

Double Standards Study Guide

Double Standards by Judith McNaught

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Plot Summary

Double Standards is a novel by Judith McNaught. The novel tells the story of Lauren Danner and Nick Sinclair. Lauren is an innocent young pianist who has come to the big city to find a job that will help rescue her father from a perilous financial situation. Lauren gets a job with Nick's company, Sinco, and quickly finds herself in a situation beyond her experience and control. Nick is fascinated with Lauren, attracted to her in ways he never believed himself capable of. However, when Nick learns that Lauren is a spy for his mortal enemy, Nick cuts Lauren out of his life without allowing her the chance to explain herself. Double Standards is a powerful novel that makes McNaught a shining star within the romance genre.

Lauren Danner has come to Detroit to ask a job from a distant relative in order to rescue her family from sure financial disaster. Lauren's father is a sick man with no health insurance, leaving Lauren desperate to find a way to deal with the mounting medical bills. When Philip Whitworth, a distant relative of her father's, offers Lauren a job spying on one of his competitors, Lauren is desperate enough to take the offer. However, Lauren changes her mind on the way to the interview and purposely fails her employment tests. Later, Lauren meets Nick Sinclair, whom she believes to be an engineer working for the company housed across the street, and charms him enough to make him promise to pull some strings with Sinco to get Lauren that much needed job.

That very night, Lauren is informed that she had a job interview the following day. When Lauren is offered a job at Sinco despite her disastrous first interview, she accepts with the hopes that she will run into Nick again. As luck would have it, Lauren runs into Nick on the way to her car and asks him to lunch to help her celebrate. Nick is once again charmed by Lauren and finds himself inviting her to a party in Harbor Springs he was planning to attend that weekend. Lauren accepts, fully aware of Nick's intentions. At first Lauren believes she can put Nick off, but quickly finds herself falling in love with her charming companion.

In Harbor Springs, Lauren charms her way through the celebrities at the party, impressed with Nick's acquaintances who appear to be so far above him in class and economic standing. Later, Lauren goes sailing with Nick and finds herself unable to resist his temptations any longer. Lauren willingly offers Nick her virtue, only to have him tease her for her naivety. The following morning Lauren is put off when Nick rushes her out the door, only to convince herself that Nick has done it out of fear for his own feelings. Lauren is convinced Nick will call. However, he never does.

Lauren is heartbroken, so she throws herself into her work. After only a few days, Lauren learns the truth about Nick Sinclair. Nick owns the corporation for which Lauren is employed. Lauren is devastated by this, convinced that Nick lied to her by not telling her the truth. When Lauren learns she is required to attend a party where Nick will be, she tries to refuse. When she cannot refuse, Lauren decides to make Nick believe his rebuff did not hurt her at all. Lauren fails, however, when Nick makes a passionate claim to her physically and she is forced to refuse.

Lauren decides she will never again be alone with Nick. However, when Lauren is assigned to a special project, she finds herself forced to work with Nick for hours at a time. Nick takes advantage of the situation and attempts to coax Lauren into an affair, but she refuses. Nick is frustrated by Lauren's refusal and slowly finds that he cannot stop thinking about her. When Lauren learns about Nick's relationship with the Whitworths, she tries to quit her job, but Nick refuses to allow her. Nick rushes to Lauren and begs her to remain, promising to marry her if she stays. Nick and Lauren are insanely happy until Philip tells Lauren that he will tell Nick she is a spy and Philip's mistress unless she agrees to steal the cover sheets to four bids Sinco is about to submit.

Lauren finds herself in a difficult position and decides to give Philip what he wants. However, Lauren is unaware that Sinco security has her under surveillance. When Nick returns from a trip, ready to whisk Lauren away on a surprise wedding trip, he is confronted with the evidence against Lauren. Nick refuses to allow Lauren to explain herself, instead believing the evidence over her word. Nick throws Lauren out of his office. Lauren goes home to her father's. Sometime later Nick learns that Lauren changed the dollar amounts of the bids, causing Philip to lose his bids. Nick forgives Lauren and begs her to come back to him. They marry and live happily ever after.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Double Standards is a novel by Judith McNaught. The novel tells the story of Lauren Danner and Nick Sinclair. Lauren is an innocent young pianist who has come to the big city to find a job that will help rescue her father from a perilous financial situation. Lauren gets a job with Nick's company, Sinco, and quickly finds herself in a situation beyond her experience and control. Nick is fascinated with Lauren, attracted to her in ways he never believed himself capable of. However, when Nick learns that Lauren is a spy for his mortal enemy, Nick cuts Lauren out of his life without allowing her the chance to explain herself. Double Standards is a powerful novel that makes McNaught a shining star within the romance genre.

Lauren Danner has come to Detroit to ask a job from a distant relative in order to rescue her family from sure financial disaster. Lauren's father is a sick man with no health insurance, leaving Lauren desperate to find a way to deal with the mounting medical bills. When Philip Whitworth, a distant relative of her father's, offers Lauren a job spying on one of his competitors, Lauren is desperate enough to take the offer. However, Lauren changes her mind on the way to the interview and purposely fails her employment tests. Later, Lauren meets Nick Sinclair, whom she believes to be an engineer working for the company housed across the street, and charms him enough to make him promise to pull some strings with Sinco to get Lauren that much needed job.

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she tries to refuse. When she cannot refuse, Lauren decides to make Nick believe his rebuff did not hurt her at all. Lauren fails, however, when Nick makes a passionate claim to her physically and she is forced to refuse.

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Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces several main characters. First is Philip Whitworth. At this point the reader is given the impression that Philip is an honest business man who fears one of his own employees is giving information about his company's bids to another company. This other company, Sinco, is continuously winning bids against Philip's own company, which is what has fueled Philip's belief that someone must be giving Philip's company bid amounts to Sinco so they can bid lower. This assumption may at first seem reasonable, since this sort of thing happens a lot in the corporate world, but the reader may take note at this point that Philip has no proof of a spy in his own corporation, but has simply made an assumption. Philip's quick assumption of guilt among his own employees gives the reader insight into Philip's personality.

The next character introduced is Lauren Danner. Lauren is a young, innocent woman who is looking for a job in order to help her father and step-mother pay some debts incurred by her father's illness. This desire to help her family shows Lauren to be a highly responsible, kind hearted person with innocent intentions. However, these innocent intentions are tainted by Philip when he asks Lauren to take a job at Sinco and spy for him. Lauren agrees because she needs a job that pays well, but it clearly goes against her moral fiber, suggesting to the reader she may not follow through with her promise to Philip.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

On the drive to Sinco, Lauren changes her mind about spying for Philip. Lauren purposely fails the employment tests, making it seem as though she is unintelligent and cannot type. Lauren also lies on her application, purposely leaving out her extensive education. Where the application asks what role she would like to play in the company, Lauren lists president and personnel manager, insuring the personnel manager's ire. When Lauren leaves, the personnel manager makes her feel as though there is no chance she will ever get a job with Sinco.

Afterward, Lauren cuts through a construction site on the way to her car. Halfway across the lot, Lauren hears someone come up behind her. Convinced it is a mugger, Lauren begins to run toward the building where she can see two men coming out. In her panic, Lauren trips and sprains her ankle. One of the men, Nick, helps her to her feet and insists on taking her into the building to make sure she does not need medical attention. Lauren finds Nick exceedingly handsome as well as charming, despite the fact that he believes her to be a child. Nick takes Lauren to an office where she cleans up and proves to him she is not a child. They engage in some mild flirting during which Lauren is given the impression that Nick is an engineer who works for Global Industries. When Nick escorts Lauren out of the building, he promises to put in a good word for her with Sinco in order to help her get a job. Afterward, Lauren drives toward Philip's home, preparing to tell him the bad news that she is unlikely to get a job with Sinco despite Nick's promise.

