

# **Dreamland Study Guide**

## **Dreamland by Sarah Dessen**

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## Plot Summary

Caitlin O'Koren wakes on the morning of her sixteenth birthday to find that her eighteen-year-old sister, Cassandra, has run away from home just before she was due to go to Yale. Caitlin's parents are immediately caught up in their search for Cass and Caitlin's birthday—including the trip to get her driver's license—is put aside. Caitlin drifts into joining the cheer squad though she has no real desire to do so, then is drawn to a young man who represents the total opposite of what Cass had done in her life. Rogerson Biscoe is wild and sells drugs. He has been in trouble with the law but Caitlin initially believes that Rogerson has turned his life around. He invites her out and takes her along as he sells drugs. They return to his house where Caitlin witnesses Rogerson's father hit him for being late. The incident forms an instant bond between the two because Caitlin is the only person who knows Rogerson's secret.

Over the coming months, they are together a great deal and Caitlin's school work, friendship with her pal Rina and cheer performance suffer for the amount of time she spends with Rogerson. She also begins smoking a great deal of marijuana and becomes friends with a young woman who supports that habit. Rogerson strikes Caitlin several times and their relationship escalates sexually. As the sex, drugs and abuse become more prevalent, Caitlin struggles to keep it all a secret from her parents and friends. Her parents reconnect with Cass but Caitlin, fearing her sister will know her secret just from her voice, avoids talking to Cass on the phone. Caitlin knows that she could tell anyone this horrible secret, but does not because she believes it means she is weak. She continues to see Rogerson despite the abuse and wonders each time he lashes out at her if his father has lashed out at him.

Finally, Rina convinces Caitlin to take an afternoon trip with her. Caitlin is fearful because she knows Rogerson will probably come by and he will be angry if she is not waiting for him. Rina and Caitlin's mother insist and she finally gives in. When she returns, later than she had planned, Rogerson is waiting and begins a brutal beating that is interrupted when a friend sees the fight. Caitlin is sent to rehab and it takes time for her to come to some conclusions about her life. She learns that Cass, despite Caitlin's impressions, is not perfect; that being Rogerson's victim does not mean Caitlin is weak; and that she can be herself.



# Cass, Chapters 1 through 6

## Cass, Chapters 1 through 6 Summary

As the story opens, Caitlin, the main character, wakes on the morning of her birthday to find a gift from her sister, Cass, outside her bedroom door. She then learns that Cass has left a note for her parents in the kitchen and has run away from home. Cass—short for Cassandra—is eighteen and due to begin school at Yale in the fall. The family knows that she has probably gone with her new boyfriend who lives in New York and works on the television set of the Lamont Whipper Show. As the family is reeling over this situation, their neighbors—Boo and Stewart Connell—arrive for Caitlin's birthday breakfast. Jack O'Koren, Caitlin's father, calls the police and learns that there is really nothing to be done until Cass has been missing for a longer period of time. Caitlin's mother, Margaret, is very upset. At Jack's request, Caitlin draws together a list of Cass's friends and Jack and Margaret begin making phone calls, hoping Cass confided her plans in someone. Caitlin takes time to open the gift from Cass. It is a journal titled "Dream Journal" and inside Cass had inscribed the words, "Caitlin, I'll see you there."

In chapter one, Caitlin tells the story of when Caitlin is four and Cass is six and the girls are playing at Commons Park. They argue over a toy shovel and Cass hits Caitlin in the head, a wound that prompts a trip for stitches and leaves a small scar. Caitlin says that her mother and Boo are friends soon after Boo's arrival in the neighborhood while Margaret is expecting Cass. It is Boo who suggests Cassandra for a name. Caitlin is chosen as the Irish version of Boo's real name, Katherine. Caitlin says that Cass spends most of her life living up to the expectations of others, including their parents. From sports to her acceptance to Yale, she seems perfect in Caitlin's eyes. Caitlin has had difficulty living up to the expectations posed on Cass's little sister.

Coming back to the present, Caitlin notes that no one remembers it is her birthday after the first moments of learning that Cass has run away. Her parents continue to make phone calls and discover that Adam's number in New York has been disconnected. No one remembers that Caitlin is to have gone for her driver's license that day and she does not remind them.

In chapter two, Caitlin wakes the next morning to realize that she has not dreamed at all over night. She remembers that, as a very young child, she wishes Boo and Stewart could be her parents. Caitlin's father is the dean of students at a local university and her mother is a housewife. Stewart is an art teacher at the university, very popular with the students. Returning to the present, Caitlin goes to Boo's and talks about Cass's disappearance. Caitlin says that she thought everything was perfect for Caitlin and Boo responds that there is "a lot of pressure" on someone who is perfect. Later at home, the phone rings and it is Cass though she does not say anything when her father first answers. She finally tells him that she is fine, asks them not to worry, then tells Caitlin she is sorry about ruining her birthday. Caitlin assures her "it's nothing" and Cass hangs up.



In chapter three, Caitlin starts school two days later and by then the only clue they have as to Cass's whereabouts is that she has called from New Jersey. Caitlin says that Margaret is taking Cass's actions harder than the rest of the family and says it is because Margaret was so caught up in Cass's activities. Cass was involved in many high school activities and those schedules had all been on the refrigerator so that Margaret could keep track of Cass's activities. She was a firm supporter and had planned to remain involved, as much as possible, with Cass's activities at Yale. Margaret and Jack have already reserved seats for a parents' weekend event at Yale. Caitlin says Yale calls to check on Cass's whereabouts and her father tells them that she will not be attending "this semester."

Caitlin's best friend, Rina, urges Caitlin to try out for cheerleader and Caitlin reluctantly agrees though her heart is not in it. One of Rina's arguments is that Cass has never been involved in cheerleading and Rina uses that argument to urge Caitlin to agree to try out. Caitlin says that Cass would never agree to be a cheerleader because it is not a real sport, with which Rina disagrees. Caitlin and Rina become friends when Rina moves to the area in middle school. Rina is very pretty. Caitlin and Rina are both chosen for the cheer squad. Caitlin does not tell her parents about the tryouts so everyone is surprised when she arrives home with her uniform. The two families decide that, despite Cass's absence and considering that she would have been away at college anyway, they will have their traditional Labor Day cookout. As Margaret and Boo are talking on one side of the yard, Stewart tells Jack that he married Boo when she was only eighteen, intending that Jack understand that Cass might be alright despite their worries.

