

Breath of Scandal Study Guide

Breath of Scandal by Sandra Brown

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Plot Summary

“Breath of Scandal” by Sandra Brown is a work of fiction.

The story begins with the history of Jade Sperry, an eighteen year old high school senior living in the coastal town of Palmetto, South Carolina. Jade is a beautiful, popular, and intelligent girl with big dreams. She and her boyfriend, Gary Parker, want to break away from the small town. After making their way in the world, they plan on returning to bolster the economy and to rescue the townspeople from the clutches of the greedy and ruthless Patchett family. The Patchett family, headed by Ivan Patchett, owns the local soybean plant. The factory employs the majority of workers in Palmetto which allows Patchett to run their lives. Patchett also has his hand in the police department and wields a great deal of power.

Jade and Gary are both very devout Christians and well respected in the community. That is, until the night Jade is gang raped by three local boys, including Ivan Patchett’s son, Neal, and becomes pregnant. Jade leaves Palmetto, South Carolina under a “breath of scandal.” Jade, however, is not one to give up. Her new goal in life, particularly after Gary’s death, is to seek revenge on the boys who raped her.

Jade attends school at Dander College. After graduating, she joins a firm that builds textile plants. Jade becomes an executive in the company. For the first time, she wields enough power to put her plan into action.

Fifteen years after the rape, Jade returns to Palmetto with the news that she is going to build a new factory. The factory will ruin the Patchetts’ dynasty, which is what Jade wants more than anything. Along the way, Jade meets Dillon Burke and falls in love.

Jade faces many demons in the story including being raped, weathering her boyfriend’s suicide, finding out the truth about her father’s death, living in poverty, being abandoned by her mother, and being betrayed by her best friend.

Intertwined with Jade’s story is the story of Dillon Burke. Dillon’s parents died, and he was raised by his grandmother until her death. From that point on, Dillon lived in foster homes. It was then that Dillon began to get into trouble. Dillon managed to straighten his life out when he met a caring counselor at a “juvenile camp.”

The story starts with Dillon and his wife on their honeymoon. Dillon is the happiest and most successful he has ever been. During a trip to Switzerland, Dillon’s wife contracts a virus and then an allergic reaction, causing them to lose an unborn child. Dillon and Debra have a boy not long after. Debra and the baby die by asphyxiation while Dillon is on his way home from work.

For the next seven years Dillon is a nomad, traveling from job to job, taking no responsibilities and developing no ties.



Dillon's life changes when Jade Sperry sees him working at a construction site. Jade learns that Dillon's boss is shady and repugnant. Jade has him arrested. Jade learns that Dillon has been the real leader on the job and wants to hire him for a new project. Despite Dillon's rude behavior and marked disinterest, he ends up taking Jade's offer and moves to Palmetto.

Jade and Dillon clash on many levels; however, Dillon rekindles his passion for his work and soon dives into it – and a would-be relationship with Jade – whole heartedly.

Eventually, Jade and Dillon become lovers and work together to move forward on the textile plant. Jade insists on facing the Patchetts alone. In the end, she prevails.



Prologue, Chapters 1-5

Summary

Prologue

The story begins with Jade Sperry looking out her office window. Outside there are skyscrapers and the hustle and bustle of the New York City streets. New York is a far cry from Palmetto, South Carolina, where Jade grew up. It had been many years since Jade had been in Palmetto, but the time had come for Jade to return to her hometown. When Jade returned, she would finally get her revenge.

Chapter 1

The story begins in 1975 in Palmetto, South Carolina. Neal Patchett, Hutch Jolly, and Lamar Griffith are sitting at the Dairy Barn talking about Neal's experiences with prostitutes. The boys joke with each other. Neal teases Lamar for being a coward. The boys are bored. Having exhausted all other options for the night, they have ended up at the Dairy Barn hoping something interesting would happen.

Several people enter the Dairy barn after leaving the evening's church service. One of the girls is Donna Dee Monroe, an unattractive girl who has a mad crush on Hutch Jolly. Donna Dee stops by to talk to the boys. Donna Dee also happens to be the best friend of Jade Sperry, the prettiest and smartest girl in the senior class. The group looks outside and sees Jade with her boyfriend Gary Parker. Neal silently fumes as Jade and Gary kiss. Neal has a keen interest in Jade but does not voice it. When Lamar cracks a joke about Jade, Neal glares at him. The boys don't understand what Jade sees in Gary. He is smart, but he is dirt poor. This is something the boys can't comprehend. Donna Dee claims that Jade is in love with Gary and nothing else matters. Neal sulks over the fact that Jade will not give him the time of day.

"The best looking girl was supposed to belong to Neal Patchett, just like the best clothes and the best car." (Chap. 1, p. 10)

Donna Dee gets into Gary's car to talk to Jade, while Gary stands in line to get ice cream. Donna Dee and Jade talk about Jade's mother and how she does not understand her daughter's relationship. Velta Sperry wants her daughter to marry well to avoid a life of poverty. Velta would be thrilled if Jade would become involved with Neal Patchett. The thought sickens Jade. Jade has nothing but scorn and disdain for the arrogant, rich boy who thinks he owns the town simply because his daddy is rich.

Donna Dee talks about her feelings for Hutch and how she will just die if he does not ask her to the prom.

Neal, Hutch, and Lamar approach Gary in line. The meeting begins jokingly and then Neal, as always, crosses the line in taunting Gary. Neal also says crude and



inappropriate things about Jade. The boys end up in a fight with Gary getting the best of Neal by smashing a sundae into his face. Gary and Jade leave the Dairy Barn.

Chapter 2

Jade thinks about her love for Gary and how he is the first person she has actually dated on her own without chaperones. Jade and Gary have planned their life together which includes college and returning to Palmetto to change the face of their hometown which is filled with corruption.

Jade and Gary park the car and make out. Jade decides it is time to lose her virginity. After a while, Gary stops Jade and says they cannot take the chance of her getting pregnant. That would mean that they would be stuck in Palmetto and end up just like their parents. Gary is scared of losing Jade and jeopardizing their future.

Velta Sperry sits in her living room annoyed because Jade is out with Gary again. Velta thinks that Jade and Gary spend too much time together. Gary is the son of a dirt poor soybean farmer. He is not suitable for Jade. Velta would prefer that Jade marry Neal Patchett so that she could have a privileged life, not one like Velta's had been. Velta had pursued and married Ronald Sperry, a soldier who had won the Congressional Medal of Honor in Korea. Unfortunately, when Ronald returned home, there were no jobs for medal winners and the man, although very popular in town, had struggled with working and supporting his family. Ronald had died when Jade was ten years old. Up until his death, however, Ronald had doted on Jade and made her feel special.

Jade arrives home. Velta tells Jade that Neal has called. Jade has no intention of returning the call. Velta thinks not calling Neal back is rude. The two argue. Jade goes off to her room to study to keep her grade point average high with the hope of getting a scholarship.

Jade is at work when Donna Dee rushes in, flushed and excited. Donna Dee tells Jade that she and Gary have received their scholarships. Jade is dumbstruck. Jade's boss allows her to leave early to go and tell Gary the good news.

Jade and Donna Dee leave the town limits and head out to the Parker farm. Along the way Donna Dee's car stops. It is out of gas. Jade becomes angry at the oversight. The girls start to argue and then quickly make up. They decide to wait on the dark country road for someone to come along. Donna Dee finally sees a car approach and stands in the middle of the road to flag it down. The car nearly hits Donna Dee. Neal Patchett is the car's driver.

Donna Dee swears at Neal. Neal, Hutch, and Lamar laugh at Donna Dee's predicament. Neal finally offers to give the girls a ride back to town. Jade grudgingly accepts. Jade gets into Neal's sports car, jammed into the non-existent back seat beside Lamar. Before Donna Dee can get into the car, Neal orders Hutch to shut and lock the door. Hutch objects but does as Neal orders. Donna Dee screams at the boys. Jade says she will not leave Donna Dee alongside the road. Jade struggles to get out,



but Neal orders the other boys to hold her. Jade is held captive as Neal takes off into the night.

Neal drives to the fishing channel where the boys had spent the afternoon. Neal orders everyone out of the car. Jade thinks about escaping but there is nowhere to go. After finishing a beer, Neal tells Jade that they intend to rape her. Jade tries to run, but Neal catches her. One after another, the boys rape Jade and then leave her on the ground. She is bruised, humiliated, and covered in mud. Jade wants to die.

Chapter 3

Donna Dee is at home, feeling guilty because Jade hasn't returned from being out with the boys. Donna Dee is angry at Neal for leaving her at the side of the road, stranded. Luckily, a farming family passed by just a few minutes after Neal drove away. The family gave Donna Dee a lift into town.

Donna Dee thinks about the way Hutch behaved in the car.

