

# **Driven (The Driven Trilogy) Study Guide**

**Driven (The Driven Trilogy) by K. Bromberg**

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# Plot Summary

*Driven*, a novel by K. Bromberg, is the first book in a trilogy detailing the relationship between Rylee Thomas and Colton Donovan. Although they are from different backgrounds and lifestyles, the heat between them is palpable when they meet by chance, and a tumultuous affair begins even though neither can give the other what they most want and need.

When Rylee Thomas accidentally locks herself in a closet at a charity date auction she is hosting, her claustrophobia takes over until the door is opened by a handsome, sexy man she does not know. Their physical attraction is immediate, but although he insists that he will have her, she is put off by his arrogance. Later in the evening, she is shocked to learn that he has paid \$25,000 for a date with her and later her boss reveals that they will have a business relationship as well. The man is Colton Donovan, a wealthy race car driver and entrepreneur, and he has offered to contribute \$1 million and raise the remainder of the funds needed to build a much-needed new facility for Corporate Cares, the non profit for which Rylee works. The organization runs The House, a home for boys whose parents have died or lost custody of them because of drug abuse, neglect or other issues. Riley is very dedicated to her job, so he has no choice but to accept Colton's generous offer even though it will mean seeing him regularly, something she both wants and dreads.

As the book progresses, it is revealed that Rylee is still haunted by a car accident two years earlier that killed her fiance, Max, and left her seriously injured. Colton is not without demons of his own, having been adopted at age 8 by a wealthy film director, but his life before that has left him tormented and damaged. Although he pursues Rylee relentlessly, he makes it clear that he can give her only one thing -- mind-blowing sex -- and when he is tired of her, he will cast her aside just as he has done with every other woman he has been with.

Rylee is offended by Colton's attitude, but her physical desire for him makes it impossible to resist playing along and eventually they end up in bed. The experience is as amazing as Colton promised, but afterward she senses a change in his demeanor and leaves in tears. Thus begins a continuing dance as they gradually reveal more of themselves to each other while knowing that neither can give the other what they need most. As Rylee gradually peels back the layers of Colton's facade, she realizes she has fallen in love with him and she begins to hope that they have a future together, and Colton, despite his protests, begins to fall for her too even though he continues to insist that he is incapable of love and will hurt her in the end.

When he takes her to his home -- something he has done with no other woman -- Rylee's hopes begin to rise, but after a night of wonderful sex, Colton awakens to a horrifying nightmare. Although Rylee tries to comfort him, he coldly demands that she get out, insisting that he is tired of her now that he has had her, and she leaves his house in tears.



# Chapters 1 - 6

## Summary

Driven follows the relationship between Rylee Thomas, a social worker dedicated to helping young boys who have no homes, and Colton Donovan, a dashing race car driver known for bedding beautiful women. Bound by an intense sexual attraction, Rylee and Colton both also harbor emotional scars from devastating events in their pasts, and they clearly have different expectations from their relationship. Despite Colton's insistence that he will hurt her, Rylee is incapable of saying no to him and is determined to penetrate his facade and learn why he thinks he does not deserve love.

Chapter 1 finds a young woman named Rylee Thomas backstage at a date auction she has helped to organize. On her way to a closet to retrieve the auction paddles, she must sneak past a couple having sex in an alcove, then when she reaches the closet, the door closes and she is trapped inside. Claustrophobia takes over and in her panic, she has a flashback to an incident in which she has blood on her hands. After pounding on the door, she is rescued by a good looking, arrogant man who begins kissing her. Finding herself enormously attracted to him, she gives in until he says, "Jesus Christ" and she realizes he is the man she passed in the hallway earlier and she pulls away from him. As she leaves, the man calls her by name and tells her their conversation is not over.

In Chapter 2, Teddy, Rylee's boss, congratulates her on a successful event and says they are raising lots of money for their cause. He says he wants to introduce her to one of their most important supporters and it is the man from backstage, whose name is Donovan. After Teddy leaves them alone, he taunts Rylee about wanting him and bets her that if he does not have a date with her by the end of the night, he will donate \$20,000. Thinking that he is unbelievably arrogant, she agrees.

In Chapter 3, the charitable date auction is over and Rylee, who never liked the idea, is relieved. One of the participants had gotten sick at the last minute and Rylee was the only person available to take her place and she hated the experience but is happy when she learns that someone paid \$25,000 for a date with her. However, she is shocked and upset when she learns it is Donovan, who continues to tease her about how great their eventual and inevitable sex will be for her.

Chapter 4 finds Rylee at her workplace, the corporate headquarters for a company that runs The House, a home for young boys who have no parents or whose parents have lost custody of them. She and Donovan exchange a series of taunting, sexually-charged e-mails before she leaves for her 24-hour stint as a counselor at The House. There, she speaks with her fellow counselor Jackson, who tells her he heard about a backstage liaison at the auction but she is relieved when he reveals it is their 20-year-old intern Bailey, and Rylee realizes it is she who was with Donovan in the alcove. Rylee approaches Zander, a young boy who has not spoken in the three months since he



witnessed his mother's murder, and she is happy when, after some coaxing, he takes her hand and goes to join the other boys at the table, something he has never done before.

In Chapter 5, Rylee is about to leave The House when Teddy calls to ask her to stop by the Corporate Cares office because someone has stepped forward to raise the remaining money they need to build a planned new facility. Rylee is incredibly excited until she arrives and finds that the person is the man she met at the event. His full name is Colton Donovan and he is a famous race car driver, businessman, son of a famous movie director, and serial philanderer. The three of them discuss Colton's plan to donate more than \$1 million and raise the rest through sponsorships of his racing team, but he insists that Rylee must be his liaison and attend a number of events with him. After Teddy leaves them alone, Rylee and Colton spar back and forth, with her insisting that she will never sleep with him and him insisting that she will.

Chapter 6 finds Rylee at the home she shares with Haddie, who has been her roommate and best friend for eight years beginning in college. Haddie can tell that she is troubled, but Rylee does not tell her about Colton, instead saying she is overwhelmed by work and the impending anniversary of what the author implies in an accident in which her boyfriend Max was killed.