In chapter four, Caitlin's mother is ecstatic and immediately begins making plans to be involved. She puts Caitlin's schedule on the refrigerator, makes treats for the trips to away games and is always in the stands, cheering for Caitlin. Caitlin says that Margaret is "almost happy" with this new involvement despite Cass's absence, and Caitlin says that her mother's happiness should have been enough for her to remain dedicated to cheerleading. In fact, Caitlin hates the sport and would probably have quit except that Caitlin and cheerleading are Margaret's "new hobby." Margaret also begins to buy things from the home shopping channel. Caitlin says it seems as if Margaret is trying to replace the emptiness left by Cass with clutter.

Caitlin is to take the top of the pyramid because the girl who has traditionally held that place has gained some fifteen pounds. Caitlin is not comfortable, fears the heights and at a game against their arch rival, Caitlin falls. Caitlin and another girl are injured but not too seriously and they head to a party after the game. On the way, Caitlin and a couple of friends see a young man with dreadlocks named Rogerson Briscoe. There is a football player at the party named Mike Evans whom Rina is trying to set up with Caitlin. Rina has ordered Caitlin to take Mike's varsity jacket, if he offers it to her, and Caitlin knows this will mean they are officially going out. That night, Rogerson arrives at the party, makes a transaction with one of the football players, and notices Caitlin. Mike offers Caitlin his jacket just as Rogerson indicates that she should come outside with him. Caitlin hesitates but leaves with Rogerson. Rogerson has a black BMW and offers to take her home. He parks a short distance down the block and they make out until five



after midnight, five minutes past Caitlin's curfew. She leaves his car and goes home where she writes about her feelings in the Dream Journal given to her by Cass. She writes as if she is writing to Cass.

In chapter five, three days pass without Caitlin hearing from Rogerson. One day during this time she is watching television and sees the Lamont Whipper Show. Just as she is about to change channels, she sees Cass on the set, holding a clipboard and talking to someone else who is obviously an employee of the show. Margaret comes to tell Caitlin to turn the television down and Caitlin points out Cass. Margaret tells Jack about it that evening and then calls the show, trying to leave a message for Cass.

Caitlin and the other members of the cheer squad are at the Senior Center where they are helping out with an event. Boo, Stewart and Margaret are all there as well and Caitlin is sent to the kitchen where she sees Rogerson. She asks if he is ever going to call and he says he does not know her last name. When she points out that he does know where she lives, he responds that he has been "working on that." Caitlin seems at least somewhat skeptical and he laughingly says that the hair makes her feel that way. She then asks why he is at the center and he tells her that it is a "long story."

In chapter six, Caitlin waits for Rogerson to pick her up and continues to try to convince her mother that going out is not a bad idea. She promises to study the following day so that they give in and allow her to go. By now, Caitlin knows that Rogerson's reason for being at the senior center had to do with a misdemeanor "of some kind" that resulted in community service. Rogerson attends a high school called Perkins Day where he says he is a "fifth year senior." His family lives in the Arbors. Caitlin says that Rogerson may have been in trouble with the law, but seems to now have his life in order, going to school and working part time in a garage. Rogerson arrives exactly on time and Caitlin leaves the house. As she is walking out, she wonders if Cass felt this same sense of relieved freedom.

Rogerson tells Caitlin that he has some errands to run and drives away from her house. The first stop is a house where Rogerson sells the man there some marijuana. She tries to make conversation several times but he cuts her off each time. She eventually asks why he invited her out and he offers to take her home but she declines. Rogerson drives down a rough road. He then goes to a trailer but this time tells her to wait in the car and she does. It takes him eighteen minutes to make the sale and she is angry by the time he returns. She tells him that she wants to go home and he kisses her and she agrees to go back to his house. They then arrive at his parents' house where there is a huge party going on. Rogerson smokes some marijuana and offers some to Caitlin. She declines initially but he tells her that the party is going to be demanding and that she should have some. Caitlin takes a drag and they go inside.

Rogerson's mother is angry and says that Rogerson was supposed to be on hand to "meet and greet" at the beginning of the party. He apologizes, leaves Caitlin alone for a few minutes, then takes her to the pool house where he says he lives. The room is immaculate and Caitlin initially considers it might be due to a maid but sees Rogerson straighten things that hardly need it and knows that he keeps the rooms in this neat



state. His father then comes in, obviously angry that Rogerson was not on hand as he had been told to be. He yells and then slaps Rogerson, hard. Caitlin is in the bathroom during the occurrence and remains there until after his father is gone from the room. In the main room, Rogerson lays back across the bed. Caitlin asks that he let her see the injury and he initially refuses, saying only that he is "fine." She finally pulls him close to her for comfort though he continues to say, "Don't touch me."

## Cass, Chapters 1 through 6 Analysis

Caitlin believes that Cass is perfect. This belief is fed by the fact that Cass is held up to Caitlin as a role model by others and that her parents—especially her mother—are so caught up in Cass's life. Caitlin continues to believe that she has to try to live up to Cass's reputation, or—faced with failure on this front—to do things Cass would never do. It takes going into rehab for Caitlin to hear someone say that Cass is not perfect. What is interesting is Caitlin's reaction to Cass's leaving. Though Cass chooses Caitlin's birthday to leave, Caitlin worries only about Cass. Cass knows how important Caitlin's sixteenth birthday will be but runs away on that particular day, wrecking it for Caitlin. It never occurs to Caitlin to be angry with Cass over this thoughtlessness until much later.

Caitlin knows that Boo will be disappointed in the fact that she has made cheerleading. Boo is a very liberated woman and believes the worst of pageants and any other activity that she believes puts a woman on display for what she looks like. Caitlin momentarily tries to hide the uniform from Boo but cannot. This is a pattern with Caitlin; she wants to please people. She knows that Boo loves her unconditionally and if she had simply gone to Boo and explained her excitement, Boo would have been okay with that. The fact that Caitlin tries to hide it is typical of her tendency to try to hide everything that she believes might not be well-accepted by those around her. This has already been seen in her willingness to go out for cheerleader because Rina wants her to though Caitlin has no desire to be part of this.

Caitlin seems to have learned a lot from Boo about potential but she is unable to put those lessons to use in her own life. Caitlin tells the story of being at Boo's house playing with a Barbie doll and Boo asks what Barbie does. Caitlin answers that Barbie goes out with Ken, goes to parties and dress up. Boo asks what she does for a living, citing the need for Barbie to make payments on the corvette she drives. Caitlin finally understands that Boo is telling her that Barbie does not have to be Barbie, that she can be anything and that Caitlin is the only thing standing in the way of those dreams.

It is common knowledge that Rogerson has been in trouble and it seems pretty obvious that he was selling drugs at the party where he and Caitlin first meet. It is not really despite this that Caitlin is drawn to him but rather because of this. Caitlin notes that this is not the kind of thing Cass would do and not the kind of person she would choose to hang out with. It is this that initially draws her to Rogerson but she falls in love with him.