"As usual, Hutch did Neal's bidding without a whimper of protest. It irked Donna Dee that Hutch cared so little for her that he would desert her on a lowly stretch of highway, prey to whatever kind of lowlife that might have come along." (Chap. 3, p. 41)

Velta goes to Mr. Jones' store to pick up Jade. Velta learns that Jade had left early with Donna Dee. Velta is, as usual, annoyed. Velta becomes even more annoyed when Donna Dee calls to ask if Jade is home. Donna Dee tells Velta that Jade had gone off with Neal and the others. Neal had probably taken Jade to Gary's house. Velta says she will call the Parkers.

Jade lay in the mud for a long time before finally crawling to the road. Jade sees headlights and hides in a roadside ditch, thinking Neal has returned. It is a truck driven by a black farmer. Jade manages to signal the man. The man takes Jade to the hospital and leaves her in the emergency room.

Jade is met by a nurse. Jade tells the nurse what happened. A doctor comes in to examine Jade. The examination feels as invasive as the rape. After Jade is examined, she showers before talking to a deputy. Jade tells her story and attempts to keep from becoming hysterical. Jade feels as if the deputy does not believe her.

Jade is taken to the police station where she must face Sheriff Jolly, Hutch's father. Ivan Patchett storms in and both men interrogate Jade. The interrogation goes on all night. Eventually, Velta is allowed to see Jade. Velta seems to be on Ivan's side as she begs Jade to let the matter drop.

Chapter 4

Ivan Patchett storms into Neal's room, bellowing at his son. Ivan demands to know if Neal had raped a girl the night before. As usual, Neal is defensive and arrogant. Neal tells his father that, yes, he had sex with Jade Sperry, but that she asked for it. She



might have said no when she clearly meant yes. Ivan is furious but quickly works on a plot to rescue his son from being arrested and charged with the crime.

The activity in the interrogation room is highly illegal and difficult for Jade. Jade is asked to repeat her story over and over again for any new person that enters the room, whether or not the person has a right to be there. Neal is also brought to the interview room. Neal, his usual arrogant self, claims he has carnal knowledge of Jade, but that it was consensual. Even when Neal pulls a pair of Jade's panties from his pocket, he claims that they were a gift. Jade is livid.

When Donna Dee comes into the room, she turns her back on Jade, angry that Jade would accuse Hutch of such a crime. Jade is broken.

Jade learns that the lab results and medical report from the hospital have been "lost." Jade says she wants to press charges anyway. As time wears on, Jade realizes that no matter what she does, her attackers will not be brought to justice.

"Nothing that was said in this room would ever be permissible evidence in a court of law-not even Neal's confession that he'd had carnal knowledge of her. He could change his story entirely and deny that he had been involved in the incident at all. From now on, it would be Jade's word against theirs." (Chap. 4, p. 71)

Regardless of everything she had been through, Jade insists that she will still press charges, even when she is warned by the Sheriff that it is not a good idea.

Chapter 5

Ivan Patchett waltzes into Fritz Jolly's office later that morning. Jolly is worried. Patchett tells him not to worry that the whole thing will blow over. Jolly isn't so sure. Patchett says he will do whatever it takes to make sure that the boys do not go to jail over the crime. Patchett, like his son, believes that it was all fun and games that got out of hand. Jolly does not agree.

"He pushed his face up very close to Fritz's. "My boy ain't going to do one frigging day in prison over a piece of tail. I don't care how bad Hutch's conscience hurts him, or how ethical you've convinced yourself you are, you bury this incident now, Fritz. Now." (Chap. 5, p. 80)

Fritz Jolly goes home and confronts Hutch, who is still in bed. Hutch starts to cry and says that he didn't mean to do it. Hutch is filled with remorse and fear. Fritz is furious that Hutch allowed Neal to talk him into it.

Jade finally says she will not file charges.



Analysis

The story begins with Jade Sperry planning to return to her hometown to seek revenge on those that wronged her. The reader is led to believe that something traumatic and life changing had happened in Palmetto. There is a build up of suspense, leaving the reader curious as to what had happened.

Jade returns to Palmetto and views the rural landscape. The author does a good job in describing the local landscape.

“The isolated communities there didn’t belong in the twentieth century. Poverty was rampant. Often there was no plumbing. Between the sea islands and the shore were tidal swamps that bred disease carrying insects to further torment a suppressed element of Southern society. Diseases caused by malnutrition and poor hygiene, which had been obliterated in most Western countries, could still be found there.” (Chap. 2, p. 32)

The people of Palmetto tend to be poor or struggling to keep their heads above water. The exception is the Patchett family who are wealthy and take every opportunity to show it and to lord their position above all others in the community. On top of that, the Patchetts are self-indulgent and self-righteous. They believe that they are above the law. Since Ivan Patchett has Sheriff Jolly in his pocket and seems to be able to do anything he pleases, the Patchetts seem untouchable. This behavior seems to be increased in young Neal Patchett who believes that everything he wants should be given to him. This includes the beautiful and wholesome Jade Sperry.

Jade is a girl with single minded focus. She is totally devoted to her school work, to her boyfriend Gary, and to God and the church. Jade and Gary have specific plans for the future, and those plans are what keeps the pair going. Jade is, by all definitions, a good girl despite her mother’s machinations to turn her into a society girl with only one goal – marriage. Jade and her mother argue about her mother’s dreams of Jade marrying Neal Patchett, a boy whom Jade despises.

Neal is temperamental and spoiled. In Neal’s mind, if he can’t have Jade, then no one can. Neal endlessly torments Gary and Jade, causing Gary to act out of character and smash a sundae into Neal’s face. Of course, this only makes Neal angrier and more determined.

Donna Dee, Jade’s best friend, is a complete doormat when it comes to anything involving Hutch Jolly. Hutch and Lamar are also doormats when it comes to Neal. The boys will do almost anything that Neal asks or demands – even rape.

Jade’s rape very nearly ruins her life. Jade is denied justice at every turn. While that would break most people, Jade has a strong sense of will. The fact that Jade’s own mother blames Jade for the rape only strengthens Jade’s resolve to get her own brand of justice.



Discussion Question 1

Why is it important for Jade to return to Palmetto and change the face of the economy?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Jade's relationship with her mother.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Neal jealous of Gary? Why does Neal believe that Jade should belong to him?

Vocabulary

Snarled, belched, noxious, poll, cabs, scurried, clutching, hazardous, lumbering, hoards, bustle, skimming, tidal, acclimated, characteristic, atone, gaze, coastal, marshes, low-country, moss.



Chapters 6-11

Summary

Chapter 6

Gary follows Donna Dee to her car in the school parking lot and questions her about Jade. Something strange is going on, and Gary is determined to get to the bottom of it in any way possible. Jade has been absent from school for a long period of time, and people are behaving strangely toward Gary. Gary confronts Donna Dee, knowing that she has answers.

Donna Dee becomes hostile and evasive when she is questioned by Gary. Gary loses his temper, an occurrence that is very rare. Gary demands to know what is going on with Jade. Donna Dee tells Gary that she and Jade are no longer friends. Gary is shocked. Donna Dee leaves the parking lot in a rush.

Gary goes to Jade's house. Jade answers the door, and Gary is happy to see her and happier to know that she is not physically ill. Jade seems to feel ill at ease with Gary. Gary questions Jade, and she tells him that she has been emotionally ill. Jade says that she has been under too much pressure and that she thinks perhaps they should see other people. Gary balks at the suggestion. Gary becomes angry and asks Jade if her problem has anything to do with Neal Patchett. Jade says her problem has nothing to do with Neal.

"The hell it doesn't," he sneered. 'He's been sucking up to me for more than a week. Ever since you got 'sick.' He's been acting like a man with a delicious secret that he's just dying to tell. Now I know what it is. He wanted to rub my nose in it. You went out with him, didn't you?" (Chap. 6, p. 102)

Jade continues to deny it, reminding Gary how much she despises Neal. Gary storms out of the house. Jade calls after Gary, but he never looks back.

Gary thinks about confronting Neal. Gary knows he could beat Neal in a fair fight; but, confronting Neal would let him know that he had provoked Gary. Gary refuses to stoop to Neal's level.

Gary goes home. He is confronted by his family's ramshackle home, the chores that loom ahead, and the passel of children that always seem to be demanding his attention. Gary snaps at the children when they approach. Gary is completely and utterly miserable. Gary does not know how he will survive without Jade.

"She made all the ugliness in his life bearable, because in her lay the promise that it wouldn't always be so. She was the nucleus of all his hopes." (Chap. 6, p. 104)



Gary's father, Otis Parker, enters the barn and speaks to Gary, reminding him to do his chores. Gary explodes in anger at his father. Otis asks Gary if there is trouble with Jade. Otis tells Gary that he understands why Gary is ashamed of the family. He wants something better for Gary. Otis does not apologize for his choice of career or the fact that he and Mrs. Parker have so many children as each was conceived in love. Otis shares his moonshine with Gary. Gary calms down. After Otis leaves, Gary tries to convince himself that Jade simply has a crush on Neal and that it will pass. Still, Gary believes in his heart that he will never be as good as Neal and will never be able to live up to what Jade deserves.

