

Deadly Little Secret Study Guide

Deadly Little Secret by Laurie Faria Stolarz

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Plot Summary

The novel "Deadly Little Secrets" is part of Laurie Faria Stolarz's Touch Series of books, which focus around Camelia Hammond. Camelia Hammond is an ordinary and pretty sixteen year-old girl who attends Freetown High School. She is best friends with Kimmie and Wes. Three months before the book "Deadly Little Secrets" begins, a mysterious boy saves Camelia from being hit by a car.

At school the following year, Camelia discovers the new boy in school is named Ben Carter and is also apparently a murderer. Seeking closure from the car incident, Camelia seeks friendship with Ben and is instantly attracted to him. At the same time, Camelia begins receiving gifts, phone calls, and notes from what is apparently a secret admirer, whom later begins stalking Camelia. The notes and messages become angrier and angrier, leading Wes and Kimmie to suspect that Ben cannot be trusted.

Yet Camelia trusts Ben, who explains that his girlfriend, Julie, accidentally fell from a cliff during a date they had. Ben also reveals that he is psychometric, meaning he can sense and see through touching people. He tells Camelia she is in grave danger, and that she needs to trust him. It is revealed in time that Matt, Camelia's ex-boyfriend, is her stalker. He kidnaps Camelia, who is then rescued by Ben. Following the rescue, Ben decides to leave town.



1

1 Summary

Three months prior to the events of the book, Camelia Hammond is preparing for summer on the last day of school. Having just turned sixteen, Camelia is almost hit by Gloria Beckham's car as it peels across the parking lot toward her. At the last minute, Camelia is shoved aside by an unknown savior, a boy who asks her if she is alright and needs medical attention. Camelia, who is bruised, says she does not, and she notices a strange scar on the boy's forearm. He touches her stomach. He then takes off on his motorcycle as an ambulance shows up, called by another boy named Todd.

1 Analysis

Unusual events plague Camelia Hammond - an ordinary and pretty sixteen year-old girl - from the beginning of the book. Indeed, her first intimation to the reader of unusual events is her being saved from being hit by a car. The savior is unknown; stranger still is the savior's deft touch of Camelia's stomach, causing a tingling sensation in Camelia's body. Yet there is nothing sexual about the act. It is simply extraordinary.



2

2 Summary

In an undated journal entry, the unidentified writer speaks about a girl that he finds to be irresistible. The writer vows that he will have the girl despite any obstacle.

2 Analysis

Beyond the unusual event that opens the book, the second chapter deals with what appear to be journal entries, undated, and by an unidentified writer, who seems to be obsessing over a girl. However, at this stage, it is unclear who either the writer or the girl are, leaving unease in the reader's mind as the reader continues.



3

3 Summary

Three months after the accident, Camelia has recovered from the shock and the bruises. She wants to know more about the boy who saved her. In Mrs. Mazur's pottery class, Camelia's best friend, Kimmie, notices that Camelia is a little absent-minded lately. Kimmie has a hunch Camelia is thinking about a boy, and decides Camelia needs one.

3 Analysis

Camelia, a curious girl, seeks closure after her rescue. She wants to know about the boy who saves her. Camelia's best friend Kimmie, who is boy-crazy and very supportive of Camelia, has the idea that Camelia is actually smitten with someone.



4

4 Summary

At lunch, Kimmie and Camelia sit with their friend Wes, whom they befriended in freshman year. Wes tells them there is a new kid in school, one who supposedly killed his girlfriend by pushing her off a cliff. Matt, former boyfriend to Camelia, comes over to the table. He wants to know if Camelia will still help him study for French. Before the end of lunch, Camelia sees the boy from the parking lot briefly as he leaves the cafeteria.

4 Analysis

During lunch, three more characters are introduced. There is Wes, slightly nerdy, but a good friend to both Camelia and Kimmie. There is Matt, a handsome and popular kid, who is the ex-boyfriend of Camelia. And the boy who saves Camelia the previous year makes a brief appearance. His character, thus far, is shrouded in mystery, appearing around the edges of the story, having not yet entered the plot significantly. Wes, however, adds to the plot by revealing a new student is also a suspected murderer.

5

5 Summary

The boy's name turns out to be Ben Carter. Ben is the new kid who has supposedly killed his girlfriend. Camelia and Kimmie are waiting near his locker as classes let out for the day. When he arrives, Camelia thanks him for saving her life, but Ben ignores her at first. He then says that it wasn't he who saved her, that she has him confused with someone else. He then leaves.

5 Analysis

Ben Carter is both savior and suspected murderer. Despite the rest of the student body's hostile attitude toward Ben, Camelia is friendly toward him. She reasons that this is because he has saved her life. Ben, however, denies any involvement with saving Camelia's life, which only further frustrates her and complicates Camelia's curiosity. Their first encounter has set about an obvious path, that somehow both characters' fates will become intertwined.



6

6 Summary

In another undated journal entry, the unidentified writer continues describing the girl he wants. She is beautiful and sweet, and he says he has messed things up when he had the perfect opportunity to speak with her. He says in time he'll make the girl is, or die trying.

6 Analysis

The way the journal entry appears in the sixth chapter is to further confound the reader, and add to the mystery. Based on the writing, the reader has the initial inkling that the writer is probably referring to Camelia, and that the writer is probably Ben.



7

7 Summary

Camelia and Kimmie go to get ice cream at Brain Freeze. Camelia explains to Kimmie that Ben is lying about having him confused with someone else. Wes shows up a moment later and asks about Camelia talking to Ben, because everyone else is talking about it. Wes and Kimmie caution against Camelia's desire to find out more about Ben and bring closure to the situation. Kimmie urges Camelia to find a nice boy, but Camelia disagrees. She heads home to help her mother with dinner.

Camelia describes her mother as a health nut, from her insistence on fresh vegetables to her organic cotton sneakers to her Buddha beads. Her Mom blinks back tears. Aunt Alexandria has called earlier, and explained she is going to therapy and getting her life back on track. Camelia's mother also hands her an envelope that came in with the mail. In it is a picture of Camelia at school with a heart drawn on the picture. There is nothing else in the envelope or on the photo. Camelia thinks it's a Kimmie prank, and decides to call her.

7 Analysis

Camelia's interest in Ben becomes something of an obsession to her, just as the writer seems to have an obsession with Camelia. Kimmie attempts to urge Camelia to find a nice boy, but Camelia isn't interested in listening. In the seventh chapter, more information is revealed about Camelia's family. Like most families, Camelia's family is slightly eccentric, evidenced by her mother's green and organic health philosophy and practice.

Further adding to the mystery and the unease surrounding the writer is a photograph of Camelia with a heart drawn on the picture.



8

8 Summary

Kimmie denies being the source of the photograph. But she does continue checking out John Kenneally, a boy she finds to be very attractive.

