replaced Chessy with Willow so that he has someone similar to Chessy and he doesn't have to be alone.



Chapters 33 and 34

Chapters 33 and 34 Summary

Hollywood is busy filming his documentary, but he calls Maybe every night when he takes a break. Maybe puts the first \$100 she makes to paying Parker back. She wants to pay back Ted and Hollywood next. She also wants to buy something nice for Sammy. Finally, she'll use the rest of the money to hire a private detective to find her father. Jess talks with Maybe about her relationship with Chessy while they work. Maybe calls to talk to Ridgeway. She tells Ridgeway about everything and he says that he believes Jake tried to rape her. He says Chessy is a mess with Maybe leaving and losing her pageant princesses. He says she's hitting the bottle hard. Maybe asks Ridgeway if he knows anything about her father, but he says he doesn't. Maybe asks Ridgeway to take care of Chessy for her.

When Sammy gets back, Willow talks him into taking her to Catalina Island. Maybe tells Sammy she has to work to get out of going with them. Ted and Hollywood pick Maybe up for lunch and notice she's not wearing baggy clothes and her heavy makeup. Because the taco truck is so hot, Maybe is accustomed to not wearing makeup and wearing shorts she borrows from Jess, and a Benito's Tacos t-shirt.

Ted keeps talking about his trip to Vegas with Gloria. Hollywood keeps talking about the documentary competition. After lunch, Maybe steps on the beach sand for the first time. Ted and Hollywood decide to take Maybe shopping for new clothes. While Maybe is trying on clothes, Hollywood is filming and then he and Ted head off to look for clothes for Ted. Maybe pays for her clothes and leaves. She pays a psychic \$10 and the psychic tells Maybe she thinks finding her father is the answer but the answer is...and she asks for \$50 to tell her. Maybe leaves.

Chapters 33 and 34 Analysis

Maybe has been hiding her true self under her baggy clothes, heavy eyeliner and purple lipstick. Now that she has made a friend in Jess and is starting to feel more like a normal teenager, she feels more confident in wearing shorts, a tighter t-shirt and less makeup. It is also Chessy's comments that sent Maybe into hiding under the makeup and baggy clothes to start. Since Chessy is no longer around, it is another reason that Maybe doesn't have to hide.



Chapters 35 and 36

Chapters 35 and 36 Summary

Sammy is taking Maybe out to dinner all by themselves so he tells her to wear something nice. Maybe has picked up some new clothes from the vintage shop the sales girl at the department store told her about, but she still doesn't have anything nice enough. While she doesn't want to do it, Maybe asks Willow to borrow some of her clothes. Willow helps put together an ensemble for Maybe. While they are out to dinner, Sammy asks Maybe what she's really doing in California. Maybe tells Sammy what happened. She asks him why he married her mom twice and he tells her the stories.

Maybe recalls that when she was little, her mother entered Maybe in pageants. Maybe even won a couple. Maybe remembers her grandmother coming to see her in the pageants and one time Maybe came in fifth place. Her grandmother took them to Kountry Buffet, but her grandmother kept talking about her mother's weight and how Maybe is pudgy. Her grandmother would also give Chessy tips. Maybe liked it when her grandmother visited because it was the only time she and Chessy were on the same side. The next morning after dinner with Sammy, Maybe wakes up to see all the photographs of Chessy have been taken down. Willow thanks Maybe for whatever she said to Sammy at dinner.

Maybe uses Sammy's computer to search for her father, check the email address Sammy set up for her and to play computer games. Hollywood sends Maybe several emails a day, and when Ted looks over Maybe's shoulder, he pouts that Hollywood doesn't email him. Maybe points out that it's because Ted doesn't have an email address. Ted is wearing a new gold watch in place of his Mickey Mouse one. When Sammy comes into the room, Ted shoves it under Sammy's nose and Sammy compliments it. Ted asks what happened to all of the Chessy pictures, but Sammy ignores the question. Sammy and Willow go out to eat and Maybe and Ted go see one of the Gloria de la Tour's old films at the theater. Ted hints that he might not be returning to Kissimmee in the fall for school.

Chapters 35 and 36 Analysis

Chessy is repeating the behaviors of her own mother in raising Maybe. Hollywood emailing Maybe, on top of calling her, regularly is another indication that he has a crush on Maybe. Sammy is finally trying to purge Chessy out of his life. He's taken the first steps necessary to do so, which is removing all of her photographs. It is still too painful a topic for him to discuss, however, because he really does love Chessy.



Chapters 37 and 38

Chapters 37 and 38 Summary

In the middle of the night, Maybe finally figures out how to find Gunnar. By morning however, Maybe can't remember what her brilliant idea was. When Willow draws on one of the newspaper ads and shows it to Maybe, Maybe remembers what her idea was. Maybe heads to the taco truck to work. When they are done for the day, Maybe tells Jess she plans on placing an ad to find her father in the trades, which are the TV and movie papers. Maybe shows Jess the ad she created on Sammy's computer.

Chapters 37 and 38 Analysis

Maybe thinks that her father was in show business. She intends on finding him by placing an ad in the papers that show business people read. It foreshadows that Maybe is going to be sorely disappointed when Gunnar doesn't respond to any of the ads. If he does respond, it is likely that he isn't even her biological father.