# Rogerson, Chapters 7 through 8

## Rogerson, Chapters 7 through 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Caitlin says that she does not tell anyone about Rogerson's father hitting him, but that secret creates their relationship. From that night, they are seldom apart. One of the members of the cheer squad, a girl named Kelly Brandt, is appalled that Caitlin is going out with Rogerson and cites his criminal record. Caitlin says that Rogerson had confided in her the stories of these exploits. Caitlin says that she has no stories of her own—yet—but that she is ready to create some. Caitlin often remembers those moments when she held Rogerson after his father had hit him. She tries to help the pain and says that she is trying to "give back what his father had taken away." Caitlin spends most weekends with Rogerson, going from one drug deal to another. She learns the names of some but they blur together. They argue over music with Caitlin preferring the happy "be-bop" sounds to Rogerson's classic rock tunes. One day they are arguing over which radio station and Rogerson hits a button to his station, saying "this is music." Caitlin counters, saying that "this is music" as she changes to a station she prefers. Instead of a song, there is a woman singing a shampoo commercial which makes them both laugh.

Rogerson is critical of the members of the cheer squad and Caitlin admits that she really does not know why she hangs out with that crew. She says that she drifted into cheerleading and that she is now, for the first time in her life, making her own decisions. Boo tries to keep Margaret involved in things to keep her mind off Cass. Having "mastered" pottery by taking a short-term class, Boo suggests that they take photography together. Caitlin is pulled into the class as well and she agrees to spend her Saturday mornings taking a photography class. Caitlin notes that Margaret, even with fundraisers for the cheer squad, seeing Caitlin's games, buying all the time and taking classes—first pottery then photography—cannot fill the gap left by Cass's absence. After deciding to take the photography class, Caitlin and Boo are alone together for a few minutes and Boo asks if Caitlin is alright. Caitlin says she is fine and Boo lets it drop.

Mike Evans confronts Caitlin, asking why she left him hanging the night of the party but she tells him it is "none of your business" and walks away. Caitlin realizes that this is what it feels like to have everyone trying to make decisions for her and that Cass might have felt this same kind of pressure. Caitlin knows that Mike Evans is not really been interested in her because she is Caitlin, but that he wants to date a cheer leader.

One night Caitlin is preparing to go out with Rogerson but her parents, Boo and Stewart are involved in a game of trivial pursuit and they all insist that he come inside to meet them. Caitlin argues but finally gives in and brings him inside. Once inside, Margaret and Boo are struggling with the question, "What city was the first to have a population of more than one million." They do not give the correct answer but ask Rogerson and he gives the correct answer, London. When it is Jack and Stewart's turn, the answer to the





question is resin and Rogerson again provides the correct answer after the men cannot come up with it. The adults say that Rogerson is "brilliant." Later, Caitlin asks how he knows "all that stuff" and he jokes that it is as the adults say, he is brilliant. Caitlin is very impressed.

Later, at the pool house, they make out and Caitlin knows that the time is quickly approaching when she will no longer be able to stop the action. Whenever they are out together, Caitlin is aware that Rogerson is watching her, keeping one eye on her regardless of the drug business he is currently transacting. Some nights, Rogerson is clingy and Caitlin wonders if his father has hit him again. Meanwhile, her mother is spending every possible moment in front of the television, waiting for glimpses of Cass.

One night Rogerson stops at a house and Caitlin meets the man and woman who live there, Corinna and Dave. The guys go off to the kitchen where Dave is making hamburger helper without hamburger because they cannot afford any this week. Corinna and Caitlin are soon caught up in a television show about acne. At one point the conversation turns to cheer leaders and Corinna says she envies Caitlin for her pretty complexion and her position on the cheer squad. Caitlin says she hates it and realizes it is the first time she has been able to say that aloud. Corinna and Caitlin have quite a lot in common. Corinna grew up in Crestwood, a subdivision near Caitlin's home. Both their mothers had been involved in the Junior League. Corinna's parents do not approve of Dave and Corinna says that they should at least support her in her decisions of lifestyle. She says that she cannot afford even to go to the dentist but does not ask her parents for money, and that if they are not financially supporting her they could at least lend moral support. Caitlin believes Corinna and Dave have a wonderful life in the fact that they are deeply in love and hopes that Cass has that same kind of love, even if she is also having hamburgerless hamburger helper.

Caitlin spends every Saturday afternoon in photography class, reluctantly at first but eventually coming to love the class and what she learns there. Class members go to a supermarket to take photos and Caitlin takes a picture of an old woman at a dairy counter, a photo that turns out good and earns praise from the teacher, Matthew. One day Caitlin is at Corinna's and when Corinna asks if Caitlin is not going to be late for cheer practice, Caitlin says there is no practice, though there is. Caitlin is watching television when the Lamont Whipper Show comes on and she sees Cass. Corinna prepares to change the channel but Caitlin points out her sister and Corinna says she had not realized Caitlin had a sister. Caitlin only then realizes that she had never mentioned Cass to Corinna or talked about the havoc Cass's leaving had brought on her life.

On the way home, Caitlin sees Rina and knows that Rina is driving around and crying because of whatever happens to be the latest crisis in her life. It is a pattern that Caitlin has seen over the years and she wants to help. She gets Rina to stop and Rina tells about an awkward scene in which her boyfriend—and his family—see her with another boy. They talk for awhile and Caitlin goes home. There is to be a ceremony that night at the school and Caitlin expects to receive an award. She was supposed to meet Rogerson that afternoon but did not make it home in time. At home, her mother says



that Rogerson came by but Caitlin still believes it is "no big deal" that she was not there after school. Rogerson appears during the event at school, looks around briefly and walks out. Caitlin cannot follow but goes outside as soon as she can. She finds him in his car. She gets in with him, still thinking that he is not really angry about her not being home. She "playfully" says, "Don't be such a big baby," and he slaps her hard across the face, then warns that she is not to ever talk to him like that. Caitlin and Rogerson do not talk about the situation all the way home. There, Rogerson pulls Caitlin close to him and says that he loves her. Caitlin says it is the first time he says so and that it should have meant a lot, but the circumstances make it more of a term he uses to try to make up for slapping her and she is not certain it is the truth.

Caitlin goes into the house and finds her mother on the phone with Cass. Caitlin slips unnoticed to her room but when she comes down after the phone call, her mother immediately sees the mark Rogerson left on her face. Caitlin says that she got elbowed in the face by someone in the crowd after the event at school and her parents believe it.