Camelia and Kimmie discuss the photo. The photo was taken the day before, meaning it had to be developed or printed the same day. Camelia believes it was printed. She then accidentally walks into John, and Kimmie wants to know all about what it was like to do so.

8 Analysis

Kimmie and Camelia discuss the photo, and realize it was taken the same day it was dropped off. This implies that whoever took the photo knows where Camelia lives. It also demonstrates that someone is watching her and her house, timing things just right to drop off the photograph.



9

9 Summary

In Mr. Swenson's science class, Camelia tries to get Rena Maruso to be her lab partner. Rena helped Camelia in biology the year before. But Rena doesn't want to, so Camelia ends up being alone. Then Ben walks in, and sits down beside her.

9 Analysis

The intertwining of the characters of Camelia and Ben -an inescapable entwining of their lives- occurs with their forced lab partnership. Here the reader begins to wonder if fate prevails in the novel over free will.



10

10 Summary

The next day, Camelia tries to get Ben to talk to her, but he won't acknowledge her. Camelia finds him very attractive. She borrows White-Out from him, and then returns it to him at the end of the class. To get his attention, she taps on his shoulder, and Ben tells her not to.

Camelia goes to the library and tries to learn more about Ben on the internet. But Matt interrupts her quest. He asks her again about French, and then asks her about Ben. Camelia says she's curious about him because he's her lab partner, but Matt says he knows better. Matt says he will find out about Ben for Camelia.

10 Analysis

Camelia is drawn to Ben like a moth to a flame. She finds him very attractive, and wants to know more about him. Perhaps even more attractive than Ben's physical features is the mystery that surrounds him. Matt, who says he knows Camelia well, offers to help her get to the bottom of the mystery. Camelia accepts his offer.



11

11 Summary

By the end of the day, someone has written "Killer Go Home" on Ben's locker in black, permanent marker. The janitors have to cover it up with paint.

Meanwhile, Camelia finds out that Rena is dating Matt. Kimmie thinks Matt is trying to make Camelia jealous. Kimmie also attempts to rationally explain that if Ben were a real killer, he would be in jail and not in school. Camelia and Kimmie question Wes about the photograph, but Wes denies responsibility.

11 Analysis

Camelia finds out that Rena is dating Matt, leading Kimmie to suspect that Matt wants to make Camelia jealous. Wes, further adding to the ominous mystery, denies any involvement with the photograph.

12

12 Summary

The unidentified journal writer confesses he left the photograph for Camelia. The writer continues obsessing with her looks and wanting to be where she is. The writer reminds himself to be calm, because soon, he will have everything he wants.

12 Analysis

Whereas Wes denies leaving the photograph, the unidentified writer admits to having left it. The reader as of here knows for a fact that the target of obsession is indeed Camelia.



13

13 Summary

Camelia attempts to put the photo experience behind her, agreeing with Kimmie that it was probably just a stupid joke. Camelia and Ben work as lab partners in science. Ben continues ignoring Camelia's attempts to make small-talk. When she and Mr. Swenson tell Ben he should feel the tube of laxative solution they are mixing, Ben's fingers graze Camelia's, and he drops the tube. Swenson tells Ben to clean it up, but Camelia makes the move to do so. Ben seizes her wrist to stop her, and everyone begins talking. Swenson tells Ben to let go of her and to head to the office, which he does. Swenson then asks Camelia if she has been harmed, and Camelia says she is fine.

13 Analysis

Camelia attempts to rationalize the photo as a dumb joke, but the reader isn't convinced that the photograph is a joke, because the reader knows through the journal writer that the photograph is no joke. An accidental touch in science class between Ben and Camelia leads the reader to imagine that there is something unusual in touch, either between Ben and Camelia, or on the part of Ben. Despite the shocking reaction, Camelia is not harmed by the touch, which is itself an important piece of evidence the reader must consider in future chapters.



14

14 Summary

Camelia goes to Knead, the pottery place where she works. Spencer, her boss, senses something is wrong and gives her clay to sculpt. Spencer, who is twenty-five, owns the shop and is also a former student of Mrs. Mazur and has given Camelia free run of the place. Kimmie arrives a short while later, and says that everyone is talking about how Ben more or less attacked Camelia in science. Camelia explains that Ben touched her like he did in the parking lot, and began feeling odd. One touch from Ben is like her whole body is being touched, she explains.

Spencer heads out to pick up some molds, and says if Camelia needs to talk, he'll be around. When he leaves, Kimmie thinks it would be a good idea for Camelia to spend some time with Spencer, to spice up her life.

14 Analysis

The reader meets Camelia's boss, Spencer, who is himself slightly creepy for various reasons. His appearance confuses the reader, leading the reader to realize that the stalker/writer might indeed be Spencer, or some other minor character in the novel.

15

15 Summary

The unidentified writer continues his obsession with Camelia. He watches what she eats and how she dresses. He is determined to find out everything about Camelia. He reveals how he and she became very close once, and that she didn't fight it. The writer wants to get close again, and wants Camelia to let him in, even if he has to force it.

15 Analysis

The writer/stalker exhibits even creepier thoughts, wanting to know everything he can about Camelia. References to events -such as becoming close- lead the reader to conclude that the writer/stalker might very well be Ben. The stalker also begins using words like "force", which sets off alarm bells in the reader's mind.



16

16 Summary

Ben smiles at Camelia in school on Monday, completely taking her by surprise. He even bumps into her, and Camelia hopes it wasn't on accident. Ben shows up for science late. The rumor is that Ben is allowed to be late for all classes for one reason or another, perhaps to protect him from other students. Camelia studies Ben, finding him more and more attractive. When class ends, Ben says he'll see Camelia later. He then goes up to speak to Mr. Swenson.

Camelia waits in the hall for Ben, and Kimmie and Wes show up. As they start to walk away, Camelia glances back to see Ben standing in the doorway, looking at her. Camelia says she's going back, but Wes and Kimmie remind her about Ben's supposed crime, but Camelia will hear none of it. When she turns to head back to talk to Ben, Ben is gone.

16 Analysis

Further making the case for Ben as the writer/stalker is the friendly attitude Ben is now displaying toward Camelia. The stalker is determined to have Camelia, and a friendly front might be the best way to endear Camelia. Further confusing the reader is Ben's seeming ability to appear and disappear at the most inopportune moments for Camelia, leading the reader to wonder whether or not Ben could use these skills elsewhere, such as staking out a house and taking photographs.



17

17 Summary

Camelia and Kimmie go underwear shopping at the mall, letting Wes go to the arcade. Camelia contemplates buying pink pajama pants, but puts them back. When Camelia gets home, Matt is already waiting at the dining room table to study for French. Camelia asks about how things are going with Rena, and Matt replies that they're going alright. Camelia's parents are snuggled up on the couch, and Camelia explains to Matt that her parents think Americans are far too reserved. Because of that, they insist on public displays of affection. After they finish studying, Matt pulls out two articles for Camelia to see.