Chapters 39 and 40

Chapters 39 and 40 Summary

Ridgeway tells Maybe that Chessy joined AA. He says one of her students accused Jake of trying to rape her so Chessy threw him out and hit the bottle. Ridgeway is Chessy's sponsor.

Ted, Maybe and Hollywood are at a cafe celebrating his film submission. Maybe can't stop thinking about Jake and asks Hollywood to take her home. On the way home, he pulls off the road and says he needs to tell Maybe something. She suspects he's going to tell her he likes her but she says she values their friendship and that it's OK.

Chapters 39 and 40 Analysis

Chessy realizes she was wrong about Jake. She's getting help for her drinking but Chessy doesn't know how to make it right with Maybe. Maybe thinks Hollywood is confessing his feelings for her but it seems as if he's talking about something else.



Chapters 41 and 42

Chapters 41 and 42 Summary

Ted and Hollywood visit Maybe at the taco truck. Hollywood falls all over Jess. Ted take Hollywood and Jess for a ride in the Rolls-Royce while Maybe cleans the truck. Maybe finds Jess's acceptance letter to Princeton. When they get back, Hollywood shows Maybe the ad looking for Gunnar they placed in the paper.

Jess tells Maybe she has a date with Daniel, which is Hollywood's real name. At home, Willow tries to get advice from Maybe about her relationship with Sammy. Willow also mentions possibly losing a commercial because she slouches. Maybe spends the next few hours using charm school training on Willow.

Chapters 41 and 42 Analysis

Maybe doesn't want Hollywood but she doesn't want anyone else to have him either. Maybe is starting to get jealous of Jess and Hollywood.



Chapters 43 and 44

Chapters 43 and 44 Summary

All Jess talks about is Danny and their date. When Maybe gets home she goes out to dinner with Willow and Sammy. Sammy keeps trying to convince Willow to eat because she's too skinny. Willow keeps practicing for her beer commercial.

Maybe and Ted are talking about the ad when Hollywood beeps in on the call waiting. He tells Maybe that he won the documentary film contest. Maybe tells him how proud she is of him. Hollywood asks Maybe to tell Ted so he can call to tell Jess.

Chapters 43 and 44 Analysis

Maybe continues to be jealous of Hollywood and Jess. While Maybe and Willow disliked each other at first, they are starting to get along now. Hollywood still has feelings for Maybe, which is why he calls her first to tell her that he own the documentary film contest. Ted seems a little jealous of Hollywood liking Maybe, which might indicate that Ted is gay but hasn't admitted it yet.



Chapters 45 and 46

Chapters 45 and 46 Summary

Ever since Hollywood won the contest, it's all he talks about. Jess, Maybe, Ted and Hollywood are all hanging out eating. Ted tells Hollywood he needs a manager and presents Hollywood with his card that says Ted is a talent manager. While they are all talking, Hollywood keeps winking at Maybe, so Maybe thinks he's flirting with her right in front of Jess.

Sammy and Willow go by the taco truck. Sammy takes free photos of the food for them so that customers can point to what they want instead of Jess and Maybe always having to explain what everything is. Jess sends them home with a big bag of food. Maybe catches Willow stuffing her face with it because she's upset that Sammy is going to leave her. Sammy is talking on the phone. Willow says that his cell phone rings in the middle of the night and he always gets up to answer it and talks in the bathroom. Maybe assures her it is nothing. Maybe also thinks that Chessy did teach her something—not to let people get too close to you and to leave them before they leave you so you don't get hurt.

Chapters 45 and 46 Analysis

It seems as if Hollywood might be using Jess to make Maybe jealous. It seems as if Sammy might be talking to Chessy again. Even though Sammy has vowed to move on, now that Chessy is working on herself and working on not drinking anymore, it might change the dynamic of their relationship, so that they can try again. Maybe stops correcting Jess when she keeps calling Sammy her dad. Maybe is starting to realize that she is lucky to have Sammy as a father figure in her life.



Chapters 47 and 48

Chapters 47 and 48 Summary

Willow has gone from not eating at all to non-stop eating. She also helps Maybe put together an outfit for Hollywood's screening. Willow shows Maybe what she is wearing to the screening, which is when Maybe finds out that Hollywood invited Sammy and Willow to attend too. While Ted and Maybe are eating at the hot dog place, he casually tells Maybe that her biological father called. When Maybe calls the number, a woman answers it as a production company. When Maybe asks for Gunnar, the woman tells her there is no Gunnar there. When Ted replays the message for Maybe, the man doesn't leave his name or say he's her father; he says he might have some information. Early the next morning, Maybe redials the number and leaves a message. As she wanders up to the kitchen, she finds Sammy reading the paper and he tells her how great Jess's photos turn out. Maybe looks at one of her and doesn't even recognize herself because she is barefaced, tan and happy. She tells Sammy she's going to laminate the photos so Jess can mount them to the taco truck. Sammy says Maybe has great ideas just like her mother. This is when Maybe realizes that her idea to place an ad looking for her father is really her mother's idea—one she always uses for the charm school.