## Rogerson, Chapters 7 through 8 Analysis

There is an understanding between Caitlin and Rogerson from the moment she witnesses his father hit him. Caitlin says that this is a part of his life that he has "hidden from the world" and that she has witnessed it. The fact that she now shares this secret bonds them together. It is left to the reader to decide whether their relationship might have taken some other turn if she had not seen this but it seems that this begins the events that will eventually lead to Rogerson severely beating Caitlin. From the time their relationship turns abusive, Caitlin never fails to remember that Rogerson is being beaten by his father. She uses this as an excuse and it seems that she might otherwise have found his abusive behavior inexcusable.

It is ironic that Caitlin believes she is making her own decisions when she is with Rogerson when what she is actually doing is following along with whatever Rogerson wants. She goes along with him all weekend as he conducts drug deals. He never asks if she would like to go somewhere or do something fun as young couples should do. Caitlin soon notes the times he buys her a milkshake, especially if he does so without being asked, as being times he is especially nice to her.

Caitlin is soon spending a great deal of time with Rogerson and her parents barely notice that the amount of time escalates so dramatically. Caitlin thinks that, considering the fact that Cass recently ran away with a boyfriend, her parents would be more diligent. Caitlin has two theories on the subject. She thinks that perhaps because they know Rogerson's family—his mother is a realtor with her photo on signs across the city—they believe that he is not a threat. She also considers that maybe, having already lost Cass who is the favored daughter, they do not really think that losing her will matter.

When Caitlin is going home after Rogerson hits her for the first time, she seems to wish that she could tell someone what really happened but knows that she will not tell. This is a classic example of the battered victim's attitude in that Caitlin is fearful that people will



think she was weak, that she deserved the beating or will otherwise take the side of her attacker. Caitlin says that she wishes Cass were there because she knows that Cass would be able to take one look at her and know what was really happening. Caitlin seems to really want someone else to take responsibility for putting this out in the open and she will continue in this vein throughout her relationship with Rogerson.



# Rogerson, Chapters 9 through 12

## Rogerson, Chapters 9 through 12 Summary

In chapter nine, Caitlin says that the lie about getting bumped by an elbow is easy to pass off to Rina, Corinna and her parents. Caitlin continues to work on her photography and Matthew sees a photo she took of Rogerson. He adeptly analyzes the photo, saying that Caitlin knows "him a little better than he'd like you to." Caitlin agrees with that analysis. She is still talking with Matthew when Rogerson arrives to pick her up and Rogerson is immediately angry that she is talking to another "guy." She says that there is nothing between them which seems to anger him more. He lashes out, hitting her in the face with his fist. When she tries again to object, he slaps her. They smoke "a bowl" of marijuana and Rogerson tells her that it is not his fault, that Caitlin caused the violence. He drops her off at home and her mother is immediately concerned. Caitlin says that she slipped on an icy patch of sidewalk near the mailbox. Her father immediately goes outside and starts spreading salt so that no one else will fall there while her mother tends the bruises and scrapes.

Margaret tells Caitlin that she does not know what she will do "if something happens to you," and Caitlin says that she could easily tell her mother, right that moment, about Rogerson's violent streak. However, she believes herself weaker than Cass for allowing the situation to develop and vows that she will not prove to everyone that she is weaker by admitting the situation. That night, Caitlin dreams about Cass. On December 20, Caitlin writes in her diary, writing as if she is writing for Cass, and tells her all about her relationship with Rogerson.

In chapter ten, Caitlin is called on in literature class but does not know the answer to the question or even what the question is about. Her teacher tells her that she has to "wake up." Caitlin goes into the bathroom and locks herself in a stall. There, she begins looking at the bruises in various states of healing. Rogerson has stopped hitting her on the face so that the bruises do not show. Instead, she is bruised up on her shoulders, arms and legs. She always wears long sleeves now to ensure that no one sees. In the moments after each instance of abuse, he buys her small gifts of magazines, CDs, cokes and candy. On Christmas Eve, Rogerson cooks dinner for them at the pool house and gives her a necklace. Afterwards, they have sex for the first time. On New Year's Eve, Rogerson believes Caitlin talks too much with a guy at a party and shoves the back of her head into a planter. She bleeds and Rogerson explains it away by telling the other guests that she is "tipsy." Caitlin says that the days after a violent outburst are "safe" because Rogerson is at his sweetest, trying to make it up to her.

She can never leave Rogerson waiting. She sometimes skips class so she can be waiting for him to pick her up after school. He continues to look for reasons to hit her. Caitlin cuts off almost all contact with Rina because she has to be available anytime Rogerson wants her. Rina senses something is wrong but Caitlin refuses to confide in her. Rina accepts that because of their long-standing friendship. When Cass calls,



Caitlin makes herself unavailable so that she does not have to talk to Cass. Caitlin says that Cass, "the smart one," will know what is wrong just from Caitlin's voice and that she does not want to allow Cass the opportunity to guess. Caitlin nevertheless desires to talk to Cass and continues to write in her dream journal.

One day Caitlin shows up for cheer practice to find the other members of the squad waiting to talk to her. They question her commitment to the team and to practice and say that they are also concerned about "some kind of problem," apparently referring to drug use. They say that she does not show up to practice regularly and that she is too tired to show spirit when she does show up. When someone asks if she cares, she says that she does not and walks out of the gym. Outside, she cries and says she cannot believe that she is upset for being kicked off the cheer squad. She goes to Commons Park for awhile and is there when Rogerson finds her.

In chapter eleven, Caitlin says she does not tell her mother she has been kicked off the cheer squad. Instead, she says that there are fewer practices because of the lull in sports and spends the time she would ordinarily have been at practice at the photography lab. Cass calls and Caitlin, at home alone, answers but cannot bring herself to talk to Cass and eventually hangs up on her. After school the next day, Caitlin pulls up at Corinna's house as has become her habit. Corinna and Dave are arguing over money. Corinna has a dream of going to California and says they cannot ever make that a reality if Dave continues to spend the money intended for rent and utilities so that they cannot save anything. The argument becomes heated and Caitlin tries to slip out but Dave sees her. Meanwhile, the relationship between Caitlin and Rogerson continues as it has been and she says that often, when he hits her, she feels sorry for him.

Margaret and Boo are soon caught up in plans for an April Fool's party, which they call "The Fool's Party." Caitlin says that whatever little attention her mother was able to spare for Caitlin up to this point is now focused on the preparations for the party, which is an important neighborhood event with a huge turnout.