On the way to the Whitworth's, Lauren recalls the Whitworth's poor treatment of her as a child, fearful of finding the Whitworth family to be as rude and conceited as they were the last time she saw them fourteen years before. When Lauren was young, Philip's son treated her cruelly and when Lauren attempted to tell on him, his mother called Lauren and her own mother names and suggested that they were worthless people because they did not have the same wealth and social class as the Whitworths. Lauren has never forgotten this treatment and continues to feel the sting of those unpleasant moments.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Lauren at first agrees to help Philip spy on Sinco out of a sense of obligation because he is family and out of a need to get a job. However, Lauren shows her moral fiber when she decides she cannot do as Philip has requested. Lauren purposely fails the employment tests and lies on the application in order to insure that she will not be offered a job. This action is humorous at this point in the novel, but the lies seem destined to come back to haunt Lauren later in the novel as the plot continues to develop.

Nick Sinclair is introduced when Lauren, the heroine of the story, literally falls at his feet. The reader meets Nick through Lauren, therefore all the reader's impressions are from Lauren's awe struck point of view. Lauren sees Nick as darkly handsome and charming, determined to make him see her as a woman when he mistakes her for a teenager. The reader right away senses that Nick will be the romantic interest for Lauren in this plot, clued in by Lauren's overwhelming attraction to Nick from the moment she sees his handsome face. Also interesting is the fact that at this point Lauren thinks that Nick is only an engineer, unaware that he is the owner of Global Industries. This affects the way Lauren interacts with Nick causing the reader to wonder what will happen when she learns the truth.

As well as introducing the main characters, this chapter also introduces some tension into the plot. Besides the plan for Lauren to spy on Sinco, these chapters also explain Lauren's relationship to the Whitworths. Lauren is a distant relative of the Whitworth's and once spent several days at their home as a child. During this visit, Lauren was treated as though she were inferior to the wealthy family, forming her low opinion of the family, especially the son. This is important because it again shows Lauren's depth of character in which she feels a duty to help out Philip despite his poor treatment of her years before.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Lauren goes to the Whitworth home as she had been invited to do earlier in the day. Lauren showers and changes before joining the family for dinner. The Whitworths welcome Lauren with more grace than they had done years before, giving Lauren the impression that the family has mellowed out with age. Lauren apologizes to Philip, explaining that she does not believe she will be offered a job with Sinco, but does not tell him she purposely ruined the interview. Lauren also explains about meeting Nick, not aware of the collective intake of breath at the mention of Nick's name.

Lauren receives a phone call from Sinco's personnel manager during dinner asking her to come in for an interview with a Mr. Williams the following morning. Apparently Nick made a few phone calls and put in a good word for Lauren. Philip insists that Lauren go to the interview, suggesting if she is offered a job that she go home immediately to collect her things and then move into a condo he owns. Philip explains the condo is for an aunt, but the aunt is currently out of the country and it would save Philip money on security if Lauren would stay in it. Lauren is thrilled because she will not have to pay rent, therefore she will have more money for her father's medical bills.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Despite a bad experience with them in the past, Lauren finds the Whitworths to be kind and generous to her. Lauren accepts this kindness with all the innocence of her experiences, not seeing that there might be something selfish in Philip's intentions. Lauren gets a call from Sinco asking her to come in for an interview. Nick's promise to put in a good word for her seems to have done some good, though Lauren believes it to be because Nick is a beloved engineer at the company. Lauren again shows her naivety here believing a simple employee could have brought about this change in opinions for her. The reader knows better because the reader knows the Nick owns the company and only a call from him could have gotten Lauren this interview after her disastrous first meeting with the personnel manager. Lauren is something of an unreliable narrator in her belief that Nick is less of a powerful man than he truly is, touching on the theme of misunderstandings.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Lauren goes to the interview where she meets Jim Williams, a stern but kind executive at Sinco. Jim likes Lauren immediately and offers the job, which Lauren decides to take despite her earlier decision to not work for Sinco because she wants to be close to Nick. On her way out, Lauren runs into Nick and offers to take him to lunch to celebrate. Nick takes Lauren to a restaurant called Tony's that is owned by a family friend. Tony is a kind man who immediately befriends Lauren when he learns that she is half-Italian. Tony insists that a young woman like Lauren needs family in a big city like Detroit and offers to be that family for her.

Over lunch, Nick and Lauren get to know each other a little better, the conversation mostly focused on Lauren. Lauren finds Nick easy to talk to, but also finds herself omitting certain truths about herself because of the lies she wrote on her application. Although Lauren invited Nick to lunch, Nick pays the bill. Afterward, Nick invites Lauren to go to Harbor Springs where he was to attend a party that weekend. Nick drives Lauren's car, encouraging her to talk about her family during the long drive. Shortly before arriving in Harbor Springs, Nick pulls over so they can rest for a few minutes. Nick flirts with Lauren, making it clear that he intends to share a bed with her that weekend. Lauren is frightened by his intensity at first because she has little experience with men, in fact has never had a boyfriend because of her intensive studies, but soon realizes that she is falling in love with Nick. Lauren decides she will make Nick fall in love with her too.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Lauren now has a job with Sinco and decides to take it to be close to Nick, whom she has already developed an affection for after only one meeting. Lauren's decision to take the job is very important to the plot for two reasons. First, Lauren is now in a position to spy for Philip, something that will put her morals to the test later in the novel. Second, now Lauren is in a position to be near Nick, the object of her desire, suggesting that Nick will remain a large focus of the novel development.

Lauren runs into Nick on her way out of the interview and offers to take him to lunch. This offer reveals to the reader that Lauren believes Nick to be a lowly engineer, not an executive, touching on the theme of misunderstandings. Nick and Lauren get to know each other, showing the beginnings of a relationship that the reader believes will lead to a romance. Lauren clearly hopes this is the case. When Nick kisses Lauren, making it clear that he intends to share his bed with her that weekend as they head to a party in Harbor Springs, Lauren reveals to the reader not only her inexperience with men, but her intention to make Nick fall in love with her. This again shows Lauren's naivety in

believing she can make such a man as Nick fall in love with her, but also introduces the theme of falling in love to the plot.

Chapter 5-6

Chapter 5-6 Summary

Lauren and Nick arrive at a beautiful, lakeside home where a party is in full swing in the backyard. Lauren is immediately overwhelmed with the number of celebrities at the party, especially when a famous supermodel comes up to greet Nick. The hostess of the party asks Nick if he needs a room in which to change, causing Lauren a moment of embarrassment when she realizes she does not have anything appropriate to wear to a dinner of that type. Nick assures her that he has it taken care of, promising to send over a dress from his nearby home, The Cove. Nick departs, leaving Lauren alone to search out a phone in order to call her father and let him know she will not be home for a few more days. As Lauren is leaving the study where she made the call, she overhears the famous supermodel discussing her with another guest, implying that she is much too young and innocent for Nick.

Lauren dresses in an expensive gown that Nick sent over and joins him outside. Nick is unhappy with the number of people at the party who want to talk business with him. Lauren comes to his rescue, charmingly stealing him away from any conversation that appears to be getting too serious. Finally, Nick and Lauren get a few minutes alone on the dance floor where Nick attempts to charm Lauren into going to bed. Lauren resists and is finally rescued when a business associate distracts Nick long enough to convince him Lauren is much too exhausted to be fun that night. Nick takes Lauren to her room and makes a date for the following day. The next morning, Lauren purposely sets out to make Nick wait for her, but her plan backfires when she cannot get her car out of the driveway. Lauren arrives at The Cove nearly an hour late for her date with Nick, but finds him still waiting for her.

Chapter 5-6 Analysis

Lauren and Nick arrive at Harbor Springs where Lauren is surprised to see the kind of friends Nick has. Lauren, still showing her innocence, believes Nick must be an amazing engineer to have so many rich and famous friends. Lauren still has no clue to Nick's real identity. Lauren also shows the reader her humble side when she panics at the idea of going to dinner without the proper attire, but again does not question Nick's ability to find her the perfect dress.