Chapter 7

Jade returns to school. For the first time in Jade's life, she is not popular. Jade is shunned at every turn because everyone believes she cheated on Gary with Neal Patchett. Jade also loses her job at Pete Jones' store.

Velta complains of the same ill treatment.

"Velta complained that she was getting the cold shoulder at work. 'I heard my coworkers whispering about you. Didn't I tell you that you'd be blamed for what happened? You should have had that colored man bring you straight home. It was a big mistake to go to the hospital. Once you did that, you sealed your fate and mine.'" (Chap. 7, p. 107)

One girl approaches Jade at her locker. The girl, Patrice Watley, is bleach blonde and wild. Patrice asks Jade if she is pregnant. Jade is stunned. Patrice says she knows the signs and if Jade does not want to keep the baby, she needs to act fast. Jade is in turmoil.

Jade thinks about the poor, black part of town where she will have to go if she is going to have an abortion. Jade was never allowed out of the car when her mother went there. People would stare at Jade, and she was made to be afraid. The thought of Jade going there, alone, was a miserable idea.

Jade thinks long and hard about the abortion. She knows that if she has the baby that Gary will never believe her story and think that she had cheated on him.

Jade decides to have the abortion and goes to see Georgie, a woman known for her arm chair medicine and the selling of moonshine. The abortion will cost \$50. Jade takes money she has saved from her job and makes the journey to the poorest part of town.

Jade is nervous when she meets Georgie. The women have a long conversation. Jade sits and sobs out the whole ugly story. Georgie says Neal has raped several girls, and she is not surprised. Jade leaves Georgie's house.

Jade makes the trip to the Parker farm. The family is thrilled to see Jade. Jade goes looking for Gary. Once inside the barn, Jade sees Gary's body hanging from the rafters. Gary has committed suicide.



Chapter 8

Atlanta, 1981

Dillon Burke waits patiently for his bride on their wedding night. The wedding had been perfect, and Dillon is deliriously happy. Dillon thinks about the first time he saw Debra at college and how their courtship had blossomed rapidly. Dillon also remembers telling Debra about his past and how he had been in trouble after his parents died. Dillon's grandmother had taken care of him until she died when he was fourteen. After that, Dillon became even angrier with the world, and he began to get into trouble until he ended up at a juvenile detention facility. A counselor at the facility sympathized with Dillon's misfortunes and gave him a piece of invaluable advice.

"He told me that I had been dealt a pretty shitty hand all right, but that how I played the cards was up to me. I could either continue getting into trouble until I ended up in prison for life, or I could turn things around and start making circumstances work in my favor." (Chap. 8, p. 126)

Dillon took the counselor's advice and changed his life for the better. Dillon graduated from college, found a good job, and met Debra.

As Debra lay sleeping, Dillon reminded himself that he could not mess this up as Debra had been the best thing that had ever happened to him.

Chapter 9

After Dillon and Debra return from their honeymoon, Dillon goes back to his job at Pilot Engineering Industries of Tallahassee. Forrest G. Pilot. Dillon's boss, summons him to his office. Pilot tells Dillon that an engineer with seniority has been given the job of overseeing the construction of a medical clinic. Dillon is outraged. Dillon tells Pilot that he is tired of sitting in a cubicle and that his talents aren't being utilized. Dillon believes the job should have been his and that he wants more opportunities.

Pilot surveys Dillon and says, "Unfortunately, having ambition and youth and talent isn't sufficient. To be really successful, one must also develop patience and self-discipline. What I should do is fire you on the spot for your insolence. But I'm not, chiefly because you're too valuable a talent to hand over to my Competitors. And secondly, because the job I have in mind requires somebody who has the guts to be abrasive when it's called for. So, I think that now is the time for you to take your foot out of your mouth and tell me whether you're interested in the project I have in mind for you." (Chap. 9, p. 135)

Pilot offers Dillon a job in Paris. Dillon tries to be cool about the offer. Debra has always wanted to go to Paris and now they had the opportunity to live there while a new construction project was being developed. Debra is thrilled about the opportunity. Dillon accepts the offer.

Both Debra and Dillon thrive in Paris. Dillon gets along well with the local workers because he is always hands on and not afraid to work. The only thorn in Dillon's side is



the accountant, Haskell Scanlan. Scanlan constantly doubts Dillon's authority and often refuses to purchase quality materials in order to save money. Dillon quickly develops hatred toward Scanlan. Dillon eventually goes over Scanlan's head which solves the materials problem but only worsens the relationship between the two men.

While in Paris, Debra becomes pregnant. Dillon decides to take a little vacation and the couple goes to Switzerland. Debra becomes ill on the trip and is taken to a doctor. She is given medication but has an allergic reaction and nearly dies. Debra survives, but the baby dies. Dillon feels as if his curse has returned.

Chapter 10

Morgantown, South Carolina, 1977

Jade sits in the office of Dr. Mitchell Hearon, Dean of Student Affairs and Financial Aid at Dander College. Hearon hands Jade a voucher that will cover her tuition, books, and fees. Hearon welcomes Jade to Dander College. Jade is beside herself with joy.

Jade leaves Hearon's office and is floating on cloud nine. For the first time since Jade had to sacrifice the scholarship she had earned in high school, she felt like there was hope for the future.

"It was as though she, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, had suddenly been thrust from a world of black and white into one of vivid Technicolor. She had been through pure hell, but had emerged on the other side to discover that life might be worth the struggle after all." (Chap. 10, p. 153)

On the way back to her motel, Jade thinks about her plan to get revenge on Neal, Hutch, and Lamar for the rape and for Gary's suicide. College was just the first step.

Jade enters the motel room and calls out to Velta. Jade sees a man named Harvey standing in the room. Jade and Velta had met Harvey when Jade was in the hospital giving birth to her son, Graham. Jade despised Harvey. Velta was not pleased when Jade had decided to keep the baby. Velta tried to convince Jade to return to Palmetto and to try to get one of the boys to claim baby Graham and to marry her.

Jade demands to know what Harvey is doing at the motel. Velta says she and Harvey are going to get married and go away. Velta is sick of Jade and the shame she brought onto the family. Velta turns away from Jade's pleas and drives away with Harvey, never looking back.

Jade begins to despair at yet another setback.

Chapter 11

Jade approaches the home of Mitch and Cathy Hearon. The Hearons are just finishing breakfast. Jade tells Mitch that she must refuse the scholarship. She introduces Graham to the couple and tells them what happened with Velta. Jade is heartbroken but



can find no way to make it on her own. Jade says she has exhausted all of her options. She cannot find suitable and affordable daycare nor can she find a job or a place to live. Cathy says she knows of a job opening. Mitch and Cathy tell Jade that they often open their home to students in need. The Hearons ask Jade if she and Graham would like to live there while she attends school. Jade is hesitant but accepts.

Analysis

Jade worries more about protecting Gary than protecting herself. By not moving forward with the criminal charges Jade saves herself the misery of attempting to make the boys pay for their crime; yet, Jade takes the brunt of disdain from the community and allows her virtue to be questioned. The entire community seems to have turned against Jade. Velta blames Jade for the rape and the aftermath. Velta is extremely self-centered and sees this latest incident as just one more thing Jade has done to ruin her elusive happiness. When Velta leaves Jade at the motel in Morgantown, Velta tells Jade that her father committed suicide. Velta blames Jade for that as well. Velta does not take responsibility for her own actions. At times, her behavior toward her only child is horrific.

It becomes known that Jade did not go through with the abortion. Although it would be difficult to raise a child on her own, particularly one born out of scandal, Jade's morality won over. She wishes nearly every day that she had told Gary. Jade is sure that she and Gary would have raised Graham together.

The Hearons immediately welcome Jade into their home, knowing that she will be a successful woman if only given half a chance. Jade refuses to allow pride to stand in her way and accepts the offer.

Dillon Burke has also known tragedy. First Dillon's parents die. Grandmother Burke takes him into her home and tries her best to raise him well. Dillon begins to come around, but then Grandma Burke dies when Dillon is only 14 years old. Dillon feels that he is cursed and that any time he loves someone, that person dies or else some other tragedy is simply waiting to occur. Dillon finally believes he has found happiness when he marries Debra. The pregnancy only enhances Dillon's joy. When the baby dies due to Debra's illness, Dillon feels that the curse has returned.

Discussion Question 1

What causes Donna Dee to turn her back on Jade during the police interview? How is Jade treated during the police interview?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jade refuse to talk to Gary?



Discussion Question 3

How is Jade treated once she returns to school? How does Jade handle the situation?

Vocabulary

Ambushed, suspicion, confirmed, ignition, expression, hostile, curtly, indecision, aggravation, liberty, even-tempered, by-product, amiss, askance, premonition, tampered, obnoxious, phony, darted, furtively.



Chapters 12-17

Summary

Chapter 12

Columbia, South Carolina, 1978

Hutch visits Neal and Lamar at their house. Hutch had not been permitted to live with the boys during his freshman year in college due to the football coach's strict rules. Now Hutch was married to Donna Dee. Neal teases Hutch about being henpecked. Hutch becomes annoyed with Neal but says little.