In chapter twelve, Rina shows up on the morning of the Fool's Party and insists that Caitlin go to the lake house with her. By now, Caitlin never wears anything without sleeves so that the bruises will not show and Rina insists that she bring her swim suit and come for the afternoon. Caitlin resists but finally gives in under the pressure. She begins trying to call Rogerson but he does not answer. She continues trying to call until Rina returns and looks for a way to back out but agrees to try to call him again from the lake house. Caitlin wears a sleeveless dress for the outing but wears a jacket over it. When her mother tries to get Caitlin to take off the jacket, Caitlin resists, initially being gentle but becoming rude when her mother insists. Caitlin and Rina leave and Caitlin impulsively has Rina turn into Corinna's drive on the way, hoping Rogerson might be there or that she can leave a message. At the house, she finds that all Corinna's things are gone and Dave says that Corinna has left him.

They arrive at the lake house and Caitlin continues to wear her jacket though Rina is in her swimsuit. Caitlin finally begins to insist that Rina take her home but Rina continues



to put her off. Rina's boyfriend arrives and suggests that they cook steaks before taking Caitlin home. She knows that Rogerson will be angry at her delay and decides to walk, though it is miles to town. Rina's boyfriend catches up in his car and drives her home. There, she finds that the guests are all at her house for the party and she soon sees Rogerson as well. Before she can offer more than a brief explanation, he begins to hit her. Caitlin says that she knows she should try to get up so that everyone will not see the fight, but cannot bring herself to do more than crawl away from him. The beating becomes brutal then Caitlin hears her mother screaming. Margaret comes running from the house and Caitlin quickly hears sirens as well. The police arrest Rogerson and Margaret is carefully holding Caitlin, trying not to hurt her. As Rogerson is being taken away, Caitlin is yelling for him and pleading with them to let him go.

## Rogerson, Chapters 9 through 12 Analysis

Caitlin's friendship with Corinna becomes one of the few stable points in her life. Following the loss of Cass, Caitlin has a void that cannot be filled by anyone or anything else, but Corinna comes closer than anyone. Corinna, in most ways, is not a good influence for Caitlin. She does drugs and Caitlin has romanticized the hardships Corinna lives on a daily basis. However, she is basically a stable person. She goes to work and tries hard to pay the bills and meet expectations. The fight Caitlin interrupts one day is over money and Caitlin knows that Dave is doing nothing to help meet the bills, let alone to save for the trip to California Corinna dreams will make her life better. Corinna asks Caitlin if she is going to be late for practice one day and Caitlin lies, saying there is no practice. In fact, she is simply skipping but she seems to realize that Corinna will not approve of that, so she lies.

Rina's actions on the Saturday of the Fool's Party seem somewhat harsh but she probably has good intentions. In Rina's mind, Caitlin has simply become so enamored of Rogerson that she cannot make time for anything—or anyone—else. Caitlin has been careful to hide the truth even from Rina and Rina cannot possibly know that Caitlin is afraid to be away from home for so long. Rina, in her pushy way, believes that she can force Caitlin to spend some time away from Rogerson and join in with Rina's fun for an afternoon. Rina will later tell Caitlin that she feels guilty because she, as Caitlin's best friend, should have been there for her in this time of trouble. There is little doubt Rina would have intervened if she had been given the information, but she does not know what is going on and Caitlin is going to great lengths to hide it.

When the final showdown arrives, Caitlin and Rogerson are almost directly in front of Caitlin's house. Caitlin will later find out that a guest at the party sees the fight, informs Margaret and then calls the police. Caitlin says that she knows she should have gone somewhere else, somewhere that the fight would not be seen, but she does not. It seems that Caitlin has finally come to the end of her rope and is ready to let the secret out in order to find a way to be safe again. However, when Rogerson is being taken away, she is immediately sorry for the situation and pleads with the police to let him go, pleads with her mother to let her go with him.



# Me, Chapters 13 through 15

## Me, Chapters 13 through 15 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Caitlin is at Evergreen Care Center. She says that she and Rina made fun of the commercials for the center, commercials that say the staff cannot make a person well, but can help them make themselves well. Caitlin says she and Rina take that to a ridiculous level, one of them asking for the toothpaste and the other saying that they cannot give her the toothpaste, but can help her help herself to the toothpaste. Caitlin says all that does not seem nearly so funny now that she is in the center. She is taken there the day after the party. Her parents check her in and her mother promises to return with some things from home to help make the transition easier. Caitlin says that she cries for the first few days. When Caitlin is in the hospital for more than a week, her mother brings her the Dream Journal and Caitlin realizes that pictures she put inside are still there with the exception of the photos of Rogerson. She slowly begins to open up to the therapist who promises it gets easier as she goes along, and she finds that to be true. She also begins to reconnect with her mother. Margaret says that she was terribly afraid the night Caitlin fell from the pyramid and had thought nothing could be more frightening, but that she was wrong.

Caitlin always has a visitor on visiting days, two times each week. She is the only girl who can say that and is envied because of it. Her mother, typical of Margaret, has organized a schedule so that there is always someone available to go visit. Margaret takes one day each week but the other day is shared by Stewart, Book, Jack and Rina. Stewart typically tells stories. Boo brings food and photos. Rina catches Caitlin up on all the gossip. Jack, on his first visit, brings a deck of cards and a book of card games. They begin playing almost immediately and work their way through several of the card games in the book. One day Boo brings her camera and film and tells Caitlin to use them when she is ready. Caitlin says that everyone claims to feel guilty because everyone says they should have known what was happening and stopped it. She says that she has finally come to a point where she can stop blaming anyone except the person who is guilty—Rogerson—though it is still difficult.

In chapter thirteen, a month passes and one day Margaret brings mail for Caitlin. There is some of the usual junk mail and two letters, one from Cass and one from Corinna. She opens the letter from Corinna almost immediately and reads it. Corinna apologizes for having left without saying good-bye but says she did not "want to leave you with a bunch of questions to answer." She says that she has had some minor trouble with her car, has made it to Arizona, and is wavering on whether to go on to California. She promises to let Caitlin know when she gets settled somewhere. Caitlin finishes that letter and decides that she is not ready to read the letter from Cass.

In therapy later, Caitlin tells her doctor that she is tired of everyone feeling guilty, and that it is not productive. Caitlin says she has not read Cass's letter because she believes that is what Cass will say in the letter. Caitlin says that Cass has always been



the perfect sister while Caitlin has been the one likely to mess up. The doctor helps Caitlin see that Cass chose to run away on Caitlin's birthday and did not care about the impact her action was going to have. She uses this as an example that Cass is not perfect and has her own flaws as well. The doctor also helps Caitlin see that she has felt the need to "hold everything together" for a family struggling to cope with Cass's running away.