## Analysis

The book's first section introduces the main characters and establishes the beginning of their relationship. Rylee is painted as a bright, pretty woman in her mid-twenties who carries emotional scars from a tragedy in which her boyfriend apparently died. The author implies that this is the reason for her severe claustrophobia, but nothing substantial is revealed at this point. Rylee is a caring person with a heart for service, and she is completely dedicated to the organization she works for and its mission of helping young boys who have been abused, abandoned or neglected. Despite the author's effort to portray her as a strong, independent woman, another side of her comes out when she meets Colton for the first time and is completely swept away by her sexual desire for him. This will continue to be an issue throughout the book.

Whereas Rylee is somewhat clumsy and shy, Colton is exactly the opposite. Dashing and self-assured, he is portrayed as a man who always gets what he wants, and what he wants now is to have sex with Rylee. Their meeting and subsequent encounters sets up a pattern of misogyny and borderline abuse that continues throughout the novel as he essentially forces Rylee to bend to his will and she vacillates between being offended by his advances and attitude, and finding herself unable to resist his considerable charms.

This section also introduces the boys who live at The House, with Zander getting particular focus. While the other residents are raucous and outgoing, Zander is deeply troubled by the trauma he has been through and now refuses to speak or interact with



others. He is established as something of a parallel to Rylee, who also has residual emotional scars from her own traumatic experience and, therefore, can relate to Zander.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Rylee have mixed feelings about Colton's donation to the auction and his offer to fund Corporate Cares' new project? How does Colton seem to feel about the position he has placed her in?

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Rylee so upset when she learns that it is Colton who bought a date with her at the auction? Since she was so attracted to him when they first met, what has changed?

## Discussion Question 3

Describe the various stages through which Rylee goes in terms of her feelings about Colton in these chapters. Why do you think she has each of those feelings?

## Vocabulary

reprieve, coexist, chaotic, niggling, habitually, alleviate, timbre, audacity, askew, mortification, ludicrous, blatant, clandestine, unscathed, cacophony, chastise, nemesis, erratic, rivulet, acrid, reverie, sporadically, palpable, translucent, inundate, salacious, exude, enigmatic, vehement, devoid, apex, sardonic, adamant, prevalent, culmination, admonish, affluence licentiously, debase, derisive, innuendo, astute



# Chapters 7 - 10

## Summary

Chapter 7 opens with Rylee finishing a shift at The House and looking forward to two days off. Someone knocks on the door and it is Colton, who continues to insist that Rylee owes him a date. She struggles to control her extreme attraction to him, then she sees Zander, who still has not spoken or shown any reaction to anything, slowly approaching them, apparently recognizing the famous race car driver. Colton bends down to talk to the boy, eliciting his first smile and handshake. He says that if Rylee will go on a date with him, he will take Zander and all the boys to the track with him, and she is so impressed with the miracle he has wrought that she agrees to go out with him as soon as her shift ends. Before they leave, Colton goes over to Zander and whispers something to him.

In Chapter 8, Rylee and Colton leave The House in his flashy Aston Martin sports car. They drive to a deli, where Colton picks up food and a bottle of wine, and while he is gone, his phone rings and Rylee sees that the caller is a woman named Tawney. Colton ignores the message and they go to the beach, where they sit on a blanket and eat as they watch the sun set. As they talk, Colton hints at a darker side, including perhaps an unhappy childhood despite his famous parents. He is insistent that he will possess Rylee sexually and she finds herself silently realizing that it is certain to happen despite her feeling that he will drop her immediately afterward. As they make out on the blanket, Colton says she is a breath of fresh air and she stops immediately, remembering that Max said the same thing to her when he proposed. She also recalls that Max's parents blame her for his death. When Colton drives her back to her car, he asks who hurt her, causing her to pull away just as they started to get close, but she refuses to talk about it and they part ways.

In Chapter 9, Rylee arrives at home to find that Haddie has learned of her acquaintance with the devastatingly attractive Colton. After Rylee fills in the details, Haddie encourages her to pursue a sexual relationship since it has been two years since Max's death and she needs to move forward. Rylee admits that she feels guilty because her feelings toward Colton are different and more intense than those she felt for Max, but Haddie says that is to be expected since she has changed, and Rylee finds herself agreeing that a relationship with Colton might be good for her.

Chapter 10 takes place the following morning as Rylee wakes to find a text from Colton, thanking her for the date and suggesting she listen to a song called "I Don't Want This Night to End." Rylee spends an hour researching Colton on the Internet, learning that his parents adopted him when he was 8 years old. There are many photos of him with beautiful women, including several with Tawny Taylor, the woman who called him the previous day. Realizing that it's time to move forward from Max, Rylee resists the urge to respond to Colton's text because chasing him would be the wrong approach.



## Analysis

These chapters begin to reveal the fact that there are two sides to Colton. On the surface, he is confident to the point of being brash, and it is clear from Rylee's Internet search that he has had a number of relationships, all with tall, beautiful, thin blondes. Rylee feels that she is the opposite of his type, being shorter and curvier with long, dark, curly hair. Despite confirming her impression that Colton is a love-them-and-leave-them ladies man, she continues to be drawn to him and finds that he awakens sexual desires that she finds overwhelming. She also begins to see a different side to him when he clearly relates to the withdrawn Zander and brings about the first tiny breakthrough since his arrival at The House, and when she gradually begins to learn that Colton himself has a somewhat mysterious past. He was not born to his parents, a famous film director and actress, but was adopted after his father literally found the boy on his doorstep, although no details are provided at this point.

This section also launches one of the book's ongoing techniques of having the main characters communicate with each other through the words of favorite songs. The reader has already learned that Rylee loves music and uses it as a form of self-therapy, particularly relating to the songs of Matchbox 20 when she thinks about her relationship with Max and the accident in which he was killed. Throughout the novel, Colton and Rylee continue to text each other with the title of a song that expresses their feelings toward each other at the time. Sometimes these interactions are playful and teasing, and at other times they are serious and heartfelt, and they provide a means of expressing feelings that are difficult to say aloud.