The history of Hutch and Donna Dee's romance is discussed from their first date through to their marriage. When Hutch announced to his father that he intended to get married, Fritz was concerned but eventually gave his blessing.

Lamar hates living with Neal. Lamar is afraid of Neal's temper as well as his silence. Lamar does not know how to tell Neal that he wants to move out. Lamar decides to put up with Neal for another school year. Lamar also thinks about how he and the others have gotten away with the crime against Jade. Lamar knows transgressions are usually punished. Lamar also admits to himself that he is gay.

Chapter 13

Morgantown, South Carolina, 1977-81

Jade meets Hank Arnett, a fellow student at Dander College. Hank is an attractive man with reddish-brown hair and an easy manner. Hank asks Jade out on dates, but Jade always has to work. Sometimes, she manufactures another excuse. Hank is not easily deterred.

"One of his virtues was tenacity. Possessing a good sense of humor, he found the foibles of life more amusing than irritating. During the course of her freshman year at Dander College, Jade would discover that." (Chap. 13, p. 182)

Jade works for Miss Dorothy Davis, a difficult elderly woman that owns a local shop. Jade wins Davis over. Eventually, the pair have a good rapport. While Jade works, she thinks about her plan to get revenge on those who wronged her. If Jade was going to succeed, it would have to be on an economic front. The Patchetts understood and revered money. Neal and Ivan Patchett were Jade's main targets. However, if their empire fell, Hutch, Donna Dee, and Lamar would also suffer the consequences.

Jade manages to keep up with the Palmetto news by subscribing to the local newspaper. Mitch had told Jade that he had distant relatives in Palmetto but never revealed their identities. During Jade's tenure at the Hearons' house, Mitch and Cathy



became the parents Jade never had. They were loving and doting on her and Graham. Jade could not have been happier.

Through the next couple of years Hank continued to try to win Jade's heart. Hank confesses to being in love with Jade and will not give up without a fight. Hank never presses Jade for information on why she is so afraid of intimacy but suggests that talking to a counselor might help. Cathy and Mitch also wonder why Jade will not give in to Hank's charms but are careful to respect Jade's privacy.

"It would have been a tremendous relief to unburden herself and tell them the whole truth. But she didn't want anyone to know about the rape. She'd learned that assault victims were victims for life. Even if they were entirely innocent, as she was, they were forever regarded with curiosity and suspicion, as though they had been branded. She lived in fear of the Hearons finding out about her. They probably would consider her the sinned against rather than the sinner, but she was unwilling to take the chance." (Chap. 13, p. 193)

One day Jade comes home to find Graham alone. Jade asks where Mitch is and Graham says he is sleeping. Jade finds Mitch in his favorite chair, dead from a heart attack. Jade takes over and helps Cathy through the difficulties of dealing with the funeral and those who stop by to pay their condolences. Jade answers the door to more company only to find one of her rapists on the other side.

Chapter 14

Myrajane Cowan Griffith and Lamar stand on the porch looking at Jade. Myrajane has nothing but disdain for Jade. Lamar looks as if he is going to be sick. Myrajane demands to know why Jade is at Mitch's house. Mitch was Myrajane's second cousin. Jade calmly says that she lives there. Jade stares at Lamar. It has been four years since the rape.

"The impact should have been dulled in four years. But when she came face to face with Lamar, rage had bubbled within her so hotly that she had wanted to claw at his face and pummel his body. She had wanted to hurt him as badly as she had been hurt." (Chap. 14, p. 198)

Hank tends to the guests while Jade goes upstairs to inform Cathy of their arrival. Jade warns Cathy that Myrajane may tell her about the scandal in Palmetto. Still, Cathy does not pry. Jade also tells Cathy that she does not want Myrajane to know about Graham.

Cathy relies heavily on Jade throughout the funeral. Myrajane attempts to tell Cathy about the scandal, but Cathy cuts her short. Mitch had hated Myrajane, and Cathy feels very protective of Jade. So, there is little need for nicety or tact.

On the night of the funeral, Jade finally tells Cathy about the rape. Unlike Velta and the others, Cathy believes the tale and cries for Jade's pain and the loss of her youth.



Lamar returns to the house alone to speak to Jade. Lamar apologizes for his role in the rape. Jade is unforgiving. Lamar admits he is gay, but Jade gives no reaction. Jade is not willing to accept any apology for her life being ruined or the death of Gary.

Jade graduates from college. She accepts a job in Charlotte. Jade is excited about the new opportunity but dreads breaking the news to Miss Dorothy and Cathy. Miss Dorothy has become very fond of Jade and gives her a check for \$5000 as a going away gift. When Jade breaks the news to Cathy, she is surprised at the reaction. Jade had expected Cathy to collapse in a fit of tears. Instead, Cathy lit up with excitement and asked when they would leave. Jade is thrilled.

Chapter 15

Tallahassee, Florida, 1983

Dillon, Debra, and their six month old son Charlie were flying back to the U.S. The little family was happy to be going home. While Debra sleeps, Dillon thinks about the awful days since they lost their first child and how Debra's only goal was to get pregnant again as soon as possible. The old thoughts reared up in Dillon's head, and he was terrified that something bad would happen again.

Upon arriving at work, Dillon learns that his boss and mentor, Forrest Pilot, had retired. Actually, his company had fallen victim to a hostile takeover, and Pilot was forced out. Scanlan, Dillon's nemesis, sat smug in the chair while telling the tale. Dillon wanted to strangle him. Scanlan offers Dillon a job in a cubicle. The men argue. Scanlan finally gives Dillon the option of working at a new site in Mississippi. Dillon accepts.

Dillon does not want to move the family again so soon. Dillon decides to work in Mississippi and come home on the weekends. It is a temporary plan. Dillon goes to work in Mississippi and, as promised, visits his family on weekends. It is up to Debra to run the household.

Dillon decides to surprise Debra one weekend by coming home early. Dillon finds Debra and baby Charlie dead in their bed. They had fallen victim to a faulty furnace. Dillon, destroyed, walks away from his former family and life as he knew it.

Chapter 16

Palmetto, South Carolina, 1987

Neal, Hutch, and Donna Dee get together. They discuss the recent demise of Lamar. Lamar had died of AIDS. Neal is having a field day condemning Lamar. Donna Dee tries to defend Lamar saying that a friend is a friend. She thinks that Neal's ridicule is in bad taste. Neal dismisses Donna Dee.

Donna Dee is unhappy with her life. She and Hutch have been married for ten years and have not conceived a child. After Hutch got out of the military, the couple moved



back to Palmetto. Hutch had gone to work at the soybean plant. Fritz Jolly had been injured in a fire and had eventually died.

Ivan Patchett decides that it is time for Neal to marry. Neal argues against the plan but loses in the end. Ivan insists that Neal needs to be married with children to appear as an upstanding man in the community. Ivan insists that none of Neal's ways need to change. Neal finally gives in and chooses a bride. However, on the way to the rehearsal dinner, Ivan and Neal are in a terrible accident. The wedding never takes place.

Ivan proposes to Neal that Hutch join the sheriff's department. Within eighteen months Ivan will ensure that Hutch will become sheriff, following in his father's footsteps. It is vital for Ivan to have the town's sheriff on his side.

Chapter 17

Los Angeles, 1991

Jade telephones Graham in New York. Jade is on an assignment to find a construction foreman for her project in Palmetto. Graham complains about moving from the city to a place he refers to as "hicksville," but Jade reminds him that he has no choice. Jade is certain that Graham will grow to like Palmetto.

The history of Jade's rise to the top at GSS is discussed from the day she met her would-be boss, cantankerous George Stein, to the day she left for Los Angeles to find a contractor capable of building a new textile plant in Palmetto.

Before visiting the site, Jade watched it through binoculars. She spotted a man who seemed to be in charge and was impressed by his demeanor. He was also attractive.

Jade wanted to launch a surprise attack on the man that had been recommended to her. Jade wanted to see how his operation ran on a day to day basis and not only what the man wanted her to see. It turned out to be a wise decision.

Jade is immediately unimpressed with Matthias. Jade's first impression is not good.

"The more he boasted, the less impressed Jade became, As badly as she wanted to commence work on the project, she faced the dismal fact that this trip had been pointless and she was still without a general contractor." (Chap. 17, p. 255)

Matthias was quick to rush Jade through the interview process. Matthias made a big mistake by making a pass at Jade, forfeiting any chance he might have had at the job.

Upon returning to the construction site office, Jade and Matthias see a police car. Two of the workers had gotten into a fight. One of the men was the one Jade had been watching.



Analysis

This section moves the story forward quickly. The trio of Neal, Hutch, and Lamar has begun to unwind as Hutch has moved on and gotten married. Lamar is tired of Neal's antics and is ready to move on with his life, too.

Graham is now fourteen years old. He does not know who his father is and Jade intends to keep it that way. Graham has grown up quickly by being the man of the house and moving around the country with his mother and Cathy. Graham adapts well to almost any situation.