Caitlin reads Cass's letter. Cass writes that it is probably not right, but she felt a huge relief in the moment when she was walking out of the house with the knowledge that her actions were letting everyone down. She also says that whenever times have been difficult for her, she has thought of Caitlin and that helps her get through anything. Caitlin says that progress is difficult and she is trying to figure out how she will manage once she returns home. She says that dreams in which Rogerson simply walks past her without a flicker of recognition are the most difficult to bear, but that she is determined to make it.

In chapter fifteen, Caitlin's mother comes to get her and she returns home. The first night, she and Margaret and Jack go to Boo and Stewart's for dinner. There she finds a great many of her photos, framed as they had been for an exhibit that occurred while she was hospitalized. As she is looking at the photos, she hears Cass's voice and says that with that sound she can finally breath again.

## Me, Chapters 13 through 15 Analysis

Caitlin's time in rehab is really a time for her to come to terms with her life and how to manage after she is released. She says that she is technically hospitalized because of the drug use but that the abuse is the real reason. She downplays the drug use and it may be because it is secondary to the abuse or because she has not used drugs so much that she is truly addicted at the time of her hospitalization. The author's focus is undoubtedly on the abuse which may be the reason the drug addiction takes such a back seat. The significance is left to the reader to decide

Caitlin takes a photo of herself and rips it to shreds in a moment of frustration and weakness. She almost throws the pieces away but then does not. Instead she saves them and later, when she begins to feel better about herself and her situation, she takes the pieces out of the drawer. She tapes the corner pieces to a piece of paper, just as would be expected for someone putting together a puzzle. She does not finish it right away but puts it together slowly over the course of weeks. This symbolizes Caitlin's efforts to put her own life back together.

The dependence of Caitlin on her older sister seems to be an issue that is not resolved at all. Caitlin matures a great deal during the course of the book but she compares her struggles during rehab to the struggle to swim to the surface from a great depth. She says that she can see daylight above her and believes that she might reach the surface, but does not break through to take a deep breath on her own until she hears Cass's voice.





# Characters

## Caitlin O'Koren

Caitlin is a teenager who lives in the shadow of her older sister, Cassandra, until the day of Caitlin's sixteenth birthday when Cass runs away from home. Caitlin is torn between the task of trying to fill her sister's shoes and trying to remain "visible." She says that she, against the backdrop of Cass's disappearance, is virtually unseen by either of her distraught parents. Then a fluke situation lands Caitlin a position as a cheer leader and her mother is immediately caught up in Caitlin's success. Caitlin is torn, wanting to be the daughter that makes her mother proud but hating the situation. All this escalates when she meets a wild boy who is everything she is not. Rogerson leads Caitlin away from the distress of her family and social life but takes her instead into a world of drugs, sex and abuse. Caitlin cannot imagine herself a victim but soon finds that she is. When Rogerson's anger erupts—as it often does—Caitlin excuses the abuse and systematically hides it until the night it is brought into the open. Then Caitlin begins the slow road to recovery. Getting away from the drugs is relatively easy for her but giving up on her love for Rogerson is more difficult. She also has to learn to reconnect with her parents and friends, to forgive Cass for leaving her, and to rebuild her life.

## Rogerson Biscoe

A young man who meets Caitlin at a party while he is selling drugs. He is the son of a wealthy family and an abusive father. By the time he meets Caitlin, he has already been in trouble with the police and is on probation, performing community service. He is eerily brilliant, producing answers to a myriad of trivia questions and making good grades in school, but lacks the motivation to do anything with that brilliance. Rogerson is dealing drugs for money and it may be that his unsympathetic parents refuse to give him anything. While Rogerson definitely has the brains to do something better with his life, his circumstances absolutely play a role in the situation. His father beats him, apparently with little provocation, which sparks the cycle of abuse Rogerson takes out on Caitlin. Rogerson is manipulative and seems to have stumbled across Caitlin at a time when she is suitably vulnerable. Rogerson follows the typical stages of abuse, striking out at Caitlin then being overly nice to her in an effort to make up for it and to keep her holding onto the relationship. He also alienates her and encourages her to believe that she is at fault for the abuse.

## Cassandra O'Koren

Older sister of Caitlin, Cass runs away from home on Caitlin's sixteenth birthday. Caitlin looks up to Cass and believes she is perfect at everything she takes on. Cass is actually struggling herself and hates the pressure of living up to the expectations and demands of those around her.



## **Margaret O'Koren**

Mother of Caitlin and Cass and wife of Jack, she is a housewife and very much the typical suburban mother. She is very involved in the lives of her children though there is a specific emphasis on her involvement with Cass. When Caitlin is picked for the cheer squad, Margaret puts all her energies into helping with schedules and fundraisers. When Caitlin is put into rehab, Margaret creates a schedule to ensure that Caitlin always has a visitor on every visiting day.

## **Jack O'Koren**

Father of Caitlin and Cass and husband of Margaret, he is a dean of students at a university. Jack is more relaxed about most aspects of life than his wife but is fiercely committed to his family. He is also devastated when Cass runs away from home and pleads with authorities to bring her back though she is over eighteen and legally has the right to do what she wants.

## **Adam**

Cass's boyfriend. He is an employee on a television set and meets Cass at the beach where they strike up a conversation and begin a relationship. He lives in New York and Cass moves away from home to live with him.

## **Boo Connell**

Next door neighbor of the O'Korens, she is very different from Margaret. Caitlin describes her as a "former hippie." She is insightful and blames herself for not having seen the abusive relationship prior to the night Rogerson beats Caitlin in public. Boo's real name is Katherine and Caitlin is named for her.

## **Stewart Connell**

Next door neighbor of the O'Korens, he is described as a "former hippie." He is a vegetarian and a college art professor. His classes are wildly popular because of his relaxed attitude. He is a nurturing person and takes turns with several others in visiting Caitlin after she is in rehab.

## **Rina**

Caitlin's best friend from childhood, she is devoted to Caitlin but is also pushy and it is her insistence that results in Caitlin's being chosen for the cheer squad. Rina is pretty and her mother has married well, meaning Rina gets a great deal of attention. Rina almost discovers Caitlin's secret but is pushy at the moment Caitlin might have told her



and loses the chance. After Caitlin is in rehab, Rina says that she is sorry because she, as Caitlin's best friend, should have known.

## Corinna

Girlfriend of Dave, she meets Caitlin when Rogerson comes to her house to sell Dave some marijuana. Corinna and Caitlin become friends though they have little in common. Caitlin is herself with Corinna and says that this is one of the few times she can be herself without feeling she is letting someone down. Corinna holds to the hope of a better life and eventually, realizing that he will not help her attain those goals, leaves Dave



## **Objects/Places**

### **The Lamont Whipper Show**

The name of the television show where Adam and Cass work.