Nick has a home nearby called The Cove. This home is isolated and well designed, clearly an expensive home, illustrating for the reader how wealthy Nick must be. However, Lauren continues to be ignorant of Nick's wealth, making excuses for his access to these riches that make sense to her. The reader finds this interesting, curious how Lauren will react when she learns the truth. The reader also wonders if Lauren's perception of Nick might not have some influence over her affections for him. The

reader is left wondering if Lauren would feel the same generosity of spirit toward Nick if she knew the truth.

Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

Lauren and Nick spend the day sailing. Lauren asks Nick about himself, specifically about his family. Nick tells Lauren that his father died when he was young. When pressed, Nick tells Lauren how his mother was a rich debutante who left a rich fiancé to marry his father and promptly regretted it. Nick's mother was miserable living the life of working class housewife. When Nick's father died, his mother spared no time in running back to the fiancé she jilted and returning to her life of luxury. Lauren cries as she imagines the poor little boy left behind by his mother to be raised by his poor grandparents. Nick teases Lauren until she brushes off her emotions with a touch of humor. Lauren tries to get Nick to talk more about himself, but he seems reluctant.

After dinner at The Cove, Nick takes Lauren into his bedroom and makes love to her. Lauren is shy and intimidated, wanting to tell Nick she is a virgin but unable to find the words. Afterward Lauren is embarrassed that now Nick knows she was a virgin. Lauren rushes out of the room, but Nick follows. Nick tells her that her virginity is unusual, but does not change his opinion of her. Nick expresses his belief that men and women alike should feel free to sleep with as many people as they want, amused that Lauren saved herself for so long. Nick then takes Lauren back into the bedroom to make love to her again. The next morning, Nick wakes Lauren and tells her that a business associate is coming and she needs to leave. Nick does not kiss Lauren goodbye and coldly tells her that if she gets pregnant as a result of their night together, she should call him. Lauren believes that Nick is falling in love with her and is frightened by his feelings. However, Lauren believes he will come around.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Lauren learns a few things about Nick, including the fact that his mother abandoned him after his father died. Lauren is so touched by this information that she decides she will allow Nick to make love to her. However, Lauren does not tell Nick she is a virgin and is embarrassed afterward when it is obvious he has figured it out. Lauren is afraid that her virginity will prove Nick's assumption that Lauren is naive, something she has tried hard to convince him is not true. Nick finds the whole thing amusing, suggesting Lauren should take as many lovers as she can handle because all women have the same rights when it comes to sex as men. This suggestion will come back to haunt Nick later in the novel when he realizes the idea of Lauren with another man is an unpleasant thought.

Nick sends Lauren home coldly the next morning, clearly done with her now that he has gotten what he wanted. Lauren tells herself that Nick is simply afraid of his feelings for her and patiently waits for him to call. This behavior on Nick's part seems to show the reader that Nick is not interested in commitment. Touching on the theme of self-preservation, this reaction seems to be Nick's way of protecting himself from getting hurt

by another woman. However, the reader is not sure that Nick's feelings even go that deep at this point. In order for Nick to be concerned about getting hurt, he would have to be in love, but Nick appears to only be in lust at this point.

Chapter 9-10

Chapter 9-10 Summary

Lauren goes home to get her things and then moves into Philip's condo. The condo is in a gated community where a guard must allow people in and out. Philip is waiting for Lauren when she arrives the first day and shows her around. Lauren finds clothes in the closets and asks Philip what to do with them. Due to the fact that many of the clothes are Lauren's size, Philip tells her she can keep them as he has no use for them. Lauren is thrilled because many of the clothes are very expensive. However, Lauren is also aware that the condo must have been a lover's nest for Philip's mistress based on the clothes and the fact that Philip asks Lauren not to tell Mrs. Whitworth about the condo because she is not currently aware of its existence.

Lauren waits the two weeks before her job begins for Nick to call, but he never does. Lauren begins working at Sinco and is kept very busy. Lauren expects Nick to call to congratulate her on her first day at work, but is again disappointed. Lauren begins to realize that Nick is never going to call, that their weekend together did not mean as much to him as it did to her. The following day, Jim sends Lauren to the public relations department where she sees a folder full of clippings about Nick. It is through this folder that Lauren learns Nick's true identity. Lauren takes the folder and reads through it, finding pictures of Nick and another woman taken the weekend she was in Harbor Springs with him. It appears that Nick sent Lauren home to spend time with his mistress. Lauren is heartbroken. When Jim sees Lauren crying, he tries to console her. Lauren explains her situation with Nick to Jim, expressing a desire to never see Nick again. Jim tells Lauren she must confront Nick head on, explaining that they are to attend a party the following weekend that Nick is hosting.

Chapter 9-10 Analysis

Lauren moves into Philip's condo and finds the closets full of clothing. Lauren is thrilled when Philip tells her she can have the clothes. The condo was clearly a lover's nest, but Lauren has no qualms about accepting the gifts once meant for Philip's lover. The reader is a little hesitant about Lauren's open acceptance of this gift, however, wondering if someone might begin to wonder if she is also Philip's mistress. This seems to foreshadow a time when a misunderstanding, a theme of the novel, might cause Lauren some difficulty.

Lauren is deeply disappointed when Nick never calls. Lauren was convinced that Nick loved her and was simply afraid of his feelings. However, Lauren is finally forced to face that Nick was only using her for sexual satisfaction. This breaks Lauren's heart and makes her feel as though she has been used, again giving the reader insight into Lauren's innocence. Later, Lauren learns that Nick was joined by another woman after he sent her home. Lauren is jealous and angry. Nick is not the person Lauren thought

he was and the man she believed herself in love with, and decides she never wants to have anything to do with him. However, Lauren must attend a party that Nick is hosting, bringing these two characters back together. Lauren's new feelings promise a great deal of tension when this next meeting takes place.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Lauren dresses in one of the fancy dresses Philip's previous tenant left behind in the condo for the executive's meeting she is to attend with Jim. Jim picks her up and assures her she looks perfect. Lauren is nervous because she does not want to see Nick again or to allow him to see how much he hurt her. Lauren acts cool throughout the party, pretending that being in the same room with Nick does not bother her. Lauren is jealous that Nick is there with Ericka Moran, the same woman who joined him at Harbor Springs after Lauren left. Lauren's jealousy relaxes some, however, when she notices Jim's reaction to Ericka. Jim clearly is in love with Ericka.

During the party, Lauren slips outside to get some fresh air. Lauren hears someone come up behind her and believes it to be Jim. However, it turns out to be Nick, who has caught on to Lauren's game and finds the whole thing amusing. Nick suggests to Lauren that they were good together and should reunite. Nick wants Lauren to share a bed with him right there in the office building. Lauren is shocked, but also finds herself nearly unable to resist Nick's charms. Only anger keeps Lauren from relenting. Lauren remembers her mother's earrings that she lost in Nick's bed, earrings that are the only things she has left of her dead mother, and demands their return.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Lauren attends the party that Nick is hosting and is shocked by the power he still has over her. Lauren is clearly in love, touching on the theme of falling in love, and wants to be with Nick. However, Nick is no longer the man Lauren believed him to be so she resists him when he attempts to take her to bed again. Lauren is showing her moral fiber here, resisting the idea of being with Nick simply for physical gratification. Lauren wants a relationship and does not believe that this is what Nick wants. Lauren shows strength of character by fighting his advances. At this same party, Lauren meets Ericka, a minor character, who appears to be Nick's mistress. Interestingly enough, however, it seems that Jim is in love with Ericka. Lauren finds this amusing and decides to do all she can to help make Ericka jealous for Jim by playing along with his attempts to make it appear as though the two of them are romantically linked. It is a game that will continue through the plot and serve to make both Ericka and Nick jealous, perhaps to help aid in the theme of falling in love.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The following Monday at work, Lauren is called down to the personnel office. It seems Nick is working on a project that requires an Italian translator and Lauren is the only one available. Lauren resists the assignment, but is informed that she has no choice. When Lauren reports for duty in Nick's office, Nick is equally resistant. However, upon learning that she is fluent in Italian, Nick relents. Nick sends Lauren to his secretary in order to translate a letter sent to him by an Italian named Rossi with whom he is working on a secret project. Lauren finds Mary unfriendly and cold toward her, like a lioness protecting her territory.