When Maybe arrives at the screening with Willow and Sammy, Jess is already there with Hollywood. Hollywood pulls Maybe aside and tells her that it's their night and she is his inspiration. When Ted arrives, he is carrying a huge bouquet of flowers, which Hollywood says he asked Ted to pick up for Maybe. When they sit down, Ted says he called and that he's going to meet Maybe after the screening. When Hollywood's film debuts, the title is *Absolutely, Maybe*, and it's a documentary about how tough Maybe's life is. Maybe stands, throws the flowers across the theater and runs until she reaches Rodeo Drive. She starts attacking a plant and two police officers try to restrain her.

Chapters 47 and 48 Analysis

Maybe is starting to see the good in herself. She is also starting to see the good in Chessy. All of the times Hollywood has been "flirting" with Maybe isn't about him liking her. It's about him using her as a subject for his documentary. Just when Maybe feels like she is transitioning into a better part of her life, Hollywood's portrayal of her life drags her back down into the negative aspects of her life. This is why she finally loses it and begins beating up a potted plant on Rodeo Drive. The two police officers showing up foreshadows Maybe getting arrested.



Chapters 49 and 50

Chapters 49 and 50 Summary

Sammy and Willow pick Maybe up from the police station. On the ride home, Willow lets them drive with the top down. When they get to the house, Ted and Hollywood are already there. Hollywood apologizes to Maybe and tells her when he tried to tell her in the car she said she already knew. He says he would never do anything to hurt her as tears well up in his his. Maybe apologizes and then punches Hollywood in the face.

Maybe hacks off her hair. Willow continues to eat. Maybe hasn't gone to work in four days but Jess drops off a bag of food by the door in her way home every day. Ted drops off a DVD of Hollywood's movie in the mailbox.

Chapters 49 and 50 Analysis

Maybe only saw the beginning of Hollywood's movie. The people who saw it urge Maybe to watch the ending. She refuses, but it foreshadows that the ending is about how Maybe has changed her life around and how far she's come since she arrived in California.



Chapters 51 and 52

Chapters 51 and 52 Summary

Maybe has been babysitting for the triplets. When she gets home, Ted is waiting for her. He tells her she needs to watch the DVD. He also tells Maybe that the guy, Scott Germaine, called again and wants to meet her at The Ivy the next day.

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Chapters 51 and 52 Analysis

Maybe is disappointed by the meeting with her father. She sincerely wants to get to know him and possibly have a relationship with him. Gary, Gunnar, thinks her mother set her up to get money out of him. Maybe's entire fantasy about her father is crushed. Maybe always thought about how great he must be, but now, even if Gary is her biological father, she won't be able to forge the relationship she wants because he just wants to pay her off with some money.



Chapters 53 and 54

Chapters 53 and 54 Summary

Maybe runs out of the restaurant frantically searching for Ted. When she finds him, she throws herself into his arms, crying. Maybe tells him everything that happened. Ted urges Maybe to take the DNA test so she'll know one way or the other. Then, Maybe realizes she has a black pouch in her hands that Gary gave to her. When she opens it, she finds \$5,000 in cash inside. When they get back to the Rolls-Royce, Maybe tells Ted that Gary hinted that there is more money to come if she is his daughter.

Maybe decides to watch the DVD of Hollywood's film. As she watches it, she realizes that the girl she sees on the film isn't as bad as she thought she was. The librarian even says she wishes there were more students like Maybe Chestnut.

Chapters 53 and 54 Analysis

Maybe feels as if Ted is selfish. While he does always talk about himself, he mentions to Maybe that their whole journey has been about her—that the reason they are in California to start is because of her. Maybe is upset because nothing has turned out the way that she had hoped or the way she planned. This is a life lesson for Maybe because life often doesn't turn out the way people plan it to, but rather have to learn to roll with the punches and deal with things as they present themselves.



Chapters 55 and 56

Chapters 55 and 56 Summary

Hollywood comes over to Maybe's house late at night. He apologizes to her and says he would never do anything to hurt her. She apologizes for punching him but says he should have warned her about the film. He says he thought he did. Hollywood asks Maybe if she could ever have feelings for him, but she says she can't. Maybe asks Hollywood about the line her mother says in the film, which is that she loves Maybe but Maybe doesn't think she does. Hollywood says Chessy was drunk when she said it but that doesn't mean it's not true. The next morning, Maybe takes a cab to the travel agency.

Chapters 55 and 56 Analysis

Maybe learns that Hollywood cares about her and that's why he made the film about her. Ironically, Maybe intends on returning to Kissimmee to talk to her mother. It foreshadows Chessy and Maybe rebuilding their relationship, but also that Maybe intends on returning to California to continue living her new life there.



Chapters 57 and 58

Chapters 57 and 58 Summary

When Maybe returns home, she asks Willow to drive her to the taco truck. Jess says she is happy to see Maybe and that she's missed her. She's glad to hear that Maybe and Daniel have talked. Maybe gives Jess the photos Sammy took, laminated and with magnets on the back. The girls start hanging them up. Maybe asks Jess if she is going to go to Princeton. Jess says she can't but Maybe tries to convince her that she has to live her own life. Maybe tells Jess she has some ideas about the business that they discuss for the rest of the time. When Maybe is about to leave, Jess says she'll see Maybe tomorrow and Maybe confirms she will.