Hank is still in Jade's life, but this time he is only a good friend. Hank confides in Jade and announces that he may get married. Jade wishes him the best and means it.

Dillon has spent seven years doing nothing but menial labor and has made no ties. Dillon does not want to get close to anyone, fearing the curse. Being free spirited suits Dillon at this time, although deep inside he longs for more.

Jade has risen to a position of power within GSS' corporate structure. This surprises many as women were not often made vice presidents and few could work well with the company's remaining founder, George Stein. Jade sees her opportunity to make her move to Palmetto and seizes the chance.

Jade is not about to let anything stand in her way, even the rude and crude Dillon Burke. Jade trusts her gut, and her gut tells her that Dillon is the man for the job. Dillon wants nothing to do with Jade at first, but he surprises her when he shows up in New York to accept the job.

The death of Lamar is a surprise to many. Myrajane refuses to believe that her only son was gay and insists on telling everyone he died of pneumonia. Neal, in his usual fashion, mocks Lamar.

Ivan's plans for Neal go awry when the pair is struck down by a train. The loss of Ivan's legs represent a loss of power and show that he is no longer the man – the force of nature – that he used to be. Neal is inept at taking over his father's legacy and the fact that he is sterile means that the Patchett legacy will die out. This is symbolic as Jade plans to destroy the Patchett legacy as well.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Lamar afraid of Neal? What might Neal do to Lamar if Lamar chooses to leave or admits to his friend that he is gay?



Discussion Question 2

What is Jade's reaction when she sees Lamar at the Hearons' house? What does Lamar say to Jade? What is Jade's response?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the relationship between Jade and Hank.

Vocabulary

Banged, belched, emerged, paisley, draped, racquet, trashed, roomy, atmosphere, ruefully, declined, tentative, grumbled, obligated, bland, devoted, brassiere, citywide, stickler, lust, amorous, skepticism.



Chapters 18-24

Summary

Chapter 18

Matthias is not surprised at the identity of the troublemaker. Apparently, the man had begun to complain about the shoddy work and low quality materials being used in the building. The foreman told him it was none of his business and to get back to work. A fight ensued, and police were called. The man was placed in a police car and taken away.

Jade enters Matthias' office and asks the secretary for information on the man. She learns that his name was Dillon Burke. The company had almost no information on Burke. Jade decides she needs to speak to the man.

Jade goes to the jail and bails out Burke. Burke is sullen, extremely rude, and hostile. Jade asks if he will accompany her to dinner because she has a proposition for him. Burke immediately misunderstands. As much as Burke tries to intimidate and scare Jade off, the plan does not work.

Jade refuses to discuss business until after dinner is over. Jade tells Burke that Matthias was using sub-standard materials, skimming off the top, and bribing a local official to get away with it. Burke is angry. He does not care about money but about placing lives in danger.

Jade also tells Burke that Matthias' secretary had a lot to say about him and the way the business operates.

“She said you seemed to be an expert on everything, from reading blueprints to ironwork to installing electrical conduit. She said Matthias resented you for quarreling with him over inferior materials, but that he didn't dare fire you because you had made yourself indispensable. Is this true?”

Burke mumbles about being previously qualified but he had done nothing but menial labor for seven years.

Jade makes her pitch to Burke regarding the plant in Palmetto. Burke flatly refuses the offer. Jade attempts to sweeten the pot by offering a signing bonus. She leaves Burke with a prospectus and ends the evening.

Weeks later, Dillon shows up in New York and accepts the job.

Chapter 19



Jade was pleased that Dillon had accepted her offer. After meeting him, Jade had delved into his background and had learned nearly everything there is to know about the man. Jade's instincts had been right. In her mind, Dillon Burke was a man who had suffered multiple tragedies and as such his talents had been wasted. Jade also knew about the takeover of Pilot Industries and Dillon's feud with Scanlan.

The process to begin building in Palmetto begins. Jade will finally be able to get her revenge.

Chapter 20

Jade is in the civic auditorium in Palmetto waiting to give her speech. The room is crowded. Dillon had been in town securing permits and preparing to work yet managed to keep a low profile. Gossip is rampant.

Jade thinks about Graham and Cathy and hopes they like Palmetto. Cathy will certainly love living in the country once more. Graham is not thrilled, but Jade believes he will enjoy growing up in her hometown. Jade also thinks about Graham's curiosity about his father. Graham had asked many times about his father's identity.

"Telling Graham the truth wasn't an option she considered. If he knew that he was the result of a rape, he would likely blame himself for living. She refused to lay that kind of guilt on her child, recalling the cruel responsibility Velta had placed on her the last time she'd seen her." (Chap. 20, p. 285)

While waiting for the crowd to settle in for her announcement, Jade spots Donna Dee in the audience. The years have not been kind to Donna Dee. Jade has some regret that she cannot remember all of the fun times they'd had, only the betrayal.

Jade gives her speech to the crowd at the civic auditorium, explaining the building of the plant and how it would benefit Palmetto. Jade remained cool and stuck to the facts. Jade introduces Dillon to the crowd and he explains the details of the building process including the fact that he intends to hire only regional workers. As Jade takes questions from the floor, Ivan Patchett rolls into the room in his wheelchair and asks Jade how she has the nerve to show her face in Palmetto.

Chapter 21

The mayor steps in and ends the session, not wanting to offend Jade or Patchett. The crowd begins to disperse but some stay behind, knowing that there will be fireworks between Jade and Patchett.

"Jade would have chosen another time and place for her first encounter with the Patchetts, but Ivan was forcing her hand, and she wasn't about to back down. She stepped off the platform and confronted him." (Chap. 21, p. 288)

Jade sees Neal for the first time. He is still as smug as ever. Neal stands back to watch the exchange between Jade and his father. Ivan rages at Jade and says she does not



belong in Palmetto. Ivan says the train might have taken his legs but not his brain. Ivan tells Jade that he is still a powerful man and she does not know what she is up against.

“‘I’ll grant that at one time you were fearsome, Mr. Patchett.’ Her eyes roved over him unemotionally. “‘Now, you’re merely pathetic.’” (Chap. 21, p. 300)

Jade leaves the auditorium, closely followed by Dillon. Dillon questions Jade about Patchett. Jade refuses to comment on the feud with Patchett which makes Dillon angry.

Back at the construction site Dillon is faced with a visitor – a scruffy stray dog. Despite Dillon’s attempts to get rid of the dog, it stays. Dillon finally names it Loner but refuses to dote on it in any way, still believing in his curse.

Dillon begins to have romantic thoughts about Jade even though he brushes them away. The relationship would not be appropriate. When Dillon does make a pass at Jade he is quickly rebuffed.

Jade takes Dillon out to the Parker farm. She measures various areas and surveys the land with interest.

At the Patchett house, Ivan is raging about Jade’s plans. He tells Neal to watch Jade and to find out what she does. Neal tells Ivan that she has been to the Parker farm twice. Ivan expresses concern over Jade’s actions. Neal brushes it off.

“‘She blew into town and made a big splash, but beneath her corporate image, Jade’s just a woman. They can cry equality all they want to. But when it comes right down to it, all they’re really good for is what’s between their legs.’” (Chap. 21, p. 302)

Ivan tells Neal not to underestimate Jade.

Chapter 22

Graham and Jade talk about Dillon. Ever since Graham had visited the construction site he had become fascinated with the process. Graham had already liked Dillon when they were in New York and now it seemed that Dillon had become something of a reluctant role model to Graham. Dillon is not easy on Graham and yells at him when he gets into dangerous areas at the site. Still, Graham likes him.

Graham asks if he can ride his bike to the site. Jade says no because it is several miles away. Graham seems to be determined and will not give up easily.

Jade visits the Parkers and receives a chilly welcome. They haven’t forgiven her for Gary’s death. Jade asks the Parkers if they are willing to sell the farm. Otis flat out refuses but Jade seems determined.

Jade is impressed with Dillon’s devotion to the job.



Cathy asks Jade why she wanted to return to Palmetto. Cathy has figured out Jade's plot for revenge. Jade does not want to talk about it or the fact that she may have feelings for Dillon.

One day at the site Jade gets a surprise visitor. It is Donna Dee. Donna Dee tells Jade that Hutch is dying. The only chance he has is if he receives a transplant. Jade is stunned. Donna Dee says she has learned about Graham and if he is Hutch's son, getting a transplant from him would be Hutch's best bet at survival. The women argue about the rape and the fact that Donna Dee had turned her back on her best friend. Donna Dee says it was Neal that told Gary about the abortion, not Hutch. Jade tells Donna Dee to get out.

Dillon is driving home after being away on company business. He almost hits Loner who has sprinted out onto the road to greet his reluctant master. Dillon had thought about not returning to Palmetto but then realized that dropping out of society again would serve no purpose.

Dillon finds Jade asleep at her desk. He wakes her and is surprised at the violent reaction. Jade finally calms down from being startled awake. Dillon kisses Jade passionately, and the two begin to become intimate until Jade stops it.