Lauren spends the rest of the afternoon helping Mary, answering the phone, finding herself stuck with the humiliation of fielding calls from Nick's various lovers. Later, Nick calls Lauren into his office and suggests they have an affair. Again Lauren resists his advances and is embarrassed when Jim walks in on them, suggesting to Nick that he and Lauren have a date that weekend. Later, in Jim's office, Lauren learns that he and Nick are old friends. Jim tells Lauren that he was once engaged to Ericka, the woman Nick spent the rest of the weekend in Harbor Springs with. Jim feels that Nick stole Ericka away and deserves a little payback. At the same time, Nick finds himself unable to resist Lauren. Nick had sworn to himself he was going to put distance between the two of them, but now cannot resist the idea of an affair despite the danger of hurting her.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Lauren is reassigned to Nick's office in order to help with a special project. This once again gets these two characters close together again and puts them in a situation where they are forced to deal with one another. Lauren answers the phone and takes messages from several of Nick's lovers, causing her opinion of him to continue to darken. When Nick tries again to get Lauren to sleep with him, Jim walks in and suggests that he and Lauren are dating. Lauren is grateful for this assistance even though she does not feel it was necessary to lie. Lauren later finds out that Nick and Jim are old friends and Jim feels that Nick deserves a little payback for stealing away his own fiancé years before. This sets up a game of deception between these three that has the potential of blowing up in their faces if they are not careful, adding some tension to the plot.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

When Lauren arrives in Nick's office the following afternoon, he begins going through her personnel file with her, using the information he gathers there in hopes of enticing her into an affair. Once again, Lauren rebuffs his advances. The next morning, Nick treats Lauren like an ordinary secretary, offending her by sending her to get his breakfast. Lauren is thrown off balance by Nick's constantly shifting behaviors. Nick spends the afternoon working, and after a meeting about the special project, Nick takes Lauren aside and explains the nature of the project to her. The project involves an inventor in Italy, Rossi, who believes he had invented a formula that will make carpet last forever. However, the man is very skittish, reluctant to trust anyone, and his formula is untested.

Nick seems to be accepting Lauren's reluctance to have an affair with him. However, Nick shows his true colors during a conference call. Nick attempts to seduce Lauren during a conference call, breaking her concentration and causing her to protest aloud, much to her embarrassment with the other business men on the phone overhear her protestations. Finally Lauren stands up to Nick. Lauren tells Nick that she is afraid he will hurt her again and begs him to please stop attempting to seduce her. Lauren asks that they simply become friends. Much to Lauren's dismay, Nick agrees.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Nick continues to push Lauren to have an affair with him, driving her into a corner until she is forced to tell him what she wants from a relationship with him. Lauren is a good girl, a moral girl, and she wants a relationship. When Nick refuses, Lauren makes it clear that she does not want to sleep with him again. Lauren is deeply hurt by Nick's behavior, but does not allow him to force her to back down from her moral stance. This reveals a great deal about Lauren's personality. It also gives insight into Nick's personality. Nick is a person who is used to getting what he wants, but Lauren is not allowing him what he wants. Nick has tried everything he can, but to no avail. The reader is curious what Nick will do now to get what he wants.

The special project Nick is working on is a special formula that is supposed to make carpets last forever. This is important because it is a project that could mean a lot of money for anyone who was in on the ground floor. Knowledge of this project could help a failing company regain its financial footing, which makes the reader wonder what would happen if Philip Whitworth happened to learn about it. The reader knows that Lauren is supposed to be spying for Philip and wonders if she will tell him about this project, thereby betraying Nick.

Chapters 14-15

Chapters 14-15 Summary

Nick is out of town for the rest of the week. Lauren visits with Philip, but does not tell him anything although she may have heard the name of one of his employees that she was supposed to listen for. Lauren has decided she does not want to spy on Nick for Philip despite her tumultuous relationship with Nick. Lauren only tells Philip that Nick is out of town. From that information, Philip learns where Nick has gone and sends investigators to find out why he was in Italy.

That weekend, Nick shows up at Lauren's condo and again attempts to seduce her. Lauren makes it clear to Nick that she wants a relationship, not an affair. When Nick refuses to accept her terms, Lauren kicks him out. Nick leaves Lauren a pair of earrings, pearl earrings to replace her mother's gold earrings, as he walks out the door. The following Monday, Lauren mistakenly believes she will no longer have to work with Nick, but is called upstairs anyway to await a call from Rossi. Lauren promptly returns the pearl earrings to Nick, making it clear she is not interested in gifts from him. Lauren spends the next few days enduring Nick's dark moods and forced to watch him entertain his female companions in front of her as though she had never existed to him. Lauren is hurt and humiliated, but she continues to work for Nick. Lauren also makes the conscious decision not to spy for Philip Whitworth despite Nick's poor behavior.

Chapters 14-15 Analysis

When Lauren visits with Philip Whitworth, she does not tell him about Rossi, having made the decision not to spy on Nick despite his ill temper and reluctance to commit to a relationship. However, Philip takes the information that Nick is out of town to find out about Rossi. This could possibly set Lauren up to be caught as a spy for Philip, injecting tension into the plot.

Nick visits Lauren that weekend and makes one final attempt to seduce her. Lauren tells Nick what she wants from him and when he refuses, she kicks him out. Nick leaves behind a pair of earrings meant to replace Lauren's earrings. Lauren is so hurt and angry, she returns the earrings without stopping to wonder what they might have meant to Nick. Lauren wants to be in love, to have a committed relationship, but Nick is dragging his feet. Nick was hurt once before and, touching on the theme of self-preservation, is refusing to commit because he does not want to be hurt again.

Chapters 16-17

Chapters 16-17 Summary

Due to the fact that Lauren has been assigned to a top secret project, Global Industries security has begun verifying her employment information. Several lies on her application have come to the attention of the head of security and he has decided to open an investigation into her history. At the same time, Lauren has brought a cake to work to celebrate Jim's birthday. Lauren also gives Jim a sweater she originally intended for Nick. Later in the day, Jim brings cake to Nick's office, showing off the sweater to Nick and then kissing Lauren as though they are lovers. Nick becomes angry at this show. For the next few days, Nick is a tyrant, causing a great deal of tension for everyone at Global Industries, except Mary who seems to be pleased with Nick's behavior. When Nick goes out of town a few days later, Mary takes Lauren out to lunch. Over lunch, Mary tells Lauren about Nick, how his mother abandoned him and one Christmas he attempted to buy her affections with a small pill box. Nick's mother gave the box to the maid in front of Nick. Nick refused to ever buy another gift for a woman again after that. Lauren is shocked at the story, but not nearly as shocked as she is when she learns that Nick's mother is Carol Whitworth, Philip's wife.

Lauren immediately decides she must resign from Sinco. Lauren tells Jim about her relationship with the Whitworths and how Philip wanted her to spy on Sinco for him. Jim tries to talk Lauren out of leaving, but she insists. Jim calls Nick at the international business meeting he is attending and tells him that Lauren is leaving. Nick immediately flies back to Detroit and confesses his love for Lauren, begging her to stay; Lauren agrees. That evening, Lauren and Nick attend a charity ball. Lauren is surprised that Nick would take her somewhere so public, assuming that his intention is to have a discreet affair. When Lauren and Nick run into the Whitworths, Lauren is relieved when Philip pretends not to know her. Lauren has decided to tell Nick about the Whitworths and her reasons for working at Sinco, but finds herself unable to find the appropriate moment for that discussion. After the party, Nick insists on knowing how many lovers Lauren has had in the two months since they were last together. Lauren teases Nick into believing she was with another man, only to make it clear he has been her only lover. They spend the night together and Lauren is determined to tell Nick about the Whitworths the next morning, but Nick is called out of town on business.