While Jess and Maybe are working at the taco truck, Jess admits that she told her Uncle Benito about Maybe working the truck with her. Jess says her uncle is coming the next day to test Maybe on her cooking skills. Maybe finally agrees to do it. As Maybe goes home, she thinks about not showing up the next day, but then decides she wants to win because she wants and needs to keep her job. She thinks that she will never return to Kissimmee and wonders if her mom received the present she sent.

Chapters 57 and 58 Analysis

Even though Maybe tells Jess she'll see her the following day, Maybe will already be gone and on her way back to Florida. Her last gift to Jess to thank her for the job and changing her life is the photos and the business ideas Maybe gives to Jess before she leaves. It seems as if Maybe plans on staying in California. She went to the travel agency to buy a honeymoon for her mom, or a plane ticket to California so that Chessy can come out to see Maybe.



Chapters 59 and 60

Chapters 59 and 60 Summary

Maybe shows up at the taco truck but doesn't see Uncle Benny. Jess says he'll be there after the lunch rush. Jess encourages Maybe to just do what she's been doing all summer. Maybe leaves and sees Jess motioning for her to come but back Maybe remains across the street.

Ted finds Maybe across the street from the taco truck three hours later. He convinces Maybe to return to the truck and cook for Uncle Benny. Maybe apologizes to Jess and tells Jess she's nervous. Jess tells Maybe to just be herself. Uncle Benny arrives and he is a little stern looking but he's only about 28 years old. He tells Maybe he wants her to make one of everything on the menu. Uncle Benny ends up loving Maybe's tacos and says she's quite the businesswoman—pointing to the tents. Ted says Maybe gets it from her mom but that she'll deny it.

Chapters 59 and 60 Analysis

Maybe is terrified of failure. She feels as if she is a disappointment to her mom, who is important to her. This is why she is so fearful of cooking for Uncle Benny and failing. Maybe feels if she fails then she disappoints Jess, who is also very important to her. Ted helps to pep Maybe up so that she can muster up the courage to go back to the taco truck and cook for Uncle Benny when he arrives.



Chapters 61 and 62

Chapters 61 and 62 Summary

When Maybe gets home, Chessy is there waiting for her with Willow. Willow rushes out the door past Maybe. Chessy and maybe's eyes well up with tears. Chessy says since Maybe sent her a first class ticket she came for a visit. Chessy apologizes to Maybe for all of the problems her drinking has caused. Maybe apologizes too. When Chessy asks about the tac business, Maybe assumes Ted has been filling Chessy in on what's been happening. Chessy starts complaining about the stewardesses and says the airline lost her luggage. As she looks around, she says Sammy has done well for himself. She says Maybe's hair and clothes are atrocious, but she looks better without the Goth makeup and it looks like she's lost weight. Even with Chessy stating her disappointments, Maybe is happy.

Chessy tries Maybe's tacos and says they're delicious. When Willow returns, Sammy is with her. He rushes to Chessy, they embrace and talk. Maybe follows Willow into the kitchen because Willow is a nervous wreck about losing Sammy to Chessy.

Chapters 61 and 62 Analysis

Chessy took a big step by flying out to California. She is overcoming her fear of change, and she is overcoming her fear of flying. Chessy knows that she had to take a proactive step to mend her relationship with Maybe. Maybe took the first step by mailing a plane ticket to her mother. Maybe is starting to learn that criticism and compliments are a mixture her mother uses to provide advice and feedback. It's just Chessy's way and isn't really anything personal.



Chapters 63 and 64

Chapters 63 and 64 Summary

Chessy's luggage isn't found, so she maxes out two credit cards buying new stuff. Maybe and Chessy are sharing Maybe's room. Chessy gives Willow advice that always send Willow fleeing from the room. Willow thinks Chessy hates her. Maybe assures Willow Chessy means well when giving advice—and Maybe realize this is true for the advice Chessy gives Maybe too. Willow tells Maybe Sammy's cell phone doesn't ring in the middle of the night anymore so it must have been Chessy he was talking to in the middle of the night. Maybe realizes Chessy was spying on her through Sammy the way Maybe was spying on Chessy through Ridgeway. Maybe tries to distract Willow by asking her to take her shopping for an outfit for the party tomorrow. Maybe and Chessy are in the bathroom. Chessy asks Maybe if she's sure she wants to do this. Maybe says she's sure.

Chapters 63 and 64 Analysis

Willow continues to worry that Chessy is going to steal Sammy away from her. Since Sammy and Chessy have a special connection, now that Chessy is in California, Willow is concerned that her substitution for Chessy is no longer necessary. When Chessy and Maybe are in the bathroom, Maybe wants Chessy to shave her head to fix the hack job Maybe did when she cut her own hair.



Chapters 65 and 66

Chapters 65 and 66 Summary

Sammy sees Maybe's shaved head. Maybe says Chessy did it for her. Maybe gives Sammy a lens for his telescope. She also asks if Chessy told Sammy her plans. Sammy says he told Chessy no. Maybe tells Chessy she she knows Sammy said no. Chessy says she gives Sammy and Willow six months and then they'll see. Hollywood picks up Chessy and Maybe they drive to pick up Ted at the mansion. They're heading to the Griffith Park Observatory.

Chapters 65 and 66 Analysis

It implies that Chessy told Sammy she still loves him and wants to marry him again, but Sammy said no. They are all meeting at the observatory for some kind of special occasion, but it hasn't been revealed yet.