Matt explains that Principal Snell's secretary, Mrs. Shelley, has a friend who lives in the town where Ben's crimes occurred. Mrs. Shelley is how everything leaked out in the first place, Matt explains. Matt also explains that Ben has a history of violence, and put his hands on his girlfriend more than once before. Because evidence was circumstantial, and there wasn't enough proof, Ben was acquitted.

17 Analysis

Camelia's study date with Matt goes well. Matt gets help with French; and Camelia gets answers from Matt about Ben. Matt's explanation of Ben having a history of violence seems to coincide with the writer/stalker employing violent words like "force". The ominous mystery around Camelia and her stalker continues to grow, as does the distaste, contempt, and animosity with which Ben is referred to.

18

18 Summary

Before class on Tuesday, Camelia is eating a granola bar outside when Ben pulls up and asks to talk. He wants to start over, and begins by asking what Camelia has heard about him. Camelia says he should tell her about himself instead. Ben also apologizes about class the other day, for which he receives a week of detention. Ben asks Camelia out for a date on Saturday at two, for a late lunch. She agrees. Their knees bump, and Ben looks panicked. He drives off on his motorcycle.

18 Analysis

Despite all of the warning signs being against Ben, Camelia decides that she will go out on a date with him. Another accidental touch -this time, between their knees- throws Ben into a panic, and he takes off. The reader has even more evidence that there is something dangerous or extraordinary about touch as it relates to Ben.

18

18 Summary

The unidentified writer recalls that his obsession was out front of the school, looking for attention, like a slut. The writer does his best to keep calm, or that he would have to smack her in the face. He thinks that his obsession only wants to make him lose control.

18 Analysis

The writer displays erratic, violent tendencies, wanting to smack Camelia for looking like a slut. Here, an interesting divergence occurs: While it could be argued that Ben is indeed the writer/stalker, his dislike of touching Camelia seems to directly conflict with the stalker's desire to hit Camelia. However, such a dislike of intimate touch may be because the stalker prefers a violent, controlling touch.



20

20 Summary

Kimmie tags along on the date that Ben and Camelia have at Seaview Park. Kimmie is bringing her little brother, Nate. Kimmie is grounded for making Nate do all the chores; now, Kimmie is his slave for a few days as punishment. Ben has set up a picnic for Camelia. They learn about each other, from Ben's love of meditation and practice of taekwan-do, to Camelia's love of sculpting clay. Then they kiss, and Ben pulls away abruptly, packs up, and leaves without a word.

20 Analysis

Camelia has at least enough common sense not to head to her date alone. A public date in the park, with Kimmie nearby, seems to be a safe way to handle a potentially dangerous situation. Yet, a sudden kiss between Ben and Camelia causes Ben to flee.



21

21 Summary

Camelia and Kimmie drive around while Nate eats McDonald's in the backseat. They discuss the odd date. Ben looks up Camelia in the phone book, and meets her at her house. He wants to talk, face-to-face. Ben admits that he pushed Camelia out of the way of the car the year before, and he is telling her this now because she is in danger. He asks if there has been anything unusual going on, or if there is anyone around she does not trust. He tells her again she is in danger, that he wants to help, and then he leaves.

21 Analysis

The reader's indecision about the identity of the writer/stalker being Ben is further shifted toward Ben when Ben confesses to having looked up Camelia in the phone book. Ben also says that Camelia is in terrible danger, and that



22

22 Summary

When Camelia goes inside after Ben leaves, her parents are doing yoga. Camelia reveals that while her father is a conservative tax attorney, and the victim of his mom's health-obsessions. Camelia's mother lets her know that Matt and an unknown boy called. Camelia also tells her mother her date went well. Camelia goes upstairs, and the phone rings. It is a male voice. The caller will not identify himself, and says he is everywhere she is, and warns that Camelia needs to be a good girl. He then hangs up. Camelia notices her bedroom window and screen are pulled up, and there is a package sitting in the flowerbox outside her window. Inside are the pajama pants that Camelia put back when she was shopping.

Camelia's father walks in, telling her dinner is ready. Camelia hides the package, and her father says they will have real hot chocolate later in the evening. Camelia can't bring herself to tell her father what has just happened, yet.

22 Analysis

Camelia cannot bring herself to tell her parents about what is going on in her life yet, even after the disturbing phone call and the package she receives. What is even more disturbing is the writer/stalker is now clearly making sure Camelia knows that he knows where she always is. Camelia's failure to appeal to authority figures further endangers her.



23

23 Summary

Instead of talking to her father, Camelia decides to go to Kimmies, lying that Kimmie is having some sort of crisis. Camelia fills Kimmie in on the gift and the phone call. Camelia also reveals that Ben says she is in trouble. Kimmie warns Camelia to stay away from Ben.

23 Analysis

Camelia refuses to tell her parents still, and heads out to see Kimmie. All of the evidence thus far points to Ben, and Kimmie dutifully warns Camelia to stay away from Ben.



24

24 Summary

The unidentified writer insists he is not going anywhere. He also insists that his obsession needs to think twice about trying to make him jealous.

24 Analysis

The stalker is preparing for the long haul, insisting he is not going anywhere. He is also becoming angered at Camelia, which is not a good thing.



25

25 Summary

Camelia questions Wes about the gift, but Wes again denies involvement. He also denies making the call. She tells Wes she wanted it to be him, and Wes tells her that is a compliment. But Camelia then says she didn't mean it like that, and hurts Wes's feelings.

Spencer is the substitute teacher for art class that day. Kimmie is excited by the prospect. Spencer goes around, offering comments and suggestions on projects. He also talks to Camelia and asks why she didn't stick around on Friday night at Knead. Kimmie suggests again that Spencer likes Camelia, and that he may have left the gift.

25 Analysis

Wes continues to deny his involvement in the stalking, leading Camelia to understand that something is indeed seriously wrong. Kimmie suggests that perhaps Spencer is responsible for the gift, but Camelia isn't convinced. She still doesn't go to the proper authorities.



26

26 Summary

At lunch, Matt tells Camelia he got a 98 percent on his French quiz. He tells Camelia that Ben has been following around a freshman girl. He also talks about scholarships, but Camelia stops paying attention because Ben walks in. Matt reveals that everyone's parents are calling the school to get Ben kicked out. Across the cafeteria, John Kenneally and his soccer buddies begin tailing Ben. They sneak up on Ben at his table, and dump tomato soup down his shirt. Camelia goes and sits with Ben. She also helps clean him up. Everyone is watching and whispering, and Ben says Camelia shouldn't commit social suicide. Ben tells her to meet him that night, and he leaves.

26 Analysis

Despite all of the evidence that is mounting against Ben, Camelia still refuses to stay away from him. Indeed, she comes to his aid in the cafeteria following the tomato soup incident. Not only that, but Camelia consents to meeting Ben after school. The potential for danger is great, and leaves an uneasy feeling in the reader's mind.