Chapters 16-17 Analysis

Jim goes out of his way to help Lauren make Nick jealous, but fails to warn Lauren about what he is going to do. Lauren is as shocked as Nick when Jim kisses her outside Nick's office on his birthday. Nick becomes enraged, showing the reader the depth of his feelings for Lauren. If Nick were not falling in love, a theme of the novel, he would not be so deeply disturbed by a relationship between Lauren and Jim. Later, when Nick learns that Lauren is leaving and he will most likely never see her again, he leaves an

important meeting and rushes back to Detroit to tell her that he loves her. Lauren accepts Nick's love and agrees to a relationship with him even though she believes it to be a discreet affair, not a committed relationship. Lauren has lowered her moral standard because she believes Nick loves her and because she loves him enough to be willing to accept what little he offers.

Lauren has learned that Nick's mother is Carol Whitworth and that Carol treated Nick badly when he was only a child. Carol walked away from Nick because he reminded her of her first marriage. Carol also accepted a gift meant to buy her love only to hand it over to the maid as though it were nothing important. Due to this, Nick has never given another woman a gift, until Lauren. Now the reader seems to have proof of the depth of Nick's love for Lauren. At the same time, however, trouble is brewing for Lauren. The security division of Global Industries has opened a file on Lauren due to some of the lies she told on her application. This investigation could possibly unearth the truth about Lauren's relationship with the Whitworths. Nick still does not know about this because Lauren has not had the chance to tell him. Tension builds as the reader realizes how hurt Nick would be to know that Lauren was spying on him for his own stepfather. It seems this investigation has the power to end Lauren's happiness, therefore it has the reader on edge hoping she has the chance to tell Nick the truth before someone else does.

Chapters 18-19

Chapters 18-19 Summary

Everyone at the office learns of Lauren's relationship with Nick, making Lauren something of a celebrity around the water cooler. Nick then announces that he has told the press they are getting married, so she should be prepared for calls asking for interviews. Nick then rushes off to Italy, leaving Lauren without a chance to tell him about Philip again. At the same time, the investigation into Lauren has revealed the fact that she lives in a condo Philip Whitworth uses to house his mistresses, making it appear as though she is his mistress. The head of security instructs his investigator to inform Global Industries' lawyer of this immediately. Lauren is also placed under surveillance and her phone line monitored. That afternoon, Philip Whitworth calls and insists on a meeting. Lauren agrees to meet Philip at Tony's. During lunch, Philip tells Lauren that he will tell Nick she is his mistress if she does not steal the cover pages to four bids Sinco is about to submit. Lauren attempts to refuse, but Philip is determined to ruin her relationship with Nick unless she agrees. Lauren reluctantly agrees. At the office, Lauren retrieves the four bids and changes the dollar amounts being bid before handing over copies to Philip. Lauren is photographed giving the bids to Philip.

When Nick returns a few days later, he is preparing to whisk Lauren off to a secret wedding. Nick is so happy he cannot wait another minute to get married. However, before Nick can escape the office, his lawyer comes upstairs with bad news. The lawyer tells Nick that Philip has sent spies to Italy to find Rossi, but has been unsuccessful. Nick instructs Jim to run Philip out of business by underbidding him on everything the two companies compete for. However, the lawyer is not finished. The lawyer then tells Nick that a spy has been identified in the company. The lawyer tells Nick that they have pictures of a spy delivering copies of Sinco bids to Philip. Nick is told that the spy is Philip's mistress. Nick is shocked to learn that Philip's mistress is Lauren Danner. Nick calls Lauren to his office where he humiliates her before throwing her out of his office. Lauren begs Nick to listen to her, but Nick refuses. Lauren is put on the street without a jacket or purse. Jim attempts to give Lauren his jacket, but when he tells her he believes that she spied on Sinco, she refuses the jacket. Lauren walks to Tony's, the only place she can think of to go.

Chapters 18-19 Analysis

At the beginning of this set of chapters, Lauren is a celebrity, the woman who finally caught Nick Sinclair. Nick and Lauren are deliriously happy, set to run off and get married. In fact, Nick plans to whisk Lauren off on a secret wedding trip. This happiness could not possibly last, however, when the reader realizes that Lauren still has failed to tell Nick about her relationship with Philip and her instructions to spy on Sinco. When the reader learns that Sinco security has learned about Lauren's living situation, the tension reaches a crushing level, convincing the reader that everything is about to

explode in Lauren's face. The final straw is when Philip tells Lauren that he will tell Nick she is his mistress unless she steals secret information for him. Finally disaster seems inevitable.

Lauren is photographed giving Philip bids that Sinco is about to submit. This is damning and it does not take anything more to convince Nick of her guilt. In fact, it seems to the reader that only the insinuation that Lauren was Philip's mistress is what it takes to make him turn on her. Nick humiliates Lauren and throws her out, leaving her crushed and desperate. Lauren turns to Tony, but the reader wonders if this is a good idea. Tony is a friend of Nick's and it was in his restaurant where she made the deadly agreement with Philip. The reader wonders if Tony will be friend or foe since it seems that all of Lauren's friends have sided with Nick, if Jim is any example.

Chapters 20-22

Chapters 20-22 Summary

Lauren awakes at Tony's only to find him on the phone with Nick. Tony attempts to get Nick to come rescue Lauren only to be told of Lauren's betrayal. Lauren is humiliated and waits for Tony to turn on her as Jim and Nick have done, but Tony does not. Instead Tony tries to call Nick back to force him to listen to reason, but Nick refuses to take his call. Instead, Mary tells Lauren to leave Nick alone. A short time later, Nick's lawyer and head of security come to Tony's to tell Lauren that Nick is not pressing charges as long as she agrees to never set foot on Global Industries property again. Lauren agrees, still insisting on her innocence. At the same time, Tony tells Lauren that he overheard Philip blackmailing her and is only disappointed that she went ahead and gave him the bids.

Lauren moves back home. A month later, the head of Global Industries' security calls a meeting in Nick's office and explains that he believes Lauren to be innocent. The security man points out Lauren's intentionally failing of the employment tests and omission of her master's degree in music. The security man also insists that Lauren was not Philip's mistress as evidence by the fact that Philip never visited her there. Finally, Tony tells everyone how he overheard Philip blackmailing Lauren. Unfortunately, no one seems willing to accept these things as proof that Lauren is innocent. However, a short time later Jim decides to look into the bids Lauren gave Philip when Sinco wins two of them. Jim discovers that Lauren changed the dollar amounts of the bids. Jim immediately tells Nick, who rushes to Lauren in order to beg her forgiveness. Nick gives Lauren a gift, a ruby pendant, and she recalls the story of the pill box he gave his mother and decides to accept his apology. Nick and Lauren are immediately married.

Chapters 20-22 Analysis

Tony proves to be Lauren's only ally, but Nick will not listen to Tony any more than he was willing to listen to Lauren. Tony is hurt by Nick's behavior, but Nick proves how deeply Lauren has hurt him and how determined he is to not allow her to do it again, touching on the theme of self-preservation. It may seem to the reader that Nick's reaction is over the top, especially his refusal to listen to reason, but when the reader takes into account the pain his mother caused him, it seems reasonable. In fact, the reader wonders if based on Nick's past he will ever be able to forgive Lauren.

Lauren is given a break by Nick, again touching on his deep feelings for her. Nick decides not to press charges, but instead allows Lauren her freedom if she agrees to never step foot on Global Industries' property again. Lauren, filled with rage at Nick for not giving her a chance to explain, readily agrees. Lauren has lost all her friends, except for Tony, and is shocked at how quickly people could turn against her. Lauren is also angry and hurt, deciding to go home rather than fight to clear her name. Lauren's name is cleared, however, when Nick finally learns that she changed the dollar amounts on

the bids. Now Nick knows that she never intended to give Philip the real bid amounts and by doing what she has, Lauren has assured that Philip will be run out of business. Not only this, but Nick also knows that Lauren was not Philip's mistress, thanks to a thorough investigation by his security man. Now Nick is free to ask Lauren's forgiveness, which he does with a gift that reminds Lauren of Nick's attempt to buy his mother's affections. Lauren accepts the gift and agrees to forgive Nick.