Chapters 67 and 68

Chapters 67 and 68 Summary

They are having a birthday party for Maybe and a going away party for Ted at the observatory. Jess is there with the taco truck and she's paying off the security guards in food because the observatory is closed. Ted tells Maybe that he got the DNA results back from the DNA test he sent in for himself and found out that he is half Chinese and half French, so he has to break it to his adoptive parents that he isn't Thai after all. Gloria de la Tour shows up demanding that Ted stay and work for her. Ted introduces Chessy as his replacement. Ted asks Maybe if she likes Hollywood at all. She says as a friend. Then, Maybe confronts Ted, saying that he likes Hollywood and that he's gay. Ted admits that it's true. Maybe glances around at her group of friends, family and other partygoers. She realizes that LA is her new home and her mother's new home.

Chapters 67 and 68 Analysis

Ted is going back to Kissimmee because he is homesick. For him, the trip to California is just a summer adventure. For Chessy and Maybe, however, California is their new home and the gateway to their new life.



Characters

Maybelline

Maybelline "Maybe" Chestnut is the only daughter of Chessy, a charm school proprietor and former beauty queen. Maybe is 16 years old when her mother is engaged to marry her seventh husband, Jake. Maybe dyes her hair colors like blue, pink, bright red, and green using Koolaid as her dyeing agent.

Maybe has always wanted to know who her biological father is, but her mother won't divulge the information. After Jake attempts to rape Maybe, and Chessy accuses Maybe of coming on to Jake, Maybe enlists her friend Ted to run off to Los Angeles with her to find her real father.

Maybe is hiding her true self behind baggy clothes, dyed hair, dark eyeliner, and purple lipstick. As her old stepfather comes back into her life and she makes friends with her boss who is a girl that runs a local taco truck, Maybe sheds her disguise and starts to become her true happy self.

Chessamay

Chessamay "Chessy" Chestnut is Maybe's mother. Chessy is a blonde bombshell with big hair, big boobs, and a big personality. She charms the pants off men and is working on getting married for the seventh time. In addition to being a serial marryer, Chessy is also an alcoholic. Whenever something doesn't go right, Chessy turns to the bottle to resolve her problems.

Chessy runs a charm school, where she also consults with beauty pageant contestants to help them win their own crowns. In her younger days, Chessy was a beauty pageant contestant and winner—making it all the way to the Miss America Pageant. Chessy didn't make it to the Miss America contest because she was afraid to get on the plane to leave Kissimmee.

Chessy ends up dumping Jake and joining Alcoholics Anonymous to regain control of her life. She flies out to California, after Maybe buys her a first class ticket, to work on her relationship with Maybe. Chessy loves to give other people advice on their looks, what they should wear and what they should change. It tends to sound like criticism and disappointment, but it is really Chessy's way of being helpful.

Ted

Ted is Maybe's best friend. He is a short and petite Asian boy, adopted by Caucasian parents after his adoptive father finds Ted at the base of a statue. With Ted is a book about Thai culture, so his adoptive parents raise him by engrossing him in his Thai



culture. Ted loves to talk, so he is always rambling on and on about whatever subject he is stuck on at the moment.

When they go off to California, Ted is constantly on the phone with his adoptive parents, Maah and Paww. Ted also has dreams of fame and fortune, so when he lands a job as the personal assistant to an aging Hollywood star, he finds himself just where he always wanted to be. By the end of the novel, Ted is homesick, and he has found out from a DNA test that he is really half Chinese and half French, rather than Thai, so he's heading back to Kissimmee to be with his parents and break the news to them.

Even though Ted seems very self-centered throughout the novel, he is really always there for Maybe. He is also encouraging her to do what she wants to do and be who she wants to be. Ted does this in a manner that is quite unobtrusive and allows Maybe to find her own way to the solutions of her problems.

Hollywood

Hollywood is a skinny, pimply kid that works with Maybe in the high school library during first period. He always has a movie camera in his hands and he is always filming because he wants to film movies for a living. Hollywood comes from a huge family that lives in a trailer park. He lands a scholarship to attend film school in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California (USC).

Whenever Ted and Maybe want to go somewhere, they always hitch a ride with Hollywood in his big green car that they call the Green Hornet. Since Hollywood is driving the Green Hornet out to college, Maybe and Ted decide to hitch a ride with him when they run off to find Maybe's biological father.

Hollywood has a crush on Maybe, but Maybe only thinks of him as a friend. As Hollywood gets used to the California lifestyle, he modifies his looks to be a bit more refined. He even starts dating Maybe's friend and boss, Jess. Ultimately, Hollywood enters and wins a documentary film contest when he enters a film he makes about Maybe.

Parker

Parker is the security guard that works in the dorm where Maybe is staying on the USC campus. She tries to convince Parker that she's a student there, but that she studies and sometimes falls asleep in the dorm lounge because of her roommate. Parker knows Maybe isn't telling the truth, but he allows her to stay there until thefts start happening in the dorms. When security cracks down, Parker gives Maybe some money, but tells her she has to find another place to stay. One of the first people Maybe pays back with the money she earns from the taco truck is Parker.