27

27 Summary

The mysterious writer wonders why Camelia isn't appreciative of his gift, and why she has to go and make a scene in the cafeteria in front of everyone. The writer believes Camelia caused the scene for attention. He wonders why she is ignoring his warnings. He wants her to listen to him, so everything can be okay.

27 Analysis

The writer/stalker is indeed the giver of the gift that Camelia found by her window. He is unhappy that Camelia is not listening to him, and that she appears to be seeking attention. The writer/stalker is most likely a fellow student, having been in the cafeteria. This provides even more evidence against Ben.



28

28 Summary

By now, Camelia has had enough. She notices that Ben is always trying to touch her, and Kimmie thinks that he has a touching fetish. Camelia begins keeping her distance from Ben, and her life has returned to normal, mostly. She, Wes, and Kimmie go to the Brain Freeze, during which time they talk about Debbie Marcus, the freshman girl Ben has been following around. Debbie is captain of the JV swim team and dating Todd McCaffrey. Debbie apparently also received notes from Ben, which she proceeded to tear up and throw at Ben, according to Kimmie and Wes. They also believe that Camelia should tell her parents about the phone calls and the gift.

Ben comes into the shop, and asks to speak to Camelia. He tells her she is in danger, that he wants to help her, and that he isn't just trying to get close to her. He then tells her to follow him, which Camelia does.

28 Analysis

The creepiness around Ben continues to grow, as he tries to keep touching Camelia. This unsettles Camelia, who finally keeps her distance from Ben. Rumors also circulate that Ben has been stalking another girl, Debbie Marcus.

Kimmie and Wes, ever the patient, supportive, and kind best friends, continue to urge Camelia to tell her parents about the call and the gift, but Camelia will not.



29

29 Summary

Camelia tells Kimmie and Wes to give her fifteen minutes with Ben outside. Ben talks about his girlfriend, Julie, and says he didn't kill her. He says her death was an accident. They had gone hiking, gotten into an argument, and Ben had grabbed her arm, and Julie had pulled away. She then fell.

Ben explains that he is different. By touching people, Ben can sense things, and he can see them. He could see Julie was cheating on him. And he can see Camelia in danger. Ben explains it is called psychometry -being able to sense things through touching.

Camelia asks Ben what is supposed to happen to her, and Ben says he can see her dead body. This scares Camelia, who decides to leave.

29 Analysis

Ben explain his psychometric gifts. Here again, inescapable fate seems to be the order of the day, based on Ben's psychometric reading. He sees Camelia, dead; and Camelia is frightened by the reading. Just as surely as Ben and Camelia have been drawn together, so too does Camelia's fate seem certain.



30

30 Summary

The writer is incensed that Camelia won't listen to him. He wants to make her happy.

30 Analysis

The writer/stalker's anger is growing. He wants to make Camelia happy, and is only becoming angrier himself. To the reader, it appears as if Camelia's fate is indeed sealed.



31

31 Summary

Camelia is saddened and horrified by her afternoon. Kimmie and Wes try to get Camelia to talk, but she is unresponsive. At home, she researches psychometry, discovering that it is not a made-up word. Camelia then locks all the doors and windows, and goes downstairs to model with clay. A short time later, Kimmie shows up with brownies, nearly scaring Camelia to death.

It is then that they notice something is in the mailbox. It is an 8-by-10 photo of Camelia with the words "I am closer than you think" scribbled across it. Camelia now knows she is being watched, and Kimmie hugs her.

31 Analysis

Camelia is terribly frightened by Ben's reading. Further compounding her fear is the arrival of yet another photograph. Rather than hearts on the envelope, this time, there is a cryptic statement of observation -that the stalker/writer is watching her, and is closer than Camelia thinks.



32

32 Summary

Camelia decides to tell her parents, and she and Kimmie begin going over all of the details of what has happened. It could be Ben, it could be a number of people, or it could be some sort of a sadistic joke. The possibilities are endless.

Camnelia also explains Ben's psychometry to Kimmie. Kimmie doesn't buy it. The two girls continue to theorize about who it might be. Camelia's parents arrive home a short time later. Kimmie then heads home, and Camelia knows she has to speak to Ben.

32 Analysis

Camelia at long last decides to tell her parents. Kimmie doesn't believe that Ben has any special gifts; and Camelia has a gut instinct to want to speak to Ben again -wisely, or foolishly, it is not yet clear. Ben has lied about things before, so it is only natural to imagine that he would lie again.



33

33 Summary

When Camelia was in the basement, Kimmie accidentally broke the bathroom window, pelting it with rocks, trying to get Camelia's attention. Camelia goes to clean up the glass, only to discover the whole window is smashed in. There is mud on the floor and leads to Camelia's bedroom. There, on her dresser mirror, the word "bitch" is written in red lipstick.

33 Analysis

The stalker/writer assumes a new tactic. He actually invades the safety of Camelia's house, and violates the privacy and security of Camelia's bedroom. There is no place where Camelia can feel safe, now.



34

34 Summary

Beside the mirror message, there is a pile of strange fabric sitting on the dresser. It is the pajama pants, cut into little bits and pieces. She runs downstairs to her parents, only to find her mom crying. Aunt Alexia has been put back in the mental hospital. Camelia erases the lipstick from her mirror, and hides the pajama shreds under her bed.

She decides to call Ben, who unexpectedly arrives just as she calls him. Camelia grabs the photos and pajama shreds, and heads out through the window.

34 Analysis

The stalker is angry. He has cut up the pajama pants into tiny pieces. Camelia has decided enough is enough, but is unable to tell her parents, who are dealing with a family crisis. Camelia -unwisely- decides to handle things herself, and hides the fabric and removes the lipstick from her mirror. Each action that Camelia undertakes only further underscores the idea that she will indeed die at the end of everything.



35

35 Summary

Ben, who thinks they should stay at Camelia's house, nevertheless gives in when Camelia says she just wants to get away. They hop on his motorcycle and head to Jet Lag, an all-night diner. Ben says he knows something is wrong. He tries reading Camelia by taking her hands, saying he can see broken glass. Camelia is torn: either he is telling the truth, or is the one who broke the glass and left the message on the mirror.

To prove himself further, Ben brings up a memory of the past, when Camelia was little, and ran away. He describes what she was wearing, what she was doing, and Camelia realizes Ben is being honest. Ben also tries out his skills on the fabric, the photos, and the notes, and believes that whoever is leaving them is a male. They eat some food, and then Ben brings Camelia home.

35 Analysis

Ben, at least to a degree, seems to be able to validate his gift. He recalls a childhood memory of Camelia, which seems to convince her that Ben is indeed genuine. He is also able to determine that the identity of the note-writer and gift-leaver is indeed a male.



36

36 Summary

At school, Camelia talks to Debbie Marcus. Her parents have called the police and her parents have consulted a lawyer. According to one of Debbie's friends, Ben was sitting outside her house, watching. The police have told Debbie's parents that something would have to happen for them to get involved. Debbie tells Camelia to be careful. She hands Camelia a note that was taped to her locker. The note reads, "You're next!"