Characters

Lauren Danner

Lauren Danner is a concert pianist who, due to an illness on her father's part, is desperate to find a good paying job. Lauren's father has arranged for her to have an interview with Philip Whitworth, a distant relative of his, in hopes of landing a job with his firm. Whitworth agrees to see Lauren, but has no intention of giving her a job until a thought occurs to him. Whitworth is struggling to win bids over another company owned by his stepson. Whitworth asks Lauren to get a job with this other company in order to spy for him and find out if one of his own employees is giving information to the other company. Lauren agrees because she is desperate for a job, but then has second thoughts on her way to her interview. Lauren purposely fails the employment tests to insure she will not be offered a job.

On the way to her car, Lauren runs into Nick Sinclair whom she believes to be an engineer working on a new building that is about to open. Lauren tells Nick about her job interview and he promises to put in a good word for her. The next day Lauren is offered a job with the company and she decides to take it in hopes of seeing Nick again. Lauren runs into Nick after her interview and offers to take him to lunch in order to celebrate. Over lunch, Nick asks Lauren to spend the weekend with him. Lauren agrees and discovers that she is falling in love. Lauren and Nick spend a romantic weekend together that leaves Lauren convinced of a glorious future.

Nick sends Lauren home early and tells her to call him if she finds herself pregnant. Lauren does not give up hope, however, and spends several weeks waiting for Nick to call. When Nick does not, Lauren is heartbroken. Soon afterward Lauren learns that Nick is not an engineer, but the owner of Global Industries, for whom she works. Lauren is devastated by this revelation, believing that Nick lied to her by not telling her the truth. Lauren no longer wants to have anything to do with Nick. However, Nick still wants Lauren and pursues her aggressively. Eventually Lauren gives in to Nick. Shortly afterward, Philip Whitworth threatens to tell Nick Lauren is his mistress and has been spying for him unless she gives him information on four bids Sinco has recently submitted. Lauren does and is caught by Sinco security. Nick throws Lauren out of his life, only to learn she changed the dollar amounts on the bids.

John Nicholas Sinclair

Nick Sinclair is the owner of Global Industries and a very powerful business man. Nick is young and charming as well, often catching the attention of many young women. Nick likes to play the field and prefers to keep his romantic entanglements simple. Nick was abandoned by his wealthy mother as a child and this has caused him to be extremely cautious when it comes to emotional involvements. However, when Nick meets Lauren he is quickly drawn in by her innocence and quiet intelligence. Nick wants to have an

affair with Lauren, but is kept at arm's length by a woman who wants a commitment rather than a short term affair. Nick tries to walk away, but his heart keeps bringing him back to Lauren.

Nick eventually allows Lauren into his heart and decides to marry her. However, on the night he plans a surprise wedding, Nick is shown proof that Lauren spied on his company and provided inside information to his rival. Nick is devastated by this evidence and throws Lauren out of his life without allowing her to explain. Nick continues to believe that Lauren betrayed him until he is finally shown proof that Lauren changed the dollar amounts on the bids, therefore causing Whitworth to bid too high and lose out on the contracts they were competing for. Nick instantly forgives Lauren and asks for her forgiveness in return.

Philip Whitworth

Philip Whitworth is a man born to wealth and spoiled by wealth. Whitworth owns a rival company to Sinco that is constantly being underbid by Sinco and this is causing Whitworth's company to fail. Whitworth is angry and frustrated by this situation, convinced that one of his employees must be spying for Sinco. When Lauren comes to interview for a job, Whitworth comes up with the idea of having her get a job at Sinco so that she can find out which of Whitworth's employees are spying for Sinco. Lauren agrees, anxious to get a good job in order to pay off her father's medical bills. However, Lauren changes her mind when she arrives at Sinco and purposely fails her employment tests. Later, Lauren meets Nick and is given a second chance when Nick calls the human resources department on her behalf.

Whitworth is so happy that Lauren got a job at Sinco that he allows her to move into an empty condo he owns. Whitworth tells Lauren the condo belongs to an aunt, but it clearly belongs to his mistress. Lauren is grateful for a place to live rent-free, and is also thrilled at the clothing left behind at the condo that Whitworth allows her to keep. However, all this blows up in Lauren's face when Whitworth learns she is engaged to Nick. Whitworth tells Lauren that if she does not give him the cover sheets for four bids Sinco is about to submit, he will tell Nick that she is Whitworth's mistress. Lauren agrees and gives Whitworth the coversheets, but not before she changes the dollar amounts listed. Whitworth ends up over bidding and losing the contracts.

Carol Whitworth

Carol Whitworth was born to money, but fell in love with a poor, working class man. Carol went with her heart and married the love of her life, only to find that living on a working man's salary difficult and unpleasant. Carol was miserable in her first marriage and when she was widowed, walked away from that life as though it had never existed. Carol married her rich fiancé and had a son, living happily ever after. However, Carol left behind a young son from her first marriage.



Nick loved his mother and wanted her in his life. When it appeared she was not going to come back to him on her own, Nick took his own allowance and bought her the perfect gift, a pretty little pill box. However, when Nick gave the gift to his mother, she made fun of it and then gave it to the maid. Nick was crushed and would never again give a woman a gift, until he meets Lauren. Carol's treatment of Nick will shape his life and make him driven to prove his own worth, but also unwilling to give his heart to a woman.

Mary Callahan

Mary Callahan is Nick's secretary. Mary has worked for Nick and his grandfather since they began Sinco in the Sinclair garage. Mary is a kindly woman who is very protective of Nick. At first Mary seems to dislike Lauren, whom she sees as just another gold digger out to get Nick's money. However, when Mary sees that Nick is in love, Mary softens toward Lauren and begins to scheme with Jim to get the two together. It is Mary who tells Lauren the whole story about Nick and his mother. However, when it appears that Lauren betrayed Nick, Mary is one of the first to turn on her and push her out of Nick's life.

Jim Williams

Jim Williams is a friend of Nick's and one of the executives at Sinco. Jim is the executive who hires Lauren despite her disastrous first interview. Jim likes Lauren from the start and the two of them become good friends. When Jim learns about Lauren's feelings toward Nick, Jim helps Lauren face Nick at a party. As Nick's passion for Lauren becomes obvious, Nick nudges it along by making it appear that he and Lauren are having an affair. However, when it appears that Lauren betrayed Nick, Jim also takes Nick's side and treats Lauren with disapproval. Lauren scorns Jim and tells him she does not want to have anything to do with him or Nick. Later, Jim is the one who realizes that Lauren changed the dollar amounts on the bids and forces Nick to see the truth.

Tony

Tony is an old friend of Nick's grandfather. Tony owns a restaurant where Nick and Lauren go to eat on several occasions. Lauren and Tony become fast friends, so when Whitworth insists on meeting with her, Lauren chooses Tony's restaurant as the meeting place. Tony overhears the conversation and later uses it as his basis for supporting Lauren after Nick believes she has betrayed him. Tony is the only one who rises to Lauren's defense and tries to convince Nick that Lauren did not betray him. Unfortunately, Nick never completely believes Tony despite his passionate pleas.

Rossi

Rossi is an Italian inventor that Nick hopes to go into business with. Due to the fact that Rossi lives in Italy and only speaks Italian, Nick needs an interpreter to help with the negotiations. Lauren happens to be the only person at Global Industries who can speak Italian, thus forcing she and Nick to work closely together. Nick explains the deal with Rossi to Lauren and she finds herself considering telling Whitworth about it in order to appease him, but decides against it. However, Whitworth takes some things that Lauren said about Nick traveling to Italy to try to find Rossi and learn about the deal. It is this situation, and some irregularities about Lauren's lies on her employment record, that lead Sinco security to find out about her relationship with Whitworth and apparent spying.

Robert Danner

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Ericka Moran

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Objects/Places

Pill Box

As a five year old, Nick bought a pill box for his mother in hopes of buying her back into his life. Unfortunately, Nick's mother gave the pill box to the maid.

Ruby Pendant

Nick gives Lauren a ruby pendant in order to convince her to come back to him. This time the gesture works.