### **New York**

Where Adam and Cass live together after Cass runs away.

### **Dream Journal**

The book given to Caitlin by Cass for her sixteenth birthday.

### **Commons Park**

Where Cass hits Caitlin with a shovel, causing Caitlin to need stitches and to have a small scar on her forehead.

### **Perkins Day**

The school Rogerson attends.

### **Arbors**

The neighborhood where Rogerson lives.

### **Crestwood**

The subdivision where Corinna grows up.

### **The Lake House**

Where Caitlin goes with Rina and misses her date with Rogerson, prompting his violent explosion that results in the police being called.

### **The Fool's Party**

The event hosted by Caitlin's parents on the night Rogerson brutally beats her.

## **Evergreen Care Center**

Where Caitlin goes for rehabilitation therapy.



# Themes

## The Effects of Abuse

The storyline revolves around the effects of abuse, most notably the situation of Rogerson abusing Caitlin. However, the story begins with Rogerson's own abuse at the hand of his father and the fact that Caitlin knows about this abuse. When Caitlin sees that abuse first-hand, she is drawn to Rogerson and he—having probably been very careful to keep the abuse a secret from any of his friends—is closer than ever to Caitlin because she is the only person who knows this secret. When Rogerson then hits Caitlin for the first time, she excuses him because she knows that he has been hit by his father. As Rogerson's abuse of Caitlin becomes routine, she comes to believe that he takes it out on her each time his father strikes out at Rogerson. This provides a way for her to excuse the behavior that is completely inexcusable in the minds of everyone except Caitlin. Another important point in this abuse is Rogerson's point of view. He does not apologize for hitting her but always tries to make it up to her following the abuse. This indicates that he is aware that the behavior is wrong but that he does not seem to know—or want to know—how to end the pattern.

## Coming of Age

Caitlin is a classic example of the coming of age theme. She ages only by about a year over the course of the story but matures a great deal, mostly after she is placed in a rehab center. As the story opens, Caitlin is dealing with the fact that her sister, Cassandra, has run away. Over the coming days and weeks, she continues to try to find herself and to find a way to fill the gap left in her life by Cass's departure. She very immaturely begins to make decisions based on whether Cass would do a particular thing. She seeks those things Cass would never do and goes from one extreme to the other—being a cheerleader to doing drugs. Another notable aspect of the immaturity seen early in the story is that Caitlin lets others, first Rina then Rogerson and Corinna, set her pace. She does not want to try out for cheerleader but does because Rina pushes her into it. She does not want to be involved in the drugs but allows herself to be drawn in by Rogerson and Corinna. It takes time in rehab before Caitlin begins to realize that she has to make decisions based on what is best for her. Even then, it is an ongoing process. Notably in this maturing process is her plan to handle the situation when she encounters Rogerson. She knows it is bound to happen and makes a conscious effort well ahead of that time to be prepared for whatever reaction she gets from him, even if it is indifference.

## Peer Pressure

Caitlin tends to give in to peer pressure whenever it is applied. What is interesting about her tendency to give in is that she realizes she is doing it and does it anyway. She is



conscious of the fact that she is making a decision and that it is being prompted by peer pressure but does not fight it. The first instance of this is seen when Caitlin goes out for cheerleading at the prompting of Rina. Caitlin does not want to be a cheerleader and tells Rina that, but Rina insists and Caitlin gives in. Despite the fact that she does not want to be a cheerleader, when she gives in to Rina's pushing, she goes all the way and makes the team. The more pressing aspect of this peer pressure is seen when Caitlin gives in to Rogerson by having sex. She also gives in to Corinna's pressure and takes drugs. Both Rogerson and Corinna are subtle in their pressure and Corinna would likely never have insisted that Caitlin participate, but Caitlin finds herself unwilling to continue to resist offers. Another aspect of this peer pressure is seen in Caitlin's sister, Cassandra. Cass has been a model student and athlete and this has created a great deal of pressure on Caitlin to do what she feels will measure up to the standards set by Cass. What happens in this case is that Caitlin eventually gives in to the desire to be exactly what Cass is not and at least part of her decision to give in to Rina, Rogerson and Corinna is prompted by her desire to be different from Cass.

## Complex Family Relationships

Caitlin is the younger of two girls and believes Cass to be the more talented and favorite of the two. When Cass runs away, it tears a hole in their family and Cass immediately feels compelled to fill that gap. It is impossible because only Cass can do that but Caitlin continues to do things that she hopes will make her mother happy, such as cheerleading and agreeing to take photography classes. This need to please is part of the complex makeup of Caitlin's nature and part of what she sees as her role in the family. When Caitlin begins to see Rogerson, she wonders that her parents are not more diligent in monitoring her activities and her whereabouts and it occurs to her that, having already lost Cass, her parents will not really mind losing Caitlin. This complexity is not confined to Caitlin's family. She sees Rogerson's father hit him, an action that is apparently a normal occurrence in his life. His mother seems ineffective and apparently leaves Rogerson at his father's mercy. Corinna's family is another example of this theme. Though her family does not become part of the action, Corinna's reaction to encountering her mother does become part of the story. Corinna tells Caitlin that she wishes for emotional support from her parents. She points out that she does not ask them for financial support at all but they apparently will not even speak to her when they happen to meet.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is written in first person from the perspective of Caitlin. This is an extremely limited perspective and is appropriate to the story. Caitlin's take on what happens is important in that it is Caitlin's life that come apart over the course of the story line. For example, it is related early on that Cass runs away but the reader knows only what Caitlin knows about the situation—that Cass left a present for Caitlin and a note for her parents. Cass's motivation and her later admissions regarding the pressures that led her to this decision are not revealed until Caitlin comes to understand them. This limited perspective is also vital in that Caitlin does not know what motivates Rogerson to his fits of violence, other than what she has seen of his own abusive father. Caitlin's lack of understanding of Rogerson's motivations and manipulation are important in that it gives the reader a fuller understanding of Caitlin's position. If the reader were given peeks into Rogerson's thoughts, Caitlin's motivations and reactions would seem less important. The limited perspective is never broken and the reader learns about her mother's guilt, her father's uneasy acceptance of the intimacy of visits to Caitlin in the hospital, and Roger's sentencing only as Caitlin learns of them.

To some degree, Caitlin could be considered an unreliable source of information as the narrator because she is portrayed as the victim. However, the story is a novel and the author—writing as Caitlin—seems brutally honest.