Finally, this section raises the theme of guilt, as Rylee reveals that she feels guilty about Max's death and that his family directly blames her and wishes she had died instead. Guilt will also become a factor in Colton's life as the novel progresses.

### Discussion Question 1

How does Colton's interaction with Zander affect Rylee's feelings toward him? What new aspects of his character does this begin to reveal?

### Discussion Question 2

Describe Rylee's first date with Colton. Why is his choice surprising given what she knows about him? Why do you think he chose this approach?

### Discussion Question 3

Why is Haddie so insistent that Rylee should pursue a sexual relationship with Colton? Why does Rylee have such mixed feelings about that prospect?





## Vocabulary

elusive, reprimand, endeavor, mode, giddy, repertoire, roguish, exertion, proximity, staccato, semblance, elicit, blatant, angst, insolent, stoic, placate, furtive, myriad, incredulity, indulgent, premeditated, opulence, feasible, diminutive, salacious, epitome, rein, enigmatic, chastise, inundate, candor, predilection, subliminal, emanate, overwrought, abate



# Chapters 11 - 14

## Summary

In Chapter 11, Haddie helps Rylee get dressed and made up in a sexy way to attend a launch party being held by the public relations firm Haddie works for. When they arrive at the crowded club, they have a few drinks and then hit the dance floor. Rylee is loosening up and having a great time when she sees Colton in the VIP area with a beautiful blonde on his arm. Noticing Rylee, Colton leaves his date and joins her on the dance floor, where they engage in a silent but sexually-charged encounter. When he is called away, Haddie explains that the rum company for whom the party is being held is a new sponsor for his racing team and she is shocked by the obvious heat between him and Rylee. After disappearing for more than an hour, Colton suddenly appears as another man is flirting with Rylee and after a heated exchange, Rylee storms away, but Colton catches up with her in a corridor. After another intense physical encounter, Colton says he has a room in the adjoining hotel and Rylee follows him into the elevator.

Chapter 12 finds Rylee and Colton arriving at his hotel suite, where they have sex. It is intense for both of them, but when it is over, Rylee senses a change in his demeanor and she realizes that although she wants more of him, he is finished with her now that he has gotten his conquest. He asks her to stay, but he seems conflicted, so she takes a taxi home, feeling humiliated.

In Chapter 13, Rylee has a recurring dream about the car accident in which Max was killed, but this time it is Colton in the seat next to her, begging her to save him. Haddie awakens her and Rylee says she is overwhelmed with guilt and other confusing feelings. She is surprised to learn that Colton called at 3:30 a.m. to find out if she made it home safely, and Haddie again encourages her to consider continuing a sexual relationship with him.

In Chapter 14, Rylee goes for a run and thinks about her confusing feelings about Colton. When she approaches her house, he is in the driveway waiting for her and she lets him inside, where she does a sexually-provocative stretching routine as he watches. He asks why she left the previous night and she says she is not a one-night-stand type of person. They both admit that they have baggage and eventually she agrees to go out on a real date with him that night. After he leaves, Rylee talks with Haddie, who has heard the entire conversation from the next room and insists that Colton is interested in her for more than sex.

## Analysis

These chapters show two distinctive sides of Rylee and they are sometimes difficult for the reader to reconcile. In classic passive-aggressive behavior, she vacillates between pushing Colton away and behaving in a very sexy manner to attract and entice him,



leaving both Colton and the reader confused and unsure of her true feelings and motivation. Nevertheless, the relationship progresses to the inevitable sexual stage and their first encounter, which is described in graphic detail, is incredible for both of them.

Colton's controlling nature begins to emerge further in this section during the scenes that take place at the launch party. Even though they are not together, when he sees her flirting with another man he immediately barges in and claims that she is with him, causing an unwanted scene. Again this leads to a passive-aggressive reaction from Rylee, who is first offended but soon finds herself unable to resist his sexual magnetism.

Chapter 13 provides some foreshadowing in the nightmare that haunts Rylee. She has had the dream numerous times since the accident, but this time Colton is in the seat next to her, begging her to save him, foreshadowing glimpses into his dark and secret past that will come into play later in the novel.

We also see the beginning of Rylee's struggle about moving forward from the accident and her relationship with Max. Although she genuinely loved her fiancé, she realizes that her feelings for Colton are different and, in some ways, stronger, causing her to feel guilty on another level. In addition, although she is not particularly uptight, she does not consider herself sexually promiscuous and has difficulty relating to the idea of casual sex without an emotional investment, and this is a concept she must continue to struggle with. That struggle escalates when Colton inexplicably seems to change immediately after their first sexual encounter, thus seeming to confirm her fear that he will cast her aside as soon as he has slept with her, but again his sweeter side emerges when he calls to check on her and appears at her house the following day.

## **Discussion Question 1**

In what ways do both Colton and Rylee exhibit passive-aggressive behavior? Give at least two specific examples for each character and describe why you think they do what they do in those instances.

## **Discussion Question 2**

After their first sexual encounter, why does Rylee leave even though Colton asks her to stay?

## **Discussion Question 3**

In discussing her nightmare with Haddie, Rylee says she is overwhelmed with guilt. Why does she feel this way? Do you think she has reason to feel guilty? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

bolster, acclimate, cohort, rakish, periphery, indiscernible, preamble, makeshift, ascent, vicinity, pretentious, pawn, insolence, notorious, antagonism, rapacious, delineation, palpable, fervent, obliterate, hedonistic, pungent, exertion, dexterity, stipulation



# Chapters 15 - 17

## Summary

Chapter 15 opens with Colton picking Rylee up for their date. As they drive, his phone rings and it is Tawny, which makes him appear to be irritated. He puts the phone on speaker and Rylee hears Tawney say she is calling to confirm a business matter, then Colton ends the call abruptly. He takes Rylee to a carnival and while they wait in line, he asks her about herself and she tells him about her parents, brother and general background. They go on several rides, but when she refuses a particular one, she explains that she has been claustrophobic since being trapped in a car after an accident a couple of years earlier, and confirms that the accident caused the scars he noticed during sex the previous night. After they leave, he vaguely refers to his early childhood but refuses her offer to talk about it, saying he does not want to haunt her with his demons.