Chapter 23

Jade returns to the Parker farm. Stein had been pressuring Jade to find an annex to the plant that could house executives and serve as a meeting place for company functions. Once again, Jade makes an offer to Otis on the farm. Otis refuses. Jade says she will not give up. Once again, Jade asks Otis not to tell anyone about their conversation. On her way out, Mrs. Parker asks Jade if Graham could belong to Gary. Jade says no but that she wishes he was Gary's son.

Jade is leaving the Parker farm when she is waylaid by Neal. Jade tells Neal that if he wants to see her then he should make an appointment. Neal points out that he has called and left messages but received no reply. Neal tells Jade that she should be careful about her bitterness that it will make her old before her time. Neal says he is offering a peace pipe, hoping that Jade can forget about their little misunderstanding.

"To reduce her rape and Gary's suicide to a little misunderstanding was grotesque. It took every ounce of willpower she possessed not to claw the complacent smile off his face." (Chap. 23, p. 336)

Neal says he thinks he is Graham's father. As a Patchett, he will take what is his – including Graham. Jade takes off leaving Neal on the side of the road and returns to the site.

Dillon steps into Jade's office. She is very upset. Dillon thinks it is because of what took place between them the night before. Jade assures him it is something else.

Neal and Ivan strike up a plan to foil Jade's attempts at buying the Parker farm.



Otis Parker calls Jade to say he wants to think about selling the farm. Jade offers him \$750,000 but will not tell Parker why she wants to buy the land. Ivan and Neal are in the room with Parker when Jade makes the offer. Neal intends to counter offer even if it means liquidating assets and taking out a mortgage. Ivan agrees.

Chapter 24

Dillon is invited to dinner at Jade's house. Graham and Dillon play chess after dinner. Graham wonders if he is going to be good enough to play professional soccer. Dillon encourages Graham.

Donna Dee comes to the house to beg Jade to reconsider. Donna Dee tells Dillon that Hutch is Graham's father. Jade is furious. After Donna Dee rants and raves to no avail, she leaves Dillon and Jade on the porch. Jade refuses to answer any of Dillon's questions.

Jade goes to visit Hutch in the hospital. Hutch is shocked to see Jade at his bedside. Hutch apologizes for that night and believes that God is dishing out punishment to those involved in the crime. Hutch also tells Jade that he does not want Graham to donate a kidney, the plan had been Donna Dee's idea.

Donna Dee enters the room and tells Hutch there is a kidney donor.

Jade takes Dillon to the abandoned Cowan mansion. Jade intends to buy the place, restore it, and use it as a country retreat for GSS. Dillon thinks she is crazy, but Jade has a vision.

Dillon begins to kiss Jade but she pulls away. Jade still refuses to answer Dillon's questions about Graham and about her fears.

Analysis

Jade is not about to let anything stand in her way, even the rude and crude Dillon Burke. Jade trusts her gut and her gut tells her that Dillon is the man for the job. Dillon wants nothing to do with Jade at first but surprises her when he shows up in New York to accept the job. Jade quickly learns that despite Dillon's past, he is the right man for the job. Dillon becomes invested in the job particularly after relocating to Palmetto. Jade admires his dedication and skill. Jade also admires other things about Dillon but is determined to keep theirs a work relationship.

Graham settles in to living in Palmetto and enjoys being at the site. Graham also enjoys Dillon's company, sometimes to Jade's chagrin.

The arrival of Donna Dee is like a glass of ice water in Jade's face. Donna Dee is arrogant and rude, insulting Jade when she does not get the answer she wants regarding the kidney transplant. Donna Dee seems to be willing to do anything to save



Hutch's life even if Hutch is against it. The arrival of the donor may save Hutch's life and prevent Graham from finding out about the rape for a while longer.

Jade's attempts to buy the Parker farm are clearly a ruse. The land is useless and Jade knows it. Neal falls for the ploy and is so blinded by revenge that he cannot see the plan in motion.

Dillon and Jade become closer and Jade begins to consider becoming intimate with Dillon; however, Jade must not lose focus from the purpose at hand.

Ivan's ego also gets the better of him, and he wants Jade out of his life.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the scene between Jade and Ivan Patchett when they first meet at the Palmetto civic auditorium.

Discussion Question 2

How does Jade feel about Dillon? Do you think Jade and Dillon will be able to keep their work relationship separate from a blossoming romance?

Discussion Question 3

What might happen if Graham finds out about the rape? How might the relationship between mother and son change?

Vocabulary

Flustered, intervened, offended, explosive, situation, catastrophe, abrupt, din, adjourned, disperse, customary, encounter, enterprise, operative, immune, surged, obscuring, smug, severed, pelvis, contusions, nebulous.



Chapters 25-30

Summary

Chapter 25

Graham is riding his bike out to the construction site when he gets a flat tire. Graham is cursing over his bad luck when Neal pulls up in his El Dorado. Neal offers to take Graham to the garage to have the tire fixed. After a few minutes of conversation, Graham is convinced that it would be okay to go with the stranger. While Graham and Neal wait for the bike to be repaired, Neal woos Graham with grown up talk and a chocolate soda.

Jade calls Hank and asks him about the drawings of the Cowan mansion. She knows George will be convinced to buy the property after he sees Hank's drawings.

Jade arrives at the site. Dillon asks Jade if she wants to have dinner. Jade and Dillon argue about it. Jade realizes that Graham is not at the site and goes into a panic. It is not long before Neal pulls up with Graham in the passenger seat. Jade is furious. Neal is his usual arrogant self. Neal tells Dillon that he is Graham's father.

Dillon tells Jade he is not leaving until he gets some answers.

Chapter 26

Dillon confronts Jade in her office. Dillon demands to know why two men are claiming to be Graham's father. Jade says both men have a lot to gain if Graham would be either man's son. Dillon does not accept the answer. Dillon presses harder until Jade admits that she was raped.

"He had expected to hear the confessions of a reformed wayward teenage girl, or of a shy introvert who had sought attention by being easy, or of a rebel out to torment strict parents. He hadn't expected rape." Chap. 26, p. 384

Jade and Dillon sit down on the sofa in Jade's office. Jade recounts the entire ordeal to Dillon. Dillon attempts to comfort Jade.

That night, Graham and Jade talk. Graham does not understand why Jade got so upset when she saw him with Neal. Jade simply says that Neal is dangerous. Graham also brings up the issue of his father and how he does not want to be a part of a "special family." Jade says she is doing the best she can. Jade considers taking Cathy's advice about telling Graham about the rape but does not tell the story.

Chapter 27



Neal and Ivan arrive at Jade's office. Neal and Ivan smugly inform Jade that they have purchased the Parker farm from under her nose. Now Jade understands why Otis had not been returning her calls. Jade reviews the deed and congratulates the men. Neal says Jade will have to deal with him from now on if her company wants the land. Jade reveals her plan – she had never wanted the farm. Neal and Ivan are furious. Neal strikes Jade. Dillon intervenes and throws Neal against the wall. Ivan and Neal storm out of the office. Jade has won.

Ivan and Neal fume over the subterfuge and plan to find a way to get revenge.

That night Jade's little family gathers at Jade's house. After dinner Jade and Dillon sit on the porch and talk. Jade says she is ready to make love to Dillon. Dillon tells Jade he has a surprise for her and leads her to his truck.

Chapter 28

Dillon drives to the old Cowan mansion. Jade is confused by the turn of events but Dillon tells her to be patient as they go inside. Dillon has cleaned and decorated one of the bedrooms and has turned it into a romantic paradise. Dillon and Jade make love for the first time.

Chapter 29

Donna Dee and Hutch are in Hutch's hospital room. Hutch's body has rejected the kidney and the doctors say there is nothing more they can do. Hutch is going to die. Hutch finally confesses to Donna Dee that he and the others raped Jade. Donna Dee tries to hang on to her denial but Hutch tells her the truth. Hutch believes he is finally paying for his sin.

Dillon and Jade wake at the Cowan mansion. On the way home Dillon jokes that Cathy and Graham will probably meet him at the door with shotguns. However, when they arrive, Graham is nowhere to be found. Jade immediately panics.

Dillon and Jade split up and go looking for Graham. Jade is certain that something bad has happened. After searching all of the usual places, Jade returns. Cathy tells Jade there is a call for her – it is Neal Patchett.

Chapter 30

Jade is terrified and furious. Jade and Dillon rush to the Patchett house to get Graham. Once inside the house, Jade sees Ivan, Neal, and Myrajane Cowan Griffith. Jade learns that Hutch is dead. Graham screams at Jade saying she let his father die. Graham is inconsolable. He tells Dillon that he had intended to give his blessing to their relationship but now Dillon won't want her because she is a slut. Graham has been told that any one of three men could be his father.