## Setting

The story is set somewhere east of Tennessee in a fairly large city. There are two high schools and a university in this city and the schools are large enough that students of the same grade are not necessarily well-acquainted. There are descriptions of a subdivision where Caitlin and her family lives and this description is adequate in that the subdivision could easily be a real place. Later, there is a description of the rehab center where Caitlin goes to recover. The author does not provide a great deal of description of this place, but the description provided is sufficient to help the reader imagine the place. The story is copyrighted 2000 and that time frame seems a reasonable time setting for the story. While there are modern conveniences available such as telephones and cars, cell phones are not readily available as evidenced by the fact that Caitlin spends a great deal of time calling Rogerson's house from her own home phone and then from the phone at the lake house. Both time and place settings are reasonable and believable for the story.

There are several specific settings including Caitlin's house and school and the pool house where Rogerson lives. Another setting used frequently in the story is the home of Dave and Corinna. Finally, Rogerson's car serves as an important setting in this story. A





great deal of the action takes place in the car and having it as a setting, considering the ages of the characters and the story line, is appropriate.

## Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward and relaxed manner that is typical of this author and this genre. Since the target audience is young adult, the language is easy to follow and to understand. There are some instances of foul language throughout the story and these seem to be used by the author as a means of realistically conveying the moods and temperaments of the various characters. The story explores Caitlin's first sexual experience but this is presented in tasteful undertones that will probably not offend most readers. There are overt references to drug and alcohol usage and to smoking cigarettes. Some of these references are presented as being generally accepted among the teens of the story. For example, it is noted that Caitlin watches as Rina smokes a cigarette in a very public place, a statement that indicates there is no real social taboo on a teenager smoking because she is not trying to hide it. The abuse is described more thoroughly as is Caitlin's reaction to it. These passages may be disturbing to some readers, but this is to be expected given the sheer nature of the story being told. There are some touching passages as well. When Caitlin and her mother begin to reconnect, readers will likely be touched by the attitudes of the two and their learning to turn to each other again.

## Structure

The book is divided into three sections. These are titled "Cass," "Rogerson," and "Me." The "Me" refers to Caitlin. These three sections are further divided into chapters that are identified by number only. Chapters one through six make up the section titled "Cass." Chapters seven through twelve make up the section titled "Rogerson." The final chapters, thirteen through fifteen, make up the section titled "Me." The chapters vary in length. Chapter eight is twenty-eight pages in length while chapter seven is more than thirty. Chapter fourteen is only twelve pages and chapter fifteen wraps up the story with only three. The story opens with a five-page prologue that is not titled or identified. The first page simply takes off with the story of Cass running away on Caitlin's sixteenth birthday and the repercussions this action has on the family. This sets the tone for the entire book and though there are details of events that occur prior to Cass's running away, the action of the story pivots on this event. The presentation of this part of the story as a prologue is effective in setting the tone for the story. The story is divided between dialogue and narrative. The division is reasonable. The dialogue and narrative are each believable and appropriate for the subject.



## Quotes

"See you in dreamland,' she'd whisper, and blow us a kiss before shutting the door quietly behind her. Like dreamland was a real place, tangible, where we would all wander close enough to catch glimpses and brush shoulders." Prologue, p. 3.

"She was eighteen, so technically she couldn't be listed as a runaway. She was more like a soldier gone AWOL, still owing some service and on the lam." Chapter 1, p. 13.

"When I opened my eyes, my ears were ringing and the first thing I saw was a circle of cheerleaders standing around me in purple sequins, pom-poms limp at their sides. I wondered for a second if I'd died and gone to hell." Chapter 4, p. 47.

"We were all staring as we passed him slowly, like tourists at a wildlife park watching the elephants from the safety of their station wagon." Chapter 4, p. 52.

"I'd been taught since sixth grade about Peer Pressure and Bad Influences and Just Say No. But for all he knew, I could be the kind of girl who smoked, I could be anything." Chapter 6, p. 80.

"Of course there were the drugs. Rogerson operated a brisk business selling pot and other various illegals to the kids at Perkins Day and Jackson." Chapter 7, p. 110.

"Even if she was struggling and living off Ramen-noodle soup, it seemed perfect to be in this kind of love." Chapter 8, p. 124.

"Rogerson had even begun to give me my own small supply of pot, as well as a bowl, tiny and white ceramic with a wizard painted on its tip. With it, my bag, my cigarettes, and a lighter, I was like Barbie all over again, just with different accessories." Chapter 8, p. 130.

"The excuses had come easy: to my parents, Corinna and Rina, I'd gotten bumped by a stray elbow as I made my way through the banquet crowd. The truth was harder." Chapter 9, p. 149.

"Next to my life with Rogerson and the ongoing struggle to avoid full contact, cheerleading seemed even sillier and more unimportant than ever. It was like another world, another language that I'd hardly learned and already forgotten." Chapter 10, p. 179.

"It was that at least while I was on the squad I had some semblance of a normal life. But no, I was just a girl with a boyfriend who beat her, who smoked too much,." Chapter 10, p. 180.

"If there was one thing that set me apart from everyone else at Evergreen, it wasn't that I'd had a drug problem, or family issues, or that my boyfriend had beaten me. These



things were a dime a dozen here, and everyone wore their neurosis like a badge, each carrying a certain weight, the way a particular brand of sweater or jeans had in junior high." Chapter 13, p. 227.



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Rogerson? How does Caitlin come to meet him? What is it about him that draws her to him? How are they similar? How are they different? What is it that holds their relationship together? What finally ends it?

What is the biological relationship between Caitlin and Cassandra? What is the emotional relationship? How are the two girls similar? How are they different? List at least two situations that arise in which Caitlin considers what Cass would do before making a decision for herself.

Who is Rina? Who is Mike Evans? What is Caitlin's relationship to each? What does she believe about Mike's interest in her? What trials overtake her friendship with Rina? Compare Caitlin's relationship with Rina as the book opens with their relationship as the book ends?

Who are Margaret and Jack? Who are Boo and Stewart? What is the relationship between the two couples? How are they similar? How are they different? What does Caitlin think about each?

Who is Corinna? Dave? How does Caitlin come to know them? What are the lives of Corinna and Dave like? What does Caitlin think about their lives? Is she correct? What do you think of their lives? Did Corinna finally make a correct decision regarding her relationship with Dave? Why do you think so?

How does peer pressure weigh on Caitlin at various times? List at least two people who put pressure on her to take some particular action. What is her reaction to these situations?

How does Rogerson begin abusing Caitlin? Why does Caitlin not put an end to the relationship at that point? What excuses does Caitlin make for the abuse? What finally happens to end the abuse?