In Chapter 16, Colton takes Rylee to a small restaurant and she questions him about his past. He reveals that he was 8 years old when he met his adoptive father outside his trailer on a movie set, and that he has one sister who is his parents' biological child. He was a handful growing up, but is close to his parents and sister and appreciates all they have done for him. He uses his mother's maiden name, Donovan, to avoid the impression that he is riding on his famous father's coattails. After dinner, they go to what she assumes is his home, but suddenly he reacts oddly, apologizing for taking her there and saying he drove there without thinking. She thinks he is rejecting her again, but then he begins kissing her and they have sex on the countertop, with Colton tying her up and blindfolding her first so he can have complete control.

Chapter 17 opens with Rylee asking about a tattoo on Colton's torso and he explains that it is a series of Celtic knots standing for overcoming adversity, acceptance, healing and vengeance. As they talk, she realizes and he confirms that this house is not where he lives, but rather where he brings women for sex. At her insistence, he explains the arrangements he makes with women he likes, and she is appalled. Eventually he says that he feels differently about her, but he will inevitably hurt her and he refuses to do that. Unable to get him to talk about why he does not feel he deserves more, she asks him to take her home, where they say goodbye before Rylee goes inside and collapses in tears.

## Analysis

The author provides more hints about the origins of Colton's dark side in this section, particularly when he stops short of revealing anything about the first eight years of his life, before his parents adopted him. Rylee's background is what one would expect given her personality and demeanor – a stable home with two loving parents, a sibling to whom she is close, a college education, a career she finds meaningful and close,



supportive friendships. While Colton's upbringing was similar in some ways with the exception of his parents' wealth and fame – two loving parents, a close sibling, etc. – it is the years before his adoption that clearly have left permanent scars.

The scene at his house is also revealing. When they arrive, it seems odd to Rylee that he seems unfamiliar with the lock and vaguely confused in other ways, and the truth eventually comes out. At her insistence, Colton describes his typical approach to relationships, which Rylee notes is almost akin to prostitution. He chooses beautiful women who often are aspiring models and actresses, gives them exposure through his high-profile public life, and tosses them aside when he tires of sex with them. While Rylee is appalled, she nevertheless finds herself realizing that she is developing deep feelings for him and is devastated when he makes it clear that their relationship is now over since he cannot give her what she wants.

The reader should also take note of the tattoos on Colton's torso, which clearly are symbolic of the demons left from his early childhood traumas.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the role that sharing music plays in the relationship between Colton and Rylee. Cite three specific examples from chapters 1 through 17 and describe how each one is used to convey information.

## Discussion Question 2

What do Colton's tattoos symbolize? How do you think their meaning relates to his life as we know it so far?

## Discussion Question 3

Describe what you know about Colton's childhood at this point. How do you think this affects his behavior?

## Vocabulary

reiterate, implication, prevalent, equilibrium, incognito, contemplate, impassive, intrusion, impending, mar, taut, radiate, cryptic, defiant, acquiesce, reconcile, perturbed, resonate, mesmerizing, facade, inkling, inverted, incendiary, lascivious, obliterate, revel, theoretical, eminent, protocol



# Chapters 18 - 22

## Summary

In Chapter 18, Rylee is having a bad week as she misses Colton. Eventually he calls her, but the purpose is to make arrangements to take the boys from The House to his test drive at the race track. Near the end of the call, he finally says that his early childhood was bad, causing him to feel the need to hurt other people just when things start to go well, including his parents as he was growing up.

In Chapter 19, Colton sends a bus to pick up the boys, plus Rylee and two other counselors. When they arrive at the track, he is gracious and welcoming to the group and when he greets Zander, the boy says "Hi," his first word since arriving at The House. Tawny, who works for the race team, is there and eyes Rylee in a dismissive way. When they are alone for a few minutes, Rylee and Colton share some banter and a kiss, and then a beautiful blonde appears, but she turns out to be his sister Quinlan, who clearly thinks Rylee is just another of his casual conquests and is a bit rude.

In Chapter 20, the boys are having a great time at the track and Rylee is taking pictures of them from a distance when Tawny approaches, assuring Rylee that Colton will soon drop her and that she intends to be the one who ends up with him. After Colton gets out of the car, he and Rylee talk, and he again tells her that although he wants her, he can only give her so much.

In Chapter 21, Rylee learns that an article and some photos of the day at the track will appear in Sunday's L.A. Times, along with a very favorable story about The House and Corporate Cares. She gets a call from the elementary school principal saying that one of her boys, Aiden, has gotten into a fight at school and when she picks him up, she learns that two of the privileged boys called him a liar when he said he knew Colton. She calls Colton to ask for help and he agrees to send something over the next morning.

In Chapter 22, Rylee is nervous because it is almost time to take the boys to school, but Colton's promised item has not arrived. At the last minute, he comes to The House in his Aston Martin and drives Aiden and the other two younger kids to school, where he makes it clear that he is their friend. Afterward, he and Rylee go for coffee and again he skirts around his painful past, telling her that he is too damaged for a relationship but that he still wants her. Realizing she has fallen in love with him, she agrees to have dinner with him the next night.

## Analysis

Little progress is made in the relationship between Colton and Rylee in these chapters as he continues to insist that he cannot give her what she obviously wants and she continues to feel strongly about him but is unable to break through the emotional



barriers he has erected. However, his sweeter side again is shown in his interaction with the boys when they visit the race track, his special treatment of Zander in particular, and his handling of the situation with Aiden. That incident in particular impresses Rylee as Colton boldly uses his celebrity and natural swagger to put in place not only the kids who have been bullying Aiden, but also the principal who has always assumed that Aiden is to blame when these situations arise. The feelings that arise from seeing this different side of Colton cause Rylee to continue to push aside her certainty that he will hurt her in the end – something he had told her directly several times – and pursue a relationship with him. Not only does Rylee tend toward passive-aggression, but Colton does also in insisting that he cannot have a relationship with her, yet refusing to leave her alone.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Colton dismiss Rylee's suggestions for ways in which he can help Aiden deal with his bullies? Why is his eventual solution more fitting with his personality?