Additionally, the sign over the school's mascot has been changed to read "Freetown High, Home of the Convicted Murderer".

36 Analysis

Although Ben seems convincing, mounting evidence suggests that he is not someone to be trusted. Debbie Marcus makes the case, believing that Ben is following her, and is leaving her horrifying notes. The police have even gotten involved. The mystery around Ben has become something of a circus, and had descended into chaos: Ben is supposedly leaving notes for Debbie, as well as stalking her; yet, Ben tries to earn Camelia's trust by divulging his secret of psychometry. The reader doesn't know whether or not Ben can be trusted, and for good reasons.



37

37 Summary

Camelia meets up with Kimmie and Wes. They reveal that the media is picking up on the story of Ben's presence being detested by the student body. Camelia also fills Kimmie and Wes in on Debbie's story.

Ben arrives at school to see the sign has been changed over the mascot and drives off.

37 Analysis

The animosity of the school body becomes overbearing for Ben, who decides to leave school early. Camelia relates Debbie's story to Wes and Kimmie, who -along with the reader- further align themselves against Ben.



38

38 Summary

The principal calls an assembly where he lectures the students about vandalism and respect. He also talks about how the reputation of the school has been seriously damaged. That afternoon, at work, Camelia discovers she's alone and is happy to be able to work in peace. Spencer suddenly appears, having been downstairs doing work. He gets closer to Camelia, telling her to keep working and experimenting. It unnerves Camelia, but then Matt arrives, holding two cups of coffee. Spencer says hello, talks with them for a little while, and heads back downstairs.

Matt comments that there are a lot of creepy guys in Camelia's life. Kimmie has apparently spoken to Matt, because she is worried about Camelia. Matt is also worried about her. But Camelia says she can handle Ben.

38 Analysis

In the thirty-eighth chapter, Matt appears to seemingly save Camelia from an uncomfortable conversation with Spencer. Matt remarks that there are a lot of creepy guys in Camelia's life. Interestingly enough, Matt's sudden appearances are also unnerving the reader, and making Matt's comment about creepy guys self-revealing as well.



39

39 Summary

The unidentified writer is angry at Camelia, feeling she has betrayed him. The writer explains that he pretended the pajama pants were Camelia, and he was poised above her with the knife. He says he was startled by his behavior, but then realized that the message on the mirror and the shredded pants were everything Camelia wants, but that she doesn't know what's good for her the way he does.

39 Analysis

The writer/stalker reveals that he ripped the pajama pants to shreds, pretending they were Camelia. The idea of violence has spilled out into physical action, meaning the writer/stalker is losing grip on reality, and leaving his own mind to physically enter Camelia's world. By this time, it appears as if Camelia will meet with a horrible demise.



40

40 Summary

Camelia attempts to work things out in her mind. She laments that just as she is about to trust Ben, the Debbie situation occurs. Camelia heads home to find her parents are not there yet, and that everything is dark. She goes inside and turns on the lights, and someone begins calling her. No one answers. Camelia orders a pizza, and then Ben calls to see if she is okay. Ben says he is going to come over.

The phone rings again, and the voice on the other end tells Camelia not to forget the mailbox.

40 Analysis

Camelia, like the reader, is confused by events. Just as Ben seems trustworthy, events dictate otherwise. Not only that, but a series of phone calls where no one is on the other end of the line further scares Camelia, who nevertheless has the instinctive reaction to call Ben and ask him to come over.



41

41 Summary

Camelia doesn't go check the mailbox, but considers calling her father instead. But outside, loud knocking comes from the door. It is Ben. He has paid for the pizza, and Camelia motions to the mailbox. Inside is a manila envelope that contains photos cut up into pieces. Assembled, the photos bear a message: "Time's almost up".

41 Analysis

Ben's arrival also coincides with the arrival of a photograph with a deadly message. Whereas Camelia's instinct may be to reach out to Ben, the reader is put off by the timing of the photograph's delivery and Ben's arrival.



42

42 Summary

Ben doesn't want to call the police, who have threatened him because of Debbie. Ben tells Camelia she has to trust him. He reveals the scar on his forearm is from attempting to rescue Julie, and says it is a physical reminder of his failure. It was also the first real incident he had leading him to believe he had the gift of psychometry. Camelia's parents arrive home a moment later, Ben introduces himself as Camelia's lab partner, and then quickly leaves.

42 Analysis

Despite all of the evidence to the contrary, Ben tells Camelia she has to trust him because her life depends upon it. Ben also further explains Julie's death, which is still an uneasy subject for either Ben or Camelia to approach. Slowly, Ben's character has become a fixed point in the plot. His character, which had before only occupied the periphery of the story, now occupies a focal point of it. His story has indeed become intertwined with Camelia's, and inescapably so.



43

43 Summary

Camelia's parents arrived home late because they went to visit Aunt Alexia in the hospital, but Camelia's mother just couldn't bring herself to go in.

Camelia can't sleep that night, and she looks for her stuffed polar bear, but cannot find it. Camelia calls Ben, and Ben drives over to pick her up.

43 Analysis

Just as Camelia cannot sleep, she cannot go without speaking to Ben. Ben concedes to coming over and picking her up. Not only is Camelia not telling her parents about what is going on, but she is also sneaking out in the middle of the night.



44

44 Summary

Ben brings Camelia to Knead at Camelia's insistence. She has the keys to get in. They head in, and Ben notices the smell of turpentine on the air. She shows Ben the works she's created. Ben also wonders if Camelia's mother is alright, insisting that what happened with her mother and her aunt was not her mother's fault. Camelia tells Ben he shouldn't blame himself, either.

Camelia begins teaching Ben about sculpture, and how to do it, and they end up kissing.

44 Analysis

Just as Ben lets Camelia into his life, Camelia decides to trust him and let him into her life. She shows him the things she's created at Knead, and the moment of personal intimacy leads to a kiss. Just as their characters have been entwined, now the characters themselves have become officially physically entwined with the second kiss between them.



45

45 Summary

Camelia and her father talk about her mother and Aunt Alexia. Camelia's grandmother blamed Alexia's birth for her husband's leaving, and treated Camelia's mother better than Alexia. Camelia and her father make plans for dinner at Taco Bell.

That morning at school, everyone is talking. Debbie is in a coma after a hit-and-run. Everyone believes it to be Ben and his motorcycle. The attack happened right after Camelia was dropped off by Ben. Kimmie, Wes, and Matt are now very worried about Camelia. Camelia argues with Kimmie, telling her Ben is not stalking her, and she defends herself by saying she's trying to be a good friend, and says that Camelia never asks about her life anymore.

Kimmie also says that Camelia getting lost when she ran away when she was younger is common knowledge, that Ben could have heard about it anywhere. Camelia is horrified at the thought, and Kimmie tells her it is time to talk to the police and tell her parents. Kimmie gives Camelia until eight that night.