""That's what makes you a whore." He pointed to Ivan and Neal. "They told me my dad could have been three men. They told me that you did it with all of them. Two of them



are dead now, and I never even got to know them on account of you. This old lady could be my grandma, only you don't even want me to know her, either." (Chap. 30, p. 446)

Jade finally tells Graham the truth. Graham immediately apologizes to Jade for the things he said. Jade is ready to leave the ugly scene behind but Ivan and Neal have one more trick up their sleeves. Ivan and Neal plan to force Graham to take a paternity test to find out the identity of his true father. Jade sends Dillon and Graham outside so that she can deal with the issue alone.

Jade confronts the trio and says she will not tolerate their threats. Jade pulls a videotape out of her purse and puts it on the table. It is a deathbed confession from Lamar detailing the events of the day Jade was raped. Jade says if any of them ever bother her again, Neal will go to prison for rape. Jade will never permit a paternity test. Jade storms out, leaving the trio speechless.

Jade has one last order of business. She takes Dillon to the channel where she was raped. She says she wants only good memories of that place and makes love to Dillon in the grass.

Analysis

Jade proves that revenge is a dish best served cold. She had fifteen years to plot her revenge against those that wronged her. While Ivan and Neal are still forces to be reckoned with, they sorely underestimated Jade's intelligence and desire to get even for the rape, her lost youth, and perhaps most of all, Gary's death.

The author brings the story to a quick close. Jade realizes that the Patchetts no longer have a hold over the town or her. Jade has moved on with her life and plans to begin a new one with Dillon.

Discussion Question 1

What finally causes Jade to confess to Dillon that she had been raped?

Discussion Question 2

What was Lamar's final decree to Jade? How did Lamar's confession help Jade to defeat the Patchetts?

Discussion Question 3

What was Jade's plan in pretending to acquire the Parker farm? How did the family benefit?

Vocabulary

Unannounced, alerted, deposited, stiffly, cocky, inquiries, pleasantries, midriff, fondled, arced, intimidation, facade, indifference, deformity, hammering, impassive, deed, bore, coy.



Characters

Jade Sperry

At the beginning of the story, Jade Sperry is an eighteen year old high school senior. Jade is a beautiful, popular, and intelligent girl with big dreams. She and her boyfriend, Gary Parker, want to break away from the small town. After making their way in the world, they plan on returning to bolster the economy and to rescue the townspeople from the clutches of the greedy and ruthless Patchett family.

Jade and Gary are both very devout Christians and well respected in the community. That is, until the night Jade is gang raped by three local boys and becomes pregnant. Jade leaves Palmetto, South Carolina under a “breath of scandal.” Jade, however, is not one to give up. Her new goal in life, particularly after Gary’s death, is to seek revenge on the boys that raped her.

Jade finds her way while attending school at Dander College. After graduation, Jade joins a firm that builds textile plants. Jade becomes an executive within the company and for the first time, wields enough power to put her plan into action.

Fifteen years after the rape, Jade returns to Palmetto with the news that she is going to build a new factory. The factory will ruin the Patchetts’ dynasty, which is what Jade wants more than anything. Along the way, Jade meets Dillon Burke and falls in love.

Jade faces many demons in the story including being raped, weathering her boyfriend’s suicide, finding out the truth about her father’s death, living in poverty, being abandoned by her mother, and being betrayed by her best friend. Jade prevails in the end.

Dillon Burke

Dillon Burke is one of the main characters in “Breath of Scandal.” After Dillon’s parents died, he was raised by his grandmother until she also died. From that point on, Dillon lived in foster homes. It was then that Dillon began to get into trouble. Dillon managed to straighten his life out when he met a caring counselor at a “juvenile camp.”

The story starts with Dillon and his wife on their honeymoon. Dillon is the happiest and most successful he has ever been. During a trip to Switzerland, Dillon’s wife contracts a virus and then an allergic reaction, causing them to lose an unborn child. Dillon and Debra have a boy not long after. Debra and the baby die by asphyxiation while Dillon is on his way home from work.

For the next seven years Dillon is a nomad, traveling from job to job, taking no responsibilities and developing no ties.



Dillon's life changes when Jade Sperry sees him working at a construction site. Jade learns that Dillon's boss is shady and repugnant. Jade has him arrested. Jade learns that Dillon has been the real leader on the job and wants to hire him for a new project. Despite Dillon's rude behavior and marked disinterest, he ends up taking Jade's offer and moves to Palmetto. Through hard work and a rekindling of his passion for work, Dillon rediscovers himself and falls in love with Jade.

Neal Patchett

Neal Patchett is one of the main characters in the story. Neal is the charming, ruthless and spoiled only son of Ivan Patchett. As the son of the powerful and feared Ivan, Neal has a sense of entitlement and never seems to get into any trouble Daddy can't fix. Neal is the instigator behind Jade's gang rape.

Gary Parker

Gary Parker is Jade's first love. Like Jade, Gary is a straight A student and devout Christian. Gary commits suicide after hearing a rumor that Jade has been unfaithful with Neal Patchett.

Hutch Jolly

Hutch Jolly is the son of the local sheriff. Although Hutch is a popular football player, he gives in to Neal's whims. Hutch is also involved in the gang rape.

Lamar Griffith

Lamar Griffith is the last heir of the Cowan family, a once-powerful force in Palmetto. Although much meeker than the other boys, Lamar goes along with the gang rape.

Donna Dee Monroe

Donna Dee Monroe is Jade's best friend. Donna Dee turns her back on Jade after Jade is raped by the love of Donna Dee's life, Hutch Jolly.

Ivan Patchett

Ivan Patchett is the most powerful man in Palmetto. Patchett owns the soybean factory which makes up the whole of Palmetto's economy. As such, Patchett feels he can dominate everyone and everything in town.



Mitch Hearon

Mitch Hearon is the dean of Dander College. Hearon and his wife take Jade in when they learn that she is destitute. Jade lives with the Hearons until graduation.

Cathy Hearon

Cathy Hearon is the wife of Mitch Hearon. Cathy and Jade form a lasting bond that exists even after the death of Mitch and Jade's graduation. Cathy becomes the mother Jade never had.

Graham Sperry

Graham Sperry is the son of Jade Sperry. Graham was conceived during the gang rape.



Symbols and Symbolism

Palmetto, South Carolina

Palmetto, South Carolina is the main setting for “Breath of Scandal” by Sandra Brown. Palmetto is located on the coastal highway of South Carolina, not far from Charleston and Savannah, Georgia. The town is, for the most part, relatively rural with a small town feel. As with most small towns, everyone in Palmetto knows each other. Gossip abounds.

The main industry in Palmetto is the Patchett soybean plant. The company is operated by Ivan Patchett. Patchett’s grandfather had the foresight to see a change in the economy of the day and used his property to grow soybeans. The byproducts of the soybeans made the Patchett family strong, powerful and omnipresent. Nearly everyone in the town is employed by Ivan Patchett which makes him a formidable man in the community. No one dares to cross Patchett for fear of repercussions such as losing his/her job. Patchett also had great influence over the police department and in many other areas.

Jade Sperry and Gary Parker have dreams to change Palmetto. After college, Jade and Gary plan to return to Palmetto and start an industry that will oust Ivan Patchett from his seat of power and give the residents better pay and hope for prosperous lives without having to sacrifice self-respect. When the time comes, Jade follows through with her plan and brings a textile factory to Palmetto. Jade denies the act is one of revenge and insists that Palmetto is the perfect place for such industry. Despite the best efforts of the Patchetts, Jade manages to forge ahead with her plans.

Rape

Rape is by far the most heinous crime that can be committed against another person. Rape is not a sexual act but one of power. The rapist seeks to dominate and to have control over the victim. The result of the rape is pain, humiliation, and fear.

Jade is stranded alongside the road when Neal, Hutch and Lamar pick her up under the ruse of taking her and Donna Dee back to town. Instead, Jade is taken against her will to the local fishing hole used by Neal and friends. Once at the fishing hole, Neal tells Jade of his intentions. The boys gang rape Jade. Fortunately, the author does not give graphic details, just enough to make one understand the humiliation, pain, and fear.

Jade is left in the mud after the incident. Jade crawls onto the road and is picked up by a stranger and taken to the hospital. The humiliation of being treated and questioned at the hospital and then the police station only adds to Jade’s anger and frustration. The rape is never prosecuted as it is covered up by the police.



Revenge

Revenge is the main goal in Jade's life after she is raped by Neal, Hutch, and Lamar. Jade plans to ruin each of the people who raped her or covered up the crime. Jade plans to ruin the Patchetts by taking away their livelihood. Jade denies the act is one of revenge and insists that Palmetto is the perfect place for such industry.

Dander College

Dander College Jade enrolls at Dander College as a last resort when no other colleges would offer her the type of financial support she needed to attend college. Mitch and Cathy Hearon make it possible for Jade to live in the small town of Morgantown until she graduates.

Cowan Mansion

The Cowan Mansion is the last remaining asset of the once wealthy and powerful Cowan family. The house has been abandoned and is in bad condition. Jade buys the house for her company with the goal of turning it into a corporate retreat.

Success

In Jade's eyes, the ultimate sign of success would be to follow through with her plan to change Palmetto and to seek revenge on the Patchetts.