## Discussion Question 2

What does Riley learn during her conversation with Tawney? How is Rylee's behavior toward Tawney different from her usual interactions with people? Why do you think she changes her tactics?

## Discussion Question 3

At various times, both Colton and Rylee say they are carrying a lot of excess baggage. What baggage does each of them have and how does this affect their interactions with each other?

## Vocabulary

bout, petulant, viable, reiterate, infuse, trepidation, self-deprecating, vicarious, bemused, sidle, irrefutable, levity, pensive, impeccable, extricate, incredulous, furtive, censure, condescending, impudence, cynicism, respite, spiel, patronize, implacable, gesticulate, veneration, errant, tangible, beguile, scrutiny, resonate, surmount, inane, rectify





# Chapters 23 - 25

## Summary

In Chapter 23, Colton takes Rylee to his luxurious beachfront home in Malibu, where she meets his dog Baxter and learns that she is the only woman he ever brought there. As they walk on the beach, she questions him about his past relationships and he says he is incapable of love. She tells him about the accident in which Max was killed and she was trapped in the car for a few days before being rescued, then they have sex.

In Chapter 24, Rylee questions Colton about a scar on his arm but he refuses to say how he got it. When she sings along to one of her favorite song, he accuses her of being a hopeless romantic and asks her to spend the night, then more sex ensues.

In the book's concluding chapter, Rylee is happy to wake up in Colton's bed until he suddenly cries out and throws his elbow into her, hurting her shoulder, before leaping out of bed and standing in a defensive position. Emerging from his nightmare, he goes into the bathroom and vomits, but when Rylee follows him and tries to comfort him, he angrily tells her to leave. She protests, but he says that he is tired of her now that she has served her purpose and forces her out the door, where she collapses in tears.

## Analysis

This shorter section brings the novel to its inevitable conclusion and leads into the second installment of the author's trilogy. Chapter 23 finds Rylee finally opening herself up to Colton as she tells him the graphic and painful details of her accident, bringing their conversation full circle from their first meeting that was prompted by the claustrophobia that resulted. Like Rylee, Colton has physical scars that are presumably from his early childhood, and they symbolize the emotional scars that both of them retain.

This section takes Rylee on an emotional roller coaster similar to the actual one she rode when Colton took her to the carnival, as Colton opens his home to her, something he apparently has done for no other woman. Just as she begins to feel that he is letting her into his life and showing her a side of himself that he typically keeps hidden, the floor falls out from under her when his nightmare causes him to push her away and hurt her in the exact manner he predicted by telling her that he only wanted her for sex and is now finished with her. Clearly that is not the case, but Rylee has no choice but to leave in devastation, but the author concludes with a plug for the next book in the series, ensuring the reader that this is not the end of Colton and Rylee's journey.



## Discussion Question 1

How does Rylee's visit to Colton's house seem to signal a change in their relationship? How does having her in his home affect Colton? How does it affect Rylee?

## Discussion Question 2

What prompts Colton to demand that Rylee leave the house? Does this surprise Rylee? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Looking back on the plot of *Driven* and what you know about the characters, what do you predict will happen in the next installment of the author's trilogy? Make a case for your predictions.

## Vocabulary

rifle (verb), presumptuous, repercussions, impenetrable, formidable, captivated, complacent, rueful, horde, fathom, barrage, covet, improvise, reciprocate, revel, falter, interject, divulge, bestow, peruse, jubilant, platonic, piquant, ricochet, inarticulate, charismatic



# Characters

## Rylee Thomas

Rylee Thomas, the book's female protagonist, is a 26-year-old woman living in Los Angeles. A native of San Diego, she grew up in a stable family with loving parents and an older brother whom she adores. After graduating from UCLA, she decided to stay in Los Angeles, where she now works as a social worker and manager at Corporate Cares, a non-profit organization that runs The House, a home for young boys who do not have parents or have been abandoned, abused or neglected by them. She is very dedicated to her job and works hard to relate to the boys in her care. In addition to working in the corporate office, she takes regular 24-hour shifts caring for and supervising the boys. She lives with Haddie, her college roommate and best friend.

A few years before the story opens, Rylee was engaged to her longtime boyfriend, Max, but he was killed in a car accident in which Rylee was severely injured. After being trapped in the car for several days before she was rescued, she has a severe case of claustrophobia and a strong sense of guilt. The accident also left her with physical scars on her abdomen and it is unlikely that she will be able to have children.

Rylee's life takes a turn when she meets Colton Donovan, a devastatingly handsome and wealthy race car driver and entrepreneur. Her sexual attraction to him is powerful although she is put off by his arrogance, but when she begins to peel back the layers, she finds that he harbors dark secrets from his childhood and she finds herself falling in love with him despite her best efforts.

## Colton Donovan

Colton Donovan, the central male character, is a race car driver and businessman who appears to be in his late 20s or early 30s. He is the adopted son of a famous movie director and an actress, so he grew up with wealth and privilege, and now he has become rich, famous and successful in his own right. Known for his good looks and habit of bedding beautiful women, he is self-assured to the point of arrogance, confident that he can get any woman he wants. It is common knowledge that Colton appeared on his father's doorstep when he was 8 years old and was subsequently adopted, but little is known of his life before that, although it is clear that it was so disturbing that it left permanent emotional scars. Because he feels that he does not deserve to be loved, he makes sure to keep his relationship casual and he makes it clear to any woman he dates that he will discard her as soon as she stops interesting him sexually.

Colton's self-assuredness is shaken when he meets Rylee Thomas, who is different from the women he is usually linked to. Beautiful in a less dramatic way, she fascinates him from the beginning and he is determined to enter a sexual relationship with her even though she makes it clear that she has no such intentions. In time, he gets his way



but not without giving Rylee a glimpse into his more tender side, but in the end, his prediction that he will hurt her turns out to be accurate.

