

Coffeehouse Angel Study Guide

Coffeehouse Angel by Suzanne Selfors

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Plot Summary

Coffeehouse Angel is a novel by writer Suzanne Selfors. This novel follows Katrina Svenson, a sixteen year old girl living in the small community of Nordby, Washington, as she struggles to help her grandmother save the family coffeehouse. The Scandinavian coffeehouse has served in the same location for more than twenty years, but recently a more modern coffeehouse has moved in right next door and is running them out of business. When the owner of the other coffeehouse offers to buy them out, Katrina's grandmother becomes determined to fight him, but the fight becomes impossible when the health department shuts them down. Coffeehouse Angel is a story of strength in the face of adversity that will inspire readers to cheer for Katrina as she finds a way to overcome overwhelming obstacles and succeed where she never thought it possible.

Katrina Svenson is taking out the garbage one morning when she sees a homeless man lying in the alley between her grandmother's coffeehouse, Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse, and the coffee bar next door, Java Heaven. At first Katrina is frightened, but then realizes the guy must need some help. Katrina takes a bag filled with day old pastries, a cup of coffee, and a sample bag of chocolate covered coffee beans outside for the man.

At school, Katrina is horrified when the homeless man, wearing a kilt, comes into the school and asks to see her. The man insists that he needs to repay her kindness, but is sent away by school officials. Katrina tries to avoid the man after school, but he finds her anyway. The man tells Katrina that he is a messenger just returned from Ireland and that he must repay her kindness by giving her the one thing she truly desires. Katrina tries to blow him off, but he refuses to be ignored. Therefore Katrina agrees to accept a desire for fortune. The man gives her a chocolate covered bean that he says will give her fortune.

Katrina tells her friend about the bean and they decide to ground it up and drink it together. Instead, Katrina's other friend, Vincent, drinks it. Less than an hour later, Vincent saves a man from dying during a heart attack. The man turns out to be wealthy and he gives Vincent a full scholarship to college. Vincent becomes a media sensation. Even Java Heaven gets in on the frenzy by creating a drink called the Vincent Mocha. This upsets Katrina, especially since the owner of Java Heaven just recently tried to buy her grandmother out so he can expand his business.

Katrina becomes even more annoyed with Vincent when she realizes that he is beginning a new romantic relationship with the daughter of Java Heaven's owner, Heidi Darling. To top it off, the stranger comes back to Katrina and insists again on giving her her heart's desire. This time he offers fame. However, Katrina accidentally feeds the bean to her cat, Ratcatcher. When Katrina returns from school that day, she discovers that Ratcatcher is the talk of the town because he killed a massive rat inside the coffeehouse. However, the rat leads to the health department closing them down. Then Katrina's grandmother has a heart attack.



Katrina is desperate to save her family business from Java Heaven. Then it occurs to her that she could use Ratcatcher's fame to help out her grandmother's coffeehouse. Katrina opens a Ratcatcher souvenir shop that does amazing business, making enough to pay what her grandmother owes and save the business. Not only this, but Java Heaven is run out of business when it turns out that the owner has lied about serving organic coffee.



Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1-6 Summary

In Chapter 1, Katrina Svenson is doing her morning chores in her grandmother's coffeehouse, Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse, when she sees a homeless man sleeping in the alley. Katrina is scared because this has never happened before, so she calls her best friend, Vincent, to come over. Before Vincent arrives, Katrina decides the homeless man might simply need a break, so she takes him a cup of coffee, some day-old pastries, and a bag of chocolate coffee beans. When Vincent arrives, he offers to chase the homeless man off, but when he opens the door, the man is gone.

In Chapter 2, at the school assembly that morning, Katrina sits with her other friend, Elizabeth, while Vincent sits with his swimming buddies. Katrina is surprised to see Vincent sit with Heidi Darling, the daughter of her worst enemy, Java Heaven owner Mr. Darling. During the assembly, just after Heidi makes her announcement that Java Heaven is sponsoring the annual Winter Solstice Festival, the homeless man comes into the auditorium. The man insists on seeing Katrina, telling everyone he must repay a kindness to her.

In Chapter 3, the homeless man calls out to Katrina, causing all eyes in the room to turn on her. The principal finally talks the homeless man into leaving and waiting until after school to speak to Katrina. Everyone is talking about the episode as the school day begins, even Katrina's World Mythology teacher, who introduces a new chapter that morning, good deeds. Even Elizabeth wants to talk about it at lunch, analyzing everything about the episode, from his insistence on rewarding her to his mode of dress, a kilt. The subject only changes when Katrina and Elizabeth see Vincent walk past them with Heidi.

In Chapter 4, as Katrina walks home, she runs into the homeless guy. Katrina becomes increasingly convinced the man is crazy as he explains to her that he is a messenger in town to deliver a message to someone and that he must give her her heart's desire in exchange for her act of kindness. Katrina tries to humor him by asking for a pencil he carries, but he does not fall for it. The man tells her that most people desire fortune most, so Katrina tells him she will take fortune. The man takes out one of the chocolate covered coffee beans and offers it to her, telling her that eating it will give her fortune. However, instead of eating it, Katrina sneaks it into her pocket.

In Chapter 5, the dishwasher in the coffeehouse has quit working. Katrina makes sandwiches for their few customers while her grandmother finishes cleaning the mess and their one employee, Irmgaard, makes soup. They discuss the Winter Solstice Festival, Anna trying to convince Katrina to ask a boy to go with her. Then Mr. Darling walks in. Mr. Darling tells Anna that he wants to expand his shop into theirs.