Ian

Ian is Hollywood's roommate in the dorms. Ian is from England. He is gorgeous and Maybe falls in love with him the first time she sees him. When Ian is missing money from his dorm room, he talks to Hollywood about it and Hollywood says that Ted and Maybe cannot go and go in his room as they please. Later, Ian runs into Maybe and tells her they caught the kid that was stealing and it was an engineering student at the school.

Sammy Wing

Sammy Wing is the man that married Chessy twice. He is a photographer that lives in California now. Maybe has always looked up to Sammy as the only true father figure she has ever had. Ted finds Sammy and convinces him to allow Maybe to stay with him so that she won't be homeless anymore.

Sammy is obsessed with Chessy and has never gotten over her. Even though he has a new model girlfriend that is the younger version of Chessy, Willow, his house walls are still full of photographs of Chessy and Maybe. Sammy helps Maybe land a job as a nanny, but supports Maybe when she turns down the job to work at the taco truck instead.

Sammy thinks of Maybe as his own daughter. He still thinks of Maybe as his stepdaughter, even though he and Chessy are no longer married.

Willow

Willow is Sammy's new live-in girlfriend. She reminds Maybe of a younger version of Chessy. At first, Willow is very snobby and acts like she doesn't like Maybe. As the two get to know each other, Maybe and Willow form a special bond. Willow helps Maybe with her clothes, while Maybe helps Willow with her posture and other charm school etiquette that can help Willow with her acting career. Willow doesn't eat very much so she is very tall and slender. This leads to Maybe referring to Willow as Twig behind her back. When Willow starts to stress out over losing Sammy, however, she starts to overeat. She gains enough weight to look healthy.

Jess

Jess is a girl that is about Maybe's age. Jess runs the taco truck Maybe comes across on one of her first days living with Sammy. Jess and Maybe start talking and they become friends. After Maybe realizes she doesn't want to work as a nanny for the triplets, she begs Jess to hire her to work at the taco truck.



Jess is Mexican and she has a deep sense of family loyalty. Even though she is accepted to Princeton, she is choosing to stay and run the taco truck for her uncle and her family. When Jess meets Hollywood, they take an instant liking to one another and start to date. Jess is a good friend to Maybe, also encouraging her and supporting her in all of the decisions that Maybe makes in her life.

Gloria de la Tour

Gloria de la Tour is the aging movie star that Ted starts to work for in her Hollywood mansion. Gloria is somewhat of a recluse, so she hardly leaves her mansion or is hardly seen in public anymore. When Ted decides to return back to Kissimmee, however, Gloria makes an appearance at the dual going away-birthday party at the observatory for Ted and Maybe. Gloria adores Ted and she begs him not to leave her. In the end, Gloria agrees to try out Chessy as her new personal assistant to replace Ted.

Uncle Benny

Uncle Benny is Jess's uncle. He owns all of the taco trucks, including the one that Jess runs. He is about 28 years old, Mexican, and adamant that only family can work on the taco trucks. When he finds out that Jess has had Maybe working on the truck, he demands to put Maybe's cooking skills to the test. Uncle Benny ends up loving Maybe's tacos and allows her to continue to work on the taco truck.



Objects/Places

Kissimmee, Florida

Kissimmee is a small town in Central Florida, relatively close to Orlando. It is also the town where Maybe was born and raised. Chessy too lived in Kissimmee for most of her life and doesn't appear to want to leave it. Kissimmee is the primary location for the novel until Ted, Maybe and Hollywood leave for Los Angeles.

Charm School

Chessy runs the charm school. The charm school is located on the bottom floor of Chessy and Maybe's house. The top five clients of Chessy's charm school are the Fantastic Five. These are five girls that attend school with Maybe, but are constantly picking on her and harassing her.

Los Angeles, California

Los Angeles, California is the setting for the remainder of the novel. It is the city where Ted, Hollywood and Maybe drive to in search of Maybe's father and so Hollywood can attend college. It is also where Maybe and Ted become homeless unless Ted lands his job with Gloria de la Tour, and Maybe moves in with Sammy. Ultimately, it is the city that changes Maybe's life and where she and Chessy decide to call home to start the next chapter in their lives.

Koolaid

Koolaid is what Maybe uses to dye her hair the various crazy colors throughout the novel. She is using the Koolaid packets to dye her hair in the Burger King bathroom when the manager kicks her out. Maybe buys the Koolaid packets with some of the money Parker gives to her and in an attempt to make herself feel better after everything that has happened to her since she arrived in California.

Chessy's Wedding Rings

Chessy has a set of wedding rings from each of her six marriages. Before leaving Kissimmee, Maybe steals the wedding rings. Maybe pawns them when she gets to California, but keeps the one that was from Sammy. Maybe only gets \$65 for the wedding rings from the pawn shop. The money goes missing when someone steals Maybe's purse while she is sleeping in the lounge of the dorm.



Rolls-Royce

The Rolls-Royce is Gloria de la Tour's car. She allows Ted to drive it when the chauffeur is off work. Ted has to wear platform shoes to be able to reach the pedals and the steering wheel at the same time. Ted, Maybe and Hollywood have many adventures while tooling around in the Rolls-Royce.