## **Haddie Montgomery**

Haddie Montgomery is Rylee's roommate and best friend. They met as college roommates and formed a deep friendship that ensures they always have each other's back. Haddie is more outgoing and free-spirited than Rylee, but she is a fiercely loyal friend and does her best to help Rylee deal with the demons left from her near-fatal car accident. She also encourages Rylee to move forward by pursuing a sexual relationship with Colton.

## **Zander**

Zander is a young boy who lives at The House. In the three months since witnessing his mother's brutal murder, he has not spoken and refuses to interact with the counselors or the other boys living at the residence.

## **Boys at The House**

Although minor characters, the boys who live at The House appear in the book from time to time. They include Kyle, Ricky, Scooter and Aiden.

## **Max**

Although he died in a car accident before the story begins, Rylee's fiance Max is an important character because of what their relationship meant to her and the lingering effects of both her love for him and her guilt over her need to move on.

## **Tawny Taylor**

Tawny Taylor is a lifelong friend and former girlfriend of Colton's. She intends to be the one who ends up with him, so she considers Rylee a rival.

## **Quinlan**

Quinlan is Colton's younger sister. She appears briefly in only one chapter but is referenced at other points.

## **Teddy**

Teddy is Rylee's supervisor at Corporate Cares and a casual friend of Colton's.

## **Dane and Jackson**

Dane and Jackson are Rylee's fellow counselors at The House



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Colton's Tattoos

Colton has a series of tattoos on his torso that depict Celtic knots representing overcoming adversity, healing, acceptance and vengeance. Although he brushes aside Rylee's questions about them, they clearly are symbolic of the difficulties he faced in his childhood and the demons he still harbors.

## Rylee's Ring

Although Max has been dead for two years, Rylee continues to wear the engagement ring he gave her, although not on her left hand. It is symbol not only of her love for Max and their plans for a future together, but also her inability to let go of him and move forward.

## Song Lyrics

Many times during the course of the novel, Rylee and Colton text each other the title of a song and the artist who performs it. The lyrics of each song are symbolic of what the character is feeling toward the other at that moment, and they use the songs as a means of communicating thoughts and feelings that they would find it difficult to express in a more direct way.

## Nicknames

Early in the book, Colton begins calling Rylee "Ryles" and she begins calling him "Ace." In the beginning, both nicknames are used in an almost derogatory way, particularly when Colton continues to use Ryles after Rylee asks him not to do so, simply because he knows it annoys her. The letters in Ace are an acronym for something Rylee and Haddie devised when they were in college and although Colton tries to guess what it means, he is never able to do so and the author saves the reveal for a later book. As the story progresses, however, both nicknames become terms of affection rather than attempts to annoy each other.

## Colton's Race Car

Colton is a top race car driver who is addicted to speed. His car is symbolic of his need to move quickly as a means of escaping his troubled childhood and the emotional scars it left with him.



## Matchbox 20

While Rylee loves all types of music, the songs of Matchbox 20 have particular meaning for her as she uses them as a form of therapy to help her cope with Max's death and its ramifications for her.

## Colton's Aston Martin

While his race car represents his need to escape from his past, Colton's Aston Martin sports car has a different meaning. It symbolizes his power and prestige, and he uses it when he wants to impress someone or throw his weight around to achieve some objective.

## The House

The House is more than a building where young boys live. For the residents, it symbolizes a safe haven from the danger and sadness they have faced, and a family to replace the one they no longer have. For Rylee, it represents an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the boys who are in her care.

## Closet

In the book's opening chapter, Rylee gets locked in a closet at the charity event she is hosting. Because she is so claustrophobic, the closet takes her back to being trapped in the car after Max died and symbolizes all the pain and guilt that those memories bring back, but when Colton lets her out, it also represents the first step toward freedom from her past and the prospect of a new life with him.

## Carnival

On their second date, Colton takes Rylee to a carnival where they go on a number of rides that symbolize the sense of fun that each of them is beginning to feel in their relationship, as well as Colton's realization that Rylee is not like his usual dates, who expect to be taken to expensive places where they can be seen with him.

## Settings

The entirety of *Driven* takes place in Los Angeles, California. It is where Colton grew up and where Riley has lived since starting college at UCLA.

The specific locations where various scenes take place vary widely. Several take place at The House, the home for boys that Riley's company runs. It is a raucous, fun home that is often filled with laughter although there is a firm structure designed to help the boys succeed. At the other end of the spectrum is Colton's palatial beachfront home in Malibu, where he takes Rylee as a means of letting her more deeply into his life.

Other scenes take place at the home shared by Rylee and Haddie, various restaurants, a club at which Haddie's product launch is held, the location of Rylee's charity event, the beach, and the race track where Colton is testing his car.





# Themes and Motifs

## Sexual Desire

Sexual desire is at the center of *Driven* from beginning to end. Although she is not an overtly sexual person and has not had a relationship since her fiancé, Max, died two years earlier -- in fact, Max is the only man she has ever slept with -- her body reacts immediately when she meets Colton. The attraction is not just the fact that he is extremely handsome and well built, but he also exudes an air of arrogance that she finds both repulsive and irresistible. Colton fans the flames by making it clear from their first encounter that he intends to have her, and their verbal sparring only causes things to heat up more.

The book's sex scenes are very explicit, making it clear that both Colton and Rylee are helpless when it comes to resisting each other. Although Rylee continually maintains that she is not a one-night-stand kind of person, and Colton maintains that sex is all he can give her, she is so drawn to him from a physical perspective that she goes against her better judgement and allows herself to be seduced. The author makes it clear that her reaction to him is mostly physical in the beginning, with her body reacting to his presence and his touch in ways that she cannot control. Her desire for him is so strong that she allows him to tie her up, perform other acts that hint of S&M, and have unprotected sex with her based solely on his word that he is clean.

Colton's desire for Rylee is equally overpowering and he uses it to manipulate her over and over, never taking no for an answer and putting her in situation in which she has little choice but to be alone with him. Even though he begins to have feelings for her as the book progresses, his relationship with her remains mostly sexual throughout the novel.