Bids

Lauren steals several cover pages to some bids that Sinco is making and gives them to Philip Whitworth in order to keep him from telling Nick lies about their relationship. Nick later learns about the theft and throws Lauren out of his life only to learn Lauren changed the dollar amounts of the bids before giving them to Whitworth.

Medical Bills

Lauren is desperate for a good job in order to help her father pay off his mounting debts as a result of medical bills.

Piano

Lauren is a concert pianist, like her mother, but is forced to sell her mother's piano to help pay her father's medical bills.

Condo

Whitworth allows Lauren to stay in a condo he says belongs to his aunt but turns out to be a hideaway for his mistresses. Later, Whitworth convinces Nick he and Lauren are having an affair due to this living arrangement.

Clothing

The condo's closets are filled with expensive clothing that Whitworth allows Lauren to have. Later, these expensive garments will prove to Nick that Lauren is having an affair with Whitworth.

Gold Earrings

Lauren has a pair of gold earrings that are the only things of her mother's she owns. These earrings are lost at the Cove on the night Lauren spends with Nick. Nick attempts to replace them with antique pearl earrings that belonged to his grandmother, but Lauren refuses the gift and later regrets her actions.

Global Industries

Global Industries is the name of Nick's company.

Sinco

Sinco is a subsidiary of Global Industries and the business for which Lauren goes to work at the request of Philip Whitworth.

The Cove

The Cove is a secluded home in Harbor Springs that Nick owns and is the setting of his and Lauren's first intimate moment together.

Harbor Springs

Harbor Springs is an exclusive lake side town where Nick and Lauren spend a weekend together to attend a party thrown by friends of Nick's.

Grosse Pointe

Grosse Pointe is a prosperous neighborhood in Detroit and is home to the Whitworths.

Detroit

Detroit is a large city in Michigan and is the setting for this novel.

Themes

Falling in Love

The moment Lauren Danner meets Nick Sinclair, she knows this is the man for her. Lauren loves Nick's charm, his gorgeous looks, and his quiet confidence. It is because of Nick that Lauren changes her mind and decides to go to work for Sinco, in the hopes of running into him in the halls of the office building they will share. Lauren believes Nick is a humble engineer, someone well respected, but a man who has massive potential but lacks the financial backing to get there. When Nick asks Lauren to spend the weekend with him, she readily agrees despite the realization that he is very likely to ask her to give up the one thing she has guarded for all of her twenty-four year, her virtue. Lauren falls deeper in love with Nick on the drive to Harbor Springs and believes that he is the man she is willing to give her love to and decides to make him fall in love with her.

The plan initially works well. Naive Lauren believes that Nick is falling in love with her as they spend the night dancing and the day sailing. Unfortunately, Lauren is unschooled in the ways of the sexually liberated, and does not know that Nick only wants her body until it is too late. Crushed, Lauren falls apart when she realizes that Nick threw her coldly out of her bed in order to spend the remainder of what was supposed to be their romantic weekend with another woman. Lauren is determined to never let Nick hurt her again. When Nick begins making sexual advances on Lauren once again, she quickly makes it clear to him that she is only interested in a long term arrangement and if this is not what he wants, then she does not want him. Nick continues to try, however, backing Lauren into a corner until she can no longer stand up to his charm.

The more Lauren pushes Nick away, the more Nick is determined to make her his. Without his being aware, Nick is slowly falling in love with Lauren. When Nick learns that Lauren is quitting her job and returning home, Nick walks out of an important meeting to rush to Lauren's side. Finally, for the first time in his life, Nick admits to his feelings and promises Lauren everything she ever wanted, including marriage. Nick and Lauren begin to plan their lives together when a misunderstanding causes Nick to throw Lauren out of his life. However, Nick cannot stop thinking about Lauren and eventually manages to forgive her for her mistakes.

Misunderstandings

When Lauren first meets Nick, she gets the impression that he is a simple engineer. Nick does nothing to dissuade this assumption, allowing Lauren to think anything she wants. Therefore, when Lauren learns that Nick is not only an engineer, but the powerhouse behind the huge company for which she works, Lauren is mortified and disgusted at his lies of omission. At the same time, Nick believes Lauren to be an uneducated secretary. Lauren even failed the employment tests to work for his company. However, it turns out that Lauren not only has a college degree, but a

master's as well. Lauren only failed the tests because she did not want to work for Sinco and act as a spy for Philip Whitworth.

Lauren does take a job for Sinco, however, because the idea of working close to Nick excites her. Whitmore continues to believe Lauren is spying for him, however. Lauren tries not to tell Whitworth anything, but Whitworth is able to take some information she gave and use it to search out an Italian inventor that Nick is attempting to do business with. Later, when Whitworth learns of Lauren's engagement to Nick, he threatens to tell Nick that she is his mistress if she does not help him learn the amounts of certain bids Sinco is about to make. Lauren agrees to protect herself and Nick, only she changes the dollar amounts of the bids in order to foil Whitworth's plan. However, the damage is done and Nick learns that Lauren is a spy. Nick throws Lauren out of her life.

Lauren suffers the wrath of all who were close to Nick and the embarrassment of being labeled a spy. Lauren is devastated by Nick's reaction to the situation. However, it seems that Nick suffers more. Nick is in love with Lauren, but believes that she has betrayed him much the same way his mother did. When Nick learns the truth, however, he is prepared to do whatever it takes to bring Lauren back into his life. Nick begs and pleads, finally convincing Lauren that he loves her enough to forgive anything.

Self-Preservation

Nick is a successful business man who built his wealth with long hours and constant determination. Nick worked so hard because he was determined to prove to himself that his mother was wrong, that money was not everything. Nick's mother left him when his father died and refused to spend time with him or to offer support of any kind. As a five year old boy, disappointed by his mother's decision to rid herself of all memories of her first marriage, Nick became determined to prove his worth to his mother and the world. Nick became deeply driven and decided not only would he prove himself, but he would never allow another woman to hurt him the way his mother did. Unfortunately, Nick could not prepare himself for the impact Lauren would have on his life.

Lauren too is a strong woman, determined to take care of herself and her family. Lauren needs a job, a good paying job, to pay for the financial trouble her father has fallen into since having a heart attack the year before. Lauren decides to take a job with Sinco, not only because it will provide that monetary support but also to be near Nick. Lauren loves Nick and wants to be a part of his life. However, when Nick makes it clear to Lauren that all he wants is a lover, not a companion, Lauren protects herself by refusing to allow Nick back into her bed.

Nick and Lauren are both people who are seeking something different from each other. Nick wants to protect himself from heartache, while Lauren wants love and a committed relationship. Eventually Nick relents and allows Lauren into his heart only to have it appear that Lauren used him to spy for her lover. Nick's past hurts make it impossible for him to see that Lauren has done nothing wrong. Nick is too frightened, too hurt, by

the possibility of Lauren's betrayal to see the truth. However, love wins out and both Nick and Lauren get what they want, each other.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The novel uses several characters as narrators, beginning with Philip Whitworth, then changing to Lauren Danner and Nick Sinclair. Lauren and Nick are the main characters within the novel and their narration comprises the bulk of the story, with Lauren taking the lead in most of the chapters. The narration allows the reader to see and hear all events through the narrator as well as feel the emotions of the character narrating the story at that point. This point is very important because this novel is a romance and the feelings of the main characters are of special concern to the reader. It is the budding relationship between Lauren and Nick that drives the plot, pulling the reader in through descriptions of the encounters as well as their growing affection for one another.

The point of view of this novel is not as difficult as the narration of some novels of this type can be. Often in a romantic novel, the narrating character tends to shift in the middle of a scene with little to no warning for the reader. This takes place in this novel as well, but the instances of these unexpected switches in narration are few and far between. The narration is not as tightly controlled as in other novels, but the narration follows closely the growing affections of the two main characters, allowing the reader insight into their love for one another, and helping build tension in the novel. The third person point of view does allow this shift of narrators, making it possible for the reader to see the story from both the woman's point of view and the man's, adding depth to the romance that might not exist if the novel had been written in another point of view. This point of view works well for this novel.