Limousine

Jade uses a limousine when she first meets Dylan to show him that she is a successful and powerful woman.

Motorcycle

Dylan leaves behind all of his belongings after his wife dies. Dylan's motorcycle represents his freedom to move about and to not be responsible to any place or thing.

Graham Sperry

Graham Sperry symbolizes that good can come from tragedy.



Relationship with Cathy

Jade's relationship with Cathy serves as a healing tool. Cathy becomes the loving and supportive mother she never had. Jade's mother always accused Jade of ruining her life.



Settings

Palmetto, South Carolina

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Morgantown, South Carolina

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New York City

New York City is the home office of GSS, the textile company that Jade began working for straight out of college. GSS is the company that plans to erect the textile plant in Palmetto. Hank Arnett, Jade’s friend and one-time beau, also lives in New York and works as an artist.



Themes and Motifs

Rape

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Corruption

There is a great deal of corruption in Palmetto. Most of the corruption is due to the works of Ivan Patchett, who is able to control most of the activities within the tri-county area. Patchett lords over his employees and makes it known that anyone who crosses him will be dealt with harshly. There are many examples in the book showing Patchett's ruthless nature.

Perhaps the most heinous use of Patchett's power can be seen at the jail after Jade reports the rape. Patchett laughs off the charges, as does Neal. In private, Ivan and Neal discuss Jade's culpability and convince themselves that she is at fault. Patchett makes a call to someone at the hospital and Jade's rape kit and lab results mysteriously disappear. Patchett and Sheriff Jolly badger Jade, treating her like a criminal. Jade is told that she will bring shame to her family if she presses charges and hints that her mother will lose her job at the factory. Jade gives in and refuses to press charges. Patchett thinks he has won but Jade has other plans that do not involve the police.

Corruption continues after Sheriff Jolly dies. Hutch is given a job in the police department and soon becomes sheriff. Upon returning to Palmetto, Jade tests the police to find out if they are still corrupt. They are. Another goal of Jade's is to clean up the police department and end corruption in Palmetto for good.



Revenge

Revenge is one of the main themes in “Breath of Scandal.” Revenge becomes the sole focus of Jade’s life after she is raped by Neal, Hutch, and Lamar. Jade plans to ruin each of the people that raped her or covered up the crime. Jade plans to ruin the Patchetts by taking away their livelihood. Jade denies the act is one of revenge and insists that Palmetto is the perfect place for such industry.

Jade’s plan for revenge has many layers. The purpose for Jade’s revenge is for the rape and her public disgrace but moreover, because the rumors and speculation caused Gary to hang himself in the barn. Even if Jade could forgive the rape she would never forgive Gary’s death which, in Jade’s eyes, was murder.

Jade’s plan to ruin the Patchetts is a simple one although it will be time consuming and can be fraught with obstacles. Jade plans to take away the workers and support for the soybean plant. Ivan Patchett, and through him, Neal, would lose power held over the community for decades. The plan works seamlessly as Jade tricks the Patchetts into buying worthless land, causing them to go broke.

Jade also intends to expose the corruption of the police department including its new sheriff, Hutch Jolly. This will also affect Donna Dee, who had betrayed Jade fifteen years earlier.

The plan to get revenge on Lamar Griffith is a little less clear although it would certainly put an end to the Griffith family’s dreams of ever regaining their position in society.

Jade’s revenge on the Patchetts is complete. Revenge on Hutch and Lamar never take place due to their untimely deaths.



Styles

Point of View

The point of view used in “Breath of Scandal” by Sandra Brown is third person omniscient. This point of view works well throughout the book as there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. The story itself is rather complex and only third person omniscient would allow the reader to follow and understand the activities of all of the characters as well as the effects of behaviors on all characters involved, particularly Jade after she experienced the rape. It also allows the reader to experience and understand the sociopathic behavior of Ivan and Neal Patchett and the lifelong remorse of Hutch and Lamar.

It also allows for the reader to follow and understand actions and thoughts of other characters in the book as well as those events of which one single character has no knowledge.

While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters in their time of confusion, third person conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

Language and Meaning

“Breath of Scandal” by Sandra Brown takes place in Palmetto, South Carolina. The language used is modern to the times, beginning when Jade is in high school, through to the more modern period when Jade returns to Palmetto.

Brown uses a great deal of slang that is common in the south although nothing that would date the work in a negative way. There are many examples of the locals peppering their speech with slang including some racial slurs and rural southern expressions.

Brown is a master of language and is not afraid to exercise her vocabulary. While there are instances of sex and violence throughout the story, Brown crafts the story in such a way that the details are understood but the explanations are in no way graphic or vulgar.

The language used by Jade changes as she gets older. Jade leaves Palmetto to go to college and eventually moves to New York. When Jade returns to Palmetto, her language is more polished than her peers, adding to her sense of success and power.

Structure

“Breath of Scandal” by Sandra Brown is a work of fiction. The novel is chronological in nature. It is comprised of 474 pages, broken into 30 chapters.

The story begins with the history of Jade Sperry is an eighteen year old high school senior living in the coastal town of Palmetto, South Carolina. Jade is a beautiful, popular, and intelligent girl with big dreams. She and her boyfriend, Gary Parker, plan to break away from the small town and, after making their way in the world, return to bolster the economy and to rescue the townspeople from the clutches of the greedy and ruthless Patchett family. The Patchett family, headed by Ivan Patchett, owns the local soybean plant. The factory employs the majority of workers in Palmetto which allows Patchett to run their lives. Patchett also has his hand in the police department and wields a great deal of power.

Jade and Gary are both very devout Christians and well respected in the community. However, one night Jade is gang raped by three local boys, including Ivan Patchett’s son, Neal, and becomes pregnant. Jade leaves Palmetto, South Carolina, under a “breath of scandal.”

Jade finds her way while attending school at Dander College. After graduation, Jade joins a firm that builds textile plants. Jade becomes an executive within the company and for the first time, wields enough power to put her plan into action.

Fifteen years after the rape, Jade returns to Palmetto with the news that she is going to build a new factory. The factory will ruin the Patchetts’ dynasty, which is what Jade wants more than anything. Along the way, Jade meets Dylan Burke and falls in love.



Quotes

Yeah, Jade. I'd like to hear all about how I raped you.

-- Neal Patchett (Chapter 4 paragraph 2)

Importance: Neal assumes a cocky stance and attitude at the police station, mocking Jade because he knows that his father has rigged it so that he will not go to jail.

To be really successful, one must also develop patience and self-discipline.

-- Forrest Pilot (Chapter 9 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote shows that while Dillon is talented, he can also be immature and insolent. Dillon will have to mature if he is to succeed in Pilot's company.

God had been merciful in one respect. Graham bore no resemblance to any of her three attackers.

-- Narrator (Chapter 10 paragraph 4)

Importance: The fact that Graham bore no resemblance to the rapists meant that any one could claim innocence or paternity, a fact that appears later in the story.

The Hearons had been more like parents to her than her own.

-- Narrator (Chapter 13 paragraph 11)

Importance: Jade's relationship to the Hearons allowed her to heal some of the wounds of her childhood, and it helps her become a better mother to Graham.

It took every ounce of self-control not to hurdle the desk, grab Scanlon by his scrawny neck, and wring the life out of him.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 7)

Importance: The retirement of Forrest Pilot and the promotion of Dillon's enemy, Scanlon, reinforces Dillon's belief that things never turn out right for him.

My old man says there are two things a man never gets enough of. Whiskey and women.

-- Neal Patchett (Chapter 1 paragraph 10)

Importance: This quote shows that Neal has little regard for anything but his own pleasure.

The best looking girl was supposed to belong to Neal Patchett, just like the best clothes and the best car.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 4)



Importance: This quote shows that Neal thinks he deserves the best of everything, not because he earned it but because his father is rich.

Listen to me, Gary Parker. I don't give a flip about social status.
-- Jade Sperry (Chapter 2 paragraph 2)

Importance: Unlike her mother and the Patchetts, Jade shows a strength of character that does not revolve around money.

A scholarship,' Velta hissed. 'That's all you ever think about.
-- Velta Sperry (Chapter 2 paragraph 17)

Importance: Velta always shows scorn for Jade's plans and wants her to settle down and marry Neal Patchett so that she might have a better life.

As usual, Hutch did Neal's bidding without a whimper of protest.
-- Narrator (Chapter 3 paragraph 4)

Importance: This shows that Neal wields his power over his friends. They go along with him, rather than face the scorn of a powerful person.

What she said wasn't true, was it? You didn't actually rape her.
-- Donna Dee Monroe (Chapter 12 paragraph 3)

Importance: Despite the evidence and the word of her best friend, Donna Dee Monroe lives in denial about Hutch's involvement in Jade's rape.

Don't ever be afraid, Jade.
-- Narrator (Chapter 30 paragraph 4)

Importance: In times of crisis and fear, Jade can hear her father's voice echo this mantra. It gives Jade the courage to move forward.