## Guilt

Guilt is one of the overriding themes of *Driven* and is a factor in both of the main characters' lives. It is most clearly manifested in Rylee's feelings of guilt stemming from the accident in which Max was killed. Even though she was not driving and the accident obviously was Max's fault, his parents and other family members have held her responsible, even declaring that she should have died rather than him. Although she knows intellectually that this is not the case, their accusations prey on her mind anyway and contribute to her recurring nightmares.

As she considers initiating a relationship with Colton, Rylee also feels guilty about moving forward from Max. Although he has been gone for two years, she has continued to wear his ring and avoid getting involved with another man, and it is only a combination of her irresistible attraction to Colton and Haddie's urging that a fling would do her good that prompts her to take the next step and begin to move on. Even as she



does so, however, she feels guilty about the fact that in some ways, her feelings for Colton are stronger than those she had for Max even though she genuinely loved him and wanted a life with him.

Colton, too, battles guilt on several levels. He has a good relationship with his parents now, but knows he caused them a great deal of trouble when he was growing up and must take responsibility for that. Although he makes it clear to Rylee from the beginning that they can only have a temporary sexual relationship, as his feelings for her grow, he harbors feelings of guilt about the fact that he will inevitably hurt her because he has no control over the demons that haunt him.

## **Demons from the Past**

Both of the book's primary characters battle demons that continue to haunt them even though the events from which they stem are far in the past. Rylee continues to be haunted by the accident in which Max was killed even though it was not her fault. Even though two years have passed, she is routinely awakened by nightmares of the accident itself and the days she spent trapped in the car next to Max's dead body until help finally arrived. The residual feelings make it nearly impossible for her to move ahead and embrace life again.

Colton's demons stem from the first eight years of his life. Although the experiences he endured during that time is not specified in this book and his adoptive parents gave him a wonderful life after taking him in, whatever happened is so deeply engrained that he, too, has violent nightmares. Still worse, he feels that he is incapable of love and does not deserve to have anyone love him, which has led to a life of meaningless sex with women he quickly tosses aside. Even as he is beginning to open up to Rylee, a nightmare that causes him to hurt her brings back all the demons that haunt him and he ends their relationship on a cruel note.

It should also be noted that both Rylee and Colton bear physical scars from the experiences that continue to haunt them. Rylee has scars on her abdomen from injuries suffered in the accident and is apparently unable to have children, and while Colton does not admit that the scar on his arm is from an early childhood injury, his reluctance to talk about it clearly indicates that some form of abuse was its source.

# Styles

## Point of View

Driven is written in the first person and told from Rylee's point of view. This is appropriate because it gives the reader an opportunity to experience everything that she experiences and to be fully aware of her thoughts and feelings about the events that take place in the novel. This is particularly useful because Rylee is confused about her feelings for much of the book, swinging wildly between her offense at Colton's arrogant behavior and her extreme sexual attraction to him. Rylee experiences a wide range of emotions throughout the course of the book, often feeling conflicting emotions at the same time, and the reader would not get a true sense of her confusion, guilt and desire without being able to see all of that through her eyes.

## Language and Meaning

Driven is written in casual, modern American English and can be comprehended by an average adult or teenage reader. However, its strong language and graphic descriptions of sexual encounters make it inappropriate for younger readers. The sex scenes are long and detailed, with explicit language contained in both dialogue and the private thoughts of Rylee as the first-person narrator.

The book contains an appropriate balance of dialogue and expository material, although the latter exists entirely in the mind of the book's narrator and main character.

## Structure

Driven is divided into 25 chapters of varying length, some longer than 20 pages and others as short as 5. The chapters are numbers but not titled, and there is no introduction or epilogue, although the author does include a sample chapter from the next book in the series.

The plot is direct with no subplots or flashbacks per se. However, the author does provide some background information in the form of dreams or reflections that give insight into Rylee's relationship with Max and the accident in which he was killed.

Driven's plot takes place over the course of about two weeks, beginning with the night on which Rylee and Colton meet and concluding with the morning he demands that she leave his house. It is easy to follow and moves at a steady pace.



## Quotes

Get a grip, Rylee! I rub the tears off my cheeks with the backs of my hands and resort to my previous year in therapy to try to keep my claustrophobia at bay. I concentrate on a mark on the wall across from me, try to regulate my breathing, and slowly count. I focus on pushing the walls out. Pushing the unbearable memories away.

-- Rylee as Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph Page 4, Paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This passage, which appears near the beginning of the novel, marks the first time the author hints at the tragedy that has affected Rylee so strongly and foreshadows the revelations to come later.

He turns around to face me, walking backwards. "Yes, Mom!" he replies, the term of endearment not lost on me. For that, in fact, is what the staff here is to these boys: we are the parents they no longer have, whether as a result of death, drugs, or other circumstances.

-- Shane and Rylee as Narrator (chapter 4 paragraph Page 32, Paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This passage describes the purpose of The House and Shane's comment gives the reader a sense of the close relationship that develops between the boys and the counselors.

My life is not some Hollywood romance movie where boring girl meets famous boy and they fall madly in love together. I'm not naive enough to believe that this is going to happen to me.

-- Rylee as Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph Page 47, Paragraph 3)

**Importance:** This passage provides a good description of Rylee's down-to-earth attitude while foreshadowing exactly what will happen to her in the near future.

Colton turns around to see what I'm reacting to. He starts to ask me a question, and I raise my hand up forcefully telling him to be quiet. Fortunately, he complies. The other boys in the room have all turned to watch, expectant expressions on their faces for this is the first time that Zander has ever purposely taken the initiative to interact with someone.

-- Rylee as Narrator (chapter 7 paragraph Page 65, Paragraph 9)

**Importance:** This passage marks the first reaction anyone has gotten from Zander since he witnessed his mother's murder and also is the beginning of a glimpse into Colton's softer side and his own troubled childhood, as he is able to relate to Zander without even trying.