Setting

The novel is set in Detroit, Michigan. Detroit is a large city that is well known for its exclusive neighborhoods, such as Grosse Pointe, as well as some of its less desirable neighborhoods. The majority of the novel takes place downtown at the offices of Global Industries, Nick's business. This building is brand new and houses all of Global Industries companies, including the first business Nick began with his grandfather, Sinco. This office, while lush and well appointed, is a comfortable place that inspires a great deal of productivity. Another part of the setting that is important to the novel is the condo that Lauren lives in, rent free, that belongs to Philip Whitworth. This condo is a place Whitworth bought to house his mistresses. This condo is expensive and furnished appropriately, making it appear as though Lauren is more affluent than she really is.

The setting is important in this novel for several reasons. First, the choice of Detroit is a smart choice because of the international business that Nick Sinclair runs. If the author had chosen to set her novel in a small town, it would not make sense to the reader that such a large business would be run there. Adding the brand new office building that

houses Global Industries to the settings reinforces the choice of locales and helps the reader to identify with the size and importance of Global Industries, allowing Nick's awesome power and charm to be reinforced by the thought that he built such a large company on his own. Finally, the condo in which Lauren lives seems to be a blessing when first introduced. However, toward the end of the novel, the condo proves to be an albatross around her neck when Whitworth threatens to tell Nick that she is Whitworth's mistress, something that is supported by her living arrangements.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple English. The novel uses a simple language that is easy for most readers to understand. However, the language is not oversimplified. The language tends to lean toward a precision that is bordering on technical when Nick talks to Lauren about his work. Nick deals in many things, including the acquisition of new technologies. When Nick explains one of these technologies to Lauren, his language takes on the educated twist a reader would expect a man of Nick's intelligence to speak with.

The language of most romance novels tends to border on simplicity. This novel, however, relies on a more precise English. The language of this novel is simple enough for the youngest readers, but is complicated in places where a more educated form of language is necessary. The novel is written in English and contains many of the slang words common in American speech patterns, but also includes language that is fitting to American industry, both of which the novel represents within its plot. The language of this novel works because it is appropriate to its characters and its setting.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-two chapters. The chapters vary in length, some as short as a few pages, others as long as ten or twenty pages. Each chapter covers a set number of scenes, propelling the story forward on a linear timeline that begins with Lauren's arrival in Detroit, following her through two job interviews and a chance meeting with Nick Sinclair, ending with Nick proposing to and marrying Lauren. The novel is written in equal amounts of exposition and dialogue, exploring as much internal dialogue as verbal sparring.

There is only one main plot and several subplots. The main plot revolves around the relationship between the two main characters, Nick Sinclair and Lauren Danner. Lauren is a small town girl, naive and inexperienced while Nick is a worldly tycoon damaged by a selfish, self-centered mother. Lauren is in love while Nick is only in lust. Soon, however, Lauren wins Nick over only to betray him by being caught spying on his company for Nick's enemy. One subplot covers the story of Nick's mother and her betrayal, and another follows the relationship between Lauren and Nick's stepfather, Philip Whitworth. Both subplots interact within the main plot perfectly, adding tension to

a simplified plot that creates the calamity of the climax, tearing Nick and Luran apart so that they may be brought back together with passion and tears.

Quotes

"Fourteen years had not dulled the painful memory of her two days at his magnificent Grosse Pointe mansion, where the entire Whitworth family, and even the servants, had treated Lauren and her mother with insulting scorn..." Chapter 1, pg. 5

"At the thought of this responsibility, Lauren felt as if the weight of the world was resting on her shoulders. She needed a job, she needed money, and she needed them now." Chapter 1, pg. 7

"Lauren had hoped to make him notice her as a woman, and he was certainly noticing her. Now she rather hoped he would say something nice. But he didn't." Chapter 2, pg. 31

"A rueful smile touched Lauren's lips as she turned her head toward the window. Everyone always said she was so intelligent, so sensible, yet here she was, already planning to make Nick Sinclair fall in love with her...because she knew she was already falling in love with him." Chapter 4, pg. 73

"With the pillow still wrapped in her arms and the smile still on her lips, Lauren fell asleep. She slept with the inner peace and profound joy of a woman who knows she has found the man whose destiny lies with hers." Chapter 5, pg. 97

"Lauren wondered if he was deliberately misinterpreting her use of the word because he wanted to avoid the issue. If he had really cared for those other women, shouldn't he have felt more possessive about them? If he really cared for her, shouldn't he be pleased that he was the only man she'd let make love to her?" Chapter 8, pg. 121

"Like a deep, clean cut that doesn't bleed for several moments after the wound is inflicted, Lauren was blessedly numb to the pain of his words; she felt only fury." Chapter 11, pg. 152

"Every instinct he possessed warned him that an affair with Lauren would complicate his life. Already she had gotten under his skin. He should have stuck to his decision to avoid all further contact with her, the decision he'd made when he sent her away from Harbor Springs." Chapter 12, pg. 172

"Afterward, Lauren walked to her car, congratulating herself on the maturity with which she'd handled the situation. She had been honest and direct; she'd withstood the temptation and upheld her principles. She had done the 'right' thing, and she was a stronger, better person for it. She folded her arms on the steering wheel and burst into tears." Chapter 13, pg. 187

"During the next three days, Lauren saw sides of Nick that she had only imagined existed. Gone was the teasing man who had held and kissed and pursued her so relentlessly. In his place was a powerful, dynamic businessman who treated her with a brisk, aloof formality that thoroughly intimidated her." Chapter 15, pg. 203

"He wanted her badly enough to forgive her for almost anything, but he could not, would not, forgive or forget the fact that she had betrayed him to his mother and stepfather. Perhaps in time he could have forgiven her for conspiring against him, but not with the Whitworths. Never with them."
Chapter 21, pg. 299

"For the second time in his life, Nick was trying to bribe a woman he loved to come back to him." Chapter 22, pg. 308

Topics for Discussion

Who is Nick Sinclair? What does Nick want from Lauren? Does Nick know how innocent Lauren is from the beginning? How does Lauren's innocence affect Nick? Why does Nick send Lauren away after their night together at The Cove? Why does Nick tell Lauren to call him if she becomes pregnant? Does Nick love Lauren? Why or why not?

Who is Phillip Whitworth? What kind of business does Whitworth run? Why is Whitworth determined to outbid Sinco? Are these companies competitors? How are they competitors? Why does Whitworth dislike Nick? What does Whitworth hope to do to Nick? Why does Whitworth ask Lauren to spy on Sinco?

Who is Carol Whitworth? Why did Carol marry Nick's father? Why was she not happy in her marriage? How did the marriage end? Why did Carol not take Nick with her when she left? Why does Carol not acknowledge Nick? What did Nick do to upset Carol? Why does Carol rebuff the gift Nick makes to her?

Why does Nick buy Carol a pill box when he is five? What does Nick hope this gift will do for him? What does Nick want from Carol? Why does Nick refuse to be treated like a child after this episode? What did the episode do to Nick's emotional state? Why does Nick never buy another woman a gift? Why does Nick buy Lauren a ruby pendant?

Who is Lauren Danner? Why does Lauren go to Whitworth to ask for a job? Why does Lauren need a job? What does Lauren hope to do with the money she earns? Why does Lauren agree to apply for a job at Sinco? Why does Lauren then blow her interview? How does Lauren end up working for Sinco anyway? Why does Lauren refuse to work with Nick? Why does Nick want Lauren to work out of his office?

Why does Whitworth blackmail Lauren into spying for him? Why does Lauren do it? What would have happened if Lauren had not given the bids to Whitworth? Would Nick have believed her over Whitworth? Would the truth have resulted in the same humiliation for Lauren if she had refused to do as Whitworth asked?

Why does Nick throw Lauren out of his life? Does Nick really believe that Lauren betrayed him? Why does Nick so easily forgive Lauren when he learns she doctored the bids? Should Lauren have forgiven him? Would you have forgiven Lauren? Would you have forgiven Nick? Why or why not?