45 Analysis

Debbie is in a coma, and Camelia's childhood incident, being common knowledge, casts just as much doubt on Ben's character as Camelia gains in trust for Ben. His character is still a toss-up. Camelia also severely strains her friendship with Wes and Kimmie, leading to a serious but minor altercation between Kimmie and Camelia. Kimmie puts her foot down and tells Camelia she must tell her parents about the stalker, or Kimmie will. Camelia, who seems to lack any real independence and free will, is now being forced to reveal she is being stalked, because she cannot do it herself.



46

46 Summary

That morning, Ben shows up at school, only to be jumped and beat up by a group of unknown boys. Ben is sent home, and the school is concerned about Debbie and Camelia. Teachers and kids are all being friendly and offering support. But Camelia is unmoved. She trusts Ben. Camelia goes to Ben's house. The police have questioned Ben, and Ben denies attacking Debbie. But Camelia notices a scratch on the gas tank of the bike.

Ben says he still has to help Camelia. Camelia, though doubts linger on her mind, still trusts Ben. She needs him to help her figure everything out.

46 Analysis

The school body has had enough of Ben. They beat him up. Camelia goes to see him, and despite all evidence to the contrary, decides to trust Ben because she thinks Ben can help her figure everything out.



47

47 Summary

Camelia goes to Knead. Spencer speaks with her to offer her encouragement on her newest work. She smiles and works for two hours, long after Spencer leaves. Matt arrives to tell Camelia that Ben went crazy, trying to get Matt to drag race him down by the lake, even putting a dent in Matt's door. Matt needs Camelia to come talk to him, because he won't listen to anyone else. Ben has plowed into a tree and is in the hospital because Matt called an ambulance. Camelia doesn't understand why Ben would simply go crazy like that. Matt heads toward Fairmont, telling Camelia that is where the EMT took Ben because there are more people on staff at the hospital there.

But Matt misses the turn. He brings them to a dead-end street which seems to be the edge of a campsite with a trailer. Matt takes Camelia's cell phone and throws it out the window. In an instant, Camelia knows that Matt has lied about Ben. Matt says he just wanted to talk to her, and questions as to why they broke up. Matt tells Camelia that he has been following her, and that she is a selfish bitch for flirting with other boys, and that Ben will be blamed when one can find Camelia. Matt then takes out some handcuffs, and forces them on Camelia. He then leads her outside, where she attempts to get free, but Matt knocks her out.

47 Analysis

Matt has been revealed as the stalker/writer, in true Hitchcockian style. Matt, the all-American, good-looking boy, is secretly an obsessive, dangerous sociopath. He even goes so far as to kidnap Camelia by lying to her to get her into his car. Though many questions are still unanswered, the major question of the identity of the stalker has been revealed.



48

48 Summary

Camelia regains consciousness. She is in an unknown location with some food and bottled waters on a TV tray. Matt has tied her up with 40 knots. He insists he just wants to be with her. He intends to keep her there until she can tell him she loves him, and mean it. Matt then prepares to leave, because people will be questioning where they are. If Matt returns, everyone will blame it on Ben. Matt leaves some food and a bowl of water for Camelia, and then leaves.

48 Analysis

Matt explains that he wants Camelia to love him, and she will be imprisoned until she can admit genuine love for Matt. Matt also plans to blame Camelia's disappearance on Ben, because all evidence indicates that Ben is responsible for Debbie's coma and Julie's death.



49

49 Summary

Camelia begins trying to loosen her knots, but cannot untie herself. She tries screaming, but no one comes. She passes out soon after.

49 Analysis

Camelia is in shock and desperate to get away. She tries to free herself, but fails to do so, passing out in the process.



50

50 Summary

When Camelia comes to, she realizes she has thrown up. She kicks at the walls and manages to secure a knife. She cuts her thumb but manages to cut herself free of the wall.

50 Analysis

Camelia comes to, realizing she's thrown up, and sees a chance to escape in the form of a knife. She uses the knife to cut herself free from the wall, hurting herself in the process, but she is still bound by the knots around her hands. This escape from the wall can be viewed symbolically as Camelia finally gaining some sort of independence. Whereas she is drawn to Ben, held against her will by Matt, and can't speak to her parents about the stalker events, Camelia is able to cut herself free from being physically bound. In so doing, she gains courage and a measure of independence.



51

51 Summary

Matt returns just as Camelia is trying to open the door. She falls on the floor, and then kicks Matt in the gut. Camelia scrambles to her feet and runs outside, running through a campground. But the trailers are closed up for the season. Matt shouts from behind her that she'll never make it out. Just as Matt recaptures Camelia, Ben shows up and goes after Matt. The two fight and Ben knocks Matt out. Ben then helps Camelia onto her feet, and she thanks him.

51 Analysis

Camelia's escape almost goes wrong, until Ben shows up miraculously to save the day, knocking out Matt, and alerting the police. It turns out that Ben can indeed be trusted, to an extent. There are other mysteries that have yet to be resolved -so the reader, while relieved to see Ben has saved Camelia, is nevertheless still uneasy.



52

52 Summary

Matt is arrested, and things are made right by the school with Ben and his family. Camelia meets Wes and Kimmie for ice cream, and they settle back into their routine. The events have also propelled Camelia's mother out of her depression, and have given her the courage to go and see Alexia. Debbie's friends turned out to be the perpetrators of her stalking incident, which made her paranoid, and get hit by a car.

Ben discovered where Camelia was by detecting her in the fingerprints of her latest sculpture. He detected Matt, and then followed Matt to the trailer. Ben is leaving, though. He says Camelia is now safe and needs to remain that way. But Camelia doesn't want him to leave. Ben says he has to go, and he leaves.

52 Analysis

By the final chapter, all of the remaining mysteries are explained, including what happened to Debbie. Things are made right with Ben by the school. In the end, Ben decides to leave. Fate appears to have fallen prey to free will, though Ben's departure is something that Camelia's free will cannot countermand.



Characters

Camelia Hammond

At sixteen years old, Camelia Hammond is the main protagonist and narrator of the novel "Deadly Little Secret." She is a normal, pretty girl and the daughter to a conservative father and a health-obsessed mother. She is a simple and unassuming girl whose best friends, Wes and Kimmie, are supportive and encouraging and very loyal. Camelia loves sculpting and modeling with clay, and works at a pottery place called "Knead." Three months before the book begins, Camelia's world is turned upside-down when she is saved from being hit by a car by a mysterious boy.

The following year at school, Camelia discovers the new boy at school called Ben Carter and that he is supposedly a murderer, having killed his last girlfriend. Camelia is nevertheless instantly attracted to Ben, seeking to befriend him. As she does so, a stalker begins leaving notes, messages, and gifts for Camelia. Each message left from the stalker becomes more and more violent as Camelia grows closer to Ben. Kimmie and Wes caution Camelia to stay away from Ben, but Camelia refuses to do so. Camelia also discovers that Ben's gift of touch is called psychometry -being able to see and sense through touch. This further endears Camelia to him. Ben warns Camelia her life is in danger, and that she needs to trust him.