You make me feel so right, even if its so wrong, I wanna scream out loud, but I just bite my tongue." I raise my arms again over my head, letting myself go, reveling in feeling that I am telling Colton how I feel without telling him. This is so unlike me -- singing out loud, letting loose -- but something about being with him, sitting next to him in his flashy



sports car, has lowered my inhibitions.

-- Rylee (chapter 8 paragraph Page 71, Paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This marks the first time Rylee uses the lyrics of a song to communicate with Colton, a practice that both characters will employ as the book progresses, and also describes the ways in which Colton is already beginning to change her.

Nah," he denies, grabbing another piece of cheese, folding it in the bread. "I'm not good with kids at all. That's why I'm never having them," his statement determined and his expression blank. I'm taken aback by his comment. "That's a bold statement for someone so young. I'm sure at some point you'll change your mind," I reply, my eyes narrowing as I watch him, wishing I still had the option to make a choice like his.

-- Colton and Rylee (chapter 8 paragraph Page 76, Paragraphs 5 and 6)

**Importance:** This is the first piece of personal information Colton has revealed about himself and is interesting because his previous interactions at The House have made it clear that he is, in fact, good with children. The author also reveals for the first time that her accident apparently has made it impossible for Rylee to have children, providing more information about why it was so devastating and life-altering for her.

I stare at her, tears blurring my vision, and afraid that my next admission will make me a horrible person. I avert my eyes, afraid to look at her when I speak. "Part of the reason I feel guilty . . . I . . . the intensity, the desperation, the everything that Colton makes me feel is so much more, so much stronger, than I ever felt with Max.

-- Rylee (chapter 9 paragraph Page 98, Paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This is an important revelation for Rylee because she truly loved Max and was devastated when he died, but this passages demonstrates that she is beginning to realize that it is possible to not only have feelings for another man, but for them to be even stronger than those she felt for Max.

He tsks at me, shaking his head, and takes a step closer. "I hope you're enjoying yourself because it's quite a show you're putting on here." He puts a finger under my chin, lifting so my eyes meet his. "I don't play games, Rylee," he warns, his voice just loud enough for me to hear, "and I won't tolerate them played on me.

-- Colton (chapter 9 paragraph Page 119, Paragraph 2)

**Importance:** This remark is ironic because in truth, Colton is a master game player and proves it throughout the novel.

Rylee," he begs, "Please help me. Please save me." He sucks in a labored, ragged breath, his fingers relaxing in mine. His voice is barely a whisper. "Rylee, only you can save me. I'm dying. I need you to save me.

-- Colton (chapter 13 paragraph Page 141, Paragraph 3)

**Importance:** In Rylee's nightmare about the accident, Max is suddenly replaced by Colton, who begs her to save him. In their real lives, it is becoming increasingly clear



that Colton is indeed in need of someone to save him, but his death is an emotional one rather than physical, and Rylee believes she is the person who can help him.

Colton withdraws his hand from mine and takes his baseball hat off, tossing it in the backseat, and shoves his hand through his hair. The muscle twitches as he clenches and unclenches his jaw in thought "Shit, Rylee." And I think that is all I'm going to get as the car descends back into silence. Eventually he continues, "I don't . . ." he stops as he exits the freeway. I can see him grip the steering wheel tightly with both hands. "I don't need to haunt you with my demons, Ry. Fill your head with the shit that's a psychologist's wet dream. Give you ammunition to dissect and throw back in my face at everything I do -- everything I say -- when I fuck things up.

-- Colton (chapter 15 paragraph Page 178, Paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This quote is significant because it marks the first time Colton directly admits that he faces terrible demons left from his past. Even as he is tacitly acknowledging that he has feelings for Rylee and does not want to hurt her, he again makes it clear that it is inevitable that he will destroy their relationship.

Ry? I -- uh . . ." I can see the regret in his eyes, in the slouch of his posture. He regards me silently for several moments, an internal struggle warring behind his facade. "Rylee, this is not what I'd planned for me. For us." He pauses, his eyes floating with emotion. "You. What you are? What we are? It scares the shit out of me.

-- Colton (chapter 17 paragraph Page 202, Paragraph 3)

**Importance:** This is the furthest Colton has ever gone in admitting that he has strong and uncontrollable feelings for Rylee and marks the beginning of a turn in their relationship and her hopes for a future with him.

Oh, I've crashed plenty of times, Ryles." He lifts his sunglasses so that our eyes can meet. "Sometimes you need to crash a couple of times to learn your mistakes, and then when the smoke clears, sometimes you're better off in the end. Lesson learned in case there is a next time." He shrugs, squeezing my hand and smiling shyly. "Besides, sometimes the dents just add more character in the long run. Looking pretty can only last so long.

-- Colton (chapter 19 paragraph Page 225, Paragraph 7)

**Importance:** In this passage, Colton is talking about crashing his race car, but clearly he is using it as a metaphor for making mistakes in life.

Colton laughs loudly, and I'm confused at his reaction. "That's only going to get his teeth knocked in, Rylee. That's something only a geek would do . . . those brats would eat him alive." "Oh . . . um . . . I had no idea.

-- Colton and Rylee (chapter 21 paragraph Page 245, Paragraph 4)

**Importance:** This exchange demonstrates the difference in Colton's and Rylee's backgrounds and world view. While she is able to relate to the boys at The House on a certain level, his street smarts give him a different perspective and a clearer



understanding of the lives of young boys even though he claims he is not good with children.

He steps next to me and runs a hand through his hair. I have to crane my head up to meet his eyes. "I'm not capable of love, Rylee," he deadpans, his voice a haunted whisper, before staring out to sea and shoving his hands in his pockets. "I learned a long time ago that the more you want someone, the more you covet them, and need and love them . . . it doesn't matter. In the end they're going to leave you anyway." He picks up a shell and tosses it. "Besides, someone can tell you they love you, but words can lie and actions can be improvised to fake something that's not.

-- Colton (chapter 23 paragraph Page 269, Paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This is Colton's clearest reference yet regarding the degree to which he has been damaged by someone he loved, presumably a parent.