Taco Truck

Maybe stumbles across the taco truck at a construction site after her interview as a nanny. Maybe strikes up a conversation with Jess, who is running the truck. Maybe returns to the truck a few times and starts a friendship with Jess. Maybe convinces Jess to allow Maybe to work in the truck, which Maybe does for the remainder of the summer.

Photographs

Photographs play a pivotal role in several portions of the novel. It is a photograph of a man named Gunnar and Chessy that Maybe finds taken around the time her mother would have conceived her. This photograph leads Maybe to believe the man in the photo is her father, and this is the man Maybe searches for, and eventually finds in California.

Sammy is a professional photographer. When Maybe arrives at Sammy's house in California, the walls are covered with his photographs of Chessy and Maybe. Sammy also takes photographs of the food at the taco truck to help Jess and maybe make the ordering process faster and easier on the customers.

DNA Test

When Maybe meets with Gunnar, Gary, he gives her a prepaid DNA test. He tells Maybe to provide some saliva and send the test in to the lab to see if she is his biological daughter. Ted takes the DNA test instead, which is how he finds out he is half French and half Chinese instead of Thai.

Andy Warhol Scarf

One of Maybe's purchases from the local vintage shop is an Andy Warhol scarf. Maybe wears the scarf around her waist as a belt and around her head at various points in the novel. During the dual going away/birthday party at the conservatory, Maybe gives Ted the scarf to remember her when he returns to Kissimmee.



Themes

Relationships

One of the primary themes running through the novel is relationships. The two primary relationships the novel tackles is the relationships of a family and friendships. The novel lightly touches upon romantic relationships as well.

Friendship is one of the primary types of relationships the novel tackles. Ted and Maybe become best friends as soon as Ted defends Maybe against the harassment of the Fantastic Five. Ted and Maybe are always there for each other no matter what happens in their respective lives.

Hollywood too turns out to be a good friend to both Ted and Maybe. At first, he agrees to drive them out to California with him when he goes to college. As their lives unfold and challenges face them in California, Ted continues to try to help Maybe and Ted in any way that he can.

For the first time, Maybe forms a friendship with another teenage girl, when she befriends Jess. Even the relationship between Willow and Maybe becomes a type of friendship as they get to know each other and help each other throughout the novel.

The novel lightly touches upon romantic relationships. First, it reveals Hollywood has a crush on Maybe. Maybe, however, only thinks of Hollywood as a really good friend. When Jess and Hollywood meet, they start to date. Jess proclaims Hollywood, who she knows by his real name of Daniel, as someone she just clicks with.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having an alcoholic mother, not knowing who your biological father is and being a homeless teenager. Maybe struggles with the fact that her coming of age includes having to learn how to live on the streets when she finds herself broke and homeless on the streets of Los Angeles.

Maybe tries to take on adult responsibilities, but realizes that she needs help from the adults in her life to turn her life around. Jamie also faces the fact that even though she has always thought of her father as a savior that could turn her life around, that he in fact turns out to be a jerk. Additionally, Maybe discovers that her mother means well when she's giving advice, even though it might sound like criticism or disappointment.

Family

Family is the central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of this particular family—the Chestnuts. While every family has their trials and tribulations, Maybe's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other.

Additionally, Maybe learns that a family is more about the people that are there for you, rather than the ones that are biologically related to you. Sammy is more of a father to her than her biological father. Even Ted, Hollywood and Ted's family act as a surrogate family to Maybe in her times of need.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first person point of view, from the perspective of the main character, Maybe Chestnut. The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Maybe. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside Maybe's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel takes place in Kissimmee, Florida and Los Angeles, California during the 21st century. The main characters are involved in the daily life of living with an alcoholic mother and then trying to make it on her own as a teenage runaway..

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the main character is going to runaway from home to find her biological father. However, as events unfold, the search for Maybe's father is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 21st century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is divided into 68 chapters. Each chapter ranges from one pages to 10 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing her opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel. The narrator switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of human relationships—family and friendships. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily Maybe Chestnut. Another subplot is family.



Quotes

"We'll always have each other, Maybelline" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

"Jake asked me to marry him" (Chapter 2, p. 2).

"You are welcome here any time, darling. You're family" (Chapter 3, p. 12).

"He doesn't even know you're alive" (Chapter 4, p. 15).

"You could use more concealer, Maybelline. Like over your entire body" (Chapter 5, p. 20).

"Maybe, you're a diabolical genius" (Chapter 6, p. 21).

"Hollywood, you gotta go. My mother never left Florida and look what happened to her" (Chapter 7, p. 28).

"When word about this gets out, Chessy's going to be the laughingstock of the pageant circuit" (Chapter 8, p. 33).

"Maybelline, I can't believe you would do this to me" (Chapter 9, p. 35).

"Ted, Jake tried to rape me" (Chapter 10, p. 37).

"We are not kidding, we are going to carpool" (Chapter 11, p. 41).

"My mother's never cried over me" (Chapter 12, p. 46).

"Shut up, already" (Chapter 13, p. 48).

"There is no Carla" (Chapter 14, p. 50).

"Come on, let's explore" (Chapter 15, p. 55).

"Welcome home" (Chapter 16, p. 58).

"Do you realize what Ian's arrival signals" (Chapter 17, p. 65).

"Does this classify me as homeless" (Chapter 18, p. 67).