In Chapter 6, Mr. Darling offers them a great deal of money to vacate the premises, but Anna refuses. Anna refuses to be intimidated by Mr. Darling even though their business has fallen a great deal since he opened his coffee bar next door and they are struggling financially. Later, Anna goes to bed and Katrina goes to do her homework. Katrina talks to Vincent about Mr. Darling's offer. Vincent offers words of encouragement. Katrina then talks to Elizabeth. When Katrina tells Elizabeth about the coffee bean the homeless guy gave to her, Elizabeth encourages her to eat it.

Chapters 1-6 Analysis

Katrina is a sixteen-year-old girl whose parents died when she was little, therefore she lives with her grandmother. Katrina works every day in her grandmother's coffeehouse, but the business is suffering because a ruthless business man opened another coffeehouse right next door. Katrina is unaware of the depth of her grandmother's problems, but suspects and is concerned. Then Mr. Darling makes an offer to Katrina's grandmother, Anna, to buy her out so that he can expand his business. Anna refuses, but it is clear that her business is going under anyway. This is the conflict that will propel much of the plot of the novel.

Katrina only has two friends, Elizabeth and Vincent. Katrina and Vincent have known each other since the fourth grade, but recently Vincent has been spending time with Heidi Darling, the daughter of the owner of Java Heaven, Katrina's worst enemy. This adds tension to this relationship, making Katrina wonder where Vincent's loyalties lie.

Katrina meets a homeless man sleeping in the alley behind her grandmother's coffeehouse. Katrina gives this man some food and coffee. For this reason, the homeless man begins stalking Katrina in an attempt to give her her heart's desire in exchange for her act of kindness. However, Katrina does not want anything from this man who appears to be crazy and tries to blow him off. He gives her a coffee bean he claims will give her fortune, but Katrina does not eat it.



Chapters 7-10

Chapters 7-10 Summary

In Chapter 7, Elizabeth comes to the coffeehouse before school to pick up Katrina because it is raining. Elizabeth immediately begins questioning Katrina about the coffee bean. Katrina admits she has not eaten it yet, so Elizabeth suggests that they grind it up and drink it together. However, before they can drink it, Vincent takes a swallow and then throws the rest of it down the drain because it is bitter. When nothing strange happens, they decide to go to school. However, before they reach the school, they witness an accident.

In Chapter 8, Vincent performed CPR on the driver of the car that wrecked. It turns out the man had a heart attack behind the wheel and Vincent saved his life. There is a media frenzy at the school, everyone wants to talk to Vincent. Then it is announced that the victim is a rich man and he has agreed to pay for Vincent to go to college because of what he has done. Elizabeth insists this is the fortune the coffee bean promised, but Katrina says it is just a coincidence. Then Mr. Darling announces a new coffee at his shop, the Vincent Mocha, and Heidi insists on being by Vincent's side all day, talking with the reporters with him. On the way home from school, Katrina runs into the homeless guy again. Katrina asks his name and learns he was called Malcolm in Scotland. Katrina asks Malcolm to leave her alone, but he insists he must give her her heart's desire. Katrina insists she must go. At the coffeehouse, Katrina hatches an idea to invent a coffee drink for Vincent to sell during the Winter Solstice Festival. Katrina needs to taste Mr. Darling's coffee in order to make a better version, but she cannot go into the shop to buy one. Instead, Katrina decides to ask Malcolm to get one for her.

In Chapter 9, Katrina goes outside and watches as Malcolm accepts a sample cup of Vincent Mocha from one of Java Heaven's employees. Katrina convinces Malcolm to give her the cup, but when Heidi and her friends find her holding the cup, Katrina is forced to throw it away. Back inside her grandmother's coffeehouse, Katrina finds Irmgaard upset. Irmgaard runs silently out of the shop as Mr. Darling comes inside. Mr. Darling shows Anna a piece of paper with a large sum of money written on it. Anna again turns him away.

In Chapter 10, Katrina has a meeting with her guidance counselor. The counselor tells her that she needs to join more organizations to get into college and uses Heidi Darling's volunteer work as an example. The counselor then has Katrina take an aptitude test to help her choose a future career.

Chapters 7-10 Analysis

Katrina accidentally feeds the coffee bean the homeless man gave her to Vincent and he immediately saves a rich man who gives him the one fortune he truly wants, a



scholarship to college. Elizabeth sees this as proof that the bean the homeless man gave Katrina really worked, but Katrina sees it as a coincidence. The homeless man himself, who tells Katrina to call him Malcolm, returns and chastises Katrina for not eating the bean herself. Katrina is annoyed, convinced more than ever that Malcolm must be crazy, even though he appears harmless.

Katrina struggles with Vincent's newfound fame because Mr. Darling, her worst enemy, is using it to sell more coffee and to further drive Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse out of business. Not only this, but Mr. Darling is adding pressure to his offer to buy them out, increasing the offer and stopping by to discuss it each day. This causes more resentment on both Anna and Katrina's part, and further underscores how much they are struggling with a lack of customers. At the same time, Katrina finds herself compared to Heidi and coming up lacking and having to compete with her when it comes to Vincent. Katrina is miserable and she feels worse because it seems she might be losing her best friend.



Chapters 11-15

Chapters 11-15 Summary

In Chapter 11, Katrina and Elizabeth are forced to eat inside the cafeteria because of the weather, so Elizabeth spends much of the time staring at her crush, David, whom she calls Face. Elizabeth wants to ask him to the Winter Solstice Festival, but she is worried he will turn her down. At the same time, Katrina is worried about some bills she saw on her grandmother's desk the night before. Katrina is also worried about the blank list for organizations and volunteering that the counselor gave her, so Elizabeth fills it with some made up things. Vincent stops by and Katrina lets him know she is annoyed that he was on television holding a cup from Java Heaven. Vincent apologizes and then agrees to help Katrina sell hot chocolate with his name and autograph.

In Chapter 12, as Katrina walks home, she runs into one of the Boys, faithful customers of Anna's, sitting at the bus stop. The man, Lars, is not supposed to ride the bus because his son, Officer Larsen, wants him to walk everywhere so he can get much needed exercise. However, Lars complains that his legs hurt. Katrina guides him to Anna's with Malcolm's help after the bus driver refuses to let him on. Malcolm makes Katrina take another coffee bean, this one supposedly offering her fame. Katrina stops at the pharmacy to see if she can get Lars a walker, but they are too expensive. Instead, Lars finds a cane.

In Chapter 13, Lars tells everyone about Malcolm, embarrassing Katrina. To change the subject, Katrina asks her grandmother what she is doing and learns she is attempting to sell the new television they recently bought. When Katrina sees more overdue bills, her grandmother claims to not feel well and goes upstairs. While Katrina and Irmgaard clean up, Irmgaard tries to silently express to Katrina that she saw an angel. Irmgaard gives Katrina a book of angels before leaving for the day.

In Chapter 14, Katrina goes to art class with Elizabeth, but does not do well. Elizabeth decides no matter what, she is going to ask Face to the festival. Then Elizabeth asks Katrina if she can eat the new bean, claiming fame would help her career when she opens her own art gallery.

In Chapter 15, the next morning, Anna is not feeling well. On Friday, Katrina learns that Vincent plans to go to the festival with Heidi. Katrina becomes angry because she had wanted him to help her sell hot chocolates that night. Elizabeth is on Katrina's side, but Vincent refuses to bend. After Vincent leaves, Katrina goes to get the coffee bean, but drops it. Ratcatcher, her cat, eats the bean.

Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Elizabeth is obsessed with asking a good-looking boy she refers to as Face to the festival, but she is nervous and dragging her feet about it. Compared to Katrina's



problems, Elizabeth's problems seem trivial and immature. However, it is a contrast that shows that Katrina should only be worried about trivial things, not the fate of her family business.

Katrina and Vincent have a fight when Katrina learns that he plans to go to the festival with Heidi rather than help her save her family business by selling hero hot chocolates. Katrina and Vincent have been best friends since fourth grade and this argument is not only unusual, but possibly detrimental to the longevity of their friendship.

Katrina is not only struggling with her family business, but she is also struggling with her own future. Katrina has never been exceptionally good at anything and worries that she might never find a career that will make her happy. Katrina finds herself compared to Heidi Darling and coming out lacking, a situation that only increases her concerns about her friendship with Vincent and her own self-worth.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

In Chapter 16, in World Mythology, Katrina reads a story that is a thinly veiled accusation against Vincent for not helping save her family business. Vincent becomes angry and tells her to get a life. Then, at lunch, Katrina learns that Elizabeth asked Face to go to the festival, but he told her he could not answer her at this time. Elizabeth is horrified. Then Malcolm shows up and tells Katrina he needs to show her something.

In Chapter 17, Malcolm takes Katrina and Elizabeth to Anna's where they find a crowd outside the store. It turns out Ratcatcher has caught an extremely large wharf rat. Officer Larsen tells Anna that he has to inform the health department of the rat in her coffeehouse and warns her not to move the rat until the health department comes.

In Chapter 18, news of the wharf rat Ratcatcher killed spreads around the world thanks to the Internet. The attention only becomes more intense over the weekend, causing Katrina and her mother to hide out in their apartment. It begins to look like they may have no choice but to accept Mr. Darling's offer. When the health inspector comes, he takes the rat and places a notice on their door shutting them down until a full inspection can be done on Wednesday. This seems like a death sentence to the business. Katrina goes to visit Elizabeth in hopes of being cheered up, but learns that Elizabeth is depressed because Face still has not given her invitation an answer. That night, Katrina cannot sleep, so she reads some of the book Irmagaard gave her, surprised to see a portrait in the Messenger chapter that looks like Malcolm.

In Chapter 19, Katrina calls to Malcolm and he appears. Katrina learns that Malcolm is an angel and he has come to deliver a message to Irmagaard, but she refuses to accept it. Malcolm shows Katrina the message and tells her the longer he is unable to deliver it, the heavier it becomes as punishment to him. As they talk, Vincent stops by and is unhappy to see Malcolm there. Again they argue about Heidi. Then Katrina's grandmother appears on the stairs and promptly collapses.

In Chapter 20, Katrina and Malcolm drive behind the ambulance, but when they arrive at the hospital they cannot see Anna right away. Katrina is frightened since her grandmother is the only family she has. Katrina eventually learns her grandmother is okay, but needs to have some tests. Katrina tries to go find her grandmother, but is turned away. Instead, Malcolm sneaks back and checks on her, assuring Katrina all is well.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Katrina and Vincent's arguing only grows worse when Katrina nearly accuses Vincent of being the cause of her family business's ruination. Then Katrina learns that her cat, who has never caught a mouse in her life, has caught a huge rat. The cat is instantly

famous, but the rat's existence in the coffeehouse causes the health department to shut them down. This seems to be the final nail in the coffin of the business.

As Elizabeth continues to live in her secure world where everything is just as simple as asking her father for money, Katrina continues to struggle to find a way to save her family. Then Katrina's grandmother is hospitalized and everything seems to be falling apart. Katrina has already lost her parents in a car accident when she was small and her grandfather, therefore her grandmother is the most important person in the world to her. Now nothing matters but her grandmother's health.



Chapters 21-25

Chapters 21-25 Summary

In Chapter 21, Katrina calls Irmgaard and tells her what has happened, then calls Vincent. Vincent offers to come to the hospital, but Katrina asks him not to. Malcolm stays with Katrina and brings her food. Katrina then asks Malcolm to take her to the Winter Solstice Festival. Finally, Katrina is able to see her grandmother. When Anna learns that Katrina has a date to the festival, she tells her to take a little of their money to buy a new dress. Anna then sends Katrina home with the promise that she will go to school and do everything she is supposed to do. Then Anna tells Katrina to inform Mr. Darling that they are now willing to take his offer.

In Chapter 22, Irmgaard arrives and helps Katrina fill out the insurance paperwork. Katrina tells Irmgaard she knows about the message Malcolm has for her, but Irmgaard continues to refuse to take it, panicking when Malcolm appears and tries to give it to her again.

In Chapter 23, Katrina goes home and sleeps all day Sunday, waking Monday to a morning without chores because of the closed coffeehouse. Katrina finds a dress Malcolm has left for her in the dining area of the coffeehouse. As Katrina is preparing to leave, some Japanese tourists ask permission to have their picture taken with Ratcatcher. At school, dozens of kids ask about Ratcatcher. Then, during assembly, Heidi announces that she and Vincent will be making decorations for the festival at Java Heaven after school. This seems like the final straw to Katrina.

In Chapter 24, Katrina runs into Elliott, a nerd-like kid in her World Mythology class in the library. They talk about the forms the guidance counselor is handing out to students to fill out. Katrina then tells him that she just got the results of her aptitude test, but she has not opened them. He opens it for her and discovers that she is most apt to be an entrepreneurial type person. Katrina is shocked. Later, she has lunch with Elizabeth only to discover that Face turned down her invitation to the festival. Elizabeth then suggests that Katrina is in love with Vincent.

In Chapter 25, after school, Katrina goes home and finds the Boys in the coffeehouse cleaning up. Katrina also learns that there have been dozens of phone calls and letters for Ratcatcher. Upstairs, Katrina finds Malcolm fresh from the shower. Katrina gets him clothes from her grandfather's closet. Katrina asks Malcolm if he can make things go back to the way they were, before Java Heaven, but then changes her mind.

Chapters 21-25 Analysis

Katrina feels defeated when her grandmother tells her they will have to take Mr. Darling's offer now. Katrina wants to save the business, and her aptitude test says she can, but she does not know how. Elizabeth is defeated too, saddened because Face



has refused her offer to go to the festival. Things look bleak for both Katrina and Elizabeth. Add to all of this Vincent's apparent alliance with Heidi and Katrina feels as though her entire world is disappearing.

Elizabeth suggests that Katrina is in love with Vincent and that is why she is upset about his alliance with Heidi. Katrina has denied this since the beginning of the novel, but it is clear to the reader that both Katrina and Vincent are dealing with some jealousy issues when it comes to the other having romantic interests outside their relationship. Even Vincent appears jealous of Malcolm.



Chapters 26-30

Chapters 26-30 Summary

In Chapter 26, Katrina goes to Java Heaven to speak to Mr. Darling. Katrina witnesses an argument between Mr. Darling and his mother before she is able to speak to him herself. When she does, Mr. Darling tells her that he has rescinded his offer because he has decided to buy the building instead. When Katrina and her grandmother are unable to pay the rent, he will just evict them. Mr. Darling opens a door to the alley and asks Katrina to leave. A gust of wind causes some papers on his desk to blow outside. After he collects them, Mr. Darling rudely sends Katrina away. Outside, another piece of paper lands beside Katrina. It is a receipt for generic coffee.

In Chapter 27, Katrina is excited about the receipt she has found because it proves the Mr. Darling has been selling generic coffee and calling it organic. However, she does not immediately know what to do with it. Katrina finds Malcolm still upstairs in her apartment, going through a photo album of her childhood. Malcolm is saddened because he will never have a life quite like this. Malcolm suggests that a promotion he is hoping to get will change things for him, but he does not think he will get it because Irmgaard is still refusing to accept his message. Later, Katrina shows the receipt to her grandmother, but Anna refuses to use it against Mr. Darling. Anna accepts that they are ruined and asks that Katrina accept the same.

In Chapter 28, in World Mythology, they talk about the damsel in distress. Katrina gets an idea as she wonders if a damsel might save herself. Katrina gets Elliot out of class and asks if he could help her save her family business. He agrees, especially when he learns that Elizabeth will be helping as well. They all meet at the coffeehouse and Katrina explains that she wants to turn the place into a Ratcatcher Emporium, selling items related to Ratcatcher. They immediately order items, such as souvenir coffee cups, and design flyers to advertise. Then Katrina gets a call from Officer Larsen claiming that he has Malcolm in custody.

In Chapter 29, Katrina discovers that the inability to deliver his message is making Malcolm ill. Katrina convinces Officer Larsen to let Malcolm go, after his arrest for loitering outside Irmgaard's apartment, and takes him back to Irmgaard's. Malcolm's message has grown so heavy that it is weighing Malcolm down so much the car's wheels sink under him. At Irmgaard's, Katrina tries to convince her to take the message. Irmgaard shows Katrina a couple of news clippings from thirteen years ago. It is then that Katrina realizes Irmgaard is the driver who killed her parents.

In Chapter 30, at first Katrina is upset, but then she realizes it was only an accident and Irmgaard has punished herself long enough. Then Katrina realizes her car is sinking into the ground because of the weight of the message. Katrina tries to pull Malcolm from the car, but the weight makes it impossible. Finally Katrina convinces Irmgaard to take the



message. When she does, Malcolm becomes light enough to be rescued from the car. When Irmgaard opens the message, both Katrina and Malcolm can see one word: live.

Chapters 26-30 Analysis

Mr. Darling rescinds his offer to buy Anna out and instead threatens to throw them out after he buys the building. When Katrina finds a receipt that seems to prove he is a liar and a fraud, Anna refuses to use it. Katrina wants to use it, but she honors her grandmother's wishes and instead comes up with a plan to help her family business by using Ratchaser's fame. It is a risky move that could leave Katrina and her grandmother worse off than before, but it could also change everything for the better.

As Katrina struggles to save her family business with the help of friends, she discovers that Malcolm is in trouble because of the message Irmgaard refuses to accept. Irmgaard reveals to Katrina that she was once a nun who was driving on a foggy morning when there was a car accident. The accident took the life of Katrina's parents. This is why Irmgaard has not spoken a word in all the years that Katrina has known her. However, the message clearly tells Irmgaard that she should no longer punish herself, but live. Katrina forgives her and Malcolm is saved the weight of the message. It is a happy ending for a sad situation.



Chapters 31-35

Chapters 31-35 Summary

In Chapter 31, the health inspector comes and clears Anna's of all health violations. Katrina and her friends continue with the emporium plans. The night before the festival, Katrina hosts a dinner for all her friends and is happy for what they have accomplished. The only thing missing is Vincent. Katrina makes an effort to make amends to Vincent, but he ignores her call.

In Chapter 32, the morning of the festival dawns cold. At first there is no business, but soon the emporium is overrun with customers. Mr. Darling becomes annoyed at their lines that are blocking his business, but Katrina feels it is only fair since his lines did the same to Anna's the year before. Later that evening, Malcolm comes to pick Katrina up for the festival.

In Chapter 33, Malcolm and Katrina attend the Sons of Norway dinner. Heidi is there without Vincent. They dance and try to kiss, but an electrical charge injures them both. They go for a walk and Malcolm once again asks Katrina what is her heart's desire. He gives her a bean and tells her to think of the thing she most desires as she eats it. Katrina does and Malcolm is surprised by her wish.

In Chapter 34, Katrina runs into Vincent's dad and learns he is down by the harbor. Katrina goes to see Vincent and apologizes for her behavior lately. He apologizes as well.

In Chapter 35, the receipt Katrina found belonging to Java Heaven was discovered in the back of her car the day of the sinkhole incident. A reporter found it and ran with it, ruining Mr. Darling's business and reputation. Mr. Darling left town. Surprisingly, Heidi became a nicer person and Katrina adjusted to her place in Vincent's life. Anna's took over Java Heaven's space and changed the menu to include more modern coffee drinks. Malcolm came back, having been promoted to human.

Chapters 31-35 Analysis

Ratcatcher Emporium is a huge success, making enough money to save Anna's. When Mr. Darling leaves town under accusations of fraud, Anna's is able to thrive in the community as a coffeehouse that includes both old world and new world traditions. Katrina and Vincent make up. Katrina makes a wish for Malcolm to get his promotion and he does, returning to her as a human.

Katrina worries throughout the novel that she has no talents, that she cannot commit to any one thing. However, the events in the novel prove that Katrina not only is strong on commitment, but that she is selfless enough that she was able to help everyone around her even if it cost her a little in return. This novel has some overtures of a Christian

nature, showing the reader that believing in the unbelievable and relying on yourself are two of the best things that can be done in the face of adversity.



Characters

Katrina Svenson

Katrina Svenson is a sixteen-year-old girl who was orphaned at three when her parents died in a car accident. Katrina lives with her grandmother and helps her run their business, Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse. However, a new coffee bar opened next door two years ago and is slowly running them out of business. Katrina worries about what will happen if she and her grandmother should lose the business.

One morning, Katrina sees a homeless man sleeping outside the back door of the coffeehouse. Katrina is frightened, but she gives the man some food and coffee anyway. That same day, the man tries to find her so that he might repay her kindness. The man tells her that he wants to give her her heart's desire, but Katrina does not believe him and blows him off several times. However, each time the man gives her a coffee bean he tells her will give her fortune and then fame, someone she knows who eats the bean does get these things.

As Katrina struggles to save her family business, she finds herself fighting with her best friend and struggling to believe in the unbelievable. In the end, as Katrina often sacrifices her own desires and needs in favor of others, she discovers inside of herself a strength and a talent she never would have recognized before.

Anna Svenson

Anna Svenson is Katrina's grandmother. Anna is an elderly woman who has run Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse for many years. Anna is set in her ways and refused to make changes to her coffeehouse even when a new coffeehouse moved in next door. For this reason, Anna lost many of her customers and now struggles to survive. As Katrina tries to support and aid her grandmother, Anna tries to hide the truth of their situation from her. In the end, Katrina saves the business and Anna learns how to incorporate the modern world into her small town coffeehouse.

Homeless Guy/Malcolm

Katrina sees a homeless guy sleeping in the alley behind her grandmother's coffeehouse and is frightened because this sort of thing does not often happen in the small community where they live. At first, all Katrina can think of is the dangers this man might represent and how she should stay away from him, but then she feels bad for him and decides to give him some food. It turns out that this homeless man is a messenger from God whom Katrina should not have been able to see. Since Katrina could see him, the man becomes curious about her and decides to grant her a wish in order to give him an excuse to see her again.



As the novel progresses, Katrina gets to know the homeless man, whom she calls Malcolm because this is what the people in Scotland once called him. Malcolm tries to help Katrina, but when he grants her two wishes that she inadvertently gives to a friend and to her cat, bad things begin to happen to Katrina and her family business. However, when faced with adversity, Katrina learns to fight for herself, to find a way to fix her own troubles. In the end, Malcolm has delivered his message and must return to where he came from for his next assignment. However, when Malcolm gives Katrina one last chance to have her heart's desire, she wishes for him to get a promotion he desires. Malcolm gets the promotion, a chance to live his life as a human.

Irmgaard

Irmgaard is an employee of the coffeehouse owned by Anna. Irmgaard has taken a vow of silence for unknown reasons. Katrina learns that Irmgaard was once a nun, but does not know much else about Irmgaard. However, Malcolm tells Katrina that the message he must deliver in Nordby is for Irmgaard. When Malcolm becomes ill from the weight of the undelivered message, Katrina goes to Irmgaard to ask her to take the message. Irmgaard then tells Katrina that she is the driver who caused the accident that killed Katrina's parents. Irmgaard has been punishing herself for this accident since it happened by taking her vow of silence and by living as sparsely as possible. However, Katrina forgives her because it was only an accident caused as much by the fog as anything else. Irmgaard finally takes the message and discovers that it is only a single word: live.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is one of Katrina's two good friends. Elizabeth is an artist who hopes to one day own a famous art gallery. Elizabeth is focused and determined about the direction of her life, causing Katrina to feel more afloat in her inability to find one thing she is good at. Elizabeth is the child of wealthy parents who has never really known struggle. Throughout the novel, Elizabeth worries over an invitation to the local Winter Solstice Festival she made to a young man she calls Face. Elizabeth's simple worries contrasts wildly with the deeper worries that Katrina must face throughout the novel.

Vincent Hawk

Vincent Hawk is Katrina's other good friend. Vincent is an avid swimmer who hopes to one day represent the Suquamish tribe at the Olympics. Katrina and Vincent have known one another since the fourth grade and are very close. However, as the novel develops, Vincent begins spending time with Heidi Darling, the daughter of Katrina's worst enemy. This becomes a bone of contention between Katrina and Vincent, nearly leading to the destruction of their relationship. However, Katrina eventually sees her mistakes in this argument and asks for forgiveness.



Heidi Darling

Heidi Darling is the daughter of Mr. Darling, the owner of Java Heaven. Heidi is an over achiever whose parents push her to be perfect in everything she does. For this reason, Heidi is often held up as an example to Katrina by the guidance counselor and other teachers. This creates resentment in Katrina and her fellow classmates. However, it is clear by the end of the novel that Heidi is just as unhappy in her own over achievement. Heidi turns out to be a fairly nice girl whom Katrina finds a way to accept for Vincent's sake.

Mr. Darling

Mr. Darling is the owner of Java Heaven, a rival coffeehouse that is right next door to Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse. Mr. Darling wants to get rid of Anna's and expand his own business, so he offers to buy Anna out. When Anna finally breaks and agrees to this deal, Mr. Darling rescinds his offer and tells Katrina that he plans to buy the building and kick them out when they cannot pay their rent. Later Katrina finds a receipt that proves that the organic coffee Mr. Darling claims to sell at his coffeehouse is really a cheap generic. Katrina does nothing with this receipt, but it is later found by a reporter who uses it to ruin Mr. Darling. Amid accusations of fraud, Mr. Darling leaves town.

Officer Larsen

Officer Larsen is a young police officer who works in Nordby. Due to the fact that her husband was a cop in Nordby for many years, Anna often calls Officer Larsen for silly and unusual reasons. Officer Larsen is very gentle with Anna and often indulges her calls for help.

The Boys

The Boys are a group of local men who spend a great deal of time at Anna's. As the novel begins, the Boys are pretty much the only customers Anna gets anymore due to the popularity of Java Heaven. The Boys are very loyal to Anna, however, and when she is shut down by the health department because of a large wharf rat Ratchaser catches, they come and clean the coffeehouse to help it pass inspection.



Objects/Places

Chocolate Covered Coffee Beans

Katrina gave the homeless man, Malcolm, a bag of chocolate-covered coffee beans the first day she saw him. Malcolm uses these beans to try to give Katrina her heart's desire. The first two are mistakenly eaten by others, the first by Vincent and the second by Ratcatcher.

Coffee

While Katrina and Malcolm are talking on a bus bench, a woman near them makes a wish for some coffee. Seconds later, the woman finds a bag of coffee among the groceries in her lap.

Vincent Mocha

Mr. Darling takes advantage of Vincent's fame after he saves the life of a wealthy man by selling the Vincent Mocha in his coffeehouse, Java Heaven. This causes tension between Katrina and Vincent because Mr. Darling is trying to drive Anna's out of business and Katrina sees this drink as Vincent's compliance in this scheme.

Malcolm's Satchel

Malcolm carries around a satchel that says Messenger in gold. The satchel holds Irmgaard's message as well as a black book that Malcolm often refers to when talking about the rules of his job. The black book appears blank to mortals.

Mythology

Katrina is taking a World Mythology class in school. The stories being studied in class parallel some of the themes of this novel.

Aptitude Test

Katrina's guidance counselor has her take an aptitude test to help her find what she might be good at to guide her in making choices for college. The test says that Katrina would be a good entrepreneur, something that Katrina takes to heart when she works to save her grandmother's coffeehouse.



Irmgaard's Message

Malcolm is in Nordby to deliver a message to Irmgaard. Irmgaard refuses to accept the message, however, causing it to grow heavier and heavier as a punishment to Malcolm for his inability to convince her to take it. In the end the message becomes so heavy it causes what appears to be a sinkhole under the car where Malcolm sits. The message, when Irmgaard finally opens it, says simply live.

Walking Cane

Lars, one of the Boys, has trouble with his leg but does not want to use a walker. Malcolm recognizes Lars' desire for dignity and arranges for him to find a cane that even has his name engraved on it.

Winter Solstice Festival

Every year the people of Nordby celebrate the winter solstice with a festival that includes the decorating of a Christmas tree and a formal dinner.

Ratchaser Emporium

Katrina opens the Ratchaser Emporium during the Winter Solstice Festival to capitalize on Ratchaser's fame after catching a giant wharf rat and to make enough money to save Anna's.

Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse

Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse is the name of the coffeehouse owned by Katrina's grandmother. It is this business that Katrina works hard to save in the novel.

Java Heaven

Java Heaven is the name of the coffeehouse that opened next door to Anna's two years before the novel begins. Java Heaven has nearly run Anna's out of business due to its modern beverages and its claims of selling organic coffee. However, it is later discovered that Mr. Darling has been selling generic coffee and calling it organic.

Nordby

Nordby is the name of the small community in Washington where the novel takes place.



Themes

Adversity

This novel centers around Katrina, a young girl who was orphaned at three when her parents died in a car accident. Katrina has lived with her grandparents since that time. Katrina's grandfather has since died, leaving Katrina alone with her grandmother, Anna. Katrina has given up some of the carefree aspects of childhood in order to help her grandmother run her coffeehouse, Anna's Old World Scandinavian Coffeehouse, the family's primary source of income. As the novel begins, the coffeehouse has become endangered because of a new coffeehouse that has opened right next door and offers more modern beverages.

As the novel progresses, Katrina begins to discover just how much trouble her grandmother's coffeehouse is in. There are multiple unpaid bills and there are repairs that need to be made to the shop itself. Katrina begins to realize that the coffeehouse is about to be forced to close. To add to this, Katrina is also present when Mr. Darling, the owner of their rival coffeehouse, Java Heaven, announces that he wants to expand his business into their space. Katrina at first thinks that taking Mr. Darling's offer might be a good idea, but soon realizes how important Anna's is to both herself and her grandmother.

Katrina wants to save Anna's, but it seems that everything she does only makes it worse. When things appear to be at their bleakest, Katrina suddenly shines. Katrina comes up with an idea to capitalize on her cat's sudden fame in catching a giant wharf rat to make enough money to bail Anna's out of trouble. Not only is Katrina able to make the money Anna's desperately needs, but fate runs Mr. Darling out of town. Learning from her mistakes, Katrina's grandmother makes changes to the coffeehouse that capitalizes on the customers left high and dry by Mr. Darling's departure. In this way, Katrina was able to face adversity and succeed.

Friendship

Katrina lives in a small community that is very tightknit. Despite this, Katrina finds herself with only two really good friends. One of her friends is Vincent, a swimmer who is focused on his goals of participating in the Olympics one day. Katrina's other friend is Elizabeth, an artist who is determined to own an art gallery one day. Both of Katrina's friends are talented and focused on their futures, leaving Katrina feeling unfocused and as though she will never have a goal or manage to attain anything.

Vincent and Katrina have been friends since fourth grade and Katrina has always assumed Vincent would be there for her. However, when Vincent begins spending time with Heidi Darling, Katrina is instantly infuriated. Not only is Heidi the daughter of her worst enemy, the owner of Java Heaven, but she is an over achiever who makes



Katrina feel small and unfocused. To add to the tensions between Katrina and Vincent, when Vincent becomes an instant hero after saving the life of a wealthy man, Mr. Darling uses the situation to capitalize on his fame by making the Vincent Mocha. Vincent even goes on television holding a Java Heaven cup. This makes Katrina feel betrayed and places their friendship in danger of ending. However, they are both soon able to see where they were intolerant with one another and make amends.

Elizabeth is much more laid back than Vincent or Katrina. Elizabeth's biggest worry is whether or not the cute boy in school will go with her to the Winter Solstice Festival. Elizabeth's worries and concerns seem to underscore the importance of Katrina's problems. In the end, Elizabeth is a good, steady friend to Katrina, supporting her through all her problems even if she never really understands just how difficult these problems are.

Forgiveness

When Katrina shows her grandmother a receipt she has found that proves that Mr. Darling is a fraud, Anna advises Katrina to get rid of it. Anna does not feel that it is right to use such dirty tactics to fight an enemy, even one as dastardly as Mr. Darling. Anna then tells Katrina that forgiveness is an important part of life and that they should forgive Mr. Darling for the wrongs he has tried to commit against them.

Katrina is confused about her grandmother's words until later. When Katrina realizes that Malcolm is dying under the weight of the message Irmgaard will not allow him to deliver to her, she fights to make Irmgaard take it. Irmgaard finally reveals to Katrina what she has been hiding for thirteen years, that she was the driver of the van that killed Katrina's parents. Katrina is angry at first, but she soon realizes that Irmgaard has punished herself enough for what happened that day. After all, it was only an accident caused as much by fog as anything else. Katrina offers forgiveness to Irmgaard. This and the message given to Irmgaard by Malcolm finally allow her to forgive herself and move on with her life.

Style

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view. The narrator, Katrina Svenson, is a sixteen-year-old-girl who relates to the reader how she fought to save her grandmother's coffeehouse against a cruel business man. Katrina tells her story as though in a casual conversation with the reader, often inserting information that implies prior knowledge of the events that are yet to take place in the plot of the novel.

The point of view of this novel is appropriate to the plot because it creates a relationship between the main character and the reader that is intimate. The reader truly cares about what happens to Katrina as the novel progresses. This point of view also keeps the narration tight, not adding in the thoughts and actions of other characters that are not defined or explained by the main character, actions that might confuse the reader. This point of view also creates a feel between reader and narrator that although there is great adversity to be faced in the course of the developing plot, all will work out for the best in the end.

Setting

The novel is set in Nordby, Washington. Nordby is a small community that is made up mainly of people of Scandinavian and Suquamish tribe ancestry. Many of the older members of the community worked the crab boats in the Bering Sea, tough work that requires tough personalities. For this reason, the community in this novel is made up of tough, but loyal people who all know everyone else's business.

The setting of this novel is unique in its ancestral and occupational background. The Boys who spend so much time in Anna's are all former crab boat fishermen, men who live their lives on the edge of the world fighting Mother Nature. These men are tough, but also show a sense of loyalty when they try to help Anna by cleaning her coffeehouse when the health department shuts her down. The history of the area is also important to the plot of the novel because it is the high Scandinavian ancestry that inspires Anna to sell unique items in her coffeehouse, but it also this old world feel that threatens to push her out of business. The setting has a huge impact on the plot of the novel, making it imperative to the overall plot.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. Even though many of the characters in the book are of Scandinavian or Suquamish ancestry, there are few foreign words in the



novel. The novel also does not contain much slang or other unusual language that might confuse a reader.

The language of the novel is proper, if simple, English. The novel is written for young adult readers, therefore the language tends to be the kind of language that young people might speak in their own everyday lives, minus the slang. The language is appropriate to the main character of the novel, a girl of sixteen with limited education, making the characters seem more authentic. Hence, the language of this novel works well with the plot.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-five chapters. Each chapter varies in length, some are quite long while others are fairly short. The novel is told both in narration and dialogue, showing a story more than telling one.

The novel contains two main plots and several subplot. The first main plot revolves around Katrina's relationship with a homeless man, Malcolm, who turns out to be an angel. The second main plot revolves around Katrina's attempts to save her grandmother's coffeehouse from bankruptcy. One subplot follows an argument between Katrina and her best friend, Vincent, that stems from her perceived sense of betrayal in his role in the battle between her grandmother's coffeehouse and its rival, Java Heaven. Another subplot follows the relationship between Katrina and her other friend, Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's typical teenage troubles. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

"The first time I saw him, he was lying in the alley behind my grandmother's coffeehouse. I figured he was some sort of bum" (Chapter 1, p. 7).

"Is it ever a good thing to have the entire population of your school turn and stare at you? If you've just scored the winning touchdown - yes. If you've just broken a swimming record—yes. If a weird guy in a skirt starts yelling your name in the middle of an assembly - never" (Chapter 3, p. 20).

"Grandmothers can tell you that you're pretty, and they will. They can tell you that you're talented and special and the best darn thing that ever walked on two feet" (Chapter 5, p. 39).

"No one slept on the wet bricks. Hopefully he had gone home—back to his family and some medication" (Chapter 7, p. 50).

"But all I noticed was the Java Heaven coffee cup that he held in his right hand" (Chapter 9, p. 67).

"If people could melt like ice cream, that's what would have happened—Millie would just be a big puddle of rocky road. As Malcolm stepped off the bus his kilt slipped up his thigh - muscular, just like his calves. Millie patted her hair, smiling as if she'd been sipping Lars's whiskey" (Chapter 12, p. 82).

"I had wanted to lean forward and kiss his lips. I didn't even know him and I had wanted to kiss him" (Chapter 13, p. 92).

"It's never a good idea to read something aloud that you wrote in a fit of anger" (Chapter 16, p. 106).

"Just a whisper and he had appeared" (Chapter 19, p. 128).

"I wanted to pretend that I hadn't heard my grandmother's decision to close the coffeehouse but her words followed me, echoing off the elevator's walls" (Chapter 22, p. 149).

"The woman who had worked with us each and every day, who had filled our stomachs with wonderful soup, who had filled the shop with the aroma of freshly baked krumkake and had become part of my family, had killed my parents" (Chapter 30, p. 199).

"He was mortal. I had made him mortal" (Chapter 35, p. 227).



Topics for Discussion

Who is Katrina Svenson? Where are her parents? Why does Katrina work in her grandmother's coffeehouse? What would she rather be doing? What is the Closet of Failures? Why does Katrina often think of this closet during the novel? What is in it? What do these things say about Katrina?

Who is Malcolm? Where did he come from? What does he offer to Katrina? Why does Katrina not take it seriously? What is in Malcolm's satchel? Why does he keep referring to a book in the satchel? What is in the book? What does Katrina think of Malcolm? What finally wins her over to Malcolm? Why does Katrina finally begin believing in Malcolm?

Who is Irmgaard? Why does she not speak? Who does Katrina think she is? What does Katrina think of Irmgaard at the beginning of the novel? How does this opinion change? What crime did Irmgaard commit? Why does Irmgaard not want to accept a message from an angel? What is she afraid of? What finally makes Irmgaard take the message?

Who is Anna? Why does she not want to change the menu at her coffeehouse? What might have happened if she had changed the menu sooner? Why does Anna not want to allow Mr. Darling to buy her out? Why does Anna not want to retire? How does Katrina finally convince Anna to change things in their family coffeehouse?

Who is Vincent? What does he want to do with his life? For what reason? Why does Vincent begin spending time with Heidi Darling? How does Katrina feel about this? For what reason? Does Vincent ever really betray his friendship with Katrina? Why does Katrina feel as though he has? How do they finally make amends? What is the result of this?

Who is Mr. Darling? What does he want from Katrina and her grandmother? For what reason? What does Katrina see when she goes to speak to Mr. Darling? Why does it appear that even his mother dislikes Mr. Darling? What does Katrina find that proves Mr. Darling is less than honest? Is this a surprise to the reader? What does Mr. Darling metaphorically represent in the plot of this novel?

How does Ratchatcher become famous? How does his fame hurt Katrina and her grandmother? For what reason? How does Katrina use this fame to make things better for herself and her grandmother? Is this ethical? Compare and contrast what Katrina does with Ratchatcher's fame and how Mr. Darling capitalized on Vincent's fame.