Camelia's character is presented through these events as having no real self-motivation and no independence. She refuses to listen to reason by moving closer to Ben, refusing to tell her parents about the stalker, and having other people decide things for her, such as when Kimmie demands Camelia tell her parents about the stalker, or Kimmie will.

By the end of the book, the stalker is revealed to be Matt, Camelia's ex-boyfriend. Matt kidnaps her and ties her up. By struggling against Matt, and managing to free herself from being tied up, Camelia gains a modicum of independence. Ben's intervention saves Camelia from Matt as she tries to escape. Camelia is then heartbroken when Ben decides he is going to leave town.

Mrs. Hammond

Mrs. Hammond is Camelia Hammond's kindly, caring, liberal, and health-obsessed mother. She serves a host of organic and soy foods, as well as tasteless vegetables as snacks and food to her daughter and her husband. Mrs. Hammond is also tremendously guilt-stricken because her sister, Alexia, is in a mental hospital. Their mother blamed Alexia's birth on their father's leaving, and treated Mrs. Hammond better than Alexia. Mrs. Hammond cannot bring herself to visit Alexia in the hospital, but after Camelia's incident, decides to go ahead and see Alexia.



Mr. Hammond

A conservative tax attorney, Mr. Hammond is the kind and caring father of Camelia, and husband to Mrs. Hammond. He takes an active interest in his daughter's well-being, sneaking real hot chocolate with Camelia, and having father-daughter dinners with her.

Kimmie

Kimmie is the best friend of Camelia and Wes. Kimmie is boy-crazy, quirky, and friendly. She is devoutly loyal to Camelia and Wes, and Kimmie frequently warns Camelia against getting close to Ben. Even when Camelia begins straining their friendship by pursuing Ben, Kimmie continues to stand by Camelia's side.

Wes

Wes is the best friend of Camelia and Kimmie. He is desperately seeking a girlfriend, is slightly nerdy, but is compassionate and devoutly loyal to Kimmie and to Camelia. He often serves as the driver for outings for the three of them. He also warns Camelia against getting too close to Ben.

Ben

Ben Carter is the love interest of Camelia, and the focus of much of the novel "Deadly Little Secret". He is mysterious, secretive, relatively handsome, rides a motorcycle, and has a large scar on his forearm. Three months before the beginning of the book, he saves Camelia's life when he pushes her out of the way of being hit by a car.

He arrives at Freetown High School after the summer, dogged by rumors of murdering his girlfriend, Julie. In reality, Ben is psychometric, meaning he can sense and see by touching people. He discovered Julie was cheating on him, and in their brief struggle, Julie fell to her death. Ben received the scar on his forearm by gashing himself when he tried to climb down to save Julie.

Ben senses that Camelia is in danger, and goes through great lengths to get her to trust him, which she eventually does. He is able to track down Camelia when Matt kidnaps her, alerts the police, and engages in a fight with Matt, knocking him out and saving Camelia. At the end of the novel, Ben decides to leave town, leaving Camelia heartbroken.

Matt

Matt is the ex-boyfriend of Camelia Hammond. He is presented as handsome, sophisticated, and an all-American boy. He is dating a girl named Rena to try to make



Camelia jealous, but it doesn't work. Matt is revealed to be Camelia's stalker, and each time she moves closer to Ben, Matt becomes more enraged. He ends up kidnapping her, seeking to blame it on Ben, and vowing not to release Camelia until Camelia loves him. Ben confronts Matt, frees Camelia, and Matt is subsequently arrested.

Nate

Nate is the eight-year old brother of Kimmie. After Kimmie made Nate do chores for her for a week, Kimmie's parents allowed Nate to make Kimmie his slave for three days.

Spencer

Spencer is the twenty-five year old owner of the pottery shop, "Knead". He is a former student of the art teacher, Mrs. Mazur. He sometimes substitutes for her. He tries to get Camelia to really feel the things she creates, but his efforts end up creeping Camelia out.

Debbie Marcus

Debbie Marcus is the freshman girl who is targeted and stalked by Ben, according to rumor. The police get involved and threaten Ben. Debbie, going home one night, is hit by a car and put into a coma. Everyone believes it was Ben. The truth comes out that Debbie's being stalked was actually a joke perpetrated by her friends, and Ben had nothing to do with it.



Objects/Places

Freetown High School

Freetown High School is the school that Camelia, Ben, Kimmie, Matt, and Wes attend. It is where much of the story takes place from Camelia seeking Ben out, to their friendship beginning, and to the classes that Camelia and her friends attend.

Camelia's House

Camelia's house originally serves as a refuge for Camelia, helping to keep her away from her stalker. But over time, the stalker targets the house, even breaking in to leave messages and rip up Camelia's pajama pants.

Camelia's Bedroom

Camelia's bedroom is where the stalker rips up Camelia's pajama pants and writes the word "bitch" on her dresser mirror.

The Mall

The mall is where Camelia, Kimmie, and Wes go to shop and play video games. It is where Camelia sees a pair of pajama pants she contemplates buying, and then decides not to. It is also a place where Camelia is watched by her stalker.

Knead

Knead is a pottery shop owned and operated by Spencer, who has given Camelia a key and free run of the place so that she may work on her own time.

Seaview Park

Seaview Park is where Camelia and Ben go on a date. It is also where Kimmie and her little brother, Nate, go to spend time and to keep an eye on Camelia.

Lipstick

Lipstick is what Camelia's stalker uses to write the word "bitch" on her bedroom dresser mirror.



Pajama Pants

Pajama pants are what Camelia wants to buy at the mall, but then decides not to because they are overpriced. The pajama pants are purchased and given as a gift to Camelia by the stalker, who later shreds them up in anger, leaving them on the dresser.

Photographs

Three photographs of Camelia are taken by the stalker, and left in her mailbox with different messages. One is a heart, and the other two are threatening messages.

Clay

Clay is what Camelia uses to make pottery and to sculpt. It harbors much of her emotional and creative energy, which Ben uses to track her down.



Themes

False Appearances

False appearance is a major and dominant theme in "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz. It focuses on characters being presented as straightforward, but becoming complex over time, and shattering previously held perceptions. It adds to the mystery surrounding the character of Ben and later Matt.

At first, Ben is presented as a murdering outcast. He eats alone, was present at the death of his girlfriend, and is the mostly likely candidate to be stalking both Camelia and Debbie Marcus. Matt, in juxtaposition, is presented as a kind, caring, and thoughtful all-American boy - the kind of boy that Kimmie thinks Camelia needs. Yet, Camelia is inexplicably drawn to Ben and away from Matt.