"I have no illusions about my looks" (Chapter 19, p. 69).

"My purse got stolen" (Chapter 20, p. 71).

"This is screwed" (Chapter 21, p. 87).



"We got orders to be really vigilant about loiterers, and, well, Maybe I know you don't live in the dorms" (Chapter 22, p. 88).

"It was an engineering student. He's going to be expelled" (Chapter 23, p. 90).

"In fact, if I'm figuring this right, it's probably very nice" (Chapter 23, p. 95).

"Your new home, for now" (Chapter 25, p. 98).

"After all, it's your room. It always has been" (Chapter 26, p. 106).

"Did she say anything else" (Chapter 27, p. 109).

"I hope to see you again" (Chapter 28, p. 116).

"I got you a job as a nanny" (Chapter 29, p. 117).

"I'm not letting you go until you say I can work for you" (Chapter 30, p. 123).

"I do want to make you proud, Maybe" (Chapter 31, p. 126).

"You're just living off of him" (Chapter 32, p. 131).

"Oh, Maybelline, I am so sorry. I believe you" (Chapter 33, p. 136).

"What is no makeup and no baggy clothes" (Chapter 34, p. 138).

"Just ask your mother who he is" (Chapter 35, p. 147).

"Where are all the Chessy photos" (Chapter 36, p. 158).

"I have finally figured out how to find Gunnar" (Chapter 37, p. 160).

"Maybe, if that doesn't do it, I don't know what will" (Chapter 38, p. 162).

"Chessy's joined Alcoholics Anonymous" (Chapter 39, p. 163).

"Maybe? There's something I need to tell you" (Chapter 40, p. 166).

"Maybe, you are so lucky to have friends like that" (Chapter 41, p. 172).

"Hollywood's going out with Jess" (Chapter 42, p. 175).

"Daniel didn't bring the camera on our date" (Chapter 43, p. 178).

"Maybe, I won! I won the student documentary contest" (Chapter 44, p. 183).

"Ahem, let's talk about Danny's screening, okay" (Chapter 45, p. 186).

"Yeah, I'm pretty lucky" (Chapter 46, p. 190).



"Your father called. He left a message on my cell phone" (Chapter 47, p. 194).

"You're my inspiration" (Chapter 48, p. 199).

"But you only saw the beginning" (Chapter 49, p. 206).

"It was a spur-of-the-moment inspiration" (Chapter 50, p. 207).

"You are an idiot. Watch the DVD. What is wrong with you" (Chapter 51, p. 211).

"Listen, kid. I'm married. My wife and children mean the world to me and I'd never want to hurt them. Stay away, okay? If the DNA test says you're mine, I'll do right by you" (Chapter 52, p. 220).

"My mother's an idiot and my father's an asshole—so where does that leave me" (Chapter 53, p. 221).

"That's what I'm going to find out" (Chapter 54, p. 224).

"Maybelline thinks I don't love her, but I do" (Chap. 55, p. 229).

"Gateway Travel Agency" (Chapter 56, p. 230).

"No, silly, I've missed you" (Chapter 57, p. 231).

"Then she'll have to prove it me" (Chapter 58, p. 236).

"When Uncle Benny does his taste test, he'll see how great you are" (Chapter 59, p. 238).

"Maybelline, consider yourself Mexican" (Chapter 60, p. 244).

"I'm sorry, Maybelline" (Chapter 61, p. 248).

"Well, I hope it's really short. I don't want to lose Sammy."
Chap. 62, p. 253).

"Stand up straighter, dear, you're slouching."
Chap. 63, p. 255).

"Are you sure you want to do this" (Chapter 64, p. 257).

"Um, did Chessy talk to you about her...plans" (Chapter 65, p. 258).

"Sammy told me he said no" (Chapter 66, p. 260).

"I want to be somebody" (Chapter 67, p. 271).

"All right. Here I come" (Chapter 68, p. 274).



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Maybe Chestnut? Why do you think she dyes her hair crazy colors, wears heavy eyeliner, purple lipstick, and baggy clothes? Do you think Maybe knows that her mother really loves her? What do you think happens to Maybe as she continues to live in California with Chessy?

Discuss the relationship between Maybe and her mother. Why do you think Maybe assumes her mother is disappointed in her? Why do you think Maybe sets out to find her biological father? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Maybe feel about Chessy? How does Chessy feel about Maybe? How do Maybe's feelings change after Chessy comes to California?

Discuss the relationship between Ted and Maybe. Are they best friends, like brother and sister, or something else? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Maybe feel about Ted? How does Ted feel about Maybe? How do Maybe's feelings change? What does she do about it? What happens to Ted?

Discuss the relationship between Maybe and Sammy. Are they friends, surrogate family members, or something else? Is there true competition in their relationship? Why do you think Sammy allows Maybe to live with him and Willow? Why does Sammy finally take Chessy's photos down?

Who is the true Chessy Chestnut? Why do you think she marries so many times? Do you think she makes it as Gloria de la Tour's personal assistant? Do you think Chessy and Maybe have a better relationship going forward?

Who is Hollywood? Is he a tortured filmmaker or just a budding film student? Why do you think he enjoys filming everything? What role does Hollywood play in helping Maybe change her life?

Discuss Maybe's search for her biological father. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?