As the novel unfolds, it is revealed that Ben and Matt are very complex characters. Ben's girlfriend's death truly was accidental and he did not murder her. Furthermore, his desire to stay away from people is based on his dislike of touching them and seeing their futures. He also has nothing to do with stalking or harming Debbie, which is the result of a prank orchestrated by Debbie's friends.

Matt, on the other hand, is presented as a quiet, obsessive sociopath who has been stalking Camelia, and who harbors latent violent tendencies. Matt ultimately kidnaps Camelia, only to be stopped by Ben in the end.

Friendship

Friendship is a major, overarching theme in "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz. It is present in two distinct ways in the novel: existing friendship, and outreach.

In terms of existing friendship, friendship exists between Camelia, Kimmie, and Wes. The three of them confide in one another, spend time together, eat lunch together, and look out for one another. The latter is especially true in the warnings that Kimmie and Wes give Camelia about Ben. It also exists in Kimmie, especially, seeking to comfort and care for Camelia when Camelia is at her lowest facing her stalker. Kimmie will drop everything at a moment's notice to comfort Camelia, even going so far as to tag along on Camelia's date at the park with Ben.

The other way that friendship exists in the novel "Deadly Little Secret", is in terms of outreach. This occurs in the outreach from Camelia to Ben, seeking to be his friend by talking to him, and trying to get to know him. She helps clean him up after the soccer players dump tomato soup on Ben, and lets Ben into her own world by letting Ben learn about her love of sculpture.



Fate and Free Will

A clever, subtextual theme of fate and free will also runs the length of the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz. It exists out of sight, and can only be detected when properly sought. Fate is the idea that one's destiny is written and cannot be changed. Free will is the idea that people can choose their own destinies and that each action and event can result in a thousand different outcomes. This is true in the novel.

Camelia portrays the character whose fate appears written. She gets close to Ben, who is a suspected murderer, and who seems to be very physical when it comes to touch. Coupled with Camelia's seemingly inexplicable attraction to Ben despite all evidence against his trustworthiness as well as Ben's vision of Camelia's dead body and the increasing violence and obsessiveness of the stalker, it is essentially a foregone conclusion that Camelia is fated to die.

Further compounding the problem is that Ben continually tells Camelia she needs to trust him, which viewed in light of human free will, can be seen as an act of free will when Camelia chooses to trust him. By trusting Ben, Camelia is able to avoid what could have been her fate. Because she voluntarily lets Ben into her world, including the emotion she puts into sculpting, she is able to change the circumstances revolving around Ben's vision of her dead body. Her acts of free will ultimately mean that she does not die, which defies her fate, and provides evidence that free will does indeed overpower fate.



Style

Point of View

Laurie Faria Stolarz tells her novel "Deadly Little Secret" in the first-person perspective in the form of her main character and protagonist, Camelia Hammond. This is done because the events of the novel are fast-paced, revolve mainly around Camelia, and involve her thought process. In third-person narration, there is an objective quality to the storytelling. In first-person narration, the reader subjectively shares the intimate thoughts and feelings of the character telling the story. It also allows the reader to discover the motives and ideas of the character who is narrating, and this is especially important in "Deadly Little Secret" given the mystery and romance that swirl around Camelia.

Setting

The setting of the novel "Deadly Little Secrets" occurs in and around Freetown High School, and the town of Freetown (no state is given). The setting of the novel works perfectly, because it conjures up images of everyday, suburban America where things are calm, quiet, and in order. Thus, Ben's arrival, the mystery surrounding him, and the mystery of Camelia's stalker are given added gravity and an ominous sense of danger given the tranquil setting.

Language and Meaning

Because Lauria Faria Stolarz tells her novel "Deadly Little Secret" in first person perspective, from the point of view of the character of sixteen-year old Camelia, the language is simple and straightforward to match Camelia's character as an average, pretty girl. The language is not fancy, overly sentimental or romantic, or dense. This makes the novel much more believable and in turn, makes Camelia's character and the plot much more believable.

Structure

Laurie Faria Stolarz divides her novel "Deadly Little Secrets" into fifty-two chapters, arranged in chronological order. While most of the chapters are told by Camelia, a handful of chapters populate the others, where the font is different and appears to be designed to make the reader believe he or she is reading a journal or diary. Thus, while some chapters are relatively long, others occupy a page or two -and one chapter consists of a single paragraph. This is done to advance the plot of the story and in the chapters written by the stalker, give the novel an added sense of urgency and danger lurking beneath the surface.



Quotes

"She was talking that first time - in a group of faceless girls. I was there, too -standing a good distance back. Watching her" (Chapter 2, p. 5).

"Ben searches the room, and so do I, but the only remaining chair is the one beside mine" (Chapter 9, p. 36).

"I'm trying my hardest to concentrate, to tell myself that combining distilled water with sodium bicarbonate is the most important thing in the world right now, even though Ben is watching and recording my every move" (Chapter 13, p. 49).

"I said the alphabet forwards and backwards and counted up building bricks to keep myself calm. It was either that or haul off and smack her stupid little face" (Chapter 19, p. 79).

"'You're in danger,' he says again. 'But I want to help you'" (Chapter 21, p. 91).

"Personally, I don't know what the answer is. I just want it all to stop" (Chapter 28, p. 117).

"It's another eight-by-ten photograph of me. Only, instead of a bubbly heart surrounding my image, someone's scribbled over my face and then written the words I'M CLOSER THAN YOU THINK across my body in bright red marker" (Chapter 31, p.139).

"I imagined it was her there, and then I angled my body over the clothes, teasing the fabric with the tip of my knife right before I slashed it up" (Chapter 39, p. 180).

"'I'm not really sure what it is yet. I was kind of just going with my gut -if that makes any sense'" (Chapter 44, p. 201).

"After Ben drops me off, I lie awake in my bed, wondering if the night really happened or if it was just a dream" (Chapter 45, p. 206).

"'Don't go,' I repeat, louder this time. I pull him in closer, so that his heart pounds against my chest" (Chapter 52, p. 252).



Topics for Discussion

The characters of Ben and Matt illustrate the theme of false appearances in the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz. Compare and contrast the characters of Ben and Matt. How are the characters similar? How are they different? How are each of the characters first presented, and why? What are the true nature of their characters?

Throughout the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz, Camelia continually refuses to listen to reason about Ben. Why? What is the source of her desire to want to trust him? Provide evidence to support your claim.

Discuss the theme of friendship in the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz. In what ways does friendship appear in the novel? Which characters does friendship occur among? Describe this friendship in detail. Why does friendship matter in the novel?

Discuss the concepts of fate and free will. What is fate? What is free will? How do fate and free will factor into the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz? Which character appears to be fated? Why? Is this character truly fated? Why or why not?

At the end of the novel "Deadly Little Secret" by Laurie Faria Stolarz, Ben decides to leave town against the wishes of Camelia. Why does Ben decide to do this? Do you think this is a wise